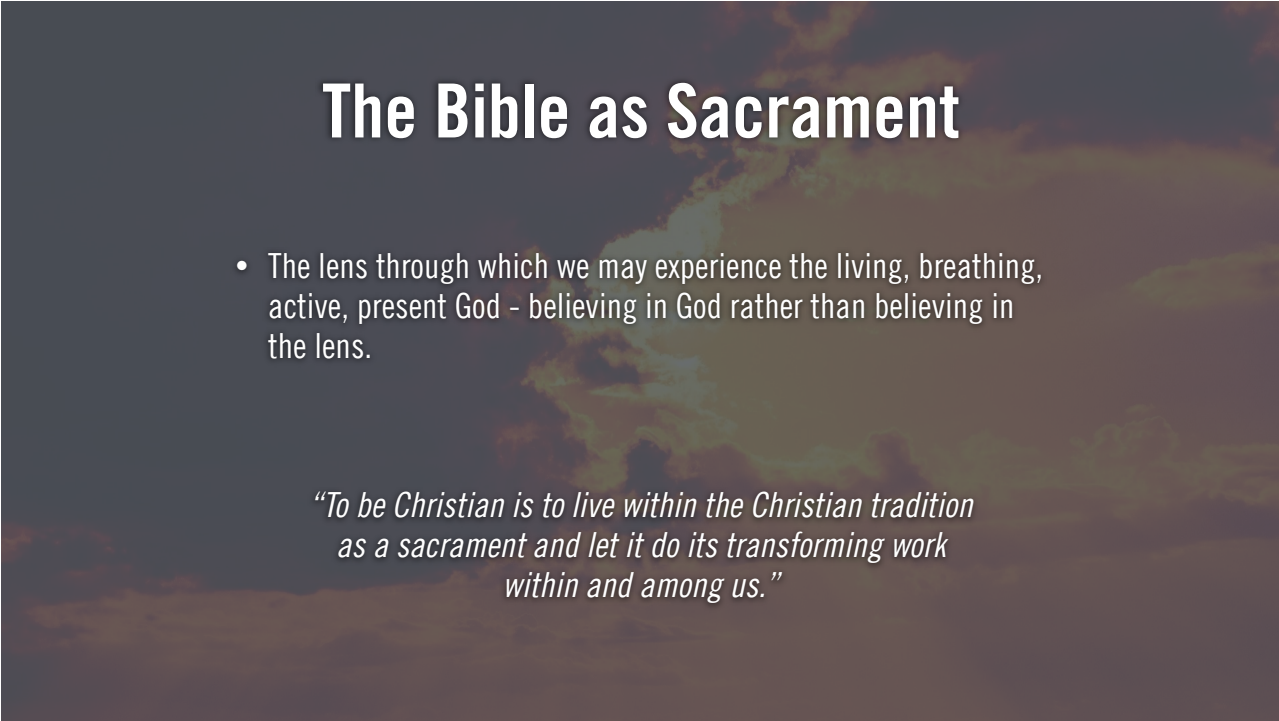




# Revelation & Apocalypse

Reading the Bible Again for the First Time



## The Bible as Sacrament

- The lens through which we may experience the living, breathing, active, present God - believing in God rather than believing in the lens.

*“To be Christian is to live within the Christian tradition as a sacrament and let it do its transforming work within and among us.”*

# The Creation Stories

- God created the heavens and the earth —  
Historical origination or ontological dependence?  
“God is the source of everything that is  
in every moment of time.”
- God’s creation & creativity continue to invite relationship and  
connection and care, and are grounded in the sacred

# The Hebrew Bible

- The Pentateuch  
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- The Prophets  
Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Lamentations, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel,  
and the minor prophets
- Israel’s Wisdom  
Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel,  
Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles

# Letters & Epistles

- Attributed to Paul  
Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- Attributed to other authors  
Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John, Jude

*Regardless of authorship, the purpose of these letters and epistles is to inspire and to challenge*

# Gospels & Acts

- The Gospels  
Christianity's primal narratives
- Extraordinary Jesus  
One with God  
Revelation of God  
"The Way"  
Bread of life  
Light shining in darkness  
Lifts us out of death into life



