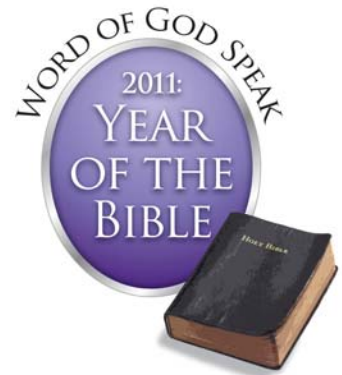


Week 48: 2 John; 3 John; Jude; Revelation 1-5 Study Guide for the week of November 28 – December 4, 2011



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with Revelation 2:1 – 3:22, the letters to the seven churches in John's vision. You are invited to get some background to these letters through reading material on these chapters in a commentary or a study Bible. There are several themes that are repeated through these letters: Jesus is the risen and exalted Lord. Do not tolerate or be influenced by wicked people and false teachers. Remain strong in your initial faith. Wake up and repent. Judgment is coming. Listen to what is taught. There is a great promise of victory and salvation through Christ. Look for these themes as you read through these letters. Which one(s) of the themes speaks to you now? Why? The letters to the seven churches highlight three major problems the Christian Church was facing in John's day: unholy assimilation into the surrounding culture, persecution for the faith, and spiritual 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 *If you are leading a small group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: Would you rather Jesus "come again to judge the living and the dead" before or after you die? Why?
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. 2 John 1:3, 7-9 In these verses John is again emphasizing the essential Christian belief that Jesus is God's Son and is both fully man and fully God. What questions or thoughts do you have about this essential belief? If you wanted to go deeper into this discussion, get a copy of the Athanasian Creed. In its first part, this creed articulates our belief about the Trinity and in its second part our belief that Jesus is fully man and fully God. Identify the second part of this creed, carefully read through it, and then discuss the second part of the creed.
4. 3 John What truth do you gain from reading this book?
5. Jude Jude, a brother of Jesus, doesn't ignore the problems Christians face in the world (Jude 17-19). Who are the current day scoffers that cause divisions in the Church? (See also Psalm 1:1) What does Jude urge his readers to do to remain living in the true faith (Jude 20-23)? How are you following Jude's advice?
6. Revelation 1:4-17 What is the picture of the risen and exalted Jesus that is taught in this initial vision that John received?
7. Revelation 2:1 – 3:22 The letters to the seven churches describe three major problems the Christians were facing in John's day: unholy assimilation into the surrounding culture, persecution for the faith, and spiritual complacency because of their wealth and comfortable lifestyle. Where do you see Christians struggling with these same problems today? John continually reorients his readers to God's reign by repeatedly circling 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?

8. Revelation 4-5 *In your vivid and Spirit-led imagination, use all your senses as you read these chapters. If you are in a small group, you may want to have one person read these chapters out loud while the rest of you close your eyes and use your imagination to listen. In this fantastic vision of the throne room of heaven, what grabs your attention the most? What sounds, colors, and visual effects do you imagine? What feelings arise in you as you experience this vision? These questions are a wonderful way to enter into reading the rest of Revelation. Revelation, chapters 4-22, is intended to invoke visions and emotions. Using your vivid and Spirit-led imagination and all your senses, allow yourself to be emotionally drawn into the unfolding vision. This is a more helpful and transforming way to read Revelation than trying to figure out what all the unusual visions mean or attach historical events and people to them.*
9. Revelation 5:9-12 How would you describe Jesus being worthy?

Bible verse to memorize: Revelation 1:8

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care and pray for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. One possibility this week is to break into pairs to pray for each other out of Revelation 3-4. After you have broken into pairs, have one of you go first and answer this:

Which one of these three to you most struggle with:

- 1. Unholy assimilation into the surrounding culture**
- 2. Persecution for the faith**
- 3. Spiritual complacency because of your wealth and comfortable lifestyle.**

After the first person has answered, the second person is invited to pray for the first person about the struggle he/she has, reminding him/her that Jesus will bring the final victory. Then switch.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.