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Project Zion Podcast

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.

Carla Long 00:33

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to the percolating on faith series with Project Zion. I'm your host, Carla Long, and your two favorite percolating on faith guests are back, Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith. Welcome back. You do.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 00:49

Hi, nice to be back.

Tony Chvala-Smith 00:51

You have a low bar.

Carla Long 00:54

Hey, that's never mind. Alright. So today, we're gonna be talking about the dun dun da Book of Revelation. I mean, I was gonna say, hey, this is super fun, right? And it is kind of fun. If you're nerds like us, right? We like this kind of stuff. Fun for us. Now, the book of Revelation has been scaring people for a while. Now, if I remember correctly, I remember first being scared by it, I think I was in late high school. So, in the early 90s, some friends and I were joking around. And somehow, I don't even know how we started watching this movie from the 70s called A Thief in the Night. And it was about people who just up and disappeared. I guess Jesus took them. I don't know. One scene showed this airplane that had no pilot anymore. Another scene that I can remember how this hairdryer that was still going was just sitting on the bathroom counter. And people just disappeared. And you know who was left? Well, us three for sure. No doubt about that. No doubt. And I think this is even before those, that horrible series, the Left Behind series came out the one that had that whole theology of fear behind it. I mean, they really that series has definitely not helped the whole Book of Revelation is scary kind of thing, right? I mean, like, I feel like everyone has a story of like, how scary Revelation was for them.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:28

Yeah, and I think, you know, in reference to it, whether it's the left behind or some of the different approaches. People always want to couch it as though this is revealing what Revelation actually says. And of course, they're all interpretations really heavily interpreted understandings of what's in Revelation. And so, one of the things that most suffers is what's actually there in the text. So yeah, tell us about your scary time.

Carla Long 03:02

Who me? Yeah, Carla? Oh, no, I've only just had that one scary time with them with a Thief in the Night and wondering if that was how what it really said, because I just didn't ever really know. I didn't really know what was the truth and what wasn't the truth? Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:16

Did it stick with you for a while?

Carla Long 03:19

It absolutely stuck with me. I mean, I still I remember those two scenes, especially the hairdryer scene, which is a weird thing to remember. But also, just the idea that Jesus might come and take people away, the good people away and leave all the bad people on Earth. And what about the bad people on earth? Like, if there's only bad people left on earth. You know, it's just gonna go to hell on a handbasket. I mean, you just know it. And so the idea is like, there's going to be like, all this anarchy and horrible things that are happening here on Earth, after all the good people are way that that is a frightening idea. And I do remember one other thing, like, somebody once told me that once the beast comes back, they're gonna put like, little computer chips in our hand or something. And so, everybody will or if I just made this up. This is something yeah, they would all know who we were from these computer chips in our hands. So, like these little things, they definitely stick with me. I'm 40 years old. And that was when I was like, early teens, mid early teens, so definitely sticks with me.

Tony Chvala-Smith 04:26

So, you know, this raises the question about is, is this type of literature in the Bible scary or do people make it scary? And I think it's important to start off by saying that, that texts don't say anything until people make them say things. So, the way a text is interpreted, can affect how people hear it. And so, a highly simplistic literalistic reading of literature like the Book of Revelation or parts of the book of Daniel can be a scary reading, but it's not what the texts were originally intended to do, and that's something we should talk about today. What this particular type of literature, and what was it? What was it meant to do? You know, when I think about my own experience, my grandfather, who's been gone for gracious 30 years now, my grandfather in his late 80s, told about a thing that happened to him when he was six years old. So, this would have been in the very early 19 hundred's, his mother had taken him to a tent meeting, a tent revival. And grandpa remembered 80 years later that the preacher scared him and the other little kids so badly with threats of hell and judgment and Jesus coming and all of that, that my grandpa as a six-year-old couldn't sleep that night, he was horrified. And Grandpa, by the way, was never much of a churchgoer the rest of his life. So how we interpret the Bible has lots of practical and pastoral consequences for people. It you can interpret the Bible in ways that completely turn a six-year-old off from Christianity, and that's, that's really a tragedy, then that's a bad interpretation of bad use of the Bible.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:18

Yeah, and I think one of the things that is really a great loss, is that in the fear mongering that comes with people's use of things like the Book of Revelation is, is a whole image of God. Who is God? And in the things that I have seen, none of them are consistent, either with the God of the Old Testament, the god of faithful love, enduring love, the one who is compassionate for the poor, and for those who are voiceless, or even the God of the New Testament revealed in Christ who is about making room for people and reclaiming people. It's just the kind of images of God that comes through in the kind of misuse of the Scripture, but particularly the Book of Revelation and does great damage to who God can be for people, and therefore what they're willing to be open to, in their relationship with God.

Tony Chvala-Smith 07:30

And if you if you think about who the Jesus is, who folks like the Left Behind, writers imagined him to be, or even before the Left Behind series back in the 70s, Hal Lindsay's book The Late Great Planet Earth, which is sort of the, the one that spawned all of this stuff. The Jesus they imagined was coming, strangely, is nothing at all, like the Jesus we read about in the gospels, the Jesus who welcomed people to his table. So, something has gone awry here in people's uses, and readings of the Bible. And it's really, I think, very, very important to offer alternative readings, alternative ways to understand these texts.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:13

And not just for sure, not just alternative but

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:17

accurate. Yeah. Yeah, I agree with that.

Carla Long 08:21

So, is that when the Book of Revelation became something scary back in the 70s? Or was it before that?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:28

you know, the Book of Revelation, as far as we can tell from even early Christian history, there were some folks even in the first and second century, who were using it in ways that were not, let's say edifying. And so, there were some parts of the world where Christianity was developing, where the Book of Revelation was discouraged, the use of it was discouraged because of how people were misusing it. Eventually, you know, in the long canonization process that went from, you know, late in the first century through about 400, when the books that we have in the New Testament, there was consensus about what books should belong to that. You know, it had, it wasn't always a foregone conclusion, that revelation would have that kind of universality. And there are some places where, what it was the kind of literature it is, and what its meaning was, for the first century Christians for whom it was written, was clear. But then there are other areas where they didn't understand the genre, they didn't understand its purpose. And so, it was really rife for misuse. So, even in its early days. It was not understood and not used well.

