

Revelation – session 1

Endurance and comfort for those oppressed in Empire,
May 4th

Overview: Written around 95 CE, Revelation uses symbols and visions to provide hope to Christians under Roman oppression.

Points:

- Apocalyptic Literature: attempts divine truth during crisis.
- Babylon = Rome, a symbol of oppressive empire.
- 666 (the Beast): likely Nero
- Endurance: Rev. 13:10, 14:12.

Structure:

- Historical context of Rome.
- Symbols of empire and resistance.
- Endurance as faithfulness.

Scripture:

- Revelation 1:9 – John on Patmos.
- Revelation 13:10 – A call for endurance.
- Revelation 14:12 – Endurance of the saints.
- Revelation 21:1–4 – A new heaven and earth.

Insights:

- Revelation pushes the opposite of Roman hegemony.
- Coded language teaches resistance (hopefully without being discovered.)

Questions:

- Why symbols instead of direct critique of Rome?
- How does endurance apply today?
- How has culture shaped your view of Revelation?
- Cosplaying persecution...?

Reading:

- Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (1984)
- Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (2018)
- Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (2013)

Revelation – second session

Political and Theological Resistance, May 11th

Overview: John uses coded language to critique empire without openly rebelling, drawing from Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

Points:

- Symbolism protects author and readers.
- Jewish apocalyptic sources like Daniel influence Revelation.
- Imperial cult and idolatry are primary targets.
- Worship of the Lamb counters emperor worship.

Structure:

- symbols in Revelation.
- Jewish apocalyptic roots.
- Worship and resistance: theology and politics.

Scripture:

- Revelation 4–5 – Worship of the Lamb.
- Revelation 13 – Beast and false prophet.
- Daniel 7 – Vision of beasts.

Insights:

- Worship is resistance OR worship is conformity OR a mix.
- Faith is political.
 Apolitical enlightened centrism, *might* enable oppression
- Symbols shape ethics

Discussion:

- What role does symbolism play in survival and resistance?
- How might worship be an act of protest?
- What symbols resonate in today's struggles for justice?
 What examples does American history have?

Reading:

- Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology) (1993)
- Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Proclamation Commentaries). (1992)
- David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (2011)

Revelation – third session

New Heaven and Earth, May 18th

Overview: Revelation is often misread as predicting apocalypse. Scholars see its vision as transformation and hope.

Points:

- “Left Behind” is one distortion message.
- New Jerusalem = renewal, not destruction.
- Critique of empire—not a prediction of God’s war.

Structure:

- Modern misreading: dispensationalism and rapture.
- Modern vision: healing, justice for the oppressed
 - (oppressed is not most of us at St. Timothy’s)
- The book today: vision of justice and renewal
- Millennialism explored

Scripture:

- Revelation 21:1–2 – New heaven and earth.
- Revelation 22:2 – Healing of the nations.

Insights:

1. God’s makes a home with humanity
2. Worship of the Lamb is stronger than fear
 - in Revelation context - the imperial cult

Discussion:

- How has popular culture shaped our view?
- What does New Jerusalem mean today?
- Hope in trying times, without cosplaying persecution?

Reading:

- Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (2005)
- J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* Paperback (2010)
- G. K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (2015)