



Week 49: Revelation 1-7

Study Guide for the week of Nov. 30 - Dec. 6

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

In Revelation 2-3, the letters to the seven churches highlight three major problems the Christian Church was facing: assimilation into the surrounding culture, persecution for the faith, and complacency because of their wealth and comfortable lifestyle.

Take a personal inventory this week. Where in your life are you tempted to assimilate into the surrounding culture? What is Jesus' promise for all those who resist assimilation (Rev 2:26-28)?

Where in your life are you being persecuted or ridiculed for your faith? If you aren't being persecuted, ask yourself why. Could it be because your faith is invisible to the world around you? What is Jesus' promise for those who persevere in the faith (Rev 2:10)?

Where in your life have you become complacent because you are comfortable? What is Jesus' promise for those who are willing to strip away their pretensions and are refined by God's cleansing fire (Rev 3:21)?

Discussion starters

1. The letters to the seven churches (Rev 2-3) describe three major problems the Christians were facing: assimilation, persecution and complacency. Where do you see Christians struggling with these same problems today? John continually reorients his readers to God's reign when he repeatedly circles back to the scene of the heavenly throne room (Rev 4; 7; 11:15-19; 19:1-10; 21:1-22:5). Since God reigns, how should persecuted Christians respond to suffering? Those tempted to assimilate to the culture? Those complacent and comfortable in the world?
2. In his commentary on Revelation, the scholar G. B. Caird called the church at Sardis "the perfect model of inoffensive Christianity." What does "inoffensive Christianity" look like? Why is this a problem? Reread Rev 3:1-6. Are Christians to worry about offending the culture or offending God? What is the ultimate outcome of not offending God (Rev 3:5)?
3. Reread Rev 4. Who is the center of John's vision? In the second ring? The third ring? Is all creation oriented toward God or toward humans? How does this differ from the message the culture sends about where the seat of power resides?
4. The four horsemen of the apocalypse (Rev 6:1-8) identify threats to the readers' well-being: conquest by a foreign power, violence within the nation, economic instability, and death. Is true security found within the borders of a nation or under a certain political system? In a flourishing economy or particular economic system? In one's own health? Reread Rev 6:15-17. Who is able to stand against these or any other threat? Hint, the answer can be found in Rev 7:9-10.

Bible verse to memorize: Rev 1:8