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:02

So for example, in the in the second century, there were a group of Christians in the eastern empire, what would be today, Turkey, who were called Montanists, who read the Book of Revelation, in a way, not unlike the way modern fundamentalists read it, very literalistically, and very legalistically, and they believed the New Jerusalem was going to land any day, in someplace in the middle of Asia Minor. And it so turned off lots of Christian leaders, that in the eastern part of the Empire, the Greek speaking part, not until well into the fourth century were they willing to entertain using the book at all, the western Empire, which was the Latin speaking side, you know, in North Africa, Italy, Spain, southern France, they generally had less problems with the Book of Revelation, but they didn't have a history of misuse of it. So. So that's just a little bit of the additional historical background to

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:05

that. And the great irony in all of this is that the Book of Revelation was written to bring good news and encouragement to Christians who were being persecuted. And so, it's really a text that's primary intention was to bring good news to say, hang in there, God is with you, even though things look dark now, God is with you, God will prevail. I mean, that's the main message of the Book of Revelation. But the ways that people have used it have totally obliterated that or overshadowed the real intent of it. So, it's, there's so much good in the Book of Revelation. But there's a few things you have to know, in order to kind of be able to get at that.

Carla Long 11:54

Well, let's go ahead and jump into that. So, I know you guys have said before on a podcast that the Bible is just a library of books. It's a lot of different genres of books. So, what kind of genre does the Book of Revelation belong to? And lovely listeners? I just want you to recognize that never once will Tony or Charmaine or I say the Book of Revelations? Oh, because, yes, because when I was an undergrad taking New Testament, with Tony and Charmaine, I do believe they said they would flunk us if we called it the Book of Revelations.

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:27

That's a little extreme, I would say, Carla, I think we said, okay, points off your final score for saying that

Carla Long 12:34

So, it is the Book of Revelation, singular, not plural. So, what genre does it belong to?

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:42

So, the Book of Revelation is an example of the genre of apocalypses. And it's actually a mixed genre book, chapters two and three are letters but really, the book as a whole is treated as an apocalypse by New Testament scholars. Well,

Carla Long 13:01

you know, that sounds terrifying to,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 13:03

again, because people have taken the name of the genre, and then the misuse already taken of Revelation. And so, Apocalypse by association with Revelation becomes this term of dread, and endings. Yeah, it's fascinating what we do with, with fear.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:24

So maybe a place to start is that the English word apocalypse, comes directly from a Greek word, which means a revelation, or a disclosure, or an uncovering. So, the Book of Revelation starts off the revelation of Jesus Christ. It's a type of literature that tries to uncover for the reader, what God is just about to do, in a situation of extreme stress or persecution. So, this, this type of literature arose in Judaism, and we can kind of give it a shelf life, right, the first truly apocalyptic books in Judaism arose just after 200 BCE. And the genre is an active genre until around 131-40 BCE. So, you know,

approximately a 300, 350-year time span in which this this type of literature was really popular, and widely represented, especially in Judaism, Judaism produced many, many apocalypses besides the, the last six chapters of the Book of Daniel, which is sort of the classic example of an apocalypse. So, here's what scholars know about the genre. If you look at the Jewish apocalypses, from this period, and the Christian examples we have in the New Testament, and in some literature outside the New Testament, there's a bunch of common features in them. And one of the common features of this genre is that you can tell from reading them closely, that the author and the author's readers are undergoing some kind of moment of profound oppression, or some kind of persecution. This is true in the Jewish apocalypses. It's also true in the in the Christian ones. So, the literature itself, this type of literature itself arose as a way to respond to a crisis situation. Things are going things are going really horribly for God's people, because people are a tiny minority, surrounded by a vast pagan majority, who are bent on their destruction. Where's God in all this? So that I mean, in some respects, all the apocalypses are trying to answer the question, where's God in the midst of the struggle and suffering we're facing at the moment? And what's God going to do about it? And how long do we have to wait. And so, I like to look at Apocalypses, as a form of, I like to call it resistance literature, as this literary genre arose as a way to help an embattled religious minority, face, stress and persecution, basically, how to resist how to hold on to your faith, when it looked like everything was stacked against you.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:23

so, some of the ways that you can tell that a particular writing is an apocalypse, is by some of the literary methods that you would find within it. And so as in the Revelation of John, or the Apocalypse of John, you'll see the use of mythical creatures, whether they be dragons, or beasts, or many faced animals. So, for the hearer, they would be able to say, these, these are animals that we know from some of the myths of the peoples around us. So, they would have recognized that. Also, it's another factor that writers use, is almost like dream states, where you see unusual, even unimaginable things happening, but they're mostly tied with feelings. So, they may be feelings of dread, or feelings of persecution or feelings of fear, that are being illustrated within the story kind of like, like poetry can sometimes take you deeper into feelings that you can identify with than just simple prose. And so, in the apocalypses, the images are there, and the kind of language are there to, to help because these are identifying with the feelings that people have, even though they're fantastical. The point is that they're, they're acknowledging that people fear, have dread. And then, then it goes from there to say, where is God in this? What will God do? That's quite often the thing that gets missed, is the Where is God in this? And What is God going to do? How is God going to remain faithful to you and invite you to stay faithful to God?

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:38

So, this apocalyptic literary form, is different from an older form in the Hebrew Bible, the form identifies with the Hebrew prophets. For the Hebrew prophets, I'm thinking of the name of Micah, Isaiah of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, the future was open was open ended. And there were a number of possible scenarios dependent on how Israel chose to respond. If, the people of Israel or Judah respond to the covenant by acting justly towards the poor, towards the dispossessed, that would create a different kind of future than if they didn't. So, in prophetic literature in the Bible, there's no sense that the future is somehow mapped out. But for the apocalyptic writers, generally writing centuries after the classical prophets, they have a whole new sense of time and space in history, and a sense of kind of their

