

Who wrote the letter? What do I learn about him from the letter alone?

Written by John. John is Jesus' servant (vs. 1:1). He refers to himself as a "brother" and "companion in the suffering" – so I assume both he and the readers are Christians enduring some sort of persecution. He explains that he is on the island of Patmos "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (vs. 1:9). Has prophetic visions.

To whom was it written? What do I notice about the recipients, their ethnicity, economic status, problems, and attitudes?

The seven churches in the province of Asia (Eastern area of the empire. I know some are Greek – most likely all are): Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. They seem to be going through a time of persecution.

Ephesus: Greek. Seem faithful – have had an issue with false teachers in the past, but have sorted things out by this point. Have undergone persecution. Unfortunately, they have "lost their first love."

Smyrna: Poor. Persecuted. About to embark on harsher persecution and possibly imprisonment. Looks like they may be having problems with being slandered by the local Jewish community – possibly leading to their persecution. Need more info.

Pergamum – They live "where Satan has his throne" – probably meaning a very paganistic, very sinful region. They do not renounce their faith, even though they face persecution and some have died. They are having some issue with church members who adhere to some false teachings – mainly the "teachings of Balaam" and the "teaching of the Nicolaitans." Need more data.

Thyatira – Undergoing persecution that seems to have made them a stronger fellowship. Like Pergamum, they have some false teaching in the church. This time it is "that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess." Is this actually a false teacher named Jezebel, or a "cult" or mindset based off the ancient woman? I think, perhaps, it is representative of a persuasive attitude in the church leading to sexual immorality, etc. Need more data.

Sardis – Spiritually dead, though they have an appearance and a Godly reputation. Need more data.

Philadelphia – Have already patiently endured persecution. Are being promised that it will soon relent and that they will be kept "from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." Need more data.

Laodicea – Neither hot nor cold. Wealthy church but spiritually poor. Need more data.

Outline the letter's major themes, making special note of its natural logistic divisions.

- *Introduction and background* (Chap. 1) – Chapter 1 sets the tone for the rest of the book. Uses colorful language, metaphors and similes. Introduces John and the seven churches. Mentions the purpose of the writing and makes obvious that this is "no ordinary letter," but is one of an apocalyptic nature.

- *The Seven Churches* (chapters 2 – 3) – Speaks directly to the literal and physical seven churches that will be receiving the letter. Each church is different, enduring similar situations but reacting differently in some cases. The gist is that the persecution has proven their character.
- *The Persecution and Suffering of the Church* (chapters 4 – 8:5) – Some narrative of John entering Heaven and seeing some goings on, seeing the Seven Seals of the Scroll being opened, each one representing some type of persecution of the church or suffering of the world in general (war, death, natural disasters, etc.)
- *The Trumpets / Beginnings of God's Wrath* (chapter 8:6 – 11) – Another series of seven, but this time the actions are a bit different. These “disasters” feel less like the normal pestilence and familiar sufferings described in the early chapters, and feel more like the beginnings of God’s wrath. Between the sixth and seventh trumpet, there is an interlude of some narrative of the two witnesses.
- *Imagery* (chapters 12 – 13) – Some imagery concerning “the good guys” (Christ) and “the bad guys” (Satan, the Anti-Christ, the False Prophet)
- *Harvest* (chapter 14) – Not sure if this section refers to a great time of revival or is yet more of God’s wrath and judgment. The symbol of a harvest in reference to revival was used by Jesus in the Gospels, and I would think that is the direction this is going until I read verses 19-20.
- *More of God's Wrath* (chapter 15 – 16) – Another grouping of seven actions. This time, the imagery is seven plagues that God is pouring upon the earth.
- *More Imagery/The Triumph of Christ* (chapter 17 – 22) – These final chapters show the final defeat and judgment of Evil with a triumphant Christ.

Why was it written? What is the overall situation?

To encourage the persecuted church to not give up hope and be faithful in their walks with Christ. Some have gone through much persecution and showed great integrity. Others have not been as faithful.

What was the author's intent in writing the letter?

The purpose here is to show that, though bad things have and will happen to the church – ultimately God’s wrath will pour out upon Evil and Christ will reign triumphant over a perfect Earth.

Revelation 1:1-8

Overview

This passage begins the book of Revelation. This introduction is a bit different than other epistles. It begins not with the standard greeting, but with a bit of background on what is to come. The traditional epistle greeting begins in vs. 4. This passage sets the stage – comes out and makes it immediately known that this letter is of a different literary form. It is to be more prophetic than instructive.

Commentary

- 1) The first verse of the book states that what is coming is a revelation of Jesus Christ. This revelation has been made for the purpose of showing His servants – the church – what “must soon take place.” The word *must* sticks out. The verse explains that the revelation was made to John, Christ’s servant.
- 2) John, therefore, has testified – or tells others about – everything he has seen. He’s one who proclaims of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- 3) The one who reads these words – reads the proclamation made by John – is blessed. And blessed also are those who not only read and hear the words, but take them to heart. I take this to mean that they are affected by it. They are comforted by the words. They are spurred on to action. That some sort of life change happens because of it. The author makes it clear that “the time is near.” This is in direct contrast to other forms of apocalyptic literature which declare that they were written long ago and are to be hidden until the “later days.” John views his current time as the “later days” – and rightly so as the life, death, and resurrection of Christ marked the beginning of a new age. Things are no longer the same as they once were. Man’s ability to have a relationship with the creator is completely different now. The relationship is different.
- 4) The standard greeting starts here. John introduces himself and gives the standard “grace and peace” from Jesus Christ deal. But, then, directly after is another line that lets the reader know that this letter will be different. Where typically the author introduces the others with him, maybe his scribe or other contributing writers, John lists the seven “spirits”...
- 5) ...and Jesus Christ, as if they also were writing the letter with him. He then gives a description of Jesus, to be extra clear the reader knows who he is speaking of. He then begins a doxology of sorts – explaining that Christ loves the author and the reader, and that Christ has freed them from sin.
- 6) He explains that Christ has made them a kingdom. And that they are priests who are able to serve God. Again, a shift from the Old Testament idea of the priesthood. The kingdom idea is also interesting, as they are obviously not members of a physical theocracy. This is also interesting in the light of the imagery to come, which shows Christ setting up a physical, earthly kingdom.
- 7) John then uses some descriptive language to describe Christ coming “in the clouds.” He says that “every eye will see Him” and it will cause mourning. I’m not sure if John is speaking figuratively or literally.

