



## All Creation Joins in Giving Praise to God and the Lamb

### *A study of Revelation with focus on Earthcare—Week 2*

Leader: Find a person in the group who will mark Zechariah 12:10 (to read in a few minutes)

**Leader:** Last week we came up with a list of environmental concerns. We also came up with ideas of what the problems are that are behind these concerns (pull out the white sheets from last time). We also talked about the fact that Revelation has been understood not only as we generally know it, a predictor of the future, but also as a message of significance to all people.

As we work our way through the book of Revelation we will be looking to see how this book offers hope to all creation. Today we will look at this book of the Bible as a letter. Who it is that John was writing this letter to and what he is saying to them?

**How do we know this is a letter? Who is John writing to?**

Have someone read Rev. 1:4-8

**Do you recognize the common greeting we see in many letters in the New Testament?** (Expect that someone will notice: *Grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne*).

Have someone read Rev. 1:9-11

**Leader:** Who is the sender of the letter? Who are the recipients? (see below)

**Leader:** Summarize Rev 1:4-11. This is a letter, written by John to the seven churches. As we read these verses we have a sense of how this letter is expanding time. The grace to you is from the one who is, who was, and who is to come. We see echoes and illusions from the Old Testament, but we don't see actual word for word references. Like the words, *Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him*. We see the echo form Zechariah 12:10 (have the person identified earlier read the verse), *They will look on him whom they have pierced*.

As we read this first vision, we find an amazing thing. This revelation doesn't start in the future, but with the present and living Christ in the midst of the seven churches.

**As we work our way through Revelation, always keep this in mind; this revelation doesn't start in the future. It starts with the present and living Christ in the midst of the churches.**

Leader: Place up the overhead of the Durer woodcut of *Christ among the Lampstands or Churches*. Read Rev. 1:12-20.

**Leader: Indeed this revelation doesn't start in the future, but with the present and living Christ in the midst of the seven churches. Working together in small groups, try to understand how the seven churches looked in Christ's eyes. Generally the churches fall into one of three categories: complacency, persecution, and assimilation. By assimilation, it is meant that the people join in with the culture around them so much that they lose a "Christian identity."**

Leader: At this point, have the group divide into small groups of three or four persons sitting near them. Provide a handout with background and the assignment. Assign a specific "church" to each group, noting that if they have time, go ahead and do other verses. Report back to the large group in 15 minutes.

Leader: On the white board create a list of the seven churches and how they look in Christ's eyes. (Ephesus: assimilation, Smyrna: persecution, Pergamum: assimilation, Thyratira: assimilation, Sardis: complacency, Philadelphia: persecution, Laodicea: complacency)

**Leader: As we begin Chapter 4, we meet God. In fact, we find ourselves in the presence of the living God.**

**How would it feel to be Smyrna or Philadelphia, a persecuted church in God's presence?** (hopeful)

**How would it feel to be Ephesus, Pergamum, or Tyatira, an assimilated church in God's presence?** (uncomfortable)

**How would it feel to be Sardis or Laodicea, a complacent church in God's presence?** (wake up call)

**Leader: In your small groups, take a few minutes to discuss how the challenges and their accusations that the churches are experiencing is similar and different to the challenges we as humanity have with our care for the earth.** (For those who have a deep passion for care of the earth, this is a word of hope. For those who are assimilated into the culture of excessive consumerism and waste, it is a word, where one says, I care about the earth, but it is hard to deal with, it is part of my social and economic well-being. This is a word of discomfort. For those who are complacent and comfortable, not experiencing the consequences of our abuse to the earth today, this is a jarring word.

**Take 10 minutes in your small groups and then we will take a short time to summarize what you came up with.**

**Leader: Summarize this time together. Revelation is a letter. It is a message from the living Christ who is in the midst of the churches. It is a message of how things are in Christ's eyes. It is a message of hope, a message that unsettles, and a message that is a wake up call. When we consider the care of our earth it is a similar message. We are in different places, but Revelation speaks to each of us uniquely.**