powerlessness to shape the future. That comes through in the apocalypses, in the apocalypses the reader is essentially told to wait, God is just about to fulfill God's purposes. Hang in there. It's part of the plan. Just wait a little longer, and you'll see the new, the new age will begin. So, and if you put yourself in the position of these Jewish readers, and then even the readers of first readers of the Book of Revelation and New Testament, Christian readers, your tiny little religious communities, you're being overwhelmed by powerful Imperial forces that want to crush you and crush your religion. The sense that you can create a new future is much less than, say, the people of Judah or of Israel in the eighth century BCE. And so, the apocalyptic literary form, gave the author and the readers a way to deal with their sense of powerlessness, by trusting that God who, whose, whose presence was, was not immediately discernible in the evil events that were happening, that God was going to come through, and very soon. All the apocalypses whether Jewish or Christian, imagine that God, God's faithful response is right at the door, and you just have to wait a little bit longer. So you know, that's, that's part of where this genre comes from. The interesting thing about it is that the apocalypses imagine a new future, which is this, which makes them a source of hope to the readers. And the sense that, if you can't do anything else, just hold on a little longer, and trust God would have been hopeful for the first reader. So the first readers of the Book of Revelation would have found in their own situation of persecution and crisis, they would have found the message, hopefully, God's in charge, hang in there, just endure a little longer, and things are going to turn.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:52

And if you want to see the evidence of that, look at the beginning of Revelation, and at the end of Revelation, in the latter part of the first chapter, what, what is being illustrated, and this is one of the places where the symbols that are being used, the author translates for us, tells us what they mean. And in these images, Christ is there among the seven churches, Christ is moving among them, and Christ's Spirit or the Spirit is there in each of those churches, even though they are being persecuted, even though people have died, even though John himself has been put in exile, the author is now on the island of Patmos separated from his people. But it begins with this assurance, that Christ, and hear all the descriptions of the Son of man wandering about among the lampstands, which are the seven churches, are descriptions that tie him to who God is, these are the same kinds of descriptions that would have been used in the Old Testament to describe God. And so, what an amazing message to say, Yeah, this is a hard time, this is a difficult time, you're probably wondering why the hang on, and yet you need to know that Christ is there, His very presence is there. And then at the end, in chapters 20 and 21, where the idea of, of God's kingdom, God's will for the earth coming down onto the earth. And it's, it's a beautiful promise of what it is that God wants and wills for, for the future of humanity. And so, you know, these are places where it's really, that would have been very heartening to the first readers.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:04

I think it's, it's really, oh, go ahead, Carla, sorry,

Carla Long 24:08

I was just going on with another question. So, you go ahead and finish to your thoughts.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:12

Okay. I think it's really interesting that lots of Christians imagine that, at the end, everybody goes up to heaven when in fact, the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, he imagines quite the opposite. Not that people go up, but that heaven comes down to earth. And it's very, very important for ethics and for church life and for our images of salvation, to recognize that the Bible ends with a vision of a new earth and not with people playing harps in the clouds somewhere.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:49

And not with the understanding and not with the idea of the earth being obliterated.

Carla Long 24:56

Yeah, yeah, I've been listening closely and I haven't heard anything about computer chips going into your hands yet. So, I'm still listening closely. And now you've already kind of mentioned this about who wrote it. You mentioned it was John of Patmos, and he had been exiled. Which actually doesn't sound bad. Like if Patmos is a Greek island, right? Is it? Does it have internet? Because I would like to be exiled there.

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:21

Well, let's just say it's not a resort. Yes. Let's put ourselves in the, in the Roman Imperial period, and I think you'll not want to spend any time there. So

Carla Long 25:33

Oh, okay. Well, tell us more, a little bit more about John, and maybe about the time period when he wrote it. What were the years that he wrote it? What was going on? Why did he? Why did these people need so much hope?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:46

Well, the scholars have different views, scholars always have lots of different views on things. But probably the best date for when this was written, would have been somewhere around 95-96. And what's happening at this point, is that, particularly in areas of minor, the church is being persecuted. In a more, probably a more organized way than previously.

Tony Chvala-Smith 26:20

So, the Emperor at this time is emperor Domitian, whose reign as Roman emperors when he had a fairly long, long reign, I think typically, the dates for his rule are around 81, to 96 or so. So, this, book fits in late in his reign. And what was happening in Asia Minor was that local cities like Ephesus, and others, were vying for Imperial attention. Domitian, as emperor had demanded that his subjects refer to him as Lord and God, while he was still living, he broke with Roman tradition in which the emperors were imagined to be deified upon their death. And so, he wanted to cut to the chase and just be considered a God during his life. And this, of course, would have created some interesting stresses for Christians. These cities in the eastern empire, were known for how they competed with each other for Imperial favor. And what it looks like is that the cities perhaps were having festivals in which people were, which the citizens were given a chance to show their loyalty to the Empire, and especially to Domitian, perhaps by coming to a public ceremony and maybe offering a pinch of incense before a statue of the emperor or before a Roman standard. And so, Jews would have been exempt from this

generally, because Roman law gave them a kind of grandfathered in status, they didn't have to observe these festivals. But what was this new group? Was this new group a Jewish group, or something else? And already by this, by the late 4th century, it's become clear that Christians and Jews are really more, it's really increasingly two different religions. So, the Christians, these tiny little Christian communities in these big cities would have been faced with a real perilous challenge. Do we just pretend and go make the public declaration that the Caesar is God and just not worry about it? Or do we resist by not doing it and then be kind of like, obviously, not supporting of the Empire? It seems like that was the choice a lot of them were making. And so, in the Book of Revelation, you discovered that a few, a few people have already been killed. John writes on the island of Patmos, and one thing we know about Imperial practices is that the Romans considered exile, a kind of worse fate than death. We would think it might be the opposite, but not the Roman Empire. So, to stick somebody who they might have deemed as a ringleader out on an island where he was sort of cut off from people and from civic life and from, you know, from the Roman Empire's very public culture and so to be cut off from all that was considered really a nasty punishment. So that's why he's out there.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:47

Right and, and at this point, they're being more circumspect about whether or not they just, you know, kill somebody because there's already the awareness that you are creating martyrs around which communities can rally. And so, this punishment of exile is very, very intentional and is probably kind of a barren island. I'm sorry, Carla, probably no palm trees are

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:21

no good Greek olives or feta cheese out there, no swimming pools. The Romans called this punishment, *relegatio ad insulam*, which means yeah, isolation. So, John was being isolated, which doesn't mean he didn't have Papyrus, and ink and visitors. But he was sort of condemned to, to stay out in the silence. So

Carla Long 30:48

Well, for an extrovert like me, that really does sound like a punishment worse than death, I probably would die from my lack of people. So, you're right. I wouldn't want to do it. Sorry, John of Patmos. I'm so sorry.

