

Weekly Bible Study group – January 13, 2010

This week's reading: Revelation 1:1-8

Reflection by Bob Zurinsky (bob@spu.edu)

This strange, poetic book begins with a key line:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.”

As we know from any literature class we've ever taken, the opening lines of any work are absolutely critical for understanding what the author is trying to say. Here in the beginning of John's vision, he tells us that what we're about to read is a “revelation” of Jesus Christ. In the original Greek language, the word is *apocalypse*. An “apocalypse of Jesus Christ” – this is what is taking place before the reader's eyes.

Definition:

apokálypsis (revelation), equiv. to apokalýp(tein): **to uncover, reveal**

Forget what you know about “The Apocalypse” from pop-culture movies of the 20th century. The actual definition of this word is something like “unveiling.” It means that what we're about to see is the “unveiling of Jesus Christ.” So what is it about Jesus Christ that is being revealed/unveiled in this book? The first chapter tells us the answer to this question. It's here in this important line:

“Look, he is coming with the clouds!”

This is a direct allusion to the vision that Daniel had in Daniel 7:13-14. The image of “one like a son of man coming with the clouds” refers to the inauguration of a new universal king. In Daniel's vision, it's the surprising choice by God to ignore all the rulers and kings and powers of the earth (whom he calls “beasts”), and instead to choose just a weak, frail human being to crown as the King of All.

This is the shocking news about Jesus Christ that this book seeks to reveal to its readers: that even though the kingdom of Jesus appears to be weak and failing in the present, compared to the great powers of the world...in the end, only this *one* King will remain standing. This frail one is the Lord of the Universe himself.