**CLAY Fellowship Bible Study #1**

**Date: October 2nd 2015**

**Textual Reference; Revelations Chapter 1: 9-20**

Reference Verses:

[Rev 1:1-20 NIV] 1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. 4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. 7 "Look, he is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"; and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." So shall it be! Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." 9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." 12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. 19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Background**:** The Book of Revelation is filled with symbolism. While it does not give us a whole lot of ‘new’ information about the gospel, it gives a new perspective on the gospel of Christ. This book also has many implications on our Christian living, but we need to explore the meaning behind these symbols to more fully appreciate what Jesus is saying to us here.

* 1:9 – The writer is John the Apostle of Jesus, the one who also wrote the Gospel of John, as well as the letters of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.
* 1:9 – Why did John get exiled to Patmos? Life in the Roman Empire was difficult for Christians at the end of the first century AD. Emperor Nero fed Christians to lions in 67 AD (reminds us of Daniel 6). Peter and Paul had been crucified and Timothy was murdered. In 92 AD, Emperor Domitian demanded all subjects to worship him as “Lord and God” (*Domine et Deus*; reminds us of Daniel 3). John did not comply and was banished to Patmos as a troublemaker. This must have been very disappointing for John as he would remain in Patmos imagining the seven churches (1:11) he loved struggle spiritually, longing to revive them with the Word of God.
* 1:10 – As John worshipped God one Sunday, Jesus revealed Himself to him, not with political strategizing or financial resources, but truly Himself!
* 1:12-13 – As John responds to God’s voice by turning, he sees the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14)! This Son of Man was standing amongst seven lampstands, i.e. the seven churches that John cared so deeply about! Even though John could not be with the seven churches, Jesus was in their midst!
* 1:13 – Appearance and clothing often give special meanings (e.g. a doctor’s attire vs. a policeman’s clothing). Jesus was wearing a long robe (representing the robe of the High Priest) and a golden girdle around his chest (meaning that His work was already done, as opposed to a belt, which means that work was still in progress).
* 1:14 – White hair symbolizes purity, sinlessness, wisdom, and agelessness. Jesus is indeed above the philosophies of all ages, including Apartheid, Marxism, and Darwinism. Fire represents purification and the light of the fire shines light upon our sins.
* 1:15 – The feet of burnished bronze symbolize strength and steadiness.
* 1:16 – One meaning behind the seven stars are the seven known planets at the time. People thought these planets had control over all their lives. But here, Jesus is the One who has these planets in His hand. Jesus’ words also cut deeply (two-edged sword) and his shining face gives us a warm feeling.
* 1:17 – John responds to Jesus with humility here! But Jesus responds to John’s act of humility with a touch – touching him with the same mighty hand that carried the seven stars. He then tells John to not be afraid.
* 1:19 – Jesus tells John to record this revelation as his means of expressing his love and care for these seven churches – and for the church of all time.

More Background about Revelations

* Last book in the (New Testament of the) Bible
* Revelations uses a wide array of vivid imagery and rich symbolism
* Written between AD 92 and 96 - when Christian persecution was prevalent under Roman Emperor Domitian
* Peterson suggests that “There is nothing new to say on [the truth of the gospel]. But there is a new way to say it” (21)

1. Letter- the longest letter in the Bible. John is writing a pastoral letter to his people to address issues they were facing and how to make sense of them.
2. Prophecy- to show things that will take place in the future, a declaration, a revealing of something that requires a response. Revelations is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament.
3. Apocalypse- an unveiling or disclosure or Jesus Christ. (Works such as the book of Daniel, Isaiah 24-27, Ezekiel 38-39, Zechariah 9-14 are also considered apocalyptic)

Background about John

* Author of Revelations, disciple of Jesus told to take care of Mary after Jesus’ death- now in his mid-80s
* Was arrested and banished to the island of Patmos- (a place where the Roman government sent criminals to work on rock quarries) because of his refusal to worship Emperor Domitian (Killing John would make him a martyr !!!)
* He was a prominent character in Biblical times. Though he was banished to Patmos, his letters written to the churches were likely censored by the Roman government

Historical Context

* After the death of Herod the Great, Judea reduced to a province in the Roman Empire with appointed procurators. Pharisees and Sadducees were given control over religious matters. The Jews instigated a rebellion against Roman rule and against the procurators. (*War of the Jews -Flavius Josephus)*
* **AD 65** Roman Emperor Nero invaded the Palestines because of their ongoing political and religious conflicts with the Jews who were also angered by false prophets and Messiahs. Persecution began in the Roman Empire under Emperor Nero.
* **AD 67** Persecution intensifies under Emperor Vespasian
* **AD 70** Jerusalem destroyed under Emperor Titus who began to lay siege on Jerusalem right after Passover. The Temple, built during the reign of Herod the Great was destroyed in August. Peter and Paul were crucified (According to the New Testament Apocrypha) Timothy was murdered.
  + Matthew 24:1-2: prophecy of the destruction of the temple
  + Luke 21: 24 Daniel 9:24-26: prophesy of the exile of the Jews
  + Luke 19: 41-44: prophecy of destruction of Jerusalem
* **AD 92** Emperor Domitian ordered all subjects to worship him as Lord and God which was not a big issue for most who were polytheists but John refused to worship Domitian and thus was arrested and banished to the island of Patmos.
* Could you imagine the situation that Christians and Jews faced during this time period?
  + Millions of Jews died in the siege of Jerusalem and many more had to deal with diaspora as they were displaced out from their home and city, refusing to settle with other people groups.

Image of God (47) (92-93)

1. White Head The first impression of forgiveness
   1. Eyes Organs of relationship
      1. Feet Capability of the body
         1. Voice -Of Jesus!
      2. Right Hand Capability of the body
   2. Mouth Organs of relationship
2. Shining Face The last impression of blessing

(1:13-16) - Robe reaching to his feet - indication of dignity and honour

Head and Hair white like wool - Ancient of Days

Feet like bronze glowing in a furnace - brass symbolizes judgement

Voice like rushing waters - power and majesty

Right hand - kept the seven stars

Mouth - with a double edged sword of judgement

* John depicts Christ in judgement when we all stand before him bathed in his glorious light

(1:20) - Christ depicted standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands, representing the churches. The lampstands show the role of the Church as a light bearer in the world. (Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world”)

Goals for the evening:

* Discuss any thoughts and questions about Revelations
* Discuss John’s circumstances on Patmos and the ways God was spoke to him
* God’s character - why does he present Himself this way?
* The situation for believers in Asia minor and the historical context over the past years
* **Key Points:**
* In seemingly hopeless situations, God is still present and has a plan for us. Jesus is Our Mighty Saviour who personally cares for us. We need to turn to Jesus and be willing to listen to how He guides us.
* What will you see when you see Jesus on judgement day? Will you feel the warmth from his brilliance or be intimidated by the double edged sword?
* Though God has already won the ultimate battle (WWII analogy) Satan is still trying to tempt us!