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:01

And you wouldn't have liked

Carla Long 31:03

So, if he didn't have any, like, writing utensils or anything, how did he write it?

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:11

Well, he probably did. For example, Paul in prison has access to writing materials. And it's certainly possible, the Romans would have allowed a visitor to once in a while to bring him stuff, because his Roman imprisonment, I mean, there's different kinds of it. But certain types of imprisonment you have to pay for it yourself, right? So, Romans,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:39

were happy to have you pay for it yourself. If you didn't have the means, or those who loved you didn't have the means, then your treatment was going to be very poor indeed. But if you were willing to pay, you could, you could have decent food and often a decent place to shelter in a house. And maybe even, you know, the availability for visitors to come. So

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:08

So, John says in the first chapter, he's, he's on Patmos, for the for his testimony, meaning for his faith in Christ. This is this has become an issue for Roman bureaucrats. Who do these people who are these people, and they worship this, this guy that one of our Imperial governors killed, put to death, they can't possibly be loyal. So yeah, so the Christians were beginning to create problems for Romans. And that's how the storyline gets going in Revelation. Well, while on the island, then John, John, who probably as far as we can tell from the writing itself, Greek was not his first language. And it's probably likely that he was a Jewish Christian. And that makes sense of the fact that he understood the apocalyptic genre really well, because this book follows pretty much all, not all, but just about all of the, all the formulas that go with an apocalyptic book. In order to do that he would have been familiar with, with the genre of literature in Judaism. So that's where the symbolic stuff starts, dreams, visions, beasts, dragons, all kinds of fantastic things that are happening, that become symbolic ways to redescribe the situation he and his fellow Christians are in,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:39

right to describe the realities of the moment, and then to go on to say, what is God about to do in the near future? Remember that this is written to Christians who are needing encouragement. And so anything that's looking towards the future in the Book of Revelation, except for the last couple of chapters, that kind of look to the end of time, but all the rest of it is, is about the near future, the time in which they're living, and then which they may be dying, to know that God is going to be doing things in in their near future. So, most of the Book of Revelation is not about some not about our time, definitely, but about their time, and things that are happening and shortly will happen. And you see that even in the beginning of the Book of Revelation, where it says these things that will shortly be happening. So, these would be things that the early Christians who are receiving this letter or this story, this experience from John would be able to recognize that the things that were happening around them were influenced By God's power in the world,

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:01

Basically, when you read through the Book of Revelation carefully, you see that it's arranged in segments, and that each segment is a retelling of the previous segment. This is part of the genre. You see it in the Book of Daniel too. The visions, all keep saying the same thing over and over again, the symbols change, they become more dramatic as you go. But to put it in a nutshell, what the visions keep saying is that Imperial Rome has been judged. The judgment is being worked out. Rome will fall, and the kingdom of God will come. So, for those Christians who are being persecuted by Imperial Rome, this this is reassurance to them, that the evil and injustice they're facing, will not last forever. And that God remembers injustice. So, apocalyptic literature has a strong justice streak in it. It's just that unlike the Hebrew prophets, the justice that that apocalyptic authors expect, is a kind of larger cosmic justice that will come very soon. But we have to keep stressing very soon. This is not, this is not

some kind of bus schedule of history. So that if you can figure out where John is, and you can figure out where 1830 is, then you can you kind of know what all happens in between and then what happens after which is a common way of miss reading this type of literature?

Carla Long 36:48

Right, so you've kind of jumped into my next question a little bit, you mentioned that, like all Apocalypse writings, has some sort of formula. And you've talked a little bit about that formula, that it's a retelling over and over and over again, with more fantastical imagery. Is that the only part of the formula? Or is there more to it than just that?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:09

Even in the telling and the retelling, there's also a whole other layer of symbolism. So, you will find in the book of Revelation, the seven cycles, you know, there's, there's seven trumpets, they're seven seals, they're seven. So, another one of those elements is the power of numbers. And within Judaism and within Jewish literature and understanding, there, there's a lot of things that they do with numbers. And so this use of seven, again, the seven churches in the first chapter. Seven is this idea of completeness, of wholeness. And so even the use of these numbers gives us a level of understanding. And, of course, other people, you know, people will point up to some of the other numbers that are in Revelation, numbers like 144,000, which, if you read that part of the passage, there's this number of that the author is told of 144,000, and then he sees, and what he sees is a countless number of people. And so, that is in John chapter seven. And so here again, is his intentional symbolism. 144,000 is, you know, 144,000 is 12 times 1200. So, the idea of the 12 tribes, the completeness of people, and so what, what 144,000 here doesn't mean a literal number, it means all people, and even as the seven and the completion of the cycles, and the seven churches, it's talking about all of the churches when it's talking about the seven churches. So, there's all of these other layers of elements that help us in an apocalypse to know what things mean, and, and how to take them. Another number that's really common that people want to make a lot of is the 666. And since seven is a complete number, six is an incomplete number. Six is not whole, and to have something that six, six and six is pointing to something that is far less than completeness, wholeness, and holiness. And so, when we're looking at what does 666 mean, we have to figure out what's the symbolic meaning here. And then also, it tells us in the text that 666 is a name. And so we get to go a little bit deeper into some of the, the name and number games that were common within Jewish culture.

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:19

So, the thing Charmaine is describing is an actual little number game that rabbis played, they called it in Hebrew, they call it gematria, which is a Hebraization, of the Greek word geometry. It's something you would like Carla, geometry math, you

Carla Long 40:36

know, I am listening so closely, you guys have no idea.

