

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other material are also available on our local website at www.gcine Brunswick.org

Session 11-15 on the study of the book of Acts by Mr. Gary Deddo is now available on our local website under "Members Only". It is an excellent Bible Study. You are encouraged to take the time to study it.

Bible Study: Our next Bible Study, continuing in James 1 will be on Thursday February 11, @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday February 18 at 7:30 p.m. is the tentative date for our next meeting with the Halifax congregation.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org – under "Members Only" and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

- Let us pray for the Church to put first things first which is **to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind.** The secondary commandment and flowing from the first is **to love our neighbour as ourselves.**
- Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."** (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)
- Let us pray that God will strengthen his people with faith, perseverance, and love during this difficult pandemic period and that the good news of the Gospel will be spread widely.
- Please pray for the leadership of GCI as they seek to lead us in the will of God to help all of us participate in what Jesus is doing now.
- Please thank God for his church and pray for God's universal church as Jesus is directing it and helping all of us to grow in his grace and knowledge of Him by the Holy Spirit.
- Please pray for all people in Canada and elsewhere who are increasingly suffering from various kinds of mental and emotional problems sometimes leading to increasing violence in families, overwhelming the health care system and damaging so many lives.
- Please pray for the children who are negatively affected by this pandemic and for their parents who are too oftentimes feeling overwhelmed juggling work responsibilities, distant learning, etc.
- Let us pray that God will give us to wisdom to know how he is working and how he wants us to humbly participate in his work of salvation. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."** (Eph 2:10 ESV)
- Let us pray, **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven".** (Matt. 6:9-10)

Offerings: (Paraphrase of some information given by Mr. Hall, GCI Canadian Director): Just a reminder that any donations we receive via either Credit Card or Canada Helps are subject to about a 3-3.5% fee which means any donations we receive for your congregation, are reduced by that amount. Direct Debit (Pre-authorized Payment) or E-Transfers have much lower transaction fees, that we do not back charge to the local congregation. (Cheques do not have a transaction fee). A person can send E-transfers to khorwood@gcicanada.ca if their bank uses INTERACT. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. If your bank permits, you can also write your name and address. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below. You can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** You can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/7735>. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

T4 FYI some may ask about donations they gave via Canada Helps. As a registered Canada Helps issues tax receipts for donations to the church given through their portal. (From Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director Feb. 6, 2021)

An Easter Preparation Challenge

February 1, 2021(gci.org)

Rick Shallenberger



In a world full of social and political division, we are not called to take sides and thus be part of the division. Easter Preparation season reminds us we are called to be centered in Jesus and to point others to him.

The Easter Preparation message is simple—Jesus saves. Social justice doesn't save, political affiliation doesn't save, leaders don't save, pastors don't save—only Jesus saves. It isn't that we should not pay attention to these other things, and we are not saying these

other things are not important, but the noise and polarization should not cloud out Jesus and become our new center of focus. Easter Preparation is a time for recentering on Jesus—who he is, what he did, what he is doing, and what he is going to do.

Let's be honest. During the past year Facebook and other social media platforms have been the medium for many well-meaning Christians to share their opinions about all kinds of topics in our hope to influence people to a particular way of thinking. I've seen well-meaning Christians write about every conspiracy theory imaginable. I can read why masks are good, and why they have no value and are just another means to control the population. I can read about the blessing of a Covid vaccine, and why the vaccine is a means by a corrupt few to change our DNA. I can read political posts that range from why our previous U.S. president was God's chosen to how pastors should apologize for even encouraging people to pray for him, to how our new president is now the answer to our nation's troubles.

What breaks my heart is how easy it is for Christians (myself included) to fall into the trap of thinking the issues in the world are more important than preaching about Christ and him crucified. Yes, I include myself because I admit I've read more of these posts than I should, I've commented on more than I should, and I've not taken advantage of opportunities to stand up for Jesus. This includes standing for Jesus when I see the name of Jesus used to justify wrong behavior or mistreating others.

Standing up for Jesus in the midst of all the political and social angst is not a popular stand. I even read posts criticizing Christians for praying, rather than protesting. Isn't prayer our go to? Shouldn't prayer and asking God to lead us be the foundation of our participation with Father, Son and Spirit? Shouldn't we be praying in the midst of standing for what Jesus stands for? I recently read Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and was moved once again at his conviction to stand for what Jesus stood for—equality for all, and always under the umbrella of nonviolence.