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## Revelation

- **Widely Popular**
  - Millennialist Interpretation
  - Millions of books sold on Apocalypse touching on Revelation
  - Frequent theme of television & radio evangelists
  - Often assessing “signs of the end” or “second coming”
- **Widely Controversial**
  - Divides the contemporary church (esp. rejecting millennialist interp)
  - Majority of Christians have little familiarity
  - Limited appearances in Revised Common Lectionary

# Revelation as Controversy

- Almost wasn't part of Canonical Bible
  - Accepted in 2nd cent. in Latin-speaking church in West
  - Not accepted in Greek-speaking Eastern church
- Historian Eusebius listed it as disputed book in 4th cent.
- Cyril of Jerusalem forbade its public and private use
- Byzantine list of canonical writings in 810CE omitted it
- Luther included it reluctantly & gave it secondary stature
  - Wished it would be thrown into the Elbe River
- Calvin ignored it

# Revelation as Apocalypse

- Revelation and Apocalypse are synonyms based on same Greek root
- Addressed to 7 churches in Asia Minor
- Written in late 1st cent. by John of Patmos
  - Mea Culpa
  - John was known in Asia Minor
  - May have been itinerant preacher
  - Knew Hebrew Bible well
  - As many as 65% of verses echo or allude to HB
- Would have been read aloud in its entirety to recipients

# Broad Synopsis

- Inaugural vision emphasizes  
visions and “seeing”  
echos & allusions to Hebrew Bible  
use of symbolic numbers
- Chapters 2-3 contain letters to the seven churches  
Evaluation  
Threats or encouragement  
Promise

# Broad Synopsis

- Chapters 4-22 detail fantastic visions  
God is elaborately enthroned in Heaven  
The lamb that was slain opens the 7 seals  
The four horsemen of the apocalypse bring war, famine, pestilence, death  
Earthquakes & collapse of the heavens  
Plagues & catastrophes including giant locusts and an invading army  
A woman clothed with the sun gives birth to a child who is attacked by a  
giant red dragon who is then attacked and defeated by angels  
A 7-headed beast rises from the sea and takes control of the earth  
God’s wrath and Armageddon follow, then the 2nd coming of Christ  
Christ leads an army in white robes; they defeat the armies & the beast

# Broad Synopsis

- Chapters 4-22 detail fantastic visions (cont.)
  - The dragon (Satan) is cast into a bottomless pit for 1000 years
  - Christ & saints rule
  - Dragon (Satan) is released & defeated again in a final battle
  - At the Last Judgment, all are raised, the book of life is opened, those whose names do not appear are cast into the lake of fire
  - New Jerusalem appears (wedding imagery) from the sky
  - Through it flows the river of the water of life
  - In it grows the tree of life whose leaves heal the nations
  - There is worship

# How do We Read Revelation?

- Futurist Interpretation
  - Core of Millennialist interpretation
  - What Revelation describes has not yet happened
  - The literal reading of the Bible cannot be wrong
  - What Revelation describes must still be the future
  - Revelation can be “decoded” to predict events (see Hal Lindsey’s books)

*Lindsey: 6th seal is nuclear war, army from East is from China, giant locusts are attack helicopters, ten-horned beast is revived Roman Empire made up of 10 nations, there will be a “rapture” and tribulation ending in Armageddon and the return of Christ*

# How do We Read Revelation?

- Past-Historical Interpretation
  - We understand Revelation only by reading it in its original context
  - Tells what John believed would happen
  - (7 times in prologue/epilogue John names near future)
  - The beast in chapter 13 & woman in 17 can be understood clearly in historical context as present (to John) figures Nero and Rome
- What is the message of Revelation to its recipients considering this Past-Historical Interpretation?
  - Christ is Lord and Ceasar and Rome are not
  - God will soon overthrow Rome & its leadership
  - Persevere, endure, have confidence & faith

# How do We Read Revelation?

- What is the message of Revelation today considering this Past-Historical Interpretation?
  - Christ is Lord, Christus Victor
  - Indictment of Empire (oppression, exploitation, religious legitimation)
  - Persevere, endure, have confidence and faith