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:40

So, what how this worked was that Rome, Arabic numerals haven't been invented yet, of course. And so, for Aramaic speakers, without, without a numeral system, what they did was they used letters of the

Hebrew alphabet, to equal number values, right? So of course, we have a numeral one and a numeral seven, whatever. But they had to use letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And Greek speakers did the same thing with the Greek alphabet. It made sense in those cultures if you didn't have a numeral system that you use the alphabet to count with. And so, the rabbi's like to play games with this, they would come up with numerical values for names and ideas and words out of the Hebrew Bible. And actually, the New Testament a place you see this in is Matthew's Gospel in the genealogy, which is divided into three sections of 14. And if you look at Jesus genealogy and Matthew really closely, and follow it through the Hebrew Bible, you see that, that at least one or more places, Matthew, or the author has skipped over someone who should have included in order to keep his series of 14. And you say, well, why is 14 so important to Matthew? And the answer is that using Hebrew letters, the name David, is the name whose letters equal 14 in Hebrew, so he's, he's using 14 as a symbol for Jesus as the Son of David. And the same thing is going on in Revelation with the 666. And in some manuscripts of Revelation, early manuscripts of revolution, the number is 616. And it turns out, New Testament scholars have figured this out for quite a long time, that there's only one name in the ancient world that can be written two different ways. And if you turn it into Hebrew characters, the value would either be 616, or 666. And that's the name of Nero Caesar, the Emperor Nero. So, the Mark of the Beast is actually a symbolic number that connects to the first readers memories of this absolutely horrifying, erratic Roman Emperor, who everybody was afraid he was going to come back from the dead. And Rick for their habit.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 43:04

It's not really a chip in your hand or a tattoo on your forehead. That was another one I'd heard growing up, or credit cards, that was another one, I had heard that these all somehow were, yeah, that there'd be a 666 that somehow you will be identified with. So.

Tony Chvala-Smith 43:23

So, that's become a kind of a number superstition in American religious culture, which is unfortunate, because it's based on a silly superficial reading of the Bible, but for the author of revelation, 666 is a symbol of having been claimed by, stamped by, the evil imperial power of Rome. And over against that is the seal of the living God, that is placed on the foreheads of, of the elect, who turns out to be as Charmaine mentioned, a countless number, right? So, it's interesting that the formulas of apocalyptic writing include all this number symbolism. And then another formula is the use of the symbolic beasts and images that Charmaine mentioned earlier. And I think, by the way, we should recommend a really good book to readers on the Book of Revelation, a simple little book by the late New Testament scholar, Bruce Metzger. It's called Breaking the Code. Very, very simple, straightforward little book that that we actually have seminars students read, because it's so helpful, but one of the things Metzger says about this use of symbolism and apocalypses is that it engages the imagination. Apocalyptic literature was imaginary literature that gave people courage and wisdom and strength to endure really nasty situations, but it reached out to their imaginations in a very creative way. And you know, when you think about it, for those who were being hounded and persecuted by local police in Asia Minor during the reign of Domitian. Yeah, the Roman Empire would have felt like a big, nasty satanic beast. So, the imagery really works well at the imaginary level.

Carla Long 45:25

Yeah, I mean, I'm already, you know, it is amazing what a culture of fear can do to people. And it's amazing that, you know, we take this number that 666, or 616. And we have made it into something that is so huge, when really it's a simple numbers game, I just, I'm just astounded over and over again, how much fear can how much fear can be made people do that can be?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 45:57

Yeah, and the thing is, and this is another one of those things that we may not even in our culture recognize, because we assume well, all this stuff must be in Revelation. But one of the things that people have done is they've taken elements from other books in the New Testament, that are not by the same author, or not from the same situation and they've linked them together. And so, they've taken a little passage, I think it's from First Thessalonians in Paul's writing that talks about where he's encouraging people who have questions about well, what about the people who have who were converted to Christ or who, who were believers in Christ, but who have died, what will happen to them? And so, there it talks about, don't worry, you know, it's all taken care of when Jesus returns, they'll be reunited with him. And so is this passage about one, one verse about being taken up into the clouds to be with Jesus. And so, people have used that in one or two other spots, and they've tied it back in to Revelation. And that's where the whole idea of rapture comes from. But it's not a developed theological view in Revelation, or even in early Christianity, that's much, much later it is probably only in the last

Tony Chvala-Smith 47:25

200 years. Yeah, rapture theology is from the early 1800s. And it comes from, you know, some Protestant thinkers in, in Great Britain,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:35

right. And then another one that has been tied to it is the idea of the antichrist. But nowhere in the Book of Revelation is that term used, that's a term that comes from First and Second John, and it simply means that, we may have mentioned this before, but it simply means someone who does not believe that Jesus came as a fully flesh and blood person? So, an antichrist is someone who does not believe that Jesus came in the flesh? So that's all it means. But it's been imported into Revelation and people pretend that somewhere in Revelation, we're talking about the antichrist, and who is that and when will they come, but it's not there. And so that's, you know, another, I would say, irresponsible use of Scripture where things are tied together, again, to heighten that sense of not being in control of a fear but it also then puts tools in the hands of people who want to manipulate people with fear.

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:47

So, you know, this, this type of literature in the Bible, can be really horribly irresponsibly interpreted. And that's why it's important for the church to offer better and good and more accurate interpretations of it. Interpretations that understand what the literature was about in its original setting, and then how to draw meaning from it for today. And just a couple of weeks ago in our Introduction to Christian Theology class at Graceland, and we were on the topic of eschatology, which is, which is end time things, right, final things. And we were encouraging the students on this and saying, you know, look, eschatology is really important to Christian theology, but it has to be approached very responsibly. Because if you don't, you end up with the sense that somehow people that God is asking us to

abandon the world and abandon our proper ethical concern for creating a more just society. Somehow you abandon all that and look for some divine bailout at the end of history, and we told them about, of course, all of our students are too young to remember this because they weren't born yet, but, taking us back to the administration of a certain President back in the 1980s, who had a Secretary of the Interior, whose name was James Watt, James Watt was an Evangelical Christian. And he is reputed to have said that we needed to use up all the Earth's natural resources so that Jesus would come back. When you say it out loud, it makes you think that it's a kind of Russian roulette Christianity, right, let's, let's spin the revolvers cylinder and see if there's a bullet in it. And one can hardly imagine a more irresponsible thing to think or believe, based on a really bad interpretation of apocalyptic and eschatological writing in the Bible. So, it's really important we get this stuff, right. And I understand it properly.

