

Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

Week beginning Sunday 25 November 2018 Where do we fit in?

Pray that we would recognise that there is a place for each and every one of us but see that the overarching purpose of God is Jesus. Pray that we will be given greater insight into how God is working out his purposes and how Jesus is key to it all.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Revelation 1:4b-8.

Background Revelation isn't the easiest book of the Bible to understand. There is a lot of visual language and sometimes people are put off by the difficulties. However, we are only looking at a few verses this week and perhaps we could take a broad overview. We need to appreciate that Christians were suffering real persecution. Some things could not be spoken of openly except with serious risk. However, here we have a declaration that God will bring his plans to fruition. Jesus will come in glory and bring completion to the work of salvation he established by his death on the cross. The detail and timing is unknown but it WILL happen and those enduring hardship were to take comfort in this promise. Jesus is the key – he is at the beginning and end (alpha to omega, A to Z) and you could say the middle as well of all God's purposes. We need to be open to appreciate the ongoing importance of Jesus for our day and age.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. "I don't understand". There are, of course, many things which we may have difficulty understanding – and some parts of Revelation may be among them. However, that should not put us off from trying to get some meaning from difficult passages. Often what we need to do is start from where do understand. How do you begin to put a jigsaw puzzle together? Are you a corners and edges person? Or do you favour trying to complete an image in its entirety? Let's look at these few verses beginning with what we might find fairly clear.
2. Jesus – it's always good to focus on Jesus! What is there here about Jesus? His death and its significance? Where does Jesus figure in God's plans and purposes? (Alpha is the first and Omega the last letters of the Greek alphabet – akin to us saying A to Z). What is said about Jesus' place in the times to come? Many people, if they think about Jesus at all, think only of him as someone from a past age – how important is it that Christians convey our sense of Jesus being with us in the present? How can we encourage talk of Jesus in the future, in the end times – without it becoming idle speculation?
3. Many people fear the future – why is that? Is there a fear that we will fall short of God's expectations? How can an emphasis on Jesus and grace be a help there? There's lots we don't know about heaven – but if Jesus is going to be at the centre of heavenly life how should that help us?
4. Jesus is in all time – past, present and future. We quite often think at Easter time how his death and resurrection should impact on the way that we live our lives now but the future is supposed to have an impact too. How may our thoughts of going to be with Jesus in heaven and enjoy fellowship with him (and other believers) for all time affect the way we live? Treat him? And others? NOW?
5. The papers are full of uncertainty about how things will turn out – we Christians are members of a society that has to live with these insecurities. However, the way we deal with them can be greatly helped knowing that Jesus is in our future – or we are in his! What practical differences might this thinking make in our lives? How might we voice them to friends?
6. Please discuss/consider anything else that arises from the passage or service.

Prayer Lord, thank you that you are working out your purposes for good for all who love you. Help us not to fear the future but we hold firm to Jesus and allow his presence and promises to change the way that we live now so that we better reflect your glory. Amen.