

New'Brew | Revelation

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

book, people, revelation, apocalypse, author, churches, god, images, written, message, numbers, text, called, christ, beasts, read, jesus, hebrew bible, letters, congregation

SPEAKERS

Tony Chvala-Smith, Josh Mangelson, Karin Peter, Charmaine Chvala-Smith

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to New Brew, the Project Zion series that's been taking us through the New Testament by explaining, exploring and experiencing the text. Our guides through the New Testament are Tony and Charmaine Chavala-Smith. And I'm your host, Karin Peter. You can see Tony and Charmaine Chavala-Smith and me and the wonderful slides that they offer as part of the discussion that we have. If you go to Latter-Day Seeker Ministries YouTube channel. Now, in today's episode, we are at the end of the New Testament, and we will be looking at what has to be the most misunderstood book in the New Testament. And that is the book of Revelation. So between the legacy of future telling and left behind populist theology and movies about Armageddon, Revelation has a lot of baggage attached to it from all of those things in our, our cultural experience. So let's see how Tony and Charmaine unpack this particular book for us. So let's dive into the text. is your right Revelation. Revelation is a playground for ignorance on, shall we say, a biblical scale? It's excellent. It's a, it's the place where many people go who should not go there. All right. All right. It's the Carnival Cruise Buffet.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:10

Indeed. So, I think we decided that probably the best place to begin is to say that it really is an irony as to how this book gets, both portrayed and used. The book of Revelation...the original purpose of this book... the only reason it was written, was to encourage people, to let them know that God was with them in a very difficult time, and assurance that God knew what was happening, and would be with them, and that it's God's job in the end, for any judgement kinds of things. And it gives us glimpses of what God's desire is for humanity, and it's good. It's good. And that's why it's so disturbing and ironic that it gets used in so many negative fear-producing ways. And we'll talk a little bit about that. But I wanted to say, first of all, the main reason this was written was to encourage people to stay faithful to know that God was with them. And if you get nothing else from this, you can stop right now and you got that message.

Karin Peter 03:33

Don't even have to listen to the rest of the podcast.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:36

Don't listen to all those other naysayers and the ones who are trying to use it to whip up some fear and somehow thinking that that's going to help people develop a really good relationship with God if, if they're afraid of some end time in the future.

Karin Peter 03:52

But let's see how we can look at it through a different lens.

Tony Chvala-Smith 03:53

That's the main place to start here is with the question of literary genre. This is where all the mistakes get made, right? What is it I am reading, right? If you get you get a Hallmark card from your beloved on Valentine's Day, and you think, oh my gosh, that's a newspaper editorial, you are going to be misreading the intent and the message of this card. So the primary mistake that readers typically make this book is it's a two fold mistake. First of all, they assume that in the Bible, prophecy is always future telling. You only assume that this is a book of prophetic future telling, simply because the author in chapter one says, it speaks of the words of the prophecy of this book, when in fact, in the biblical tradition, especially in the Old Testament tradition, prophecy is not foretelling much at all. It's describing the present predicament, the present circumstances, from the God's-eye perspective, which is what the prophet in the Hebrew Bible gets to understand and what the seer in the book of Revelation gets to see. Right? So the genre of this book is an apocalypse. Chapters two and three, which are sometimes called the letters to the churches, are more like prophetic pronouncements to the churches. Everything else in the book fits in the genre of the apocalypse. And so we have to know what an Apocalypse was, in the first century, if we want to make sense of the book, as the author intended it, and as the first readers would have read it. So that's what we're going to do. First, we're going to spend a little more time than we usually do on literary genre, because it's so important. So when we talk about genre, to put it in a current cultural context, if I begin to tell you something, and I'm like, once upon a time, right there, you've got indicators that this is a fairy tale. And right then there's going to be a princess and the Prince and a toad and evil somebody. You know what's going to happen? You know, it's not a Stephen King novel. Right? So when we talk about genre, that's the kind of thing we're talking about.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:11

Different literary forms, different ways of writing something. And authors in all times have had a variety of options that they can use to communicate what they want to communicate. Some kinds of things because of its very nature, lend itself towards certain types of communication. And that is this the situation with apocalypses.

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:35

So the first thing we'll say is that the book of Revelation is an apocalypse. And so the genre Apocalypse gets its title, from the Greek verb, Apocalypso, which in Greek means to uncover something right to take the veil off something to reveal something. So scholars use that word to define to describe this genre of literature. And apocalypses, as a type of literature arose in Judaism, we'll say roughly around 200 BCE. And they had a lifespan of about 300 years. So the last of the Jewish apocalypses, are written around 100 CE, early, early into the second century. And the book of Revelation has most of the features of these Jewish apocalypses. So it's, it's part of the genre.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:24

And this is one of those places where we're reminded again, that the earliest Christians were all Jews, and their scripture is the Old Testament, and there isn't a New Testament, until, you know, 300 and something with consensus on typically, what books will be in it. But, everybody who is part of Christianity is going to be richly blessed in and steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures. So the fact that this way of communicating that you would find in some of the Hebrew Scriptures is a natural, especially in a situation where people are under duress where, in this case, the Romans are starting to more systematically persecute Christians and prosecute Christians. And so this kind of literature that helps the oppressed speak their fear, their agony, and their need for hope, is really appropriate.