Here are a few observations about Jesus that might help us in this season to prepare for Easter.

Jesus was passionate for God and for people, not for society, politics or our own interpretation of justice. I can't help but think of what Jesus did when he saw the temple—the house of God—being used for things other than developing a relationship with God. He held nothing back when he saw offenses toward God. He went in the temple and turned over the tables of the money changers, reminding all who would hear that the temple was to be called a house of prayer. Healthy churches are houses of prayer—a place free from political or social division and rancor. We are passionate for all of God's people and we stand up and let others know this—regardless of how others judge us or even persecute us.

Jesus lived in the world but did not involve himself with the divisions, causes and social systems of the world. In contrast, he taught people about God's social system, which includes loving and accepting all others. His primary message about the kingdom was telling the Jews that Gentile lives matter too. He suffered the consequences of bringing a message of light to a darkened world—it killed him. Healthy churches are cross-generational and cross-cultural havens of acceptance for all—where all are accepted, loved, included and treated as brothers and sisters of Jesus. In a healthy church we stand up when we see others persecuted against or not treated as equals. When differences occur, we acknowledge that godly men and women can have different opinions, and we listen to each other and learn from each other in a spirit of love.

Jesus came as a Prince of Peace. The Jews wanted him to overthrow Roman rule, but he told them to pay taxes. They wanted a king on a white horse, but he rode a donkey. They wanted a change in their government and their systems, but he taught a change of heart. Healthy churches are houses of peace, where our central focus is on Jesus and on how we can share his love and his life with others. We are peacemakers because the Prince of Peace lives in us. This doesn't mean apathy; it means we stand for the peace of all. When others are being mistreated, we stand for them—again, even if it means we suffer the consequences.

What is the Easter Preparation challenge? To stand for Jesus.

To acknowledge what is going on in current events, and to remind our churches that what we preach is Jesus and him crucified ([1 Corinthians 1:23-24; 2:2](#)). This means we preach the gospel of the kingdom of God and the message that all are forgiven, loved, equal, and included.

To preach that the social injustices we see are the result of people not putting their trust and faith in Jesus and preaching that the difference we make is by loving people as Jesus did ([John 13:34-35](#)). This goes beyond just preaching—it means standing for those Jesus stood for, and died for.

To remind our churches to be hospitals for sinners, and to remind all that within the walls of the church there is no Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, Republican or Democrat. All are the beloved children of the Father ([Galatians 3:28](#)).

To center and recenter everything we do as a church around the gospel of Christ. To acknowledge he is the center of all things and it is in him we live and move and have our being ([Acts 17:28](#)).

We were chosen to represent Jesus only ([Ephesians 1:11](#)).

May we use this season of Easter Preparation to stand for Jesus.

Accepting the challenge to recenter, Rick Shallenberger

REVELATION: REVELATION IT'S NO MYSTERY (from gci.org)

The book of Revelation holds special interest for many Christians. With its strange, many-headed monsters and mystifying symbols, Revelation has provided through the centuries the raw material for a myriad of equally strange and mystifying interpretations and predictions.

From the second century on, every succeeding generation of Christians has had its prophecy pundits who claimed to understand and rightly “interpret” Revelation's symbols as referring to nations and events in their particular day and “proving” that Christ would return in their generation. And all of them were wrong.

Our generation is no different. With a Bible in one hand, newspaper clippings in the other and a wall full of maps behind, our modern pushers of prediction ad-diction use the power of electronic media to give the 1900-year-old message of the book of Revelation a new scramble and generate big dollars in donations to get out their “urgent” message before it's “too late.”

But how *should* Revelation be interpreted? To whom was it written and why? What is its real message for Christians today?

“What must soon take place”

Most biblical scholars agree that Revelation was written sometime in the late first century after the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish Temple (A.D. 70). The intense persecution against Christians in Rome launched by the Roman emperor Nero would have been at least a recent vivid memory for believers, and renewed abuse

by Roman authorities was an ever-present fear. Christian hope was understandably challenged by the stories of Roman Christians being rounded up and imprisoned, butchered, fed to lions in the arena, enslaved, or smeared with tar and burned as human torches on crosses along Roman roadsides.

