

# End the Week with the DTP - January 13, 2012

13th Jan 2012

**Welcome to End the Week with the DTP!** This weekly email is sent automatically to clergy and Readers in the diocese (if you don't want to receive it, please send an email to [CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org)) but anyone is welcome to subscribe to the list, and we are especially keen to pass it on to any interested lay people, especially those who may have responsibility for preaching. To subscribe they simply need to email [CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org).

## Events coming soon

### **NEW** College Lectures at St John's Nottingham

St John's College, Chilwell Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3DS [www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk](http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk)

College Lectures happen at 12.05pm every Wednesday during teaching term, and are part of the learning programme for all students. The events are also open to others. The cost is £6 per lecture, to cover administration. (Lunch is extra and must be pre-booked.) **Space is limited, so places MUST be booked in advance.**

**Wednesday 18 January - The Right Revd Tim Stevens, Bishop of Leicester** Bishop Tim has a particular interest in inter-faith relations, and his views on The Church and The Big Society have been widely reported on.

**Wednesday 29 February - The Right Revd Steven Croft, Bishop of Sheffield** Bishop Steven is heavily involved in Fresh Expressions and Church Planting initiatives. Meet him after lunch for an informal chat in the Student Common Room.

**Wednesday 21 March - J John** J John of the Philo Trust is a well known and respected evangelist with a creative storytelling style. His lecture topic will be Communicating Effectively, and he will also be staying to preach at Communal Worship.

To book, contact Ruth Taylor at St John's on 0115 925 1114 or at [r.taylor@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk](mailto:r.taylor@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk).

## **Reminder** In Service Study Weeks at St John's, Nottingham

In Service Study Weeks (ISSWs) offer you the opportunity for in-depth study of a topic of academic interest relevant to the mission and ministry of the church today. They are designed primarily for serving clergy and others in full-time Christian work. Each study week runs from 12noon on Monday to lunchtime on Friday.

ISSWs coming up are:

- **Understanding Church** (6-10 February 2012)
- **Engaging Culture** (30 April-4 May 2012)

Each ISSW costs £295 (tuition and full-board) or £215 (Tuition only). For full details, go to [www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/study-weeks](http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/study-weeks) or email [academic@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk](mailto:academic@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk).

## **Reminder** Going for Growth

**Wednesdays 29 February, 7, 14, 21, 28 March 2012, 2pm to 5pm at St John's College Nottingham with the Venerable Bob Jackson**

This course about how churches grow today is for all clergy and other lay leaders who wish to see their churches flourish and grow numerically and spiritually. Each session will focus on a different aspect of the general road to church growth, but will also give time for your own particular concerns and situation.

Price: £85 + lunch or supper as required

Booking deadline: Friday 21 January 2012. Places **MUST** be booked and paid for in advance.

To book contact Helen Taylor on 0115 968 3221 or 0115 925 1114 or email [h.taylor@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk](mailto:h.taylor@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk)

Download a leaflet / booking form at

## **Reminder Training for Rural Church Ministry from the Arthur Rank Centre in 2012**

The Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) is offering two types of residential training programmes for rural clergy, or clergy-in-training:

Multi-Church Ministry Workshops are over 2 days based at Offa House, at £150 pounds per person. 2012 dates are 13-14th June & 10-11th October. Full details & booking forms are to be found at [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/arc-training/multi-church-ministry-workshops](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/arc-training/multi-church-ministry-workshops). Places are limited.

Rural Ministry Courses are over 3 days based jointly between the ARC at Stoneleigh Park and Offa House. 2012 dates are 20-22nd March & 16-18th October. Details can be found at [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/arc-training/rural-ministry-courses](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/arc-training/rural-ministry-courses). Booking forms are currently only available to download for the March course (cost £220), and places are limited. If you are interested in the October course, contact us at [katrinas@arthurrankcentre.org.uk](mailto:katrinas@arthurrankcentre.org.uk).

## **Reminder Communications Training in Leicester 2012**

These training events are being offered in Leicester (St Martins House, 7 Peacock Lane, Leicester LE1 5PZ) in March and April next year, and can be booked through the London communications office. Clergy and Readers can use their CME grant to cover the costs, and lay people are equally welcome.

