

Session 2 Discuss and Explore

Question 1: Pastor Matthew mentions hymns and liturgy that evoke the language of Revelation. Name some favorite hymns that use similar language. What do you appreciate about the language of these hymns? Why do you think Revelation provides such a rich source material for liturgy and hymns?

Question 2: Pastor Matthew explains that sabbath is the rhythm of creation and worship is the rhythm of Revelation. How do you understand sabbath? What are some of your memories of a time that is set apart for rest? What did it feel like or look like? What are some of your sabbath practices that help you set time apart?

Question 3: Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, “The sabbath is a cathedral in time.” How do you understand this quotation? What might a “cathedral in time” look like for you?

Question 4: Revelation uses evocative imagery that can be difficult to imagine. Read the description of the Lamb from Revelation 5:6-8 in your Bible. Try sketching an image of the lamb or use your mobile device to look up a piece of sacred art, such as “Adoration of the Lamb” in Munich, Germany.

Question 5: The Lamb of God, often called the Agnus Dei for the Latin description of this piece of the liturgy, is an image that we use often in worship. For the first Christians, the lamb was a symbol of sacrifice on an altar as well as a symbol of innocence and purity. Review these words from our liturgy from Revelation 5:12. Take some time to wonder about what the image of a lamb means to you. Then share your ideas with someone else.

Hymn Sources

1. How does the imagery from Revelation add to the meaning of the hymn?
2. How does understanding the context in Revelation affect your hearing of the hymn?
3. How effectively do you think the hymn-writer interpreted Revelation?

Of the Father's Love Begotten (ELW 295) (Revelation 1:4-8, 17; 21:3-6)

Of the Father's love begotten Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending he,
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore.

Holy, Holy, Holy (ELW 413) (Read Revelation 4:1-8)

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
Which wert and art, and evermore shalt be.

Amazing Grace (ELW 779) (Read Revelation 22:5)

Amazing grace!—how sweet the sound— That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.

When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we'd first begun.

Battle Hymn of the Republic (ELW 890) (Read Revelation 14:19-20)

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on.

Old and New

In Revelation 4:1-11, John describes the throne-room of God with some similarity to Ezekiel's description. Read both and compare and contrast the visions. See Ezekiel 1:4-28.

In Revelation 4:6, John describes a "sea of glass, like crystal." The account of creation found in Genesis 1 describes God stretching the waters from the waters, so that waters were above the sky and below the ground. In the imagination of ancient people, the throne of God would reside above the waters over the sky, therefore the vision of the glassy sea. See Genesis 1:6-7.

In Revelation 4:8, John's descriptions of the four creatures attending the throne-room sound much like the seraphim described in Isaiah. Note also that their chorus is similar, pointing to the otherness of God. See Isaiah 6:1-3.

In Revelation 4:9-10, John preserves much mystery of God in this description. There is no description of God's appearance, and God's holiness (other-ness) is emphasized. It is like the story of the people of Israel gathering around Mt. Sinai. Read both and find similarities and differences. See Exodus 19: 9-18.