The author of Revelation describes himself as John, writing as an exile on an island in the Aegean Sea called Patmos, located off the coast of what is today south-western Turkey. His purpose is simple: "...to show his [Jesus'] servants what must soon take place" ([Revelation 1:1](#)). In other words, the author was writing about events of his day, not about the flow of history through the centuries and millennia to come after him.

Apparently, however, it's no fun to believe that Revelation was actually about things that were to take place "soon" after the book was written. Here we are, 19 centuries later, still trying to find ways to interpret it as having been written for our day.

Apocalyptic style

The name of the book of Revelation is taken from its first verse: "The revelation of Jesus Christ." The word *revelation* is translated from the Greek word *apokalypsos*, which means "unveiling" or "revealing."

Another term for the book of Revelation, "The Apocalypse," comes from this Greek word. In modern English, *apocalypse* has come to imply "disaster" or "appalling destruction." Yet the original word simply referred to an unfolding, or opening, of events that, in the case of John's book, were to come to pass in the near future.

John chose to write in a special literary style well known to Jews and early Christians called "apocalyptic." Apocalyptic uses fantastic images and symbols to describe God's judgment and victory over the oppressors of his people and all evil. It was popular during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. The symbols and figures in apocalyptic writing were not to be taken literally, but were to be understood in the context of the apocalyptic style, similar to the way we might understand the symbolism of a political cartoon today.

The symbols found in Revelation might appear strange to Christians of later centuries, and they have certainly been the subject of great debate and mystery. But John used them because they were understood by the Christians of his day.

Revelation was not a riddle book to enable Christians of future generations to decipher when Jesus would return. It was a book of hope and encouragement to Christians of the first century,
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written to assure them that in spite of all evidence to the contrary, Jesus Christ had already won the final victory over all tyrants and tyranny.

Even if the faithful saints must face martyrdom at the hands of the enemies of God, Revelation assures its readers, in time they will be vindicated, raised from the dead in glory and reign with Christ. Therefore, Revelation urges, the faithful should trust Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and resist any temptation to give their allegiance to those who stand against him.

Message for today

That message has the same striking force for Christians today. Whatever despots arise, wherever tyranny takes hold, Christians are assured by the message of Revelation that the day of their deliverance and vindication is coming. **"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (21:4).**

Jesus has already won the victory over the devil and all forms of devilish oppression. Though the faithful might die at the hands of the wicked, their place with the risen and victorious Lamb of God is assured. Whenever throughout history Christians have faced persecution and oppression, even as many do today in various parts of the world, they have found John's apocalyptic book a source of great faith-building joy.

Revelation is a message of hope to all Christians through every century who find themselves walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Because Jesus reigns, every believer's story, no matter how dismal it might be in the present, will end triumphantly.

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'" ([Revelation 21:3-4](#)).

Not so mysterious

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the

heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. (Rev. 13:13)

What on earth does that mean?

Many scholars, preachers and religious hobbyists, of course, have been painting the symbolism of Revelation with all sorts of creative interpretations for nearly two thousand years. But it's helpful for us to take note that all these seemingly baffling symbols would have made perfect sense to the people for whom Revelation was originally written. A modern counterpart might be political cartoons, whose exaggerated or even wildly distorted symbols and caricatures make perfect sense to us today.

Political cartoons use stereotyped images. G. R. Beasley-Murray calls the political cartoon "the closest modern parallel" to Revelation's symbols (*Revelation*, The New Century Bible Commentary, p. 17). For example, there is John Bull, who represents the temper of Britain, and Uncle Sam, the spirit of the United States. The lion also represents Britain and the eagle the United States. Two other symbols are the Russian bear and the Chinese dragon.

Often these and other political figures are drawn as caricatures. Says Beasley-Murray, "Frequently the situations depicted are deliberately exaggerated, and even made grotesque, in order that the message may be made plain." The operative word here is plain. That's what the symbols of Revelation were to John's congregations. They were plain, simple and quickly understood. Beasley-Murray explains the point further:



"The symbols by which the contemporary political forces and the spiritual powers of heaven and hell are portrayed [in Revelation] were as traditional as Britannia and the British lion, the Russian bear, and the Chinese dragon.... What to the uninitiated modern reader appears grotesque imagery, spoke with power to John's fellow Christians."

