

A SERIES ON REVELATION: is this the end?

Week 13 – saints & earth-dwellers

Transition: Last week we covered Revelation chapters 6 & 7. Chapter 6 began with Jesus (the Lamb) opening the seals on the scroll (that no one but Him was worthy to open). Each of the first four seals released a rider on a horse. Together, they brought chaos upon the earth through conquering, removing peace, causing famine, and killing many. We also saw that back in heaven, there were many souls before the throne of God crying out to Him to avenge their murder. This was followed by a tremendous earthquake (and a blood-red moon) that caused those dwelling on the earth to fear for their lives. In chapter 7, God had an angel seal 144,000 from Israel's 12 tribes for the purpose of serving Him in some capacity. The chapter ends with all of heaven worshipping God.

Context: Chapter 8 begins right where 7 left off, with Jesus opening the 7th seal which ushers in 7 angels with 7 trumpets. Although biblically, trumpets can be used for a variety of purposes, it appears that they are being used here as fanfare, calling everyone to be aware of what the Lord is doing. Likewise, this chapter continues to reveal that what is going on in heaven directly impacts what takes place on earth.

Opening Questions:

- How often do you think about heaven? When you do think about it, what are you thinking about? How has your view of heaven changed since this series began?
- Share a story of when God answered one of your prayers. What makes it so memorable to you? What impact has it had on your faith?

Scripture/Storying: Revelation 8

Before the group meets: ask everyone in the group to read the Bible passage and to be prepared to discuss it together.

When the group meets: re-build the passage together as a group by asking everyone to share what they remember about the passage and its flow. (Someone from the group can be assigned ahead of time to lead the group through this.)

When the group meets: read the passage out loud (invite the group to participate, especially if the passage is long).

Discipleship Questions:

Encourage participation and self-reflection from all group members. Please feel free to come up with your own questions. Be sure to reserve ample time for personal application. And remember, you may not have time to cover every question, so plan ahead by choosing the ones that you intend to discuss. The rest can be done if there's time.

- This chapter begins with Jesus opening the 7th seal. It is then followed by about a half-hour of silence in heaven. Why do think there is silence? What do you think is going on while heaven is silent? How important is being silent before the Lord for our spiritual life? Why? Share when you had a powerful time spiritually being silent before the Lord.
- This is the second time we see that the prayers of God's people are in golden censers before the throne of God. (See 5:8.) How is this description different? How does this description help your understanding of what they are and do?
- Do you think that every prayer of every saint for all of time makes it into these censers? If not, what prayers are in there? Give an example of a prayer that would be in the censer as well as one that might not be. How will this impact your prayer life?
- What is God's attitude about these prayers? How do you know this? How might this influence the way you live?
- What is your reaction to the destruction that God is sending on the earth (burning up a third of the earth with hail-fire-blood, causing a third of the sea to turn to blood, causing a third of the fresh water sources to become bitter, and causing a third of the solar/planetary lights to become dark)? (The phrase "those who dwell on the earth" is used multiple times in Revelation. It always refers to people who do not have a saving relationship with Jesus.)
- What would you say to someone who was sincerely wondering why God was sending such devastating destruction upon the people of the world?

Prayer time:

Let's do something different this week...let's spend ample time in prayer, especially in light of what we read in chapter 8 about the prayers of the saints and how God uses them. Specifically, pray for such things as: that the gospel will be sent to nations who need to hear it, for the people who will be bringing it, for the people of those nations to be open to receiving it, for the Church throughout the world to be faithful to the Lord, to live holy lives, and to be bold in telling others the truth about God's love for them (as revealed in the gospel). Please feel free to pray for anything else that the Lord lays on your heart.