

Bethany Free Lutheran Church
451 34th St.
Astoria, OR 97103

What is this last book of our Bibles?

Few would argue that the most controversial as well as most difficult book of the Bible to read, understand, or even to preach on would be the book of Revelation. It is a book full of powerful imagery, strange creatures, horrifying events, and puzzling messages. Some Christians tend to avoid studying this book because they just can't wrap their heads around so much of what they read that they throw their hands in the air and say, "Why bother?" Other Christians seem to think that they have the corner on everything written in the book and that if you disagree with their specific understanding of how they see Revelation you are a heretic. Is there anything we can learn from the book of Revelation that applies to our lives here and now? Is there any worth in studying this strange book of the Bible? The answer is a resounding yes. Revelation is a book worthy of much study. In fact, found in the first chapter verse three, we see this encouragement written to those that seek to undertake the challenge of Revelation, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near."

Well, this new year I want to help us all receive a special blessing from God by preaching our next sermon series from the book of Revelation. In the past I have preached on small sections from Revelation, or one sermon as an overview of Revelation, but never an in-depth sermon series through the entire book. As I begin to preach through this book, I also will plan on wrapping up our series on Joshua, to transition into a deeper study of Revelation in our adult Sunday School. This will provide those in attendance a chance to ask questions, and go deeper into a book that will surely cause us to wrestle with some difficult passages.

Let me begin our study by presenting a broad overview of the book to give you a teaser of what awaits those that attend adult Sunday School as well as church. The book of Revelation is an Epistle, which means that it was a letter written to a specific set of people that had specific needs that needed addressed at the time of it's writing. It would be wrong to say that it only applied to future Christians living in the end times. Clearly there was meaning and significance of this letter for the early church. While it was written for the

current church universal, it seems to also have an eye forward to those that would come after the present day church. This means that Revelation was written for the present church, as well as for those that would follow. It would be narrow minded and wrong to see the book of Revelation only applying to the church of the Apostle John's day.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia classifies the book as "apocalyptic," which means that it contains, "visions, and revelations of the future, frequently in symbolical form..." If Revelation is frequently in symbolic form, how then should we understand it, or describe it? A good literary example of symbolic form is poetry. Poetry is written in words that have a specific meaning, but sometimes those words conjure up different feelings and thoughts of the listeners. Two different people may read the same words, but understand aspects of those words slightly differently. Poetry makes for a very poor choice to use in a legal agreement as it can be vague and ambiguous at times. Precise language is best used in a legal agreement, but that doesn't mean that poetry lacks a purpose. Apocalyptic literature is much like poetry in that it conjures up feelings and thoughts of the reader, while also being a bit difficult to understand it's precise meaning. I believe the main overarching theme found throughout the book of Revelation is that those who overcome the enemy, will have victory and eternal life in Christ. This profound truth is what Revelation continually points to. And this truth is often explained and pointed out using highly figurative language much like poetry.

So while some of us that are analytical and focused on facts might be driven a bit nuts by the book, others that have a more artistic bent are more easily blessed through reading it. And if you wonder why would God use such a book as Revelation, instead of just presenting the facts, think of this illustration. Would your spouse rather be told they love you in plain simple words, or would they rather experience that love through the use of all their senses? Revelation is the final book of the grand love letter of God's written word to His adopted children that He loves. So get ready for a deep dive into a difficult book this New Year!

Pastor Rich Carr

Worship With Us

8:45 A.M. Glad Tidings Radio 1370 A.M.

9:30 A.M. Sunday School

11:00 A.M. Worship Services

Live Stream

We live stream our 11:00 A.M. Sunday worship services on Subsplash. If you prefer Facebook we are still there. Sunday sermons are also posted the same day on our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@bethanyfreelutheranastoria3012/featured>. You can find links to all of these on our website at www.bethanyfree.com



SUNDAY SCHOOL

9:30am-10:30am

Kindergarten- Adults

Learning God's Word



Men's Prayer Breakfast

The men's prayer breakfast is January 4th, 8:00am. Cooking starts at around 7:15am, if you would like to help. We would love to have more men join us.

Deacons & Trustees Meeting

They will meet here at church, Tuesday, January 7th, 5:30pm.

Bethany Sewing Ministry

The ladies of Bethany will meet January 2, 16, 23 & 30 this month, Thursday mornings at 10am, downstairs at Bethany. All sewing skills are welcome. A lunch is provided. We work on quilts that are mostly sent to AFLC Alaska Missions in Naknek, AK

From the Alaska Mission News:

"There's something different about these quilts." was a comment I overheard at the annual quilt giveaway which turned into a conversation of how these are prayed for and made with love by many ladies in the lower 48. Along with the other items we've had donated too are socks, shoes, hats, mittens, and more. It really is a sight to behold. I heard from many in the area that it is their favorite event of the year. You realize the giveaway is surrounded by beautiful works made in love by people who love

them in the lower 48 even though they don't know them. It's evident how this has become a community favorite. It was another successful year with lots of quilts to still continue to hand out to surrounding villages. Thank you!



Brown Bag Ministry

Every Tuesday, 1:00pm, we have our weekly Brown Bag Ministry which prepares brown bag lunches that are distributed in the community, we are always grateful for volunteers.

Confirmation Class

Confirmation class will meet January 9, 16 & 23. They meet at 2:40pm after school at the Astoria Middle School, on Thursdays. If you know someone interested please contact Pastor Rich.

WMF Meeting

Women's Missionary Federation will meet, Thursday, January 11th, 11am at the church. All Ladies are Welcome, bring a lunch, dessert is provided.



Congregational Annual Meeting

Thursday, January 30th we will hold our annual meeting with dinner provided. Dinner will be at 5:30pm followed by the meeting at 6:30pm

Women's Evening Bible Study

WEBS meets the 4th Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Hosted by Brenda Carr at the parsonage. We will be starting a new Bible Study this month.

