

Essential Biblical Texts
Week 7 – Essential Transformation
March 17 2021

A. Romans 12

1. He begins with an appeal to worship, give yourself to God.
Your little bit of creation, your body, give it to service of creation.
 - Body, “soma”, whole “person”
 - What is this about ‘living sacrifice’ – this picks up on the Jewish gentile themes
 - The temple was about once again living in the presence of God. Remember that Genesis 1 began with creation being a temple and humans the priests. Now that language and imagery is brought into the Jesus way.
2. “this world” – Paul is calling for a conformation into new creation. The new age has broken into the old age.
3. He picks up again on the Romans 8 notion of “mind,” that is to say your way of being, your direction. We must adopt a new way of thinking, the mind of the spirit vs the mind of the flesh. In this way one becomes someone who works things out. It’s not about following a list of rules and bypassing your mind, the Christ way is of learning and struggling to work out the will of God. It is Christian maturity.
 - Mind in line with Gods – a tough Greek phrase (logokalatrea) that connects to ancient philosophies
 - The transformed mind is Paul’s way of becoming a genuine human being
 - Aristotle defines humans as logikonzoan – a living being that thinks logically. Aristotle and many other philosophers the idea of being people that could think things out is what marked us as human.
 - For Paul, the mind was also embodied. The Christ way of ‘sacrifice’ is the mindful way of God. Paul says this is the sort of worship that shows you are being a genuine human being at last.
 - **Learning to drive is a good analogy. You need to learn to read and react, sometimes the best course of action is drive into the ditch to avoid a much bigger accident.**
 - The mind renewing feature of the gospel is central to Paul’s mission. For Paul it’s not just a matter of teaching people to think about different things. We need to think in a whole different way.
4. Don’t let the present age dictate the agenda
 - Jews believed in Present age and age to come.
 - The early church, the present age and the age to come overlap. The present age has been interrupted by the age to come.
5. Verse 3 relates to chapter 11 where he implores a high level of humility.
6. The image of the body was a common philosophical metaphor. In light of everything Paul has done discussing Jew and Gentile, these words are exceedingly relevant.
7. Acts of kindness and gentleness were hallmarks of the gospel and stood out in the Roman empire.
8. Verse 16 he returns to the notion of what the Christian mind is.
9. NOTE how important the theme of Love is to this chapter and those that follow.

B. Revelation

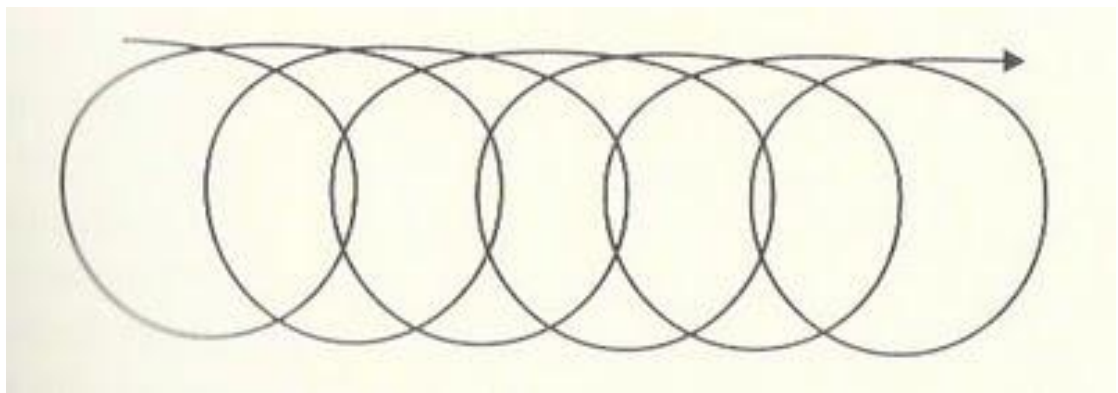
1. It's a letter

“One of the best-kept secrets about Revelation is that it is a letter that was written to seven churches. Revelation 1:4 says, “John to the seven churches that are in Asia.” A letter is a form of communication. People write letters in order to be understood. When John wrote Revelation to seven congregations in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), he used language that would have been meaningful to them. The first readers of Revelation were Christians who experienced several kinds of challenges to their faith. Their situations are reflected in Revelation 2-3:

- **Persecution** – Christians in Smyrna and Philadelphia were denounced because their faith commitments set them apart from the wider non-Christian context. Their challenge was how to persevere in the face of open conflict.
- **Assimilation** – Christians at Pergamum, Thyatira, and Ephesus struggled with issues of compromise. Their challenge was what to do when their faith interfered with their social and economic life.
- **Complacency** – Christians at Laodicea and Sardis were affluent, but their prosperity took the vitality out of their faith. Their challenge was how to maintain a vital faith in circumstances where they were too comfortable.

After looking at the situations of the readers in Revelation 2-3, John invites them into the presence of God in Revelation 4. This majestic vision of God seeks to draw readers into the circle of worshipers who gather around the throne and sing “Holy, holy, holy” to the Lord God Almighty. Regardless of whether readers come from situations of persecution, assimilation, or complacency, Revelation invites them to join their voices with those of the heavenly host in worshipping the one true God.” – Dr. Craig Koester – Is This the Time

2. Revelation moves in a non-linear fashion.



- Loop 1: Seven messages to the churches (Rev. 1-3)
- Loop 2: Seven seals (4-7)
- Loop 3: Seven trumpets (8-14)
- Loop 4: Seven plagues (15-16)
- Loop 5: Babylon & Rome (17-19)
- Loop 6: Victory (20-22)

- Visions celebrating the triumph of God also occur at the end of each cycle (4:1-11; 7:1-17; 11:15-19; 15:1-4; 19:1-10; 21:1-22:5).
- In the middle of each loop, there are images of horsemen *"that represent conquest, violence, hardship, and death."* This feature of each loop always gives way to the top of the loop, where we find visions of heaven, of the presence of "God, the Lamb, and the heavenly chorus."

"Threatening visions and assuring visions function differently, but they serve the same end, which is that listeners might continue to trust in God and remain faithful to God."

A clue to understanding Revelation's message comes from a refrain that appears in the opening and concluding chapters of the book.

God: I am the Alpha and the Omega 1:8

Christ: I am the first and the last 1:7; 2:8

God: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end 21:6

Christ: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end 22:13

According to Revelation, the end of all things is God and Christ. They are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. The spiraling movement of the book fits this description. The visions pose challenges, then bring readers into the presence of God and the Lamb, then pose challenges and bring readers back to God and the Lamb

3. Revelation 21:1-8

- I. The first thing it points out is that there will be no more sea. The sea in the Bible often represents "chaos." It's a symbol that we find already in the beginning of the Bible. Genesis 1 we read that God created the world from the midst of the sea. And throughout the Bible God is continually separating waters and interacting with sea, sometimes calming, sometimes walking on it, but what we read is that in the end, there will be no sea in the city of God.
- II. The image is not that of an escape from the creation or the earth 'dissolving like snow' but rather a renewal of the creation. Heaven coming down and the space of heaven and earth once again being reunited.
- III. The promise is that of shalom
- IV. Verse 6 – The spring of water takes us back to Isaiah 55 where we remember the promise that God will quench the thirst of his people (particularly those in exile)
- V. Verse 7 – The connection of the inheritance coming to the children of God connects back to 2 Samuel 7.