- 8) Then, just to once again assure that the reader knows exactly who he is talking about, he invokes the words of Yaweh (Exodus 3:14): “I am ... who is, who was, and who is to come.” This is the same idea in Exodus when God tells Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”

Discussion

- Review party date and time
- Pass around breakfast list again to ensure everyone that can sign up has signed up
- Ask if anyone was able to do the research I asked about last week – gathering any information on the historical context, literary context, John, or any of the recipients
- Have someone read Rev. 1:1-8
- Review verse 1 – how does this verse set up the rest of the book? What about it is interesting? How is it immediately different than every other epistle?
- From this passage, what do we know about John?
- From this passage, what do we learn about the purpose of the letter?
- From this passage, what do we learn about the intended recipient/readers?
- Do you find anything interesting about vs. 4-6?
- What do you think about verse 7?
- What do you think about verse 8?

Revelation 1:9-20

Overview:

John continues his introduction. He is setting up the rest of the book. Gives the very beginning narrative and introduces the main “characters” – John, Jesus, the seven churches, and the seven angels.

Commentary:

- 9) John begins to set the stage. He paints a picture of why the letter is being written. He explains he was in exile on the prison island of Patmos when the revelation was given and written.
- 10) He explains that he was “in the Spirit” at the time of the vision.
- 11) The vision, or voice, commanded John to record the vision and share it with seven specific churches.
- 12) An audible voice accompanies the vision. The verse says that John heard the voice and turned to see the speaker. John also sees the seven golden lamp stands.
- 13) Standing in the midst of the lamps is a glorified Christ.
- 14) John describes Christ’s glorified appearance.
- 15) John describes Christ’s glorified appearance.
- 16) John describes Christ’s glorified appearance.
- 17) Christ’s presence compelled John to worship. Christ tells John not to be afraid.
- 18) Jesus announces Himself.
- 19) Jesus commands John to record what he is seeing.
- 20) Jesus then explains the purpose of the lamp stands – they are the seven churches.

Discussion:

- How does this tie in with the last lesson? (Continues the introduction. Setting the stage.)
- We just celebrated Christmas. What is the supposed purpose of the holiday?
- How do you think of Jesus when you think of Christmas?
- How is Jesus typically portrayed in our society?
- How is He portrayed in this passage?
- What is the significance of this?
- What is significant about verse 10? (Paul is “in the Spirit”)
- What does this mean?
- What does Jesus say the lamp stands and stars represent?
- Do you find anything interesting about vs. 17-18?
- What does “like the son of man” mean?

Revelation 4:1-11

Overview:

John has finished recording Christ's message to the seven churches. He now moves on to another portion of his revelation. Here, he describes his translocation into heaven and his observation of what is taking place!

Commentary:

Vs. 1 – After Christ was finished giving the message to the seven churches, John records seeing a “door standing open in heaven” and a voice commanding him to “Come up here....” Interesting use of the door directly after Christ's message to Laodicea, in which Jesus explains that he “stand[s] at the door and knock[s].”

Vs. 2 – John records that he was “at once” brought into heaven. He describes seeing a throne with “someone” sitting on it.

Vs. 3 – This “person” had the appearance of jasper and ruby. There was a rainbow encircling the throne. All in all – awesome! I believe he is actually looking at God, and this is the best he can do at comprehending/describing the greatness of God.

Vs. 4 – John describes 24 “elders” seated around God.

Vs. 5 – More description of God's glory and power, and emanated by these mighty, “natural” occurrences. John also mentions the seven lamps and the seven spirits of God.

Vs. 6 – Sea of glass? Looks also like we are being introduced to the four creatures.

Vs. 7 – John begins to describe these four creatures. Each is similar, but has a different characteristic – lion, ox, man, eagle.

Vs. 8 – We learn that these creatures are constantly praising God! “Day and night they never stop....”

Vs. 9 – Each time these creatures give praise to God (again, DAY and NIGHT),

Vs. 10 – The 24 elders bow and worship God

Discussion:

- Context?!?!
- Before getting into what this passage “means” – make some observations for me? What are some of the images you see?
- What is crazy???
- What is interesting?
- What do you learn about God and His relationship with His creation?
- Does this passage present a challenge?
- Why is this passage important in this part of the book? (*Shows the reader we are entering into a new plane. Before – the book was “different” but still read very much like an Epistle. This opens it up and screams, “I’m completely different. Something you aren’t used to is about to happen.” – Literary standpoint. Not theological standpoint.*)

Revelation 5:1-14

Overview:

This passage speaks to Christ's deity and mission – to the fact that He was slain to that “persons from every tribe and language and people and nation: could be “purchased for God.”

Commentary:

- 1) John, continuing on the same vision He began in chapter 4, explains that he saw God holding some kind of scroll
- 2) An angel was asking for and looking for someone “worthy” to open the scroll.
- 3) However, no one was found worthy.
- 4) This caused John much emotional distress (why? Seems like he just arrived – why so emotionally attached already??
- 5) One of the elders explains to John that Christ – the Lion – is able to open the scroll!
- 6) John spends the rest of the chapter describing this Lion, but now calls him a Lamb. He describes the lamb as slain, which seven horns and seven eyes.
- 7) He shows Christ taking the scroll from God the Father.
- 8) Once He has the scroll, the four creatures and the elders begin to worship the Lamb.
- 9) They worship Him and exclaim the fact that He is “worthy to take the scroll and open its seals....” They attribute this to the fact that Christ was slain. They proclaim that this took place so that “persons from every tribe and language and people and nation: could be “purchased for God.”
- 10) These people are now “priests”!!!!!! In the Old Testament, priests were the only ones who were able to have access to God. And this only after strenuous cleansing ceremonies. Now, all believers are as priests. We all have access to God, with no need for an intermediary.
- 11) An amazing scene begins to unfold – thousands upon thousands of angels begin to worship Christ!
- 12) Same.
- 13) Even more, “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them” began to worship!
- 14) The creatures and elders also continued to worship.