Carla Long 50:57

I completely agree. I remember watching a documentary not so long ago called, I think it's called, Jesus Camp. And it was about somewhere and I'm not kidding, in Lee's Summit, Missouri, not too far from where you guys are in Independence. Right. And, and I remember an interview with one of the women who was very invested in this Jesus Camp, and she said, of course we don't recycle, the second that we use up all Earth's natural resources is when Jesus is going to come back. And this is like a, like people who believe it seems to me like the people who believe in the rapture, who have those bumper stickers that say, in case of rapture, this car will be unmanned, or whatever, like they live, to die. Like, their whole being is all about living to die. And what's going to happen after that doesn't matter what happens here, it only matters after, after death. And so that is for Community of Christ that is not our theology at all, it is so far removed from our theology, we live to live and create something incredible here on Earth. So, it's just such a different way of thinking about it. And it seems like, you know, at first glance, the Book of Revelation could be something scary and awful, but going just a little bit deeper, it is definitely a we live to live kind of hopeful book.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:14

Absolutely. And the idea that God loves this world, God loves people, and God is wanting to make this a place where there is freedom, where there is equality, where there is especially peace. And one of the things that I think really helped me see how different your view of the world is, depending on how you read books like this. It affects what how you interact with the world, politically and socially. I was once having a conversation with a relative of mine. And we were it was during one of our world conferences, and we were talking about nuclear disarmament, and the resolution before the church, that we say something about that and take some actions where we could. And this relative said, well, why would you want to get rid of the nuclear weapons, when that's how God is going to cleanse the world? And so, it was like, let's have more weapons so that God will cleanse the world sooner. And it's like, oh, my goodness, you know, there's no sense of what about future generations? What does it mean to let Christ's love for all people and for the creation itself be what motivates us? Rather than, like you're saying, living to die? To figure out how am I going to get my place in heaven or whatever, as being more important than being an integral part of this world that were a part of. Yeah, it was so sobering. And I was like, I didn't, you know, like, I didn't even know what to say.

Tony Chvala-Smith 54:20

You, if you and if you think about the personal ethical consequences of a statement like that, here's how it would translate. Why should I worry about that severe pain in my chest in my left arm, it's the way that I'm going to die and go to heaven? Or why should I worry that my, my children are playing in the street, it's the way they're going to die and go to heaven. It's, it's that kind of logic. It's, it's twisted ethical logic, based on a really bad reading of the Bible, and Community of Christ at our best we want to counter that we want to offer something different.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:51

Well, and we believe in a God who's, who cares about this life in this place and how we are with each other and how we are within the ecosystems that were a part of. So, yeah, it makes a difference, it does make a difference. One of the other ways I think that the Book of Revelation gets misused is that it takes some of the imagery and kind of separates it into in focusing primarily on the violence part of it, and some of them want will, some people will want to kind of connect that with Old Testament views of God being a wrathful God, and wanting to wipe people out. And so, I think that's another part of the Book of Revelation that needs to be seen in its bigger context of what is really being said here. And so, for instance, the question often that needs to be answered, we think, as a church we need to be able to answer is, how does the Book of Revelation connect with our understanding of a God who values peace and calls us as individuals and as a church to peace?

Tony Chvala-Smith 56:13

So, a way to do that is to recognize first of all, nowhere in the entire Book of Revelation are believers ever encouraged to achieve things by violence? It is, it's never once suggested in the book that, that Christians take up arms, that Christians form militias, that Christians somehow fight for this or that, never once suggested. So, in that respect, the Book of Revelation's view of discipleship is like what you find in the gospels, Christians are nonviolent witnesses to a different kind of future. Another aspect of it is that the central figure of the Book of Revelation is, is not a lion, but a lamb. It's, it's quite fascinating this is, this first appears in chapter five, where John hears and then sees, or he hears, hears about the lion of the tribe of Judah. And then when he looks and sees, and by the way, apocalypses are always about seeing its visionary literature, what he sees is that the lion is not a lion, but it's a lamb, with the marks of slaughter on it. And actually, the Greek word for lamb, there is a diminutive form of the word for lamb. As, one scholar translates it, it's lamkins, it's a little lamb, that, that the real power of human history, the real power, that will create a different future is not the power of vindictive violence, but a suffering love that is represented in Jesus who has whoever has the marks of being crucified on him. I think that's quite powerful. That is that, that the one, the one in whom we are baptized, is his, his power is self-giving love, it's not another kind of power that calls us to, to live, live that kind of reality. And then finally, I shouldn't say finally, but, you know, just to move along here, the image of the of the city at the end of the book, the New Jerusalem, with gates that are open all the time, because there's nothing to fear anymore who's the tree of life for the healing of the nations? It's a, it's a beautiful civic image of salvation, salvation is finally viewed in this book as a city, not as individuals thrust off into some glory somewhere, but a city which is full of relationships, which is an international city. If, if that's, if that's God's dream for history, then why would we not want to act on behalf of that dream now? So, the only way to act on behalf of that dream, is to act in a humble, peaceful, compassionate, just ways for the wellbeing of others. So, the Book of Revelation can be a peace text, if we read it carefully, and

understand the type of literature we're dealing with. And let the symbols lead us deeper than a superficial reading whatever, take us. Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 59:42

So, one of the things I would say is that the best antidote to the fear mongering that happens around the Book of Revelation is for people to actually read it and read it with an informed guide like Metzger in *Breaking the Code*. When we first used this, we used it for a Bible study with a group of young adults. And there were some of the young adults in the group who were so afraid, had been so enculturated with fear about the Book of Revelation that they had never read it. And they were afraid to. Partly because, Carla, of seeing things like you had seen movies or people trying to scare each other, with some of the images or some of the, their interpretations of what might be in Revelation. And so this one, one friend of ours, Amy, when we were voting on which book, she did not want to, to do revelation, she was quite adamant about not wanting to do it. And in fact, it was like after the second week that we had been working on the Book of Revelation, when she came on Sunday night to our Bible study, she said, Oh, I have to tell you about this nightmare I had. And it must have been a few weeks in because we had gotten already to the bowls of wrath. And so, she'd been reading ahead for the next study. And it still talks about these bowls of wrath. And she's so she was telling us about her nightmare of seeing these kind of zombie like Campbell's kids, you know, like from the Campbell Soup. Poor thing. So, she sees these zombie like Campbell's kids holding bowls of steaming wrath and walking, you know, towards her kind of thing. And

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:01:43

it's more frightening than anything in the book. Yeah, it

Carla Long 1:01:47

sounds like she's writing her own bigger revelation, actually.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:01:50

And so, I mean, and she, she was kind of laughing about it by this point. But, I mean, she was one of the first as, as we went through the Book of Revelation, with a good guide, she was one of the first to say, oh, yeah, I get it. Yeah, I'm ready to move on to something else now. So once you know, people understand, you know, the cycles of seven and the kind of repetition and the heightening of meaning. and it's like, oh, okay, okay, I get it now. And you know, it, it diffuses it, it doesn't make it less interesting, it doesn't make it less meaningful, but it certainly makes it less scary. And then we're also then not blinded to the beauty that's in it, and the encouragement and the hope.

