

Monday

Read Revelation 1:1-3

The Book of Revelation, like the rest of scripture, is the revelation of God. Revelation simply means to reveal. If something must be revealed, then it is in some way hidden or unknown before it is revealed. This means that God's Word to us and for us needs to be unveiled by God – we wouldn't know God's Word unless God revealed it to us – we are not able to use our intellect or resources to get the Word of God, God must give it to us.

And so, our translation starts with, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place." John, nor we, would just figure these things out, they need to be revealed. If you look at a different translation of this verse, you might see, "The apocalypse of Jesus Christ..." That gives us pause – apocalypse! We think of all sorts of terrible, nasty things when we think of apocalypse. Movies certainly pick up on apocalypse as cataclysmic destruction, catastrophe, or desolation. We all say things like, "It has been an apocalyptic week for the stock market." But, the Greek word usually means reveal or revelation. And in using this word for the Book of Revelation, John is signifying that this is a revelation about the things that must take place in the last times. And, John conceives of these things both happening in his lifetime and stretching into the future. Oftentimes, we think of Revelation here in 2021 and think none of it has happened and project it all into the future, but this isn't the case – this book has not been on hold for 1,900 years. Like the rest of scripture, it has and continues to reveal important information to the Church Universal since it was written.

How does this (rather brief) glimpse of the words "revelation" and "apocalypse" transform your understanding of all of scripture and of what the Book of Revelation is doing?

Tuesday

Read Revelation 1:11-20

Think back to the two drawings we looked at of the beautiful woman. One was drawn to a romantic, poetic ideal of the description given. The other was drawn as a hyperliteral reflection of the description. Which one was more pleasing? Which one actually captured what the language was trying to convey?

It will help us to look at the meaning John is conveying in Revelation rather than get caught up in trying to make the language hyperliterally come alive. This doesn't mean there is never a time to take things literally. I hope that the construction workers building a bridge take the engineering team's designs literally. I'm not sure I want to drive across a bridge that was constructed to a romantic ideal instead of solid engineering principles. But always reading scripture like an engineering plan can be disastrous for faith (and so can always assuming everything is poetic or symbolic). We will be best served by understanding John's vision that is Revelation as conveying many, many symbols which we will need to interpret to understand.

But, in fairness, this might be a new way for you to understand scripture. What is concerning, scary, or confusing about understanding scripture as using symbols to get at reality rather than being very literal? Feel encouraged to talk to me (Pastor Seth) and let's pray together today and this week that our eyes can be opened to the fullness of God's message to us in all of Scripture.

Wednesday

Read Revelation 1

Revelation is meant to strengthen our witness to the resurrected Jesus Christ. Jesus is not an absentee landlord of the churches – he is walking with and amongst us. Jesus is not silent – he has all the angels and the Holy Spirit to communicate with us.

As we start to look at the seven churches next week, the pattern will basically be a message of encouragement for things that congregation is doing well and a message of admonishment for the way(s) that congregation needs to reform to be more Christ-like. Cooks Creek, as a congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, has things we do well and things that we need to reform. *Spend some time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the knowledge of what Cooks Creek (and ourselves!) are doing well and what needs some special focus in changing. Don't pray for your opinion to be right... pray for the knowledge of the Holy Spirit!*

Thursday

Read Daniel chapters 7 and 10 (read below first)

Bible study in brief! John will make a ton of references and allusions to passages in the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. Too many to do justice to in our sermon time.

But, if you want to get a little more background and understanding for what is going on in Revelation and the rest of scripture, we will try to use Thursdays in the devotional to open up some of those OT references. Today, we will take it easy. I'd suggest you skim Daniel chapters 7 and 10. Don't go bonkers taking a deep dive into these two chapters (well, you can if you want, but that's not our point here). *As you read the description of the "Ancient of Days" in Daniel 7 & 10, what are the similarities and differences to how Jesus is described in Revelation 1? What do these connections say about who John is seeing Jesus as in Revelation 1?*

Friday

In preparation for Sunday worship, please read and reflect upon Revelation 2:1-7.