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:33

So the term apocalypse then refers to this kind of literature as it's revelatory literature. In which, in an apocalypse, the author/seer narrates, in some way, an experience or a series of experiences he has had of a visionary nature. And these experiences were designed to uncover the meaning of what's going on now. We'll have to say again, and again, in the Apocalypse, as the predictive element is very minimal, and it's not far off prediction, it's near near future, which the the revelation that the author has received, and this goes for Jewish Apocalypse as to the revelation is is for the readers right then. And any future talk is designed to give them a sense that the desired future is really close by. So this genre Charaine mentioned this genre of literature emerged in Judaism in the second century BCE, in times of severe persecution when Jewish people found themselves being hammered by outside powers for just simply for being Jews. The one piece of apocalyptic literature that is in the Hebrew Bible is the book of Daniel. And in that book, chapter 7 through 12 are the apocalypse and it's actually a series of apocalypses and it's very easy to place that book. Those visions are speaking to Jews during the Maccabean revolt, roughly around 165 BCE, when the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes, had simply outlawed Judaism, and many Jews who are not converting to Hellenism, or to Greek ways of thinking, were just being tortured and murdered. So the book of Daniel was written in that situation. And, in every Apocalypse, and there's a lot of non-canonical ones, but in every apocalypse, you can pretty much detect what the historical situation is. And they all are literature that come out of situations of where there's like, violent suppression of the faithful for some reason. And so for this reason, I like to say the apocalyptic literature is resistance literature. Right, it was, it intends to help struggling readers find a way to resist not not physically or violently, but to resist faithfully the temptation to abandon their faith and hope, because of the persecution. So that's a really important key for understanding them. This is true of the of the book of Revelation, too. It's, it's, it's really, it's really good resistance literature. So we mentioned that the genre, this genre's aim is not predictive. It's what we'd call hortatory. That is a day it aims to exhort the readers to keep faith, even amidst situations that are really brutal and horrible. So that's what the the authors are trying to do. Imagine you're an embattled Jew in the second century BCE, or you're a Christian in Roman Asia in the late first century, when Revelation was written, and you receive this text that's read in the worship service, with all these images, and so on. And imagine that somehow, the text is intended for the 21st century. What? Wow.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:01

What it's not for us.

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:04

Absolutely. So. So this literature is written for an original audience. And that's so important for understanding what's going on. One of the ways the apocalypses do what they do, is that they try to describe the author's mystical experiences, and their experience of God's presence in various kinds of fantastic ways, right? Beasts, objects, dragons, numbers, everything is described in very mystical terms.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:44

And with heightened sense of threat, that these horrible beasts are about to do something or destroy something, they're at the door, they're coming. They are the, the part of the systems that run our lives, it's all of it's all there.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:04

So it'd be very easy to figure out in the book of Revelation that, that the dragon is Satan. And there's two beasts the first beast is the Roman Empire. And the second beast is the apparatus of worship connected to the Roman rulers. So it's very easy to figure it out, right and so but depicting oppressive realities with beast imagery, conveys to the imagination, the feeling something of the reality of it. Like our political cartoons sometimes use animals and characters to convey certain things, that needs to be conveyed at a feeling level, not just a head level. So one of the things that's interesting about the apocalypse is that they, they use a lot of language and terminology from the Hebrew Bible. They seldom give long quotes in the Hebrew Bible, though. In other words, they, they take images, language, concepts, terms, and they're sort of retooling it. But it's, it's pretty easy to see like, for example, the book of Revelation makes heavy use of images and language from Daniel and from Ezekiel. And from other books of the Hebrew Bible. Yeah, from Psalm and from Isaiah. So a first reader of one of these texts, it's assumed that they are familiar with the Jewish Scriptures. And that would give us a little bit of a clue about the author's audience. They may primarily have been Jewish Christians, or Christians who had some connection to Judaism or the synagogue. And so they would have immediately caught the biblical imagery that's been used throughout it. And so basically, so we're gonna kind of give you the short version. Apocalypses always aim to keep hope in God's presence, and hope for God's justice alive among the readers. So in a nutshell, all apocalypses, Jewish Christian, canonical, noncanonical This includes the Book of Revelation, they have a very simple message when you strip it down. It's God is sovereign in history. Things are things are bad, and they're going to get worse before they get better, which is going to be quickly, very soon. We're almost there. Now, are we there yet? Yes, we're almost there. So stay true. Evil and suffering, and oppression and violence will not have the last word in God's creation. And there will be final justice. So now, if you compare the book of Revelation with say, the Jewish apocalypse, Fourth Ezra, with the Jewish apocalypse, Second Baruch, there's a bunch of these right? Obviously, each one will have its own distinctive cast, and so on. But when you pare their message down, that's pretty much where you'll come out with all of them. Endure, endure, endure. Trust God, trust, trust God. God's got this, hang in there, don't give up is pretty much the message of an apocalypse. So we thought what we do next is, we're going to take a look at chapter one of the book of Revelation. And be able to see some of these features, starting in verse nine.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:29

So, this is a passage, 9 to 20. And I'm just going to go ahead and read it to you. And we can stop partway through and make some of the comments that tie in with what we've described so far as the genre. So Revelation 1:9-20. And this is the introduction, the author introducing himself. So, I, John,

your brother who share with you in Jesus, the persecution, and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. So it's one sentence, but it tells us a whole bunch. So he's recognizing that he's acknowledging to them, that he is sharing in the problems of right now, because of Jesus, because of belief in Jesus, and the persecution, and so he's kind of giving a short version here: persecution, the Kingdom, patient endurance. We're going to look at all of that. It is basically in his letter. But then he's saying he's on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. So he is there, he's been exiled to this little island, by the Romans, which you're gonna talk a little bit more about exile, being a kind of punishment, rather than killing someone who is saying things you don't want, because that will make them a martyr. You exile them away from family, from community, from everything. But, he is able to write this about this vision and have it sent to the churches. So then he starts to explain what happened to him. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, meaning in prayer or meditation. And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, write in a book, what you see, and send it to the seven churches to Ephesus, to Smyrna, Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. So these are the seven churches as seven here being an important number, wholeness, which again, is one of those numbers important in Hebrew Scriptures. But it's also naming these seven congregations that are in pretty near proximity to each other.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:05

They're all in Roman Asia too, same Providence.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:08

And so he's naming them but there's something really powerful about you being named as the reason why this vision came to someone. So this is God noticing you. And I think that's important to see as we start out this, this book. So then the author, the one who's having the vision, John, then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, And on turning I saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed in a long robe with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair wore white as white wool white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnish bronze refined as in a furnace in his voice was like the sound of many warm waters. In his right hand, he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp two edged sword. And his face was like the sun shining with full force. What a description? And when we start looking at the particulars here, we'll begin to see as so someone saw one, like the Son of Man, this is a description of Jesus, basically. But all of these descriptors clothed in a long robe with a golden sash. These are old testament images that people would have recognized his head and hair white as white wool, white as snow, these would have been terms that would have been used in reference to God. And so, again, already, we're seeing this equating of Jesus, and God as being of the same nature. His feet were like burnished bronze, again, refined as in a furnace, and his voice like many waters.