- Get your church noticed: the basics - 29 March, 2pm-5pm. Cost: £35
- Social media for the scared - 13 March, 10am-1pm. Cost: £50
- Twitter 101 - 13 March, 2pm-5pm. Cost: £50
- Mission in the Wedding show marketplace - 30 March, 2pm-5pm. Cost: £30
- Being Interviewed - 21 March, 10am-5pm. Cost: £80  
OR Broadcast interview basics - 21 March 10am-5pm. Cost: £40
- Design for Print - 27th April, 2pm-5pm. Cost: £40

All training can be booked online at [www.churchcommstraining.org](http://www.churchcommstraining.org) or by telephone on 0207 898 1465.

## **Reminder Life Change Preaching: Why? Who? How?**

**Philo Trust Conference 2012 with Dr Martin Sanders**  
**Wednesday 20 June 2012, 9am - 4pm at St Andrew's Church, Chorleywood**

Dr Martin Sanders is the Director of Doctoral Programmes at Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, New York, as well as Professor of Pastoral Theology, teaching courses in homiletics, pastoral leadership and spiritual formation.

The conference day sessions will include:

- Identifying our Mission, Audience and Approach
- Making Sermons Live
- Connecting with the Soul

Special early discount of £30 per person (including refreshments) if booked before 31 March 2012. £40 per person thereafter. To book, visit [www.philotrust.com](http://www.philotrust.com), email [admin@philotrust.com](mailto:admin@philotrust.com) or call 01923 287777.

You can find details of all the events coming up, which have been advertised in recent editions of End the Week, [here](#).

## **Notes on the Reading for Sunday 22 January • 3rd Sunday of Epiphany**

### **Revelation 19. 6-10**

Revelation is one of the most (perhaps the most) undervalued books of the whole Bible – or maybe I just mean least understood. Even though Christian writers had referred to it from the early second century onwards, there were disputes about whether it actually belonged in the New Testament. Eusebius in the early fourth century regarded it as a 'disputed book' but probably because he found its contents unsettling and uncomfortable as the personal chaplain to the Emperor Constantine. Explaining its very dim view of imperial power to his unpredictable master cannot have been easy! (See History of the Church 3.25; 7.25.)

What is often overlooked is that Revelation tells the story of salvation but in a rather different key to the one used by Paul and the Gospel-writers. Its arresting prophetic images offer an alternative path to understanding. Eugene Peterson comments that 'The truth of the gospel is already complete, revealed in Jesus Christ. There is nothing new to say on the subject. But there is a new way to say it. I read the Revelation not to get more information but to revive my imagination' (Reversed Thunder Harper & Row 1988, pp.xi-xii). Approaching Revelation with an open imagination is essential; most of the problems with interpretations of it seem to me to come from taking it too literally. But rightly understood it can, as Peterson says, liberate and revive the imaginative eyes of faith.

Understanding Revelation isn't as easy as that statement makes it sound, of course; the key to understanding

is grasping the structure of the book, but every commentator seems to have a different idea what that structure is! To my mind the best way of understanding the story which Revelation tells is offered by Alan Garrow (Revelation Routledge 1997). He suggests that most of the first half of the book is introductory, creating suspense before the revelation of 'that which is soon to take place' (Rev. 1.1; 22.6) in the opening of the great scroll. So introductory letters to the Churches of Asia Minor fill chapters 1-3, followed by a vision of heaven (Rev. 4) and the introduction of the scroll and the Lamb who is worthy to open it (Rev. 5). Seven seals which bind the scroll are opened (Rev. 6), followed by seven trumpets which precede the opening of the scroll itself (Rev. 7-11.18). Finally, the contents of the scroll are revealed in three parts, followed by a short epilogue (Rev. 11.19-13.18; 15.1-16.21; 19.11-22.7; 22.8-21). But between these parts are two interludes: a future vision of the triumph of the lamb (Rev. 14) and a future vision of the evil of the city of Babylon and of its fall (Rev. 17.1-19.10). The passage set for Epiphany 3 is therefore the conclusion to one of these two late interludes in the book, and takes place out of the sequence of events that are being described. Rev. 19.6-10 is a kind of 'flash-forward' to the final triumph of the lamb, the lead-up to which has not yet been fully narrated.

