

## **Revelation Study 2022**

### ***Explanation of Biblical Study Method***

Welcome to our class on the New Testament book of Revelation. I'm so excited to be your rabbi (teacher) and guide in this journey. If you will make a commitment to engage in our presentations, discussions, and assignments, you will not only grow in your knowledge of the biblical text but you will have your spirit and heart "tweaked" by the Spirit of God. Since the Bible is God's Word, it is an "incarnation" of the Living Word, Jesus. In other words, just as followers of Jesus believe and confess the "human and divine" nature and character of the Living Word, so we also acknowledge the human and divine nature of the biblical text. The Bible is the expression of the will, perspective, and person of God but it is also part of the human story. Written by real people with real families, real joys, and real struggles, it communicates the power and presence of God in and through the human experience. So as you read, you are getting a full dose of human reality as well as a taste of the "supernatural"...in other words, God is at work in and through the biblical witness.

There are a couple of other things that I would like you to know about how we are going to approach the text during this class. I am a proponent of a biblical study methodology that includes the following elements: *EXEGESIS - INCUBATION - HERMENEUTICS - INCUBATION - APPLICATION*.

*EXEGESIS* is an exploration of the text...what it says in its historical context, how it was communicated in its original language and how it was understood by the people who heard/read it for the first time. Simply put, Exegesis is the study of the text. During the past 100 years or so, this study has been summarized by the phrase, "biblical criticism". Now, that does not mean critique (i.e. tearing down)...what it does mean are forms of analysis (i.e. taking it apart to see how it works). Methods of biblical criticism include historical, literary, form, redaction, structural among others. As you study the text, you could call yourself an "exegete". The "big" issue in exegesis is to study the text apart from any "embedded beliefs"...that is, preconceived biases which you bring to the text. We will be attempting during our class to let the text speak for itself.

*HERMENEUTICS* is the study of the interpretation of the text. Just as there are numerous methodologies from which to exegete a text, so there is a number of "schools" of hermeneutics (e.g. allegorical, devotional, liberal, literal, etc.). To be a faithful "hermeneute", one needs to follow some "rules" of hermeneutics. Though studying hermeneutics is a course unto itself, here are some principles that should guide your biblical interpretation: first of all, take the Bible at face value. Secondly, look at the context of the passage from a textual perspective...notice how the text is woven into other texts by the author. Thirdly, how does the rest of the Bible speak to what the specific text is saying? Remember, the Bible is not just a collection of books but also ONE book that shares a commonality of themes, purpose, and message. Understand that truth is attainable, and that logic/reason are God's gifts to us to aid in the understanding of biblical material. Another hermeneutic "rule of thumb" is to interpret scripture from a "community" context...in other words, you are not the only Christ-follower alive nor are you isolated from the faithful community of saints that has spanned history.

Thirdly is *APPLICATION* (generally referred to an "inductive" study)...application is simply a dedication, not so much a school of study, to apply biblical truth to life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in the New Testament as well as numerous places throughout the biblical witness give specific challenges to the reader to apply biblical truth. One of the methodologies that are taught at the School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University (the University at which I am an Adjunct Professor) is something called the "Practical Theological Method". Below is a summary of this methodology of application:

#### *The Practical Theological Method:*

1. Helps us organize our observations of a situation or condition
2. Helps us evaluate these situations or condition
3. Helps us strategically respond to the situations or conditions in a Christian manner

There are Five Steps to this Method:

1. What's happening?
2. What's really happening?
3. What does the Bible say about what's happening?

4. What should be happening?
  5. What can we do now?
- Step One - Describe the present action – in other words, what’s reality? What’s really happening?
  - Step Two – Assess the present action critically – in other words, how did we get to this present reality? What is the history, sociological conditions, etc. that have brought us to an understanding of this action?
  - Step Three – Recognize Christian views (in many instances these are countercultural views). This is the step where a deep and applicable understanding of God’s Revelation is critical. What does the Bible say about this situation? How have Christians responded through spiritual experience in the past? Please recognize that every believer is a “hermeneute”...real question is are you a competent or incompetent hermeneute? Can you readily handle the truth?
  - Step Four – Evaluate relationship between Christian views and present action. In other words, seek to understand the difference between how Christian and non-believer understands the situation. Be very clear without condemnation or condescending attitudes. This is critical for evangelism.
  - Step Five – Design new action and make smart changes.

Oops...and don't forget "*INCUBATION*". When I first started to think about using this word in a biblical studies class, I thought I was crazy. Then I reflected on the importance of "incubation". We need to let the text "swim around" in the deep recesses of our soul...in other words, to study the Bible is not simply an exercise in reason...it is a delving into the depths of the spirit. When you are exegeting or interpreting or applying a text, you should always remember to "live" the text for a while. Let it breathe in your heart...let it soak into your soul. Just don't read it and then move on...reflect and meditate on the Word!