Discussion:

- Context! (Continuation of passage from chapters 4. The heaven scene moves forwards.)
- What are your observations – what are some of the images you see? (God on a throne with a scroll that no one can open. John weeping. A Lion/Lamb that can open the scroll. Lots of things worshiping the Lion/Lamb.)
- Read vs. 5 and 6. What does verse 5 say? What does verse 6 say? Why a lion and a lamb to describe the same creature?
- Anyone want to guess what this Lion/Lamb represents?

- Why does John weep in verse 4? I know what the verse says, but try to place yourself emotionally in his shoes. Tell me what you see,
- What is unique about vs. 8? What does this say about Jesus?
- What are the creatures/elders/people saying about Jesus? Why is this significant?

Revelation 6:1-17

Overview:

This passage is a continuation of chapter 5. In five, we see John in despair as “no one is worthy to read the scroll” until the Lamb – Jesus – appears and has done what He needs to do to be able to read the scroll. Here, as the Lamb opens each seal on the scroll, a corresponding action takes place. I believe this scroll represents “what must happen” in the last days. These corresponding events show the magnitude of what is actually inside the scroll – and the scroll isn’t even open yet! They are just a portion of what is to happen.

Commentary:

1. Here the Lamb (Jesus) opens the first of the seven seals. As it is opened – one of God’s servants – one of the four creatures – commands the white horse and rider to “Come!”
2. This white horse rider holds a bow, is *given* a crown, and rides as a conqueror. Interesting to keep in mind what *white* has represented thus far in the book of Revelation. I think that, in a symbolic way, this white rider shows the sovereignty of God is what is about to take place...
3. The Lamb then opens the second seal, and – again – the creature (God’s servant) commands the next rider to come.
4. This rider rides a “fiery red” horse. He’s *given* a sword and is allowed to “take peace from the earth.” Interesting that these first two riders are armed with weapons of war and are allowed to conquer and take peace.
5. The Lamb opens the third seal, and the next rider is commanded to come. This rider is on a black horse and holds scales. It seems as if this horse represents some sort of coming famine?
6. A day’s wages for only two pounds of wheat OR six pounds of barley? Wheat and barely both members of the grass family. Wheat used in bread, barely in soups, stews, and beer and other distilled beverages. Almost as if the people are given a choice between food or drink? Really, they are both staple foods.
7. The Lamb opens another seal, and another rider is commanded to come.
8. This rider is, quite literally, Death (notice Death is made to follow God’s command). The verse continues to say that “they” were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine, and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. I think “they” is in reference to all four horseman, not just this last one. Though this last one makes it clear that death will follow war and famine.
9. As the fifth seal is opened, no “action” takes place other than John now seeing a group of martyrs – real people killed for their faith in Christ. This next section is interesting keeping in mind who the readers were.
10. These martyrs are asking God for justice.
11. They are then given a white robe (we’ve seen these before) and were told to wait a little longer because ... there were still more to be killed!!!! (How comforting!!!)

12. At the opening of the sixth seal, there is some crazy natural disasters taking place.
13. More disasters.
14. Still the same.
15. All are affected – no one can buy their way out here.
16. They recognize that God's wrath has come!!

Discussion:

- Context – what is taking place immediately before this takes place? What have we been studying?
- This passage seems to have some logical divisions. WITHOUT TRYING TO INTERPRET THE MEANING, what are they? [Four Riders (creating death/martyrs), the martyrs asking God for justice and being told to wait, and the wrath beginning to happen]
- Now, let us look at the four horsemen. Who are they, and what are they doing?
- Who is the authority here? (We see God asserting His authority. No coincidence that the FIRST rider is on a white horse. Notice all are commanded by the creatures. They are *given* jobs to do. Possibly review Deut. 32:23-25 and Ezek. passage.)
- Why is this important?
- What happens with the fifth seal? How is that for comforting?
- What takes place with the sixth seal? Anything interesting about verses 15-17? (No one exempt! And they recognize God's wrath)

I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them. I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. In the street the sword will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. (Deut 32:23-25) - These are basically Moses' last words! They are located in his farewell address that he gave to Israel before he walked up the mountain to die. He's describing what will await God's people when they walk away from God. Notice the symbology is exactly the same – arrows (from God), pestilence, plague, wild beasts, the sword.

When I shoot at you with my deadly and destructive arrows of famine, I will shoot to destroy you. . . . I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken. (Ezek 5:16-17; see also Jer 15:2-3; Ezek 5:12; 14:12-21). – Ezekiel's prophecy is the same as Moses'. God is telling Jerusalem the fate it will have for forsaking God.

Revelation 6:9-16

Overview:

A continuation of last week's lesson. This week focuses on the 5th and 6th seals. With the opening of the fifth seal, we see many martyrs asking God for justice. Interesting that they ask for vengeance. This is not "in line" with the "love everybody" theology. Also interesting to note the reply – you've got to wait until everyone else is killed first. How comforting... Keep in mind the readers of these letters are currently undergoing some persecution and have been promised that it is going to get worse!!!

Commentary:

9. As the fifth seal is opened, no "action" takes place other than John now seeing a group of martyrs – real people killed for their faith in Christ. This next section is interesting keeping in mind who the readers were.
10. These martyrs are asking God for justice.
11. They are then given a white robe (we've seen these before) and were told to wait a little longer because ... there were still more to be killed!!!! (How comforting!!!)
12. At the opening of the sixth seal, there is some crazy natural disasters taking place.
13. More disasters.
14. Still the same.
15. All are affected – no one can buy their way out here.
16. They recognize that God's wrath has come!!