On this reading, Rev. 19.6-10 offers the reaction of Heaven to the destruction of Babylon, the oppressive city and its power (which all serious commentators identify with Rome and its empire). The great multitude (Rev. 19.1, 6) is the population of heaven, acclaiming the victory of God and the wedding of the lamb in a great hymn of praise (Rev. 19.6-8). The wedding anticipates the consummation to come in the final vision of the book, the new Jerusalem, when God will dwell with humanity (Rev. 21). Perhaps its most striking affirmation is that God's triumph includes humanity. This is not a God who lives in isolation from his people or his creation, but one whose aim through incarnation has been to draw all things into unity with himself. This is nothing less than the re-imagining of who God is. David Bentley Hart picks up the point well when he notes that if 'in the revelation of God in Christ, through the Spirit, the Father himself had made himself known to his creatures...[then] an entire metaphysical tradition had been implicitly abandoned. No longer could God in the "proper" sense be conceived of as an inaccessible Supreme Being dwelling at the top of the scale of essences, who acts upon creation only from afar, by a series of ever more remote deputations, and who is himself contained within the economy of the high and low. If all of God's actions in the Son and Spirit are nothing less than immediate actions of God himself, in the fullness of his divine identity, then creation and redemption alike are immediate works of God' (Atheist Delusions Yale UP 2009, p.207). That this is so is one of the most important affirmations that Revelation makes: God cares so much for his world that he has come and is coming to rescue it – another way of stating the Christmas story, but without a manger, a shepherd or a wise man in sight! (John's vision gives the whole story of the gospels in a single paragraph without naming Jesus at all in Rev. 12.1-5; but that is the passage set for next week.)

It would be easy to leave this passage there, with the praise of heaven ringing in our ears. But there is actually more at stake here, and the way in which the lectionary has to pull out plum passages can make us miss important elements in their context. The context of the song of praise here is the fall and destruction of Babylon; the preceding chapter has been filled with images of destruction, and this one opens with a Hallelujah song praising God's judgement on 'the great whore', exulting in its eternal destruction as the smoke from the ruins 'ascends from age to age' (Rev. 19.3). For some this glorification of violence is shocking and reignites the debate about whether this is a truly Christian book at all. Others challenge the assumptions at work in such a view, taking Western scholars (and the Western Church) to task for overlooking the way in which praise here arises from judgement. What God is being praised for is his righteousness. The corollary of God's holiness is the final and utter destruction of evil – and it is clear that Babylon/Rome has no redeeming features and must be destroyed, just as Rome itself had utterly destroyed its own rival of Carthage in 146BC, leaving it to burn for seventeen days and then sowing its fields with salt so that nothing would ever grow there again. We gulp at such destruction as comes on Babylon, but in the text itself 'John provides heaven's perspective on the human suffering entailed in the destruction of empire. Even those who suffered and mourned empire's passing are seen to join the great multitude in thanking God for their release from slavery when viewed with heaven's eyes' (S.P.Woodman The Book of Revelation: SCM

Core Text, SCM, 2008, p.223). Such a perspective is perhaps more likely to be found amongst the 'Occupy' protesters on the steps of St Paul's than within our churches. Yet God's holy intolerance of what is evil is part of what moves the multitude in Revelation 19 to praise. Amidst the songs of praise in our churches, how do we too share this perspective, from the point of view of those who suffer and rejoice that God is moving to set them free, as so many of John's original audience must have done?

## And Finally...

Bishop Colin Buchanan offers the following misprints ('What the spellcheck won't tell you') from service sheets in the latest Praxis News of Worship:

- at a wedding: 'Grant us, we pray, your peace in our hearse, Lord, at the end of of the day'
- a collect: 'O God, the sauce of all goodness...'
- a hymn: 'Crown him with many thorns...'

And I always remember a Reader I worked with years ago who always made her prayers sound as if they began 'O Lord, you tortoise...'

*Any other contributions gratefully received!*

**That's all folks!**

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