

ACTS TO REVELATION

Drive Thru History | The World of the First Christians

This Week's Scripture

Read 1, 2 & 3 John, Revelation 1

LEAN VERSUS LUXURIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Earl Palmer, former pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA one of the greatest Bible teachers I've known, cautioned followers of Christ to be careful that they not stumble into what he described as "luxurious" interpretations of Scripture. Earl writes, "When it comes to biblical study, if we were to err, it would be better to err on the side of interpretive restraint than on the side of interpretive excess. Our goal as Christian interpreters must be first of all to let the text speak for itself, and in its own terms." The tendency to have luxurious interpretations of the Bible sometimes begins with a failure to understand the kind of literature one is studying. That is particularly the case with Revelation.



In the political cartoon pictured above, what is the artist trying to convey? Would it help to know that this cartoon was published in the South China Morning Post on July 1, 1997, the day Hong Kong was returned to China. (Continued)



John and the Island of Patmos

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Last week, we had a difficult conversation about the persecution of the Christian church and specifically the execution of two key leaders, the Apostles Paul and Peter. Beginning this week we will explore the remaining writers of the New Testament. Episode 16 focuses on a remarkable follower of Jesus named John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" – which is how John referred to himself in the Gospel that bears his name. I love the fact that John described himself that way. May that be true of each of us – that we are the disciple that Jesus loves.

LOVE EACH OTHER

Read 1 John 1:1-10.

- What catches your attention from these verses at the beginning of John's first letter? What insights into Jesus do they give you? What does John encourage us to be and to do as followers of Christ?

Read 1 John 4:1-21

- In this very important chapter, the Apostle John makes some important claims regarding what is true and what is not. He offers ways to discern what teaching is from God and what is not. What assertions does John make?
- What do you learn about love from this chapter of 1 John? Make a list and then explore how what he teaches us about love, could impact your life this week?

Week 16

Would it also help to know that the caption read, "Today, Hong Kong..." Apocalyptic literature accomplishes its purposes through vivid imagery like this. Darrell Johnson writes, "Imagery has the capacity to go beyond the intellect, through the emotions, into the imagination, so the intellect is informed and the emotions are ignited with hope." You would not have seen a dragon swallowing the city of Hong Kong in 1997. But that image might have captured how you were feeling that day if you were a citizen of Hong Kong. Similarly, the Apostle John uses dramatic imagery to capture the vision he saw. His revelation points us to the greatest truth of all. Jesus wins! Or more accurately, Jesus has already won the battle for humanity and His creation. If you are looking for a solid commentary on the Book of Revelation you might consider the one written by Darrell Johnson called, *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation*. Click [HERE](#) to learn more.

Let me also encourage you to watch the Bible Project's overview videos of the Book of Revelation. They will guide you towards a lean, faithful and helpful understanding of this very important book.

Revelation 1-11 | Click [HERE](#)

Revelation 12-22 | Click [HERE](#)



Just click [HERE](#) to watch episode 16, John and the Island of Patmos

Week 17 Prep

Read Revelation 2-22

THINGS ARE NOT ONLY AS THEY SEEM

As Earl Palmer points out in the quote I included on page 1 of this study, interpreting the Scriptures should include some reflection on what the text might have meant to the people to whom it was first written.

The word translated "revelation" is the Greek word "apocalypsis" which means to unveil, to reveal. In the Book of Revelation the truth about the risen and victorious Jesus is being unveiled. A curtain is being pulled back so we can see the reality that surrounds the reality of this world. Without minimizing the challenges we are facing in our lives, we can say, "things are not ONLY as they seem." There is more going on than meets the eye. Jesus Christ is alive and at work.

- Read Revelation 1:1-20. What do we learn about Jesus Christ and how might this knowledge have strengthened and encouraged the 1st century Christians who were facing persecution at the hand of the Roman authorities?

- How does this revelation of Jesus strengthen and encourage you today?

What other ways were you challenged by this week's reading and video? What questions do you have? What might have disturbed you, confused you? How insights did you glean that you might apply in your life this week? How were you encouraged or comforted?

Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Notes from the Video and Discussion

What other insights, questions, challenges, encouragements are you taking with you tonight? Record your thoughts and any action steps you intend to take in the space below.

Small Group Prayer Requests

Record them here...