Discussion:

- Context – what is taking place immediately before this takes place? What have we been studying?
- This passage seems to have some logical divisions. WITHOUT TRYING TO INTERPRET THE MEANING, what are they? [Four Riders (creating death/martyrs), the martyrs asking God for justice and being told to wait, and the wrath beginning to happen]
- What happens with the fifth seal?
- What are the martyrs asking for? Do you find anything interesting about that?
- What is the reply?
- How is that for comforting? (Interesting to keep in mind the audience)
- What takes place with the sixth seal?
- Anything interesting about verses 15-17? (No one exempt! And they recognize God's wrath)

Revelation 7:1-17

Overview:

John is still writing about the opening of the sixth seal. It reads almost as an interlude – mainly because of the chapter division. But the action logically flows to take place between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals. The Lamb opens the sixth seal and many natural disasters happen. THEN the angels hold back the wind. THEN the 144,000 are sealed. THEN John sees the multitude in heaven. THEN the seventh seal is opened...

Commentary:

- 1) After John witnesses the many natural disasters on earth, he then sees four angels holding back the winds – preventing them from blowing on the land or sea, etc.
- 2) He then witnessed another angel – who has some type of “seal of God” on him – tell the four angels...
- 3) Not to harm anything until the “servants of our God” are “seal[ed] on [their] foreheads...”
- 4) John then reports then number of servants of God sealed – 144,000, all from the twelve tribes of Israel...
- 5) In vs. 5-8, John lists each of the tribes and explains that 12,000 from each tribe are sealed.
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- 7) In vs. 5-8, John lists each of the tribes and explains that 12,000 from each tribe are sealed.
- 8) In vs. 5-8, John lists each of the tribes and explains that 12,000 from each tribe are sealed.
- 9) After these servants are sealed, John then sees a “great multitude” standing before the Lamb. It’s important to note that “every nation, tribe, people, and language” are represented. This multitude are wearing white robes and holding palm branches – one representative of their cleanliness and of Christ’s mercy/forgiveness, the other representative of Christ’s authority and power.
- 10) They then begin to praise God – praising Him for their salvation.
- 11) The angels then begin worshipping God.
- 12) The praise of the angels.
- 13) One of the twenty-four elders from the earlier scene then approaches John and asks him about those in white robes.
- 14) John explains that this elder knows better than he does. The elder then explains that they are those martyred in the *great tribulation*.
- 15) He continues to explain – their reward is to serve God day and night, and they are literally sheltered by His presence.
- 16) They will know no hunger or thirst – basically all their needs will be met.
- 17) More good stuff.

Discussion:

- Context – what has taken place SO FAR – don't tell me what we just read just yet...
- What are the natural, logical divisions of this chapter. Again, don't tell me what we just read – tell me where scenes/ideas shift.
- What is taking place in vs. 1-4? Why is this important?
- What is taking place in verses 5-8? Anything interesting? (*The tribe of Dan is missing and Ephraim is replaced by Joseph – his father. Also interesting, no historical mention of the twelve tribes since the kingdom of Israel destroyed by Assyria c. 720 BC*)
- What is taking place in vs. 9-17?
- Who are these people?
- What are they wearing/holding? What do these represent? Where have we seen these before?
- What are these people doing?
- Where are they from?
- Why is this here/written?

Revelation 8:1-5

Overview:

This section completes the portion of Revelation dealing with the opening of the scroll and the seven seals. It also transitions into the next phase of Revelation – the seven trumpets...

Commentary:

- 1) As Christ opens the seventh seal, heaven is silent for about half an hour. Considering all that we've seen taken place thus far, this is quite remarkable.
- 2) Then the seven angels (I believe we were introduced to these guys before, but I'm not sure...) are given seven trumpets.
- 3) Then another angel walks up. This one has a golden censer. His job is to offer all the prayers of all God's people upon a golden altar. Should take a while...
- 4) The smoke and prayers travel up to God...
- 5) After this, the angel throws this censor onto the earth and lots of crazy stuff happens...

Discussion:

- Discuss possible dates for a Sunday school shindig.
- Context
- Where does this passage sit within the overall story of Revelation?
- What is happening here?
- Let's review all seven seals. Does anyone have any questions that you have that never got answered?
- Has anyone been able to pull anything applicable out of this section on the seven seals? If so, what?

Revelation 8:6-13

Overview:

This passage comes directly after the seven seals of the scroll are opened. We've already witnessed some bad stuff happening on earth, including martyrs and natural disasters. We've seen thirty minutes of silence in Heaven. And now we the first four of seven angels blowing trumpets and unleashing some more bad stuff.

Commentary:

6. The seven angels are preparing to sound the seven trumpets
7. The first angel sound the trumpet. The action associated with this blow show hail and fire (mixed with blood) being "hurled" down on earth. A third of the eart, trees, and grass is destroyed. (Lots of thirds in this passage.)
8. As the second angel sounds his trumpet, we again see some more "bad stuff" taking place. This time "something like a huge mountain" is thrown in the sea. – turning the water into blood.
9. This destroys one third of the sea creatures and ships.
10. Another trumpet, and a "star" falls into the rivers and water (fresh water is affected).
11. This star – or "Wormwood" as it is called, turns one third of the water bitter. Many people die as a result. This is the first of the trumpets to specifically mention people dying, though the second trumpet does reference ships.
12. Another trumpet, and a third of the sun, moon, and stars turn dark.
13. After the fourth trumptet, an eagle flying around cries out as a warning that the worst is yet to come!

Discussion:

- Review party specifics. Who is bringing what?
- Have someone read passage.
- What is the context? What have we read thus far and how does this playing into the overall theme? How is it "set up"?
- Someone explain the first trumpet.
- Someone explain the second trumpet.
- Someone explain the third trumpet?
- Someone explain the fourth trumpet?
- What specifically is being targeted? Have class read Genesis 1.
- What does the eagle say in vs. 13. Why is this significant?

