

LEAD SHEET

REVELATION - WK 8 THE SEVEN PLAGUES NOVEMBER 20, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL: NAVIGATE THE BIBLE

If you want to know God better, read His Word!

GETTING STARTED

Before we start our study of Revelation today, let's review where we're at and what we know to be true so far.

General Discussion:

- Where is John when he sees this vision? (*In exile on the island of Patmos.*)
- Should all that we read be taken literally? (*No, it is rich in imagery, signs, and symbols that are meant to communicate a truth more than an event.*)
- What is at the center of Revelation? (*The atoning work of Christ described in chapter 12.*)
- What is the main point of Revelation? (*Faithfulness to Christ in the face of suffering is worth it because Jesus has defeated Satan, sin, and death and those who remain true to Christ share in that victory.*)

What we study today will not sound much like a victory. Rather, we're going to talk about wrath as we talk about the last set of 7s here in Revelation.

DIGGING IN

Read Revelation 15:1-8

John says he saw a “sign.” A couple of the symbols we read about are the sea (which represents chaos in Revelation). However, this is a sea of glass. Glass here controls that chaos—the chaos is not moving and it’s not happy about it, because fire wants to burst through it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is standing by the sea? (*Those who are victorious over the beast.*)
2. Whose song are they singing? (*Verse 3 of Moses’ song.*)
3. What would you say is the theme of the song they sing? (*God’s power is greater than anyone’s is, no one can defeat Him, only He is holy, all shall worship Him.*)
4. What does John see “after this” according to verse 5? (*The temple, opened.*)
5. How are the angels dressed and what might that symbolize? (*Shining linen, golden sashes, purity and authority, etc.*)
6. What picture is Revelation 15 trying to paint here about God? (*He is powerful and He is about to act.*)
7. At the end of chapter 15, what happens? (*The temple fills with smoke from God’s power.*)

God is powerful, and His wrath is real. God is merciful, God is good, and God is loving. However, He also judges those who rebel against Him. What we’ve read just now is really only introductory. Revelation 16 describes God’s wrath in detail.

Read Revelation 16:1-20

There’s a lot here, but let’s start with a summary of the plagues. This is not the first time we see a series of sevens. In fact, this is the third and final set of sevens.

After this, God's wrath is complete. Let's skim the passage again and ask some questions about these bowls of God's wrath.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is God's wrath poured out in each of these events? *(Answers below.)*

2. What happens to those affected when the wrath is poured out? *(Answers below.)*

Plague #1: Poured out on land / Sores break out on people who worshipped the beast

Plague #2: Poured out on the sea / Sea turned to blood

Plague #3: Poured out into rivers, springs / springs turn to blood

Plague #4: Poured out on the sun / Scorched people

Plague #5: Poured out on the beast's throne / Kingdom plunged into darkness

Plague #6: Poured out in the Euphrates River / water dries up

Plague #7: Poured out into the air / Voice from the throne "It is done!"

3. Who is the target of God's wrath here? *(Those who had the mark of the beast.)*

4. Who is safe from these plagues? *(Those who are faithful to the Lamb.)*

5. The beast receives judgment as well. His "throne" and "kingdom" are impacted. With those symbols being used, who do you think the beast can be interpreted as being? *(A corrupt government, evil authority in the world.)*

6. What phrase is repeated in the fourth and fifth bowls?
(*"They refused to repent and glorify Him."*)

7. In your opinion, is God's wrath justified? (*Yes. He is just. Those who have declared war on Him are the ones who are judged.*)

There are other interesting points at play here. The sun (used as a weapon to scorch people in this passage) was linked with Caesars all throughout Roman history. For God to control the sun is a political statement against Rome.

God is in charge of nature.

The power that opposes God (the beasts, the false prophets) seems to represent the Roman government. Lots of language here about kings, kingdoms, thrones, and even Roman geological references, but they don't really possess power. Only God is fully powerful.

Discussion Questions (Continued):

8. What does the voice from the throne say in verse 17?
(*"It is done."*)

9. What is done? (*God's wrath being poured out.*)

10. How is this illustrated? (*Thunder, lightning, earthquakes, etc.*)

11. Where else have we seen this before? (*The other sets of 7s, which began in Revelation chapter 4.*)

12. What could this mean? (*Most scholars believe this is God's rubber stamp on what has happened.*)

MAKING IT REAL

That all sounds great, well actually it sounds terrifying, but what does it all mean for our lives?

General Discussion:

- In the plague passage, what do the people who are afflicted refuse to do? (*Repent.*)

- Why would people who are so miserable refuse to repent and change? (*Pride.*)
- Where else in the Bible do we read about plagues? (*Exodus.*)
- Are any of these plagues similar? (*Water to blood, boils, and sky turned to darkness.*)
- Did Pharaoh back down in the face of the plagues? (*Only temporarily.*)

God is judging evil for the purposes of having people repent and come to know Him. Only in Revelation 11:13 does this happen. Every other time those who are judged have a hard heart, do not repent, and don't find salvation. This sets up a contrast for us today. This is a timeless message. God is powerful. He is loving, but that love includes justice. If those who rebel against Him do not repent, they are on the receiving end of that justice.

General Discussion:

- Do you think of yourself as a rebellious person? Against whom do you rebel? (*Authority, parents, etc.*)
- Do you think of yourself as rebellious against God? (*Most students probably do not.*)
- In the Bible, how often do we see people rebelling against God? (*Throughout the entire Bible.*)

Read Deuteronomy 9:24, Psalm 25:7, Jeremiah 5:23 and Titus 1:10

Israel is rebellious in the beginning (Deuteronomy), David acknowledges his own rebellion in the poetic books (Psalms), the prophets speak of the rebellion of the people (Jeremiah), and it's even present in the New Testament. Obviously, it's present in Revelation, too.

General Discussion:

- So let's think through this again. Are you rebellious against God? (*Most certainly.*)

- According to what we read in Revelation, what is the anecdote to rebellion? (*Repentance.*)

**Read 2 Chronicles 6:37, Job 36:10,
Matthew 3:2, and Acts 2:38**

Discussion Questions:

1. What does repentance mean according to these Scriptures? (*To change, turn around; choose a new path, etc.*)
2. What are the gifts that follow repentance? (*Forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, citizenship in the Kingdom, fellowship with our Creator, etc.*)
3. Given those stark contrasts, which would you prefer? (It's obvious that the gifts of repentance trump judgment every time.)

The message of Revelation and the Seven Plagues is really quite simple. God's wrath exists (not just in the future) to try to bring about repentance in those who rebel against Him. Either we are on God's team or we are against Him. If you ever find yourself on the on the wrong team, repentance is the only way to change that.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray that your students will respond to the coming judgment with repentance and increased faithfulness to Jesus.