

Reading Schedule for August 13-19, 2018

I am delighted you are joining me in our walk through the Book of Revelation. Sometimes we can get bogged down with what we don't understand. But I think there are plenty of connected points for us to understand and apply to our lives. The intensity of the end times is going to be the worst ever, but still we live in fairly intense times right now.

August 13 – Revelation 9:1-21: “The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God.” (v.13) We've already read that the incense that ascends to the altar of God represents the prayers of the saints. These woes are an answer to those prayers. The word “angels” in verse 14 means fallen angels or demons. These four unidentified demons would be extremely evil and destructive. But note that they do not have the power to release themselves and do their evil work on earth. Instead, they are held back by God and will be released at a specific time, doing only what he allows them to do. This is true then, and it is also true today. I told you that the principles that govern the end times also apply to life right now. Even as the New Testament teaches us to resist the devil, let Jesus be our example as he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. He stood strong and so can you. How do you respond to this interesting and even complex chapter?

August 14 – Revelation 10:1-11: “And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.’” (v.4) It says that John must seal up this as a secret until the proper time. Throughout history, people have wanted to know what would happen in the future, and God reveals some of it in this book. But John was stopped from revealing certain parts of his vision. The angel also told the prophet Daniel that some visions he saw were not to be revealed to everyone (Daniel 12:9). God has revealed all we need to know to live for him right now. The Book of Revelation reminds us to be ready for the end, but we must not place more emphasis on speculation about the last days than on serving God right now. Do you agree? How do you respond to this chapter?

August 15 – Revelation 11:1-14: “And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” (v.3) I may not understand all the implications of this chapter, but I do understand the power of partnership in ministry. This Sunday I will emphasize spiritual partnerships. As the culmination of the age is depicted in this book, two witnesses are anointed by God for this specific moment. It appears that they win, they lose, and they win again. They reveal that we are both invincible and vulnerable at the same time in regards to our testimony of Jesus Christ, but truth will prevail. The example of these witnesses is important because they stir up our courage to witness on behalf of Jesus. Obviously it is not identical, but we represent Christ to others. Again, I am not sure exactly of the implication of this chapter. Let the ministry of these two inspire you today. How has this chapter spoken to you?

August 16 - Revelation 11:15-19: “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’” (v.15) Most evangelical scholars believe that this is the trumpet that heralds the second coming of Christ. As the seventh seal shifts from the woes on the earth

to worship in heaven, so too this day announces that God's Kingdom has arrived and will prevail forever. The celebration is about the certainty of Christ's arrival, where his wrath will bring judgment, and his reward will bring great blessing. Life on earth may be unpredictable, and good people may suffer, and ungodly people may prosper, but in the end God's eternal rewards will be completely just and forever enjoyed. How do you respond to this short reading?

August 17 - Revelation 12:1-6: “She gave birth to a son, a male child, who ‘will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.’ And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” (v.5) I have always been fascinated that in this book about the future we read about the arrival of the Son of God born of a woman. The connection to the devil trying to devour the child could be understood as King Herod sending his soldiers to kill all the young babies in Bethlehem. The very first prediction of the woman's offspring is found in Genesis 3:15, where the serpent will be crushed and the offspring will be bruised. The picture of Jesus being the ruler who carries a rod of iron and is exalted to God's throne makes perfect sense to us as we know that Jesus rose from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God. Some have questioned the connection that I am making, but I think it is pretty clear. The battle of heaven has been going on from the beginning, and yet now the devil has been cast down and his days are limited so he responds with great fury. We will read about that tomorrow. What does the connection to the Messiah in this short reading mean to you?

August 18 - Revelation 12:7-17: “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (v.11) This may be one of the more well-known verses in the Book of Revelation. It outlines a principle of victory that is true for you and me, and will be accentuated in the last days. Satan is called the accuser, but we trust in the Lamb who shed his blood for our victory. The NIV uses the word “overcome him,” but I like the word conqueror, as in Romans 8, we are more than conquerors. The possibilities of remaining strong through the power of the blood and the word of our testimony, is meant to stir up real courage in us. The phrase “his time is short” also gets my attention because it means it is of limited duration. Ultimate victory is sure and we can live in the certainty of that fact. How do these inspiring verses stir your heart?

August 19 - Revelation 13:1-18: “The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.” (v.2) This beast is sometimes identified as the antichrist, or the man of lawlessness. His blasphemous words and demand for worship reinforce the connection between these predictions of a final future opponent to Christ's reign. But some have suggested that this beast could represent a composite of human empires summed up in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome and others. At that time, the rulers of these nations will demand absolute allegiance. This is reflected in the ten horns and the seven heads, as multiple aspects of devilish authority mounting up in the last days. What aspect to their devilish pursuits gets your attention? How can you remain strong?

PRAYER: Pray for the gathering of our church in the open air as we enjoy worship, fellowship, baptisms and more this coming Sunday.