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:09

Some of this language here comes from Daniel chapter seven. So the apocalyptic author's borrowing image images from apocalypse, which we know that they did, they shared images, there's a common fund of images across these books, which may be why at the end of Revelation, the author says, don't add to this book anymore, because he knows that apocalyptic authors do that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:29

And it's very interesting things like, and from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. And his face was like the sun shining with full force. So there's at least one other place where Jesus actually goes into battle with this sword that comes from his mouth. And, and the idea here is that he's not the only weapon he's taking is God's word, the word exists in, actually in Revelation, Jesus is called the Word of God. So so it's very interesting in which chapter was I looking at earlier, but it's where this whole idea that Jesus on this white horse and the righteous on white horses will go into battle. But all he's taking is this sword, the words that he brings about God, as his weapon. And so it's, it's one of the things you'll find in Apocalypse is you'll find images that we usually think of, in one way, being completely used in another way. So the idea of a sword not being used to physically kill people, but to to right the wrong, to help people see with clarity, what has been deceptive previously. So lots of Old Testament images there. And then when I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead, but he placed his right hand on me saying, Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last, and the living one, I was dead and see, I'm alive forever and ever. And I have the keys of death and of Hades. Now, right, what you have seen what is and what is to take place after this. So here's the so all the self-identifying, again, we're seeing all these different messages that are telling us that this is Jesus, this is Christ. Do not be afraid, you know, that whole message that keeps coming through the Gospels when God is revealed in some way, or Christ is revealed. I am the First and the Last. This is an assurance that you can trust me for what is to come, as you have trusted me for what already is, I am the living one. And then that whole thing about there, some of the these Christians have died. Because of their belief. I was dead. And see now I'm alive. So it's like he's identifying with their greatest fears. I have the keys of death and Hades. that death is not the last word for those whom you've lost or for your own fears of death. So now again, write what you have seen. And then, and then this is wonderful, because this is something that lots of people don't realize, and that is that the author of the book of Revelation often tells us what these symbols mean. So we have this tendency to say, Ooh, we need to have some template that will tell us exactly what all of these images are. But the author does quite a bit of that for us if we're willing to listen to them instead of just make up our own stuff that will scare somebody. So for as for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, Christ's tan, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. And the seven lampstands are the seven churches. So the seven churches that were mentioned, there's this idea that there's an angel or that the Spirit is present in a real form or real sense in each of the churches. And so here is this image of Christ walking among the congregations and, and being present with them, and that the Spirit is already there in each of those as well. So this is one of those places where the author tells us what the symbols mean.

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:47

And also, it's really important to understand there's a whole political side to what's being said here. And we're gonna say more about that shortly when we get to setting. But, Imperial Rome controls everything, right? And here's someone Imperial Rome executed, who says, Oh, nope, sorry, I'm alive. I'm in charge of death and the underworld, not Rome. And then that down below this the seven stars. In Bart Ehrman's introduction to the New Testament, he has a picture a photo of a coin, that was minted during the reign of the emperor Domitian. And the mission is Domitian has behind the scenes here in this book, we're gonna get to him soon. The emperor Domitian, at the birth of one of his sons had a coin minted. And it shows, it shows this little infant child holding out his hand to the seven stars equaling the universe to seven planets. And inscription talks about the divine, the son of the divine emperor, Domitian. And so this right here is raising a counterpoint. Who really, who really holds the universe in his hand, not the emperor, not the Roman Empire, but actually Jesus who was crucified and

who is still alive. And so the first readers of this probably had had that coin in their pockets, you know, and so the political implications of this theological texts would have been immediately transparent to the first readers. Okay, go ahead and stop share. Sure. Okay. So that gives us a taste of a lot of features of the apocalypses, are present in those few lines there. So, next question would be well, who wrote this, and the author names himself as John. But this author is not the same author as the one who wrote the Gospel of John. Totally different style, totally different word use. This author's Greek is clearly his second language. He writes Greek as if you were thinking in Aramaic, or maybe Hebrew, whereas the Gospel of John is not written like that. So, so we don't have any reason to say his name isn't John, it's John. It's just not John the Apostle. It's not John, the Beloved, which is a thing that has been made up, we don't know that the beloved disciple was called John. And it's not the same author as the one who wrote first, second, third, John, the Letters, and who identifies himself as the Elder. So we have some early Christian prophet named John, who is connected to the tradition out of which the Gospel of John comes and the Letters come. Scholars refer to that as the Johannine tradition, just as a shorthand, but this is a different author from those. And then when well, current scholarship generally agrees that this book comes from very late in the reign of the emperor Domitian. So that's 95 to 96, of the first century. And then if we look at the setting of the book, there's two things we have to know first of all. From a variety sources, we know that in Roman Asia, late in the first century, there were local persecutions of Christians, because of their refusal to engage in a form of veneration of our worship of the emperor, the emperor statue or the emperor standard or something like that. So, Domitian we know claimed, unlike his predecessors, claimed that he was Lord and God while he was still alive.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:21

Usually emperors waited you know, is after they died, they were made gods that could be worshipped and could find favor with them.

