

The Apocalypse of St. John

Weekly Discussion Group

Discussion Questions Week 1

- 1) If you could only read one book for the next month, what would you choose?
- 2) What surprised you most about the early Christians' challenges with Roman rule and culture?
- 3) Why do you think people are so curious about the Book of Revelation?
- 4) What do you think it means to 'study, not speculate' when reading a challenging text?
- 5) How do you think the first century Christians felt when faced with persecution for their beliefs?
- 6) Why do you think the Book of Revelation avoids specific predictions but focuses instead on broader messages about faith?
- 7) How might the historical context of Revelation impact the way it's understood today?
- 8) What might the Book of Revelation teach us about balancing cultural pressures with personal beliefs?
- 9) How can the themes in Revelation about loyalty and resisting temptation be applied to our lives now?

Sunday's Text

Revelation 1:1-3 (NLT)

¹This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John,

²who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

³God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.

Sunday's Message Summary

Pastor Ryan kicked off the series on the Book of Revelation, explaining its focus, historical context, genre, and common misconceptions. He clarified the book's title, emphasizing it as "Revelation" (singular) and not "Revelations." This text is identified as a single "apocalypse" or unveiling from Jesus to John, intended for seven specific churches struggling under the oppressive Roman Empire. The early Christians resisted Roman demands to worship the emperor, leading to persecution, which intensified during Emperor Domitian's rule. John's Revelation offered a vision of God's justice, encouraging believers to maintain their faith despite Rome's demands for allegiance.

Ryan established guidelines for the study, encouraging careful interpretation without speculation, urging attendees to read, understand, and engage with the text responsibly. He emphasize that Revelation was not written as a modern predictive prophecy but as guidance to address first-century issues that still hold relevance today. John uses the apocalypse genre to expose the truth behind current events through symbols, metaphors, and dramatic imagery.

The book combines elements of a letter, prophecy, and apocalyptic vision. It's written as a letter addressing the challenges and spiritual conditions of specific churches, calling for faithfulness amid persecution. As a prophecy, it reveals God's guidance and requires a response to injustice and empire. Finally, as an apocalyptic text, it unveils both present and future spiritual truths that challenge believers to align with Jesus over worldly powers.

Pastor Ryan went on to critique speculative readings that treat Revelation as a literal prediction of future events, warning that such views promote fear and a misinterpretation of the books's message. He argued that Revelation should inspire Christians to resist contemporary "empires" of materialism and injustice, staying faithful to the teachings of Jesus, the Lamb of God. In the end, the series seeks to guide attendees in living as "radical disciples" dedicated to resisting evil and embodying the values of God's kingdom.