Carla Long 1:02:43

There's a Yeah, that's what I was gonna say, I think one of my assignments for seminary was to do a devotion to make a devotion about the Book of Revelation or something like that. And, I think, I made a devotion about some of the letters he had written to the churches. And they're beautiful letters. They're really lovely letters that he writes,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:03:00

they are, in fact, that was one of the things that when we were talking about doing this podcast, it's like, what are some of the things in the Book of Revelation that can help us in spiritual formation? And I would say that, looking at the letters and thinking about, in each of them, in almost all of them, there is both a commendation, you know, you've been doing this well, but also a warning. But you might want to check how you're doing on this thing. And so, you know, taking one of those and, and recognizing, yeah, where are the places that I have persevered? But then where are the places that I've lost my first love of God, where I've made it more about, you know, rules or about other people's issues than I have about God. So each of those letters if we let it can help us kind of do some inner work and to both give room for God to commend us and also to honestly look at some of the places where there's room for us to grow, there's room for us to be more courageous or to persevere more or to be concerned about the kinds of things that we think, what are the things that inhabit our minds, you know, some of the warnings to some of the churches are some of the theologies that they've taken in unquestioningly and haven't looked at what are the outcomes of believing those things? So, you know, there's lots of room for personal spiritual formation throughout the book, so that's another way to to

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:57

engage it. And also

Carla Long 1:04:59

Yeah, John of Patmos just used a, what was it a critique sandwich? That's right. Sorry, Tony.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:05:07

That's a lovely, lovely image. I think I just have to piggyback on that, Charmaine just approach it from the spiritual formational side, let me say, from the ethical and social ethical side, too, there's great value in this book, because look, if, if the outcome of history, if God's desired hope for outcome for history is a peaceful city with no gates, then any type of political movement that wants to create gates, or walls, is running contrary to God's desired outcome for history. If the book is a critique of abusive, coercive, manipulative power, then any place we see abusive, and, and the corrosive uses of political power to manipulate people and to, to hold them down, that is running against the will of God. And so, the book can empower our ethical imagination, to say, wait a second, what I see happening in my country's political life is running against the grain of the will of God. And so, I'm going to stand against it. In other words, there's, there's a call in the Book of Revelation, to represent a different kind of future, a future in which all the nations are welcome, a future in which suffering is has been done away, a future in which there are no more tears, a future in which peace is the final outcome. That's the kind of future God envisions and calls us to. And, and so the Book of Revelation can actually empower us after that, that's actually how the first readers would have heard this, that is, they, they would have heard this, these promises of hope, as a way to hang in there and not give up on their deepest values, which included community and peace and, and creating a different kind of life and different kind of future. So, I think, both in terms of spiritual formation, like what do we worship, what do we allow ourselves to be formed around, and in terms of our political social imagination, the Book of Revelation has a lot to teach us a lot to guide us. And

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:07:34

I have one more little thing, that is something that often comes up and is misunderstanding, and I would say misuse of the Book of Revelation. And that is about its ending. So, Tony's already told you that apocalypses kind of had this 300-year window when they were popular, and people knew what they were and knew how to read them. But one of the things that often happened to apocalypses was that people would add on things to the end of them. So, somebody might have written an apocalypse and then maybe 20 years later somebody would add on a new bit that would be you know, forecasting, something that may be happening in the near future, or a way to interpret what had happened recently, and how God might have been in that and then somebody else might add on another ending on to it, and another and another. And so, there's some of the apocalypses, from the first and second century BCE, they have pages of add-on's after the original text. And so, what we have at the end of Revelation is that kind of a statement that started to be used in apocalypses, to basically say, the author saying, this is where I'm ending my apocalypse, don't be adding anything else onto it, or anything beyond this point has been added on. I mean, it's basically a way of saying, kind of a copyright. This is, this is where we end, this is where my thoughts, my words, and, and nothing should be added to this. So that's really important because when Christianity started taking these books that had become over the space of about 300 years, important and valuable, and, and officially made them canon. They did not put them in a chronological order. And we've already talked about these being done by different people in different times. And with this book being written somewhere around 95-96 is not the latest writing. There are other writings in the New Testament that easily date from 100-130 as as perhaps the latest date for Second Peter. And so, this is simply this statement at the end of Revelation. This was a choice by Christians to put it as the last book because it talks about last things at the very end. But that statement is just an author's statement about his own writing in the Book of Revelation, it's not a statement that says, you know, you can't have other things that your group might call scripture in the future. So, I think that's just an important thing, since people who don't see the Bible as a library of different writings, provide different authors, tend to see that last little statement, or in the last chapter of Revelation as somehow saying that God will not speak beyond that time and that book, and it's just an important thing to know.