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:31

The middleman. Right, and so special. So, we also know that the cities of Roman Asia, one of which Ephesus was a huge city, the cities of Roman Asia would try to compete with each other to see who could show the most veneration to the emperor, because of course, you got stuff from Rome if you're ... Yeah, yeah. So, here's the situation late in the first century Christians, even Christian of a Jewish background, are no longer connected to the synagogues. And Roman law and practice allowed Jews to be exempt from these emperor worship things because of they saw Judaism as an ancient religion. And so they just kind of said, Alright, we're going to grandfather that in. But Christianity was treated by now as a new religion that had no standing. And so Christians in these congregations, in Ephesus in Smyrna, and so on, they're faced with the situation of do I do the emperor worship, and if I don't, I'm going to stand out like a sore thumb and then be the victim of not only just ostracism, but then it's going to start to get violent, too. So that's the situation on the ground in Asia. And then the author, Charmaine mentioned, he's she's on the island of Patmos, he's been banished. That indicates that the Romans saw him as some kind of a ringleader or leader. It's, it's a little odd, if this is the Roman punishment called *relegatio ad insulam*, that is, banishment to an island. Typically, as far as we know, that was for that was for somebody with Roman citizenship. So, if the author had Roman citizenship, he didn't lose it. But he lost contact, he was no longer able to be present in person in Roman Asia. And it would have been for an unspecified amount of time, this was not alright 30 days and you're out. The Romans could keep him there indefinitely. So, we know that Romans, Roman Empire used islands, little islands in the Aegean Sea as exile islands too. So, that's his situation. He is somehow in charge of these churches.

We don't know how he doesn't describe himself as a bishop or anything like that. He describes himself as a prophet, but he is connected to them. And he's stuck on the island. If it was that particular Roman punishment, he apparently could write and have visitors. That's probably how this got off the island in the first place. But now he's, he's stuck out there for the duration. So then, who is this addressed to? Well, we have those seven churches in Roman Asia, and they're struggling, these churches are struggling with external forces and internal forces. Obviously, the external forces are the forces of persecution and social pushback, because of the being Christians. The inner situation is sort of outlined in those we'll call them the letters to the churches. These churches are in various degrees of health and unhealthy and one of the things that's going on internally in the in the churches is there are some people who are saying something like, he's not really a God. Let's just do the sacrifice and be done with it. And then we'll be fine and others are same can't do that. That's worshipping an idol. So, it's that kind of tension. And some of these some of the churches if we follow the letters, some of the churches are one of them is lukewarm.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:04

One has forgotten its first love, the first love of God and now it's cooled, and perhaps is more concerned about its cultural standing than it is about its relationship with

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:19

God. One of them is like, we've got tons of reserves in the bank, we're good. We're risk we don't need anything. To which John says, You have no idea how needy you are. Right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:31

Another has some leaders within it that are kind of leading people astray. And so they're warned about that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:37

And at least one of these churches has had somebody martyred ... somebody killed because of being a Christian. So, their congregation is in various states of crisis really. And that's then John has this experience and, or series of experiences, and then writing something like the Apocalypse of John is not something you did in a weekend. A this is a long, complicated text, right? So, he didn't just jot this down.

Karin Peter 34:07

Well, he had a lot of time on the island. There's no shopping there's no Amazon to deliver, I mean...

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:17

And all you've got is olives and fish, so tired of olives and fish right so but so this this book is addressed to Christians in a real historical crisis moment. But numbers are always symbolic in this book too, their symbolic of bigger realities. And so the seven churches represent the church.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:42

The wholeness... the complete church so everyone can overhear for themselves the good news in it as well.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:50

So, what's the message then to these people? Well, first we're gonna say this is what the message is not, because we have to go over this again and again and again because you know American religious culture for sure. But other places in the world the book of Revelation is so horribly misread and misused and people are abused with it. We it's sort of a cultural default setting that really needs to be overcome.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:14

Well, there's actually a lot of people who are afraid to read the book of Revelation. Because, either they or someone they know have been traumatized by it. And they're afraid of what it says. Which, wow, that's, talk about harming people with Scripture and harming scripture for people.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:36

So that what the message is not, well, for one thing, this message is not a call to passivity. Right? The message is not do nothing, because you can't change the future. It's not that at all. It's rather quite opposite of that. Practice hope because there's going to be a different future. The message of the book of Revelation is not get revenge be violent join a survivalist group. Right. All that kind of nonsense. It's not that at all. There's no vengeance on the part of the readers that is allowed in the book of Revelation. This message is not a prediction of the 21st century. You cannot find

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:22

it's not about us, it's not about us.

Tony Chvala-Smith 36:28

In the 1980s, people were trying to find Gorbachev and Reagan in the book. And so, it's like, no, no, no, no, no, is uninformed reading of a text, right? So, the message of the book is, is not that we'll be raptured soon, first of all, the word rapture and doesn't appear in the Bible. And secondly, this book is not about people going up to heaven, it's about heaven coming down to earth. Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:53

Also, another thing it's not, it doesn't talk about the Antichrist. The term Antichrist is not in the book of Revelation.

Karin Peter 37:02

It's in all the movies that were based on the book of Revelation.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:07

And the people who did those movies are laughing on their way to the bank.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:12

They were uninformed, as to what is actually in Scripture.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:17

The message of the book is not be careful about using credit cards, or you'll get the mark of the beast on you. It's not that right. It's not so and so is the Antichrist, you insert your favorite villain or enemies, not that, right. And the message of the book of Revelation is definitely not, "it's all predicted in the book

of Revelation." No, it's not. That's a disastrously horrible misreading of the book. So, what is the message we had to go negative first, because we've got to get that stuff off the table? Well, the main figure in this book is the lamb. The lamb who, who was slaughtered and is alive, and it's the Lamb who has already conquered death, who is the real power in the midst of history, not the Roman Empire. So that's pretty cool. Actually, when you think about it. Suffering love, and not oppressing others, is the key to the future in this book. God's judgment on the Roman Empire has already begun. That's part of the message of the book. The reign of God is near us. That's part of its message to its first readers. Christ. At the end of the book, there's a wonderful invitation. Christ's invitation remains open to use the word come, come, come, come. Please, please come. Meaning to hang in there with following Jesus for the readers themselves, or to keep resisting the Empire keep living this new way. Don't give up hope. All that's connected with coming to Christ, as the book describes.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 38:57

I'll read that if that's all right. So, it's Revelation 22. Starting 16 through 17, it is I Jesus who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star, the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Let everyone who hears say Come, let everyone who is thirsty, come, let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:30