Revelation 9:1-12

Overview:

This section covers the fifth trumpet blast. At this blast, another star falls to earth. This one is “given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.” Interestingly, while the first four trumpet blast specifically targeted different aspects of creation, this trumpet blast specifically targets people. It does not kill, but tortures.

Commentary:

1. The fifth trumpet is sounded and another star falls to earth. This star is “given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.”
2. As this “Star” opens the “Abyss” much smoke rises – darkening the sun and sky (remember that the sky has already been darkened by 1/3 from the last trumpet.
3. From this smoke come “locusts” that have the “power like that of scorpions”...
4. These locusts, oddly, are told not to harm any grass or tree, but are told to harm those people who have not been “sealed” (the 144,000 witnesses)
5. They are not allowed to kill, but to torture for five months
6. People will seek death (try to commit suicide?), but will not be able to find it.
7. These locusts, as further described, don’t seem to be your ordinary locust. They’ve got something akin to “crowns of gold” on their head and some human faces.
8. Their hair (THEY HAVE HAIR?!?!?) is most likely long and their teeth (THEY HAVE TEETH?!?!?) are sharp.
9. Their breastplates (THEY HAVE BREASTPLATES?!?!?) are similar to iron and their wings are pretty loud.
10. They have tails!!! With stingers??? These tails/stingers are what is used to torment humans for the duration of five months.
11. They have a king named Abaddon or Apollyon depending on what language you are speaking. In English, this translates to Destroyer.
12. John then announces that this was the “first woe” and that two more remain. Fun...

Discussion:

- Review party details
- Have someone read Revelation 9:1-12
- CONTEXT!!!
- What is happening in this passage? What are some things you observe?
- How is this different in nature than the first four trumpets?
- Someone describe these locusts. Some have eluded that these are, in fact, some type of man-made war machine (i.e., helicopter or jet, perhaps?). What do you think?

- What job are these locusts given? What are they not allowed to do? Is that significant? Why or why not?
- Why is this passage important?

Revelation 9:13-21

Overview:

This passage discusses the actions of the sixth trumpet. Here we see four angles, bound at the Euphrates River, let loose upon mankind in order to kill one third of the people. They had with them 200 million riders on horses that are eerily similar to dragons. Despite this, those left living still refused to turn to God.

Commentary:

13. A sixth angel sounds the sixth trumpet. This time, a voice rises from the altar.
14. The voice tells the angel to release four angels bound at the Euphrates River.
15. These particular angels have been created for this very purpose – to kill one third of all mankind.
16. With these angels are 200,000,000 mounted troops.
17. These riders were wearing fancy breastplates. The horses breathed fire and had heads like lions (think Asian depiction of dragon...). The breathed fire, smoke, and sulfur.
18. One third of all mankind was killed by the fire, smoke and sulfur that came from them.
19. Their “power” was in their mouths and tails, which also had “heads”
20. Those not killed did not repent, however. They continued to worship idols, demons, etc.
21. They continued in the same sin they had been committing – murder, magic arts, sexual immorality, and theft.

Discussion:

- Breakfast list
- Who will be around during the summer?
- Have someone read Revelation 9:13-21
- CONTEXT
- What do you observe in this passage? Don't try extrapolating anything just yet... (Dragons? The people from the Euphrates are beyond the Roman boundaries – barbarians!!!)
- What is taking place?
- How is this different from all others? (The first one that is specifically designed to kill humans)
- What is the result?
- How often does this happen to us? God may try to teach us something – maybe not so overtly – but never-the-less we continue in our own sin.

Revelation 10:1-11

Overview:

This passage is situated between the sixth and seventh trumpet blasts. It is a transition and announcement of the seventh trumpet. Basically something to catch the reader's attention – announces that what is about to happen is pretty important.

Commentary:

1. John then sees yet another angel. This one is described as being “robed in a cloud, with a rainbow ... [a] face like the sun, and ... legs ... like fiery pillars.”
2. This angel was holding another scroll. This scroll is opened. This angel has one foot on land and one at sea....!!!
3. The angel shouts “like the roar of a lion”, and is answered by seven blasts of thunder.
4. John attempted to write what the seven thunders answered, but was prevented from doing so. I find this verse interesting.
5. The big angel then lifts his right hands to heaven.
6. He announces that “there will be no more delay ...”
7. But that the seventh angel will soon sound its trumpet. At that time, the “mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets”
8. God then commands John to take the scroll
9. John asks the angel from the scroll. The angel gives it to him, but tells him to eat it (reminiscent of Ezekiel 3).
10. So John eats the scroll. It tastes good but makes him sick.
11. He's then told to prophesy “about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.

Discussion:

- Breakfast list again?
- Read Revelation 10:1-11
- Context
- Someone describe the scene. WHAT does John see?
- Describe this angel. Where else have we seen this imagery? (Earlier in Revelation 4:3; 1:16)
- What does the angel do? (shouts)
- What happens in response? How is this significant? (more shouting that we aren't allowed to see – “less is more”)
- Then what does the angel say? How is this significant? (Announces the seventh blast. Proclaims that “the mystery of God will be accomplished.”)
- What does God then tell John to do?
- What does John do?
- What is the result?
- Why is this significant?

Revelation 11:1-14

Overview:

This passage still takes place between the 6th and 7th trumpet blasts. It directly follows God's command to John to eat the little scroll and to then prophesy. This passage deals mainly with the two witnesses – their message, death, and resurrection.