Most people are familiar with George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, in which animals speak. The book itself is a political-social statement about the excesses of political leadership and the subjugation of the weak. We do not think the book bizarre because animals talk in it. We know it is symbolic. We also readily understand the

meaning of Orwell's symbols — and enjoy them. In fact, it was precisely because of the form in which *Animal Farm* was written that has made it a timeless piece of literature.

There are several lessons in this. First, we should not consider Revelation strange or bizarre. To its original readers, the book was easy to understand, extremely interesting and thoroughly meaningful. If we look for the overarching message to all Christians instead of the specific details intended for first-century believers, Revelation can be all those things to us as well.

Five keys to unlocking the strange book of Revelation

1. Revelation was written to encourage late first-century Christians in the wake of severe persecution.
2. It was written in a special literary style understood by first-century Christians and characterized by fantastic beasts and mystical symbols set in a titanic battle between good and evil.
3. Its message is consistent with the rest of Scripture, a declaration of the good news of Jesus Christ and a call for patience in faith as believers await their vindication and glory.
4. Its central figure is the slain, risen, victorious Jesus Christ.
5. Its central theme is the ultimate salvation of the saints.

Thomas Torrance: Apocalypse or Revelation is the unveiling of history already invaded and conquered by the Lamb of God. Apocalypse means the unveiling of new creation. At its very heart Revelation means the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

— *The Apocalypse Today*

Gordon Fee: Revelation is a Christian prophecy cast in apocalyptic style and imagery and finally put in letter form, dealing primarily with tribulation (suffering) and salvation for God's people and God's wrath (judgment) on the Roman Empire.

— *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*

Ben Witherington III: Indeed if one is a student of the history of the interpretation of Revelation, one recognizes a near 100 percent failure rate when matching up images and events in Revelation with particular historical figures.

— *Revelation (New Cambridge Bible Commentary)*

Craig S. Keener: John's symbolic language is meant as evocative imagery, to elicit particular responses, rather than as a detailed literal picture of events.

— *The IVP Bible Background Commentary (New Testament)*

G. B. Caird: John uses his allusions not as a code in which each symbol requires separate and exact translation, but rather for their evocative and emotive power. This is not photographic art. His aim is to set the echoes of memory and association ringing.... The first readers were almost certainly well versed in the sort of symbolic language and imagery in which the book is written. Whether they had formerly been Jews or pagans, they would read the language of myth as fluently as any modern reader of the daily papers reads the conventional symbols of a political cartoon.

— *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Black's New Testament Commentaries)

M. Eugene Boring: Revelation has continued to speak directly to the church in times and places where Christians with no political or economic power have experienced inhuman cruelty, such as the Nazi era in Europe or the church today in countries governed by oppressive dictatorships. Response to the message of Revelation is an expression of faith in the faithfulness of God in a situation which gives no indication of it in this world.
— *Revelation (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching)*

PS Another view of when the Book of Revelation was written:

"When did John have this experience conveyed in the Revelation? Somewhere between A.D. 92 and 96, most likely in 96. In A.D. 92 difficult times became more difficult. Persecution in the Roman Empire had already begun in A.D. 65 under Emperor Nero and intensified in 67 A.D. under the Emperor Vespasian. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 Peter and Paul had been crucified, Timothy murdered. But in A.D. 92 things got worse. Domitian was the Emperor. He was a profoundly insecure man (as most tyrants are). To compensate for his insecurity, he ordered all citizens and subject of the Roman Empire to worship him as Lord and God, Dominus et Deus. He changed the name of the Roman empire to "Eternal Empire" and called himself "Everlasting King." All citizens and subjects were to go to the temple built in his honour, take a pinch of incense, throw it on the fire of the altar and say Caesar Kurios, "Caesar is Lord." Domitian did not care what else people believed as long as they did this "little act of worship," an act of worship which was the glue that held his empire together. (From *DISCIPLESHIP ON THE EDGE and Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* by Darrell W. Johnson pages 23-24)

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—a) www.gci.org, b) www.gcinewbrunswick.org, c) www.gcicanada.ca; d) www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton ;

For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email— evautour47@outlook.com