

St. Andrew Academy

Revelation: Cracking the Code or Why you won't be left behind!

Fall 2006

Monday Evenings

Class Times: Monday evenings
6:45 – 7:00, gathering time
7:00 – 8:30, class time

Class Dates: 9/11, 9/18, 9/25, 10/9, 10/16, 10/23, 10/30, 11/6 - NOTE - **No class on Oct 2!**

Instructor: Scott L. Engle, Ph.D.

Reaching me: Scott's office 214-291-8009
Scott's e-mail: sengle@standrewacademy.org

You can find the syllabus and other course materials at the website for the St. Andrew Academy at www.standrewacademy.org. Simply go to "Scott's Academy Classes" and you'll see this class in the list. All of the course materials are posted there.

IN THE EVENT OF BAD WEATHER, CHECK THE ACADEMY'S WEBSITE, WHERE I'LL POST ANY CANCELLATION ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE HOMEPAGE. If we have to cancel a class, we'll simply extend the class a week further into November.

Course materials:

1. The set of overhead handouts and bible worksheets. These are all in your course notebook.
2. A study Bible

Highly recommended - available the first night of class

Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation, Bruce M. Metzger, Abingdon Press, 1993

Also recommended (Amazon.com is probably the easiest place to find these. There may be a few copies in the St. Andrew bookstore or at Cokesbury).

In God's Time: The Bible and the Future, Craig C. Hill, Eerdmanns Publishing, 2002

Revelation and the End of All Things, Craig R. Koester, Eerdmanns Publishing, 2001

Revelation, William C. Pender (Interpretation Bible Studies), Geneva Press, 1999.

Course Description

The UMC Book of Discipline reminds us, “*United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. . . . The biblical authors, illumined by the Holy Spirit, bear witness that in Christ the world is reconciled to God. The Bible bears authentic testimony to God’s self-disclosure in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as in God’s work of creation, in the pilgrimage of Israel, and in the Holy Spirit’s ongoing activity in human history.*”

As strange and bizarre as the book may seem at times, Revelation is part of the New Testament – every bit as much as the four Gospels. This is no accident! The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the book of Revelation and help them better understand the place of Revelation in the larger Biblical story. In particular, we’ll see how the images of Revelation and the witness to Jesus provided by those images are deeply embedded in the Old Testament. We’ll try to get more comfortable with the fantastical symbols and imagery of this apocalypse. Most importantly, we’ll seek to understand how this book was a message of comfort and encouragement to early Christians – not a book of terror and one made to scare people into genuine belief (as if that could happen!) Through it all, we will strive for humility in our interpretation!

Learning Objectives

Those who complete this course should be able to:

1. Better appreciate the place of Revelation in the larger Biblical story, seeing how it reveals to us the hope that is ours in God.
2. Explain how Revelation, John’s apocalypse, was one of many apocalypses and how it would not have seemed so strange to Christians 2000 years ago.
3. Grasp the structure and the story of John’s Revelation – how and why it progresses from scene to scene.
4. Respond to those who see Revelation as part of a larger mysterious *biblical puzzle* that is waiting to unfold in very specific and predictable detail.
5. Respond to those who see the *Left Behind* interpretation of the “end-times” (premillennial dispensationalism!) as being the only one that is possible. It is not. Indeed, *Left Behind* is a minority view in Christendom.
6. Understand how Revelation is a message of hope and encouragement for all Christians, especially those who are being persecuted for their faith.
7. Better appreciate the value and importance of the Christian imagination, how it can shape our understanding of God’s world and our place in it.

Expectations

To get the most out of this class, you should attend every meeting and be prepared to devote at least a couple of hours each week to the assignments. I suggest that you devote a half-hour each day, rather than do the reading and the worksheet at one sitting. This class can be a good means of building a daily “Bible habit” that can sustain and enrich our lives and our congregation. The weekly worksheets are designed to help you build a daily habit.

I hope that you will bring to the class all the questions and uncertainties about Revelation that have puzzled you. We won’t necessarily be able to answer them all, but I want the class to be responsive to your needs, while still ensuring that we cover most of the material in the syllabus.

We expect you to enjoy the class and we will do all we can to exceed your expectations!

Schedule of Class Activities
Revelation
 Fall 2006 – Monday Evenings

Class Date	Topic	Chapter Assignments/Worksheets
9/11 (#1)	Introduction to the class End-times fascination Our guides on this journey Left behind? – A few surprises	
9/18 (#2)	Scene 1 – The Church in the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 1 – 4 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 2
9/25 (#3)	Scene 2 – The Church Suffers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 5 & 6 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 3
10/2	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
10/9 (#4)	Scene 3 – The World is Warned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 4
10/16 (#5)	Scene 4 – The Drama of History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 8 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 5
10/23 (#6)	Scenes 5 & 6 – The World is Punished; The Whore of Babylon meets Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 6
10/30 (#7)	Scene 7 – The Drama <i>behind</i> History (seven visions of ultimate reality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 10 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 7
11/6+ (#8)	Scene 8 – Jerusalem the Bride – The story ends well!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 11 in Metzger’s <i>Breaking the Code</i> • Bible readings for Week 8