And what's really fascinating about the book of Revelation as an apocalypse when you read it against some other Jewish apocalypse is from the period is that, for example, that the Jewish Apocalypse called Fourth Ezra, which is from exactly the same time period, dealing with some of the same issues, but from a Jewish perspective. The apocalypse of Ezra basically says that the final number of the redeemed is a very small number. The book of Revelation is quite opposite. It, it's an open-ended number. In fact, uncountable, uncountable, in fact, 144,000 and chapter back in chapter six and seven, the text tells you, it's interpreted for you, it's not literal, it's a symbolic number of the full numbers redeemed who can't be counted the text says so in other words, there's not any kind of predestination in this book where we're, you know, if you're, if you do number 144,001, it really is bad to be you. So, that kind of open-endedness is, is unique here in this particular book. And I think that's quite a good feature of it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:38

Yeah. And just to go to the 144,000, because we're not going to get to all the symbols, but this is one that quite often gets used as some kind of definitive end number. And so, it's talking about actually, the 12,000, from each of the 12 tribes. So, this, again, is an inclusiveness. So, you hear that you, you hear these numbers, this many people from each of the 12 tribes, but in an apocalypse, it's, it's not just what you hear, it's what you see, that makes sense of what you hear. And so then, after the naming of all the tribes, there's 12,000 of these and this and this, and this, and this after this, I looked, and there was a great multitude, that no one could count from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne, and before the land, robed in white with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out, and it's the worshiping God. So, this is, it's much, much, much, much bigger than the 144,000. The 12 times 12 is, again, one of the number of things that would be common in Jewish understanding symbology.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:55

So final salvation in this book is a multi-ethnic inclusion fest. It's huge. And there are no boundaries, there are no walls, there are only open doors. So, it's quite fascinating. One final thing here, just to say about the book is that apocalypses have a kind of a literary structure that they all share. They're written as a series of concentric circles.

Karin Peter 42:24

This is where this is where we get into the slinky. Yeah. Yeah, vintage, age, you know what a slinky is.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:33

right? Exactly. So, so the author will, will give it will give have will explain the vision in a in a circle, and then start over again, with maybe another vision, but it'll be saying the same thing. And sometimes the saying of the same thing focuses on different aspects of it. But the cycles of seven in this book, basically keep rotating around to say the same thing over again, God's got this, it's bad, but hang in there, you're going to be okay, on the other side, salvation is coming. Stay faithful as they are. All of the cycles really say this. So, the reason to know that is because one of the classic ways to misinterpret this book, is to treat it, like as Luke Johnson calls it like a bus schedule, right? So, if I, if I can just find if I can just figure out where this is, then I know, ah, oh, history in history then. Since the World War One, so everything after the text is everything in the 20th century, it's like, no, this is a horrible way to read the book, and it doesn't pay attention to this literary device of the concentric circles.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 43:39

are what the message is, it's still focused on us having somehow this special knowledge of when the end is going to come or when God's judgment will come. So, we can figure out who who's gonna get judged. You know, it's, we tend to make it all about us. And we, we miss so much when we do that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:02

So let's move on to explore and we'll start, Karin, where we usually start to see what scintillating questions revelation raise for you.

Karin Peter 44:11

Oh, the questions on Revelation. So, it's actually become one of my more favorite books to have conversation about. And that comes from going through Community of Christ seminary, a long time ago. Now, when I look back at it, I think in 2001-05, and one of the things that was really interesting to learn, and I want you to just speak a little bit more about it is the numbers deal that, in in our contemporary culture, we start to look at numbers with inside meaning as being associated maybe with the occult or paganism or that kind of thing. But in Hebrew life and culture and writing and understanding numbers had meaning and purpose. So, it's,... you touched a little bit on the seven on being this kind of complete thing and the 144, in multiplication of 12 is going to be this same kind of 12 tribes, the whole body of people, but there are others as well that we find when we are reading scripture, there's 70, there's 40, which, in my colloquial way of speaking, it is like that's a long, long time. Yeah, when you read 40 it's that's a long, long time, not so much 40, you know, so what, what's going on there? I mean, we tend to look at it as a mysterious, you know, a cultish thing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:43

So, one thing to say is that, in Jewish synagogues, rabbis liked to like to play with the Torah, in terms of finding different hidden meanings. And one of the games they played with the Torah was a game they called Gematria, which is a Aramaic or Hebrew way of saying geometry. And so what they did was they used (Arabic numerals that we're used to were not invented yet, right.) So, people who lived in Semitic cultures use the Hebrew alphabet, and letters them are given numerical values for me, it's going to pull up a lovely chart for us here. So that was the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Alef, and there in the upper left-hand corner, equals one. And you go down to the letter, Yod, the tenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which is 10. And then the next letter Kaph, jumps up by 10, to 20, and so on and so forth up through the letters of the alphabet until you get to the final letter.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:54

by 10s. From that point on, till you get down to Tav.

Tony Chvala-Smith 46:59

And this is important to know, actually, this, this happens in the book of the Gospel of Matthew, were 14 generations, 14 generations, 14 generations, where 14 turns out to be the sum of the letters from the Hebrew name, David, D V D ... David, those numbers equal 14, well, here in the book of Revelation, the the number is, of course, the 666 number, right? Right. And what's interesting to know is that some manuscripts of revelation don't have that number they have 616. So, what scholars figured out over the years is that there's only one name only one name from the Roman Empire, that if you turn it into Hebrew characters, could legitimately be there 666 or 616. And that's the name Nero Caesar. And the reason is that the Hebrew language does not typically like to end a word with a long Oh, narrow, it would want to end would want to stick an end on there just for pronunciation. NeRON QeiSaR, Nero Caesar, if you add the N, which would have probably happened in spoken Hebrew or Aramaic, you get 666. Right? If you leave the N off, you get 616. And that is the only name.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:20

The numbers over on the right here, and the one in brackets is what the N would be the 50. So,

Karin Peter 48:29

So the mark of the beast, the beast itself is this horrible Roman figure of terror.