Carla Long 1:11:09

For sure, so, uh, you guys have kind of mentioned a few things to keep in mind. But just for our listeners out there, when they read the Book of Revelation definitely have another text that they're reading with it that kind of helps them through it, like Bruce Metzger's book, Breaking the Code. But what are some of the other filters that they should keep in their head? When they're reading? It? Definitely, that this is a book of hope and that's one. So, what are the other filters that they should kind of keep in there before? They, you know, don't let themselves freak out? Yeah,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:11:44

I think the thing that you need to remind yourself on every single page is that this is a pastor, writing to people who he has tried to nurture in the faith in the first century, I think we need to keep always before us, who was this written for? You know, we are the benefactors of this having been copied, and spread around. But who was it originally meant for? And I think that really will help us to put a lot of things into perspective, is that, you know, these were beleaguered Christians in the, in the later part of the first century, who were, and probably, in many ways, still trying to figure out who is this God that is

represented to us in Jesus Christ? And what does it mean to hang on? When, when life is really difficult, right. Now,

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:12:43

here's another filter, I would add. And that is that, in terms of the literature of the New Testament, we have one complete Apocalypse, and four complete gospels. Right. In terms of the amount of literature, gospel trumps Apocalypse, and I learned that from the great Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kuhn, who makes that statement in one of his books. It is a brilliant statement. In other words, lots of types of American Protestant Christianity think that Revelation is sort of the capstone, sort of the lens through which you read all of the Bible. And it's like, no, no, no, no, the gospels, the story of Jesus's life, death, life, ministry, death and resurrection, that's the lens through which to read the Bible. And so don't, don't turn the Apocalypse of John into something more than it is. It's one book in a library of a very particular type of literature. And so the center of the canon is Jesus, the center of the church's life is Jesus. And the Jesus who is coming, is the Jesus who came. So, it's really important to keep that as another set of filters for reading this book.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:13:58

Yeah. And that's where I would go to is, let Jesus be the lens that you're reading this through. This is about having hope, in, in being a follower of Jesus in a difficult time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:14:12

And one final thing I can think of too, is that it's really, really hard for church folks to get out of the habit of thinking of the Book of Revelation, as I'm putting double quotes on it, predicting the future, predicting our time. This is not a crystal ball type of literature. It's really not that at all. Gosh, I remember one time, Charmaine and I did a class at a church camp, about 100 years ago. So, we did a whole week with the adults on the Book of Revelation and the last day of the class, some dear church member in a little kind of Q&A at the end of the class, said, so what's been fulfilled and what's yet to be fulfilled? Asleep at the wheel moments. It's like, well, I don't really have time to start over again. But anyway, there's this, oh my gosh, this deeply embedded instinct for lots of Christians in the United States that somehow the Book of Revelation is, as I use Luke Johnson's term, it's the bus schedule or the train schedule, and it's predicting things, and if we can just find where we are in the bus schedule, we'll know what's coming. It's like, no, it's not that type of literature, you're miss reading it. So, give up the idea that this book is predictive, apocalypses are hortatory, meaning they exhort, the main, the main function of the apocalypse is to exhort its readers to hang in there because they can trust God is going to come through, that's what they're about. They're not about predicting; I don't know who's going to win the next World Series or something dumb like that. So, give up the predictive lens, it's not helpful for reading this literature.

Carla Long 1:16:01

Amen

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:16:04

sorry, got a little carried away there. But

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:16:07

and I think, you know, maybe just reading a little bit from the last chapter might be helpful. This is bits and pieces from 20 to 12, through the end, and this is Jesus. See, I am coming soon, my reward is with me to repay according to everyone's work, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. So, it's reflecting back on those images at the beginning of Jesus walking among the churches, but then goes on, I'm the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star, the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let everyone who hears say, come, and let everyone who was thirsty, come, let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. And then at the very end, the grace of the Lord Jesus, he with all the saints, amen.

Carla Long 1:17:24

Well, that was excellent. Thank you. I think that's a really good place to, to end it. Tony, Charmaine, I appreciate you so much about helping us through, you know, kind of looking, being able to look at Revelation in an entirely different way. It is a book that has just promoted so much fear. I think all three of us have mentioned that it has caused fear in our lives. And I would imagine that that is true for a great many people who listen to this podcast. So, I hope that it we can kind of demystify it, continue to demystify it, and maybe, you know, I think Bruce Metzger's book is an excellent book, it's less than 100 pages or right out 100 pages, it's super simple. Were there any other resources that we could toss out there for people to look at if they're interested,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:18:15

I think a couple of things to do is to maybe look for a good study Bible. And this one's pretty good. The New Interpreter's Study Bible, and it's the New Revised Standard Version, but for other good study Bibles,

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:18:35

I think either the third or the fourth edition of the New Oxford annotated and NRSV, just so you've got the footnotes and some basic background,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:18:45

Harper Collins Study Bible

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:18:48

that one works, and then also, for one volume commentary, it's called the People's New Testament Commentary, the People's one volume commentary, the New Testament, really an excellent piece of work on the whole New Testament, written by Fred Craddock, the late Fred Craddock, who was one of the Dean of American Preachers for a very long time until he passed away a few years ago. And then, Eugene Boring, who actually wrote an amazing commentary on the Book of Revelation. So, they're, they're great New Testament commentators. And that commentary is written with preaching and adult Sunday school and teaching in mind. So those are some things and of course, for the daring, they can always take New Testament 1 and 2 in our seminary, those who want to try out some master's level work. That would be another place where you could learn more about the Book of Revelation.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:19:48

Cool.

Carla Long 1:19:49

Did you say Eugene boring?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:19:52

Well, yes, that's his name.

Carla Long 1:19:54

I'm so sorry about that for him.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:19:59

Yeah, so it I mean, it's his commentary on revelation in the interpretation series is a fabulous commentary. And I have to it's an unfortunate last name. He's not boring.

Carla Long 1:20:11

Okay, good to know. But yeah,

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:20:13

he's well worth reading.

Carla Long 1:20:17

Well, thank you again, Tony and Charmaine, for being with us. Thank you, again for sharing your knowledge and for, you know, just providing us some an opportunity to talk about something that has been kind of scary to talk about. So, you guys are great. And I really appreciate you,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:20:31

thank you for helping remind us of some of these topics that might be of interest in bringing your own questions and experience that really helps a lot. Thank you. And know,

Carla Long 1:20:41

for sure. Oh, and maybe we should just say, listener. If you have like ideas for topics or you'd like us to talk about something, feel free to go to the Project Zion Podcast.org. And, you know, type in some of your ideas or find us on Facebook at Project Zion Podcast. And, you know, tell us what you want us to talk about if if you're still

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:21:02

listening. Here's a truly apocalyptic thing to say now, Carla. The end. The end of this podcast has come.

Carla Long 1:21:11

It is indeed the time. Thanks again, Tony. And bye bye.

Josh Mangelson 1:21:20

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