Commentary:

1. John is given a tool that measures and is told to measure the temple, the altar, and count the number of worshipers.
2. But he is told not to measure the outer court of the temple as it has been "given to the Gentiles ... for 42 months."
3. During this time, two "witnesses", or messengers, will be appointed to prophesy.
4. John describes them as the "two olive trees" and the "two lampstands" that "stand before the Lord of the earth." This is a reference to a passage in Zechariah 4.
5. Any who try to harm the witnesses will be killed by fire from their mouths.
6. They are also allowed to cause a drought for the time they prophesy, turn water into blood, and other plagues.
7. After they are "finished" – presumably after they 42 months are up, the beast from the Abyss will attack kill them.
8. Their bodies will lay unburied in Jerusalem ...
9. For three and a half days. During this time, people from every tribe, language, and nation will view them and refuse to bury them.
10. It will be a time of celebration.
11. After the three and a half days, however, God raises them from the dead. This, understandably, frightens a few people.
12. God then calls them back to heaven.
13. At that time, an earthquake hits Jerusalem, destroying half the city. Seven thousand people are killed and the survivors – terrified – give glory to God...
14. John then announces that two woes have passed, and more is yet to come.

Discussion:

- Read Revelation 11:1-14
- Have someone explain the context
- What is John's task here?
- What is he not to do?
- Why not?
- What else is happening during this time?
- Describe the witnesses? What are they saying/doing? What do you think is meant by their description as olive trees and lampstands?
- What happens to the witnesses?

- Then what?
- Why do you think the witnesses were sent?
- What is the result?

Revelation 11:15-19

Overview:

This passage comes directly after John announces that the end of the second woe and the beginning of the third. This third “woe” could strike some as odd, as it is the “Kingdom of the Lord” coming to fulfillment. This is the seventh trumpet blast.

Commentary:

15. The seventh trumpet sounds. At the sound, voices in heaven declare that this world is now the “Kingdom of the Lord and of his Messiah.”
16. The twenty-four elders we met earlier then fall on their faces and worship God.
17. Their words – notice they call God the “One who is and who was”, but not the “One who will be.”
18. They declare that the “time has come for judging the dead” and for “rewarding your servants” and for “destroying those who destroy the earth.”
19. At this time, God’s temple “opens” and we see the ark of the covenant along with some impressive weather.

Discussion:

- Context
- Someone **BRIEFLY** summarize what is taking place here.
- Verse 15 – what do these voices in Heaven say? What does this mean?
- Verse 16 – where have we seen these elders before? What are they saying now? What does this mean? Anything interesting? (Compare to Revelation 1:8)
- Why is this the seventh woe? This sounds GREAT to me!!!

Revelation 12:13-13:10

Overview:

This passage varies from the bulk of what we've been studying. It reads more like a third person narrative than a first person experience. As such, I need to step back and not try to interpret every detail, but try to understand the overall story and pull a moral out of it.

With that in mind, the story being told in these few verses speak to a dragon not getting his way, bestowing its power upon some super-beast, who can then make war on those humans who worship Jesus. And, in this instance, the beast is actually able to overcome those whom it attacks. The passage ends with a warning that God's follows will be held captive and be killed, but that they should have patience and faithfulness because of it. Which is very interesting.

Commentary:

Vs. 13 – The dragon being aware of the fact that he was no longer in heaven, pursues the woman from the first part of chapter 12.

Vs. 14 – However the woman was able to escape.

Vs. 15 – So the dragon again tries to attack her.

Vs. 16 – But fails.

Vs. 17 – This makes the dragon upset, who he declares war on all the Christians of the world.

Vs. 1 – So the dragon summons a beast out of the sea. Scary looking.

Vs. 2 – Very scary looking! The dragon gave the beast its power and authority. (But why???)

Vs. 3 – The beast was able to get some people to follow it. Mimics Christ in appearing to die being resurrected.

Vs. 4 – This caused people to worship the dragon in much the same way that those who worship Christ worship God the Father.

Vs. 5 – The beast is able to do these things for a specified amount of time – the same 42 months we've been seeing over and over.

Vs. 6 – Blasphemes God and those who follow God.

Vs. 7 – This beast is able to was war conquer all who worship God/Jesus.

Vs. 8 – And all unbelievers will worship the beast.

Vs. 9 – If anyone has ears...

Vs. 10 – This verse is basically a type of “warning” or statement explaining that Christians WILL be taken captive and killed, but to be patient and to be faithful because of it.

Discussion:

- CONTEXT
- Explain that John has switched his writing style yet again. This reads like a third-person narrative. We need to be careful to try not to get too deep in all

of the interpretive dancing, but sit back and appreciate the text for what it is – an amazing, eye-opening narrative with some great instructions.

- With that in mind – someone sum up the storyline of what we've just read – who are the three major characters here? Who are the protagonist and the antagonists?
- At the beginning, what is the dragon's goal? Does he accomplish this goal? Why not?
- What does he do next? Does he accomplish this goal?
- What is the significance of that? What does it mean to us – as followers of Jesus?

Revelation 14:1-12

Overview:

This passage comes directly after John's narrative of the two beasts (anti-Christ and its false prophet). Showing up here again is the 144,000 witnesses, three messages from three angels, and a great harvest.

Commentary:

1. John again enters himself into the action – reporting what he saw. The scene shifts again from the narrative of the beasts. Now, John again sees Christ – this time on Mount Zion (in Israel) and with the 144,000 witnesses we have already met.
2. And he hears a loud sound from heaven sounding like thunder. It was “like” that of harpists playing harps. Thunder and harpish?
3. And the 144,000 sang a song only they could learn to God.
4. John explains that these 144,000 are all virgins and I believe they were martyred? They are faithful.
5. Considered “blameless.”
6. Immediately after, John sees an angel flying (the first of three in this series) in the air proclaiming “the eternal gospel” to *all* living on earth.
7. The angel is calling out to all to turn to God.
8. After this John explains that a second angel follows the first. The angel proclaims that “Babylon the Great” has fallen. Babylon is symbolic for something else – a human government, perhaps? Whatever it is, it is an entity causing/enticing sin in others.
9. After this, yet a third angel follows. This one exclaims that all who worship the beast or receive the mark...
10. Will be punished and not enter heaven. They will instead be “tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.”
11. This will not be temporary, for the “smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever.”
12. John explains that because of this, those who choose to follow God must be patient and endure against the hardships that will endure for not receiving the mark or worshiping the beast,
13. John then hears another voice saying “blessed” are those “who die in the Lord from now on ... They will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.” Meaning that many will be martyred.
14. Then John sees Christ with a “sharp sickle in his hand”
15. Then an angel proclaims that it is “time to reap”
16. So Christ swings the sickle over the earth and reaps a harvest.
17. Another angel comes with a sickle.
18. And another angel tells this first angel to continue to gather “grapes” because they are ripe.
19. So this angel gathers the “grapes” and throw them into the “winepress of God’s wrath”

