All Creation Joins in Giving Praise to God and the Lamb

*A study of Revelation with focus on Earthcare—Week 4*

Leader: In our session today, we will spend most of our time looking at the traits of evil we see in Revelation 12 and 13. We will also see how these visions promote faithfulness in the face of evil. We will look quickly as chapters 14,15, and 16.

We begin by reading together the end of chapter 11

Revelation 11:16-18

> Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, singing,

> “We give you thanks, Lord
> God Almighty,
> Who are and who were,
> For you have taken your
> Great power
> And begun to reign.
> The nations raged,
> But your wrath has come,
> And the time for judging the dead,
> For rewarding your servants,
> The prophets
> And the saints and all who fear
> Your name,
> Both small and great,
> And for destroying those who
> Destroy the earth.”

Leader: The Creator seeks the liberation of the world itself from the forces that hold it captive. God’s kingdom does not bring destruction of the world, but destruction of “those who destroy the earth.”

As we begin chapter 12, we will work in small groups again. Talk with two or three person next to you. Read 12:1-10. Ask these questions:
Who is the woman?
Who is the dragon?
Who is the child?
When is this happening?
Where is this happening?

After about eight minutes bring the group back together. (It will be easy to see that this vision bends time and space. We cannot put it on a map or on a calendar. The woman Israel, the dragon is Satan, the child is Christ, but the time and place are not so easily identified).

Read 12:11-17. **Satan rages on earth because Satan is so vulnerable. Satan is not conquering but a wounded and caged animal.**

**This word promotes courage in the face of evil.**

Present the following on an overhead:

| Beast was slain and yet lived (13:3) | Lamb was slain but yet lived (5:6) |
| Beast conquers by war (13:7) | Lamp conquers by faithful suffering (5:5) |
| Beast oppressed people of every tribe, Tongue, folk, and nation | Lamb ransoms people of every tribe, tongue, folk, and nation |
| Beast’s followers marked (13:7) | Lambs followers sealed (7:3; 14:1) |

**We have two images: the power of the lamb and the power of the beast. (Ask these rhetorical questions)**

Was the lamb a reality for them?
Was the beast a reality for them?

Is the lamb a reality for you?
Is the beast a reality for you?

Chapter thirteen speaks of the beast as a leopard, a lion, a bear. These were evil Empires we read of in the book of Daniel. This idea of one that is slain but lives is likely a reference to Nero. Nero was like Elvis, even after he was dead and gone there were sightings. It is the embodiment of the power that threatens the people of God. Many believe that the 666 at the end of chapter 13 is Nero. This was through use of a system where numbers represent specific letters (gematria). Beyond the first century it is hard to know what 666 means.

The word we hear again in 14,15, and 16 is a word that calls for repentance, announces judgment and warns.
Hand out the study sheet that includes the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls. This is a word that addresses us. We stand in front of this word and say, we are in trouble if we don’t hear the threat.

The tragedy is when repentance doesn’t happen. The seals, the trumpets and the bowls repeat a series of warnings.

The word that is most frightening is found in Revelation 13:4, They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”

This is a word of despair. It is to say that the corruption is so massive that we must simply go with it. Spend a few minutes with one or two person around you to discuss how it is with any concern, but especially with concerns for the earth that we can fall into a sense of despair. How does the Word of the Lamb work against this despair? (When we consider the extent of consumerism, waste and greed, it seem like an insurmountable task. How do we take care of the earth when the whole economic system of the world is based on spending? How can we not have hope, when God is the one at work, changing hearts and changing priorities? How can we have no hope when Revelation cycles us back again and again the throne room where all creation joins in giving praise to God and the Lamb).

Lead a discussion of what people came up with in this time.

Before we go, we are brought back again and again to the power of God. We read in chapter 15, “Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations.”