



"Refresco" – Sermon Discussion Guide

The Battle Between Good and Evil"

Living With the End in Mind – Part 16b

October 11, 2015 – October 17, 2015

Refresco by Associate Pastor David Poland

ICE BREAKER: What was your favorite joke as a kid?

READ: Revelation 12:1-6

If I were handing out awards for the most brain bending and headache inducing passages of scripture Revelation 12 would be on the short list. There is so much going on here in explicitly symbolic ways. There are heavy references and allusions to multiple different Old Testament passages. In fact if you do not have a *strong* grasp on things like Old Testament theology, the life of Jesus, Church history, how to interpret prophetic passages, and a host of other topics then I would wager that you have around a 100% chance to leave this chapter more confused than when you started it. (I would also say if you have all of those things down then your chance to be confused falls to about 98%... it is really hard stuff...)

Just to be honest, I have spent a long while chewing on the things that we will explore this week and most of the time it feels like I have not gotten very far. So what I would like to do today is explore some of the biggest "issues" that must be addressed to have a complete grasp of what is being said here. As mentioned earlier there is a bunch to look at so let's jump right into it.

READ: Genesis 37:9-11

This is the first passage that most people who have studied Revelation 12 say we must take into account to fully understand what is happening. In Joseph's dream we find "the Sun, the moon, and eleven stars" all bowing to him. We then compare what implications this has with the fact that the woman is "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet." Many think that this gives us clues as to who the woman is. In Genesis we have a hint that the sun and moon represent Jacob's father and mother, but more importantly we see that there are some serious ties to the nation of Israel and the sun and the moon. We see this theme again later in scripture.

READ: Psalm 89:35-36

The sun and moon again serve to illustrate a point. Specifically they are used to compare with the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises. So as we search the whole counsel we begin to see that there are themes and similarities that arise in as we compare passages to one another. But we are still not done.

If we look at the story of Jesus' birth in Matthew we find that there are some similarities that we cannot afford to not acknowledge.

In Revelation 12 we see that when the woman has a child the dragon seeks to destroy it but God sweeps the child

up and the woman flees to the wilderness. A similar scene happens in the end of the chapter; when the dragon is defeated by Michael he pursues the woman again but she flees a second time and is saved. When Jesus was born we find in Matthew that Herod sought to kill him. Herod was so determined to destroy Jesus that he was willing to kill all boys under the age of 2. So Mary, Joseph and Jesus fled to Egypt.

These are just of the many topics that we would have to look at to get a full picture of what is going on here. We could discuss the state of the Roman Empire and the church at the time John was writing Revelation. We could talk about all the persecution that happened in the book of acts. We haven't mentioned culturally what the Sun and moon would mean to the original audience. So we can be tempted to throw our hands in the air and give up. But there is a small thing that we skipped by in the beginning of Revelation 12 that can help us and bring us some encouragement.

Revelation 12:1 "And a great sign appeared in heaven." There are two key ideas in this sentence that can help us immeasurably. 1) *A great sign.* We are told in the introduction to what we are about to read that we are talking in signs. Signs in scripture are inherently difficult. It is much simpler to interpret a literal description of what is happening then figuring out all the ins and outs of signs. 2) *In heaven.* Whatever it is that John is witnessing exists in a plane higher than the earthly one that we currently occupy. In the entire book of Revelation and specifically in chapter 12 we see that God's ways are higher than ours, so when we try to comprehend it all there is bound to be some headache.

What we need to remember is that as we approach difficult passages God will help us but sometimes it requires work. Sometimes a passage will elude you for a while, even a long while. As you search all of scripture for the answers to questions that a passage like Revelation 12 brings you, will reap rewards that you never even saw coming.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Instead of specific questions take some time to discuss with your life group what bible study tricks work for you. What things help you study the bible (both practical and spiritual)? How do you handle difficult passages? Why do (or don't) you have a daily quiet time with bible study as a part of it?

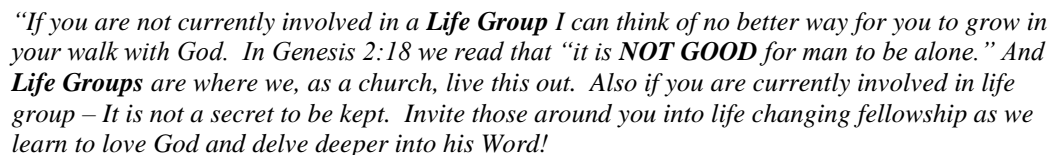
HOMEWORK: Being a student of scripture is a lifelong journey, and we can't expect to be experts on everything right from the get-go. This week I encourage you to engage scripture, don't balk away from the tough passages or give up when confusion starts to creep in.

VERSE TO MEMORIZE: 1 Corinthians 2:16



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COMMUNITY/FELLOWSHIP • DISCIPLESHIP • MINISTRY • WORSHIP • EVANGELISM



- *Pastor David*

Additional Notes, Praise Reports and Prayer Request:

[illegible]

Financial Report:

Weekly budget requirement:	\$ 5,500
General Offering 10/04/15:	\$ 5,236
	-\$ 264