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:38

Nero had been dead 30 odd years roughly when this book was written. But the memory of Nero was not a pleasant memory because Nero was sadistic. He was monstrous. His own contemporaries thought of him as crazed. And he started a pogrom against Christians sometime in the 60s in Rome, and the Roman historian Tacitus describes the horrible tortures he put Christians through. But the memory of the memory of Nero as this kind of person lasted a long time. And so that the beasts mark is 666 or 616. And it simply has been stamped with the cruelty and the unpredictability of Nero. Nero in other words, has become a symbol of violent evil against God's people. So that's what the number equals it has nothing to do with your checkbook. Karin, I'm just wanting to tell you that. It has nothing to do with hotel rooms.

Karin Peter 49:48

But when we when we look at this chart, and I really encourage our listeners to view this so that you can look at it for yourself on Latter-day Seeker Ministries YouTube channel, but it's a lot like the secret decoder ring as a kid, a lot of kids have gotten where a letter equals a number, or even just basic ciphers that we learn, you know to do as we're going through school. And we learned about cryptology, and that kind of thing. That's what was happening here. And so we find evidence of it in, in Hebrew texts. And so it's not secret. It's not magical. It's not any of that. It's simply a way of ciphering a message that would be known to some people and unknown to others.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:33

Right, so if you look at this chart, don't take the letters and then go try to go to the Hebrew Bible and figure out who's doing what to whom? Because you'll be wrong.

Karin Peter 50:46

Absolutely, because we don't have it in context with a greater understanding, absolutely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:53

Numbers, animals, beasts, angels, and all these all these things that filled the ancient worlds universe.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:02

Imaginations and legendry.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:08

In its own way, the book of Revelation and other apocalypses has to try to convey a story sort of Star Wars, the view of good versus evil, right? It's a cosmic battle. It's a cosmic battle. And for the Book of Revelation, it actually has already been won. It's been won. What's left is the rearguard action. So So, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:32

So any other questions?

Karin Peter 51:34

Well, yes, I'm hoping you can say a little bit more about the imagery, apocryphal imagery, in the same way as numbers have been kind of defined as cultish, the apocryphal imagery has, has fascinated people. And I remember and I think it was the 1971 New Interpreters, one volume commentary, they gave a really nice little article about it that just was kind of across the board on understanding apocryphal literature and some of that thing. Can you talk about that and how it's very similar to similes, when we're talking about things, you know, it's like kind of things.

Tony Chvala-Smith 52:20

Sometimes the text will actually tell you, whose face was shining like the sun in full force. And it's meant to be an image of glory and divine dignity, it lots of times the images are very transparent, but they mean, and often, as Charmaine mentioned the, the author will explain them quite often, sometimes he doesn't need to explain them because they're just straightforward.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:40

And the dragon and the beasts are explained by the author, as being Rome and being this worship of the Emperor, this cult of worship of the Emperor and Satan and, and ultimate evil conducting, so those are, those are all those would have been very easy for people, both they would have known it culturally, but also the images, say something about the character, again, that poetic way of describing the, with animals with these mythic animals, the nature of this kind of power at work in the world. So, there's, there's those,

Tony Chvala-Smith 53:29

I'm thinking of one that's it's, it sounds crude to our ears, but the image of the city of Rome as the whore, right? And so, this is political parody going on there. So, the patron goddess of the Roman Empire, and of the city of Rome, is Roma. Right, the goddess Roma. And so, the author depicts the city of Rome as a woman reclining on seven hills, it's pretty transparent. She's reclining,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:04

And Rome is built around 7 hills.

Tony Chvala-Smith 54:08

Oh, by the way, when sometimes people say well, this was written in code language so the Romans couldn't understand it's like a Roman would easily have understood that and been very highly offended by it. But she's described not as this amazing divine woman, but she's described as a prostitute, and all the nations come and sleep with her. It's basically it's a real slam against the Roman Empire and against Roma. And by the way, prostitution, fornication and so on in this book, bear all the kinds of the metaphorical weight that it had in the Hebrew Bible, where it's connected with idolatry. Worshiping other gods than Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible is tantamount to being unfaithful. And so same here, all these nations sleep with Rome, ie they worship the Roman Empire. And so worshiping Rome, if we do that, that's described as illicit sexual activities. There's, there's that connection there. So

Karin Peter 55:15

Unfaithfulness to God? Yeah, exactly. Absolutely. There's some more ordinary kind of imagery that's used to that we can miss. As we, as we kind of go through it. So, we're used to the creatures and the beasts and the, and the numbers, because that's part of our culture. And we hear about them. But there's, there's just kind of normal imagery that that you and I would use if we were trying to write poetry, or hymnody. Kind of a thing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 55:44

The depiction of the Divine Throne Room.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 55:47

Heavenly worship. Yeah.

Karin Peter 55:49

Beautiful. Yeah, the worship images. Absolutely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 55:52

So yeah, yeah. So you know, the thing to do in reading the book of Revelation is, first of all, always let the author help you. And then secondly, when the author won't help you or can't, use a good study, critical study Bible, and a good commentary, a simple one is Bruce Metzger, is Breaking the Code, which is really quite lovely and easy to read, and very clear.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 56:15

And it's set up in lessons with questions and background, and it has, it'll give you a lot of the context kinds of pieces that we're giving you, but in a more organized way. And, one of the things we really love about this book, and the newer edition as well, is that the authors are willing to say, Oh, here's a symbol that we don't understand what it means, you know, and it's like, they don't step up just to have credibility. In fact, their credibility comes in saying, you know, here's an image, whose meaning we have lost,

Karin Peter 56:45

what they're not making it up as they go along. I thought that's what we did with Revelation, what are you talking about?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 56:51

I don't know. But anyhow, it's, it's a really good book, and it's really accessible. So it's really easy to read.

Karin Peter 56:59

For like a senior-high, and youth.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 57:03

I use that book quite a lot. And it'll give you lots of the background on those kinds of symbols. But it will also keep lifting at what is the main, what's the main purpose of this book. And I just, we just, we recommend that book a lot.

