Knock, Knock, Who's There

Revelations 3:20

Our Tuesday Bible Study is studying the Book of Revelations. I would like to give those unable to participate in this Bible Study an opportunity to study on their own. This midweek message will also allow those studying Revelations to grow in their understanding of it.

For many the Book of Revelations is a scary book. It is this fear and symbolism that hinders their ability to understand. Some of that fear is based on their lack of context. The Book of Revelations was written in real-time, about real events, to real people. As much as the Book of Revelations is spiritual, it also reflects political and revolutionary undertones. The political and revolutionary currents are at the heart of the book's message and must not be ignored if we are to understand the message the book is trying to convey.

The first-century Christian church was under immense persecution from the Roman Empire. The emperors that fostered most of this persecution were Nero and Domitian. The book's theme, symbolism, and imagery address both the spiritual battle between good and evil and the political oppression the early Christians were under.

The Roman Empire considered Christianity a threat to their very existence. The threat was not that the Christians could exterminate them. It was one of authority and reputation. They could not afford to have it believed or known that a small band of rebels gave them a hard time. You see, the Christians refused to participate in emperor worship which signaled one's loyalty to Rome and was looked upon by the Christians as a religious act. Their refusal to worship the emperor was seen as an act of treason. This made Christians enemies of the state. This helps us understand why the Pharisees made Jesus' prosecution political. This made Jesus an enemy of the state, which led to His crucifixion.

Revelations portray the Roman Empire as the beast; Babylon represents Rome. The fall of Rome represents the downfall of all the oppressive powers. It was this vision of the downfall of the oppressive forces that gave hope to early Christians. The Book of Revelations encouraged imperial resistance.

The Book of Revelations continued in its use of symbolism to reflect resistance. The Lamb vs. The Beast: The victory of the Lamb (Jesus) over the Beast (Rome) was viewed as both a

political and spiritual victory. This victory of the Lamb over the Beast speaks to Revelations' anticipation and expectation of God's kingdom to replace the corrupt powers of the world.

Revelations honor those who resisted. They all are considered martyrs because they made the ultimate sacrifice, they gave their lives for the cause of Christ. It was the death of these martyrs that encouraged others to persevere and resist the oppression of Rome.

The Book of Revelations is spiritual. However, we cannot separate or ignore the political realities of its day. The symbols found in this book were codes of hope to the people of that time. The people living under the oppression of Rome needed assurances that God's justice would prevail over the corrupt systems of the world.

This combination of spiritual endurance and the promise of political transformation is at the heart of the revolutionary spirit of that day. It says that God is still on the throne. It speaks of the political climate and the spiritual hopes of people engaged in a colossal battle of cosmic proportions. Their only hope and guiding light are the promises of Jesus Christ.

Today we too are engaged in a spiritual war that is not in our control. It is a war that is and will be fought in the spiritual realm. The Book of Revelations reminds us that some battles do not belong to us. Some battles belong to the Lord. So let us continue to be strong in the Lord and in the Power of His might.

Let us not give up hope. Let us not grow weary in these last hours of a political campaign that seems fraught with evil. Let us have confidence that the One seated on the throne has already won. Let us hold the hand of the One who has conquered, and because He has conquered, we too are conquerors, and because He has conquered, Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness. He is the hope that lifts every heart. Jesus the Lion of Judah, in Him we place our trust.

Blessings,
Pastor Gool