20. These “grapes” are then trampled, the results being a lot of “wine” ,,,

Discussion:

- Context?
- This passage is divided into three sections. Someone tell me what the first section is and what are we seeing there? Who are the characters? What are they doing? Why is this unique/significant? Etc.
- What is happening in the second section? Who are the players? What are they saying?
- What is the message of the first angel? Why is this important? (God’s not leaving himself without a witness! Still one final chance!)
- What is the message of the second angel? Any ideas of what this Babylon is? Is it important?
- What is the message of the third angel? Why is this message important? What does that mean for all believers left on earth?
- What is happening in verse 13?
- What is happening in verses 14-16? 17-20?
- So what can we take from all of this?

Revelation 16:1-22

Overview:

This passage deals solely with the seven bowl judgments. These judgments are directed at those who have persecuted and killed those who follow Christ. None of this leads to any repentance, but those remaining alive only curse God.

Commentary:

1. John hears a voice announcing the seven bowl judgments.
2. The first judgment is “poured ... on the land” and it caused sores to break out on all who had followed and worshipped the beast.
3. The second judgment is directed at the sea. The water is turned into blood and everything is killed. This goes further than the trumpet blast earlier in which only 1/3 of the sea is turned to blood.
4. The third bowl is directed at all the fresh water, which also turns to blood.
5. After this, an angel announces that these judgments are just ...
6. ... because those who remain living and who these plagues are directed at are those who have killed the “holy people and ... prophets.”
7. The “alter” responds and agrees that the judgments are just. I believe the altar represents the slain saints.
8. The fourth judgment comes in the form of the sun scorching people.
9. The results of which are that those scorched cursed God rather than repenting.
10. The fifth judgment is directed at the beast and the kingdom. The kingdom is plunged into darkness.
11. Again, the people curse God. They refuse to repent. This shows a belief but no desire to follow or worship.
12. The sixth bowl is poured upon the Euphrates, which dries up “to prepare the way for the kings from the East.”
13. Then some frog-looking things jump out of the dragon (Satan), the beast (anti-Christ), and false prophet (the second beast).
14. They are able to persuade the kings of the world to actually gather to do battle against God (what????).
15. This quote is inserted here. I believe they are Jesus’ words.
16. The kings gather at Armageddon.
17. The seventh judgment is “poured out ... into the air....” A loud voice states, “It is done!”
18. Some crazy stuff happens.
19. Complete and utter destruction – every city on earth is collapsing.
20. No more islands or mountains.
21. Lots of hail. People cursing God.

Discussion:

- Context, context, context! Where are we? What have we been discussing? Where does this passage fit into the overall scheme of things?

- Okay – don't get into details. Someone BRIEFLY describe what is taking place here. How are people reacting?
- Lets look at each individual judgment. Start with the first three. Someone tell me what happens with the first three judgments. Have we seen any of this happening before? Compare/contrast with trumpets.
- What is being said about the first three judgments? Why is this significant? What is the altar and how is it responding?
- What happens with the fourth and fifth bowls? How is this different than the first three?
- Someone explain the sixth bowl.
- Someone explain verse 15.
- Someone explain the seventh bowl. Total and complete destruction?

Revelation 18:1-24

Overview:

This passage explains the complete and utter demise of Babylon. What exactly Babylon is or represents is unclear. We know Babylon, historically, was the capital of the Babylonian empire (modern day Iraq). This empire is the one that took captive the kingdom of Judah. It probably represents, to the Jews, an ungodly, oppressive regime that God never-the-less ordained to conquer the nation as a way of judgment. In this sense, it represents a city of ungodly government, yet great wealth and power. Here, it seems, Babylon is referred to as a prostitute. In a way, then, the sins of all the other nations are linked to it. However, Babylon was an ancient city even in those days. Why wasn't Rome used? It would be like modern day dooms-day-ers using "Rome" instead of "Washington."

Commentary:

1. Another angel speaks.
2. The angel proclaims that Babylon has fallen. It is no longer a beautiful city, but a place for wild animals and "impure spirit[s]"
3. The reason: the city has led all the other nations astray. It has used its influence not for Godly things, but for material wealth.
4. John hears God's people being called out from Babylon. God does not desire for His people to "share in her sins" or "receive any of her plagues". Does this mean that believers are spared from the plagues (i.e., Raptured?) or just that they are "called" not to partake in the sin? If the later, how do we learn from this?
5. Babylon has lots to answer for.
6. Not going to be good for her.
7. Will be judged – given torment and grief – by the same token of her own pride and luxury.
8. The judgment will be shift. The entire city knocked out in one day!
9. The "kings of the earth" will mourn.
10. The mourning of the kings.
11. Merchants will mourn.
12. They are going broke now.
13. Same.
14. More same,
15. Same.
16. Same.
17. Sea captains and sailors also will mourn – again just as the merchants it affects their income.
18. Same.
19. Same.
20. The people of God, however, will rejoice! It is part of the judgment long coming. For Babylon is responsible for the death of the martyrs.

21. An angel then picks up a giant boulder and throws it into the sea. It explains that Babylon will fall in the same way and never recover.
22. None of its culture will survive.
23. Same.
24. And here is the reason for it all: "In her was found the blood of the prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth."