Tony Chvala-Smith 57:22

And if you want a more extensive commentary, a really good one is the one written by M. Eugene Boring, in the Interpretation series. It's a whole commentary on the Book of Revelation. It's more extensive, in it's notes and stuff, and it's really quite well done. He also is the one who wrote the footnotes in the New Interpreter's Study Bible. And his footnotes are really, really good in the New Interpreter's Study Bible.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 57:46

In fact, there's a really good one about violence in the book of Revelation that comes from him. And he's helping us to understand kind of what kind of violence are we talking about here? And it's images of violence. But is it really about God, doing violence to others, and he puts it into the context, which I think is really important of, what is the reality of the people for whom this is written? They are afraid, they have been already oppressed, some have died. And they are angry. They are angry at the Romans for this marginalizing that's happening to them, the persecution, the suspicion that's being cast upon them, and, and they're saying, will we have justice? Will there be any justice for us? And so that's part of what the author is trying to help them see. Is that in the big picture, God's going to take care of

them. God will take care of the need for justice. So it's it's a nice little excursus there in New Interpreter's Bible from Eugene Boring as well.

Karin Peter 58:30

Before we go to the experiencing part of this in my last question, is this in Community of Christ in the Restoration tradition, we have some weirdness and how we've tried to understand the last days the last haze the, you know, what happens when you die? Our doctrine and our theology has just been kind of, it's had an interesting life, as its ebbed and flowed in the life of the church. We do have still some remnants of that laying around about end times and that kind of thing. What's our responsibility when we read those texts? I mean, how, where are we? Where are we now? How are we looking at that altogether?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:00:00

I mean, Community of Christ statement on Scripture gives really solid advice on that. We want to use all the resources we can. We don't reject scholarship, we use scholarship, we want to understand if it's scripture, and it's that important to us, we want to understand, what was it trying to convey to his first readers, we've got to start there. That's got to be the baseline, right. And so paying attention to language and word usage and historical social religious context, very important.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:00:32

And I think we have to be honest about the fact that some of the ways that we talked about the book of Revelation, were to prove our rightness as the one and only true church. And, just as this book is not about us knowing when the end is going to come. So, we're on the inside of this, this book is not about our church, either. And we have to be honest about that. And I think once we acknowledge that, that this book is for the people of the time, and we get to overhear it, and see what part of this message is useful to us today, then then we'll get a lot more out of it. Because it's not about us. It's not about our church. It is about God. It is about Christ. And if we can keep that in mind, as we're reading, it will, we'll get a much, much we'll get much the same benefit, as the first hearers did, to be reminded, who is God? What is this kingdom of God that has been talked about? And how does it fit in with the suffering that we're going through right now. And if you're finding yourself in a time of suffering, and wondering, "where is God?," you might really benefit from hearing the good news part of the book of Revelation. Avoid some of the, you know, fire and brimstone parts, which people? Oddly enough, those are the ones that people often...

Karin Peter 1:01:57

There's some fascination, there's a fascination with that. Yeah, isn't or maybe, you know, a lot of us tend to go Luther's direction and just say, maybe it shouldn't even be there. I don't know.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:02:08

Well, you know, when you think about some of the damage that has been done to people, and how they've been turned off from God, because of the fear that people have used this book to instill in people. You know, you can't blame people for saying, Yeah, let's, let's just, you know, end it a book earlier.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:02:34

I think it's in the New Testament canon. And so, it's going to be used, and it's going to be used by people who shouldn't be using it, and who were poorly informed. So, it really is the church's responsibility to give better interpretations of it, to use it and get better interpretations of it. So people can see that there's an option, right? I'm reminded too that, the great Catholic theologian Hans Kuhn, who died in the last couple of years, in one of his books, he said, we have to remember that in our New Testament canon we have one apocalypse, but we have four gospels. We can't let this book overtake the rest of the New Testament's message. And we can't let abusive readings of it overtake the churches message. So, we have to give better interpretations. And that means using it and introducing people to it and introduce them to good resources, and getting them detoxed from all the bad uses of Revelation.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:03:33

I think it is okay. And maybe even important to say, this book is not about this, this and this. So that people can clear out some of the garbage that has been piled up on on this book and say, No, it's not about those things. Let that go. Let's take another look and see, what is the good news here? I think that's always a good way. What is the good news in this book, and there's actually a lot, actually a lot.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:09

We did a quick summary of some good news pieces. And this wouldn't be everything in the book. But for example, in this book, the good news is, anyone can come the table is open all the time.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:04:18

And, and near the end, there's this idea of the kingdom of God coming down to earth. And there's all these doorways and they're always open, they are always open.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:30

And for all its violent imagery. This book is about the end of violence, in other words, in God's preferred future, there is no no place for violence. That's part of the message of the book. This book reinforces the reign of God on earth will happen, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. It's not a pipe dream. And another thing about this book that I love is that in this book, God does not have a most favored nation. It's an anti-nationalistic book. And that's something we really need to be able to take in deeply in church life right now. God's purposes include the earth, the earth is not disposable, the Earth is included in salvation. And so, I'll come back to one at the end about hope that I think is really a powerful aspect of apocalyptic literature and of this book.

Karin Peter 1:05:21

Let's move into that, how we can look at the good news and entertain this text.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:05:27

