

Weekly Bible Study group – February 24, 2010

This week's reading: Revelation 17:1 – 19:10

Reflection by Bob Zurinsky (bob@spu.edu)

The book of Revelation challenges us to think about our own lives and our world a little bit more deeply. When we're children, we naturally have a mindset that is smaller and more self-centered. And I don't mean that in a negative way – it's natural. Our first context is our family, and maybe a small circle of people beyond that. Sadly, many people remain stuck in a small world, without growing or maturing or expanding their vision as they age. And this spills over into our understanding of what the "gospel" is, and what we think Christianity is all about. Tell me, did you grow up thinking that the good news was primarily about yourself, the state of your soul, the benefits for you? Think about that. I pray that we have enough humility to let scripture convince us otherwise. It's not wrong to begin with that perspective. In fact, it's a natural step in our development. But it's not maturity.

Revelation asks us to think much bigger. This text insists that we focus our vision onto the SYSTEMS that are present in our world. The world-wide structures that either fit into God's vision for the earth or not. Revelation demands that we evaluate our own hearts and lives, and see if we're living as a part of a system that is corrupt. This means critically evaluating our politics, economics, etc. The big-picture stuff. Are we participating in the subtle systems that subvert God's plan? Probably.

In Revelation 17-18, John describes a vision of "The great city that rules over the kings of the earth." She is depicted as a rich, self-absorbed queen, with this name written on her head: "MYSTERY. BABYLON THE GREAT. THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." She is a visual representation of a whole world system that is set against God's dream for the earth.

And the message is clear: **"Come out of her, my people."**

Because her future is inevitable: **"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"**