Discussion:

- CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT. What have we been looking at?
- Someone BRIEFLY give an overview of what happens here. Who are the characters and what do they do?
- Now, someone tell me everything you know about the historical city/kingdom of Babylon.
- What is Babylon representing here? Why do you think "Babylon" is being used? Why not Rome? Or Persia? Or Assyria? Or Egypt?
- Someone look at verse 4. What is happening here? Does this mean that believers are spared from the plagues (i.e., Raptured?) or just that they are "called" not to partake in the sin? If the later, how do we learn from this?
- What is the Why? Why is Babylon being whipped out?
- Again, what can we learn from this? How can we live our lives differently based on this?

Revelation 19:1-10

Overview:

This passage comes immediately after Babylon is destroyed in the previous chapter. With its destruction comes great rejoicing from the multitudes in heaven. It brings much glory to God.

Commentary:

1. After Babylon is destroyed, John hears a “roar of a great multitude in heaven”. It is worship/praise to God.
2. The praise states that God has been fair with His judgments. He has avenged those who have been killed for their faith in Him.
3. More worship/praise on the destruction of Babylon.
4. We again see the scene in heaven of the 24 elders and 4 creatures worshipping God.
5. Then another voice, “from the throne,” telling all God’s servants to praise Him.
6. John hears another great sound – this time the sound is like “the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder.” Again, praising God in response to the previous call to worship.
7. The worshippers are proclaiming that it is now time for the “wedding of the Lamb.”
8. More discussion of this wedding – explanation of the symbolism of the fine linen.
9. An angel then speaks to John, telling him that those invited to this wedding supper are “blessed.”
10. John then begins to worship this angel but is told not to.

Discussion:

- Context
- What are the main characters we see here.
- Simply explain what they do, what they say, etc.
- Why does everyone seem so happy? What do you think about all the rejoicing over the deaths of so many? What else could this be? (not just destruction of Babylon, but the beginning of the physical reign of God)
- What is happening in verses 7-9? Someone explain this wedding feast to me. Contrast the bride to the whore.
- What is happening in verse 10?

Revelation 19:11-21

Discussion:

- Context
- What characters do we see here?
- What are they doing?
- What do we see taking place in verses 11-16? Who is this? Have we seen any of this imagery before?
- What is happening in verses 19-21? What is unique about the wording of verse 21?

Revelation 20

Overview:

This passage comes toward the end of the book. A lot has taken place – letters, judgments, Babylon’s destruction, Armageddon. Now, the Kingdom of God has taken physical rule on Earth. The anti-christ is thrown in the lake of fire. Satan is bound for a thousand years, and the saints rule with Christ.

Commentary:

1. An angel comes to earth with a key and chain. We see “Abyss” again.
2. Satan is bound in the Abyss for one thousand years.
3. The Abyss is sealed. Satan can no longer deceive the nations. He will, however, be released again for a “short” time.
4. Then those who had not worshipped the beast, but were faithful to God, came to life and reigned with Christ for this thousand years.
5. The rest of the dead stayed dead. John refers to this as the “first resurrection.”
6. The first resurrection > the second death
7. Eventually Satan will be released from the Abyss.
8. He will again deceive the earth and bring them for battle. There will be great numbers.
9. The ending of this battle will be similar to the ending of the first.
10. This time, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire as well.
11. John then sees God reigning on His throne.
12. Then the dead are judged for their works and according to the book of life.
13. Same.
14. Death and Hades then thrown into the lake of fire as well. John explains that the lake of fire is the “second death.”
15. Then, anyone whose name is not written in the book of life is thrown into the lake of fire.

Discussion:

- Party?
- Context
- Who are the characters here.
- Don’t interpret, but tell me what is happening,
- Now, let’s break this up into smaller sections and try to digest it. Vs. 1-6
- Where have we seen the Abyss before?
- Where have we seen the dragon before?
- How short is it?
- Why are verses 4-6 significant?
- Vs. 7-9
- Why are people following Satan again?
- Have we seen this scene before?

- What is happening in verses 11-15?

Revelation 22

Overview:

This is the last passage in Revelation. It sums everything up and ends with a command to John on the intention of the prophecy. John is commanded to not hide this book, but to tell everyone about it. To make it known.

Commentary:

1. John is shown a river of “the water of life” that flows from God/Jesus. Think back to Jesus’ conversation of woman at the well.
2. This river flows through the city. On either side of the river is the “tree of life” which bears twelve crops of fruit.
3. There is no longer any curse! “Eden” is truly restored! God’s intent for man is restored.
4. The “servants” will see the face of God!
5. No more night – God is an eternal light!
6. The angel then assures John that everything he has seen is “trustworthy and true,” and that he has been sent from God to show these things to John.
7. Jesus is then quoted, explaining His soon coming and a blessing to those who “keep the words of the prophecy written in the scroll.”
8. John admits that when he saw this thing, he fell down to worship the angel.
9. The angel admonished him and told him to only worship God!”
10. The angel then tells John to NOT hide this revelation, but to share it.
11. Interesting verse – “Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong...”
Very interesting...
12. Jesus again speaks – proclaiming He is coming soon! And that He will reward everyone “according to what they have done.”
13. He speaks with the authority of God. Places Himself on that same level once again.
14. He explains that those who repent will be saved,
15. Those who don’t are damned.
16. Jesus explains that He has sent this angel to John to give this message to the churches.
17. More invitations for salvation.
18. John is given a warning – and so are all who read this book. Not to add or take away from it.
19. More Jesus coming soon.
20. The end.

Discussion:

- As always – CONTEXT?
- What is happening in verses 1-5? Why is this significant?
- What is happening in verses 8-9? Why does John keep doing this??
- What is this angel saying in verses 10-11?

- What is being said in verses 12-13? Why is this significant? (Jesus using GOD language)
- What is being said in verses 14-15?
- What is being said in verses 18-19? What does this mean?
- What is great about verse 21???