Good. And, as we've tried to say, with each of these, people's experience with scripture has not always been positive. And we look at this as being the author's understanding using this, in this case, it's a vision that the author using the language that they have, is explaining it and describing it, because they want to share with others their experience with God. And that's exactly what's happening here. But that experience is shaped by the language, the genre that they're going to be using, the images that they're drawing from all of those kinds of things. This is a really good example Book of Revelation of the author

using literary, cultural situations, and symbols of his own time. And we can't assume that when we read it, we'll get the same thing out of it, that the first readers got, and that's OK. But we can come to it and say, perhaps there is something there, that this writer is wanting to pass on to the, to Christians in his time, that would be helpful to them. And maybe some of that could be helpful to us as well. So we're not looking at scripture as, you know, all words of God just telling you what you must be or not be and judging you, and all of that. We're looking at as somebody's writing, that's tried to encourage. And, in this vision experience of John, that is what he's trying to do. So, I'm going to do two different things here, I'm going to start with that first passage that we read, we're going to go to one part in it and just give us a chance to sit with it for a little bit. And this is that image of Jesus, I saw one like the Son of Man. And here he is, he's walking among the golden lampstands, the seven churches, with their stars, their angels. And, and so what I would ask you to do is just hold on to that image, that idea of Jesus, walking among the congregations, and close your eyes if that's helpful. Imagine Jesus walking amidst your congregation or the group of people that you worship with. Just let yourself get there. And then prayerfully consider this: Who do you sense Jesus drawing your attention to in your congregation or the group that you meet with? Who is Jesus touching or comforting right now? Who is he looking for? And to whom is he whispering, "I am with you," Or "go out with courage."? if you have some time later to do that as a prayer exercise, take that image of Christ walking in the midst of your congregation or your group. And notice who he especially has concerns for. Then I'm going to take you to a passage near the end of the book. And and I think this one is is again one of those places where there's lots to be seen and to be heard. So, I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Lots of Old Testament images there. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them, they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, death will be no more mourning and crying and pain will be no more. For the first things have passed away. And the one who is seated on the throne, said, See, I am making all things new. Also, he said, Write this for these words are trustworthy and true. And then he said to me, meaning John, it is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. And get a real sense for the congregation that is struggling so hard and unsure. Is it worth hanging on? Is it worth hanging on? So, this is like full disclosure. There is one more sentence after this verse eight, this is Revelation 21, two to seven. And in verse eight, you'll have one of those passages that gets plucked out and used all by itself. So, I'm going to mention it because we've got to keep the balance here. It says, But, as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerer's, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. So that's often where people go, they go to that verse and say, okay. But as Tony and I were talking about this earlier, Tony's described this as this is kind of the this is the warning, this is not the message, if that makes sense. So, it's like you're driving along on a road trip, and you see a sign that says danger, falling rocks. And if you were to say, Oh, my whole trip was traumatized by this sign, danger of falling rocks, then you've missed the point of the journey, by focusing on the warning. And so, I think that's really important, because we obscure the good news, quite often, by only focusing on the warning. And so that's one of the places I want to go to, but I want you to notice, what is it that this passage is saying, and you'll notice they don't say that it's God, it's obviously God on the throne, but they use the term what the author hears coming from the throne, or the ones seated on the throne, or he, again, with the assumption that this is God. And so what is it that we hear from the throne, we hear, see, the home of God is among mortals. That's where

God chooses to be. I think we underestimate the power of that, especially for people who are strong, struggling, He will dwell with them, they will be his people, and God, himself will be with them. And then the idea of God will wipe every tear from their eyes, deaths will be no more mourning, and crying and pain will be no more. And that in the midst of all of that, those might feel like, you know, mushy words, but these are people who are in danger of losing everything. And so this idea that death does not have power over them, and then, "see I'm making all things new." This brings them back to what's been happening in their life because of this. Of Christ being in their life of the Spirit, having moved with them and through the congregation. It refocuses them. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." We're in the middle somewhere. And the God who was there at the beginning and who we've experienced in community in good times and bad, God is also the end. To the thirsty, I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. And those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. Lovely words. But when we know what the situation is of those to whom these are given, we, we get a much more of a sense of them having real power. So which of these messages of God speak to your life most strongly right now? If you were to take one of these in as something that God wants us to hear, which of these would be most meaningful to you? And then, who needs to hear this good new news about God's desire for all people? Who do you know that needs to hear one of these statements of good news of this God who cares for all people?

Karin Peter 1:16:21

I'm not sure what poltergeist muted my microphone. So we're ending in a Spirit of hope. And Tony, you said you had some comments about that, that you wanted to share?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:16:31

Oh, yeah, I have a quote from a favorite theologian of mine, Juergen Moulton on German theologian, who's in his 90s. He's still as far as I know, he's still alive. But his book, the theology of hope, was a blockbuster theology, theological book back in the 1960s. But he says this, "meaningful action is always possible only within a horizon of expectation. Otherwise, all decisions and actions would hang unintelligibly and meaninglessly in the air." In other words, unless we have something to hope for, we will not act decisively for justice now. And so, if the book of Revelation has anything to say about it, justice will finally win. Therefore, anything we do for justice now matters,

Karin Peter 1:17:21

Which are important words for a community that values the pursuit of peace, God's shalom, as what we hope for, and I suppose our central kind of theology, is that God with us in, in this world? Yeah, absolutely. So, I imagine a lot of our listeners didn't expect to end in a beautiful hope filled a space at the end of our podcast on the book of Revelation. But that's where we are. And I'm going to conclude in that spirit with the couple of verses from the hymn in Community of Christ Sings, called "God Bestows on Every Sense," and its hymn number 572, in Community of Christ Sings. And I like this because it takes a little bit of the imagery and a sense of that we find in Revelation and shares it in this really beautiful way. "God bestows on every sense beautiful hopes, evidence and signs of what the earth will be just beyond what we can see. Vibrant pictures and our dreams brushed with crystal color schemes vanish from awakening mind leaving just a trace behind. In a burned and blackened field, broken ground begins to yield tiny, fragile sprouts of green hints of forests, yet unseen. God makes all creation new, turning back what people do and building up what we destroy, singing sorrow into joy." Very much the imagery and content of that last piece, Charmaine, that you led us through in that

experience as well. So, we'll let the author who I did not quote in that text, let's see, that would be Adam M. L. Tice, will let Adam have the last word on our closing thought. And we hope that you will join us for our next episode, which will actually be our final New Testament episode and it will be a She Brew episode where we take a look at some women in the New Testament in a way that maybe gets overlooked when we're doing some of our biblical exploration. So, look forward to that and until then, I'm Karin Peter with Tony and Charmaine Chabot Smith. This has been New Brew, part of Project Zion Podcast. Thanks for listening!

Josh Mangelson 1:20:17

thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast, subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher, or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you're there, give us a five-star rating. Project Zion Podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries, or Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze