

Home group notes - w/b 24th November 2014 – Life and death

Use as much or as little as you wish. Allow time for prayer even if you cut short some of the study. You don't have to use all of these notes, and it doesn't matter if you get diverted into something else the group needs to study.

1) Read Revelation 1:1-18

We won't do a full study on Revelation in one evening! So don't spend too long in this, nor think there is only one right answer... But just note:

- To whom was the revelation given?
- What kind of writing does it claim to be?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Have a guess at the context (no-one really knows except it is dated to around 80AD)
- It is unlikely to have been written by John the Gospel writer – very different style and language
- What is John told to do with the revelation he received?

What comfort (if any) do you take from these verses?

Look at the description of the speaker in verses 12-16. What is the most memorable or outstanding feature for you? How does this relate to your knowledge or experience of God?

What is John's reaction to his vision (v17)? And Jesus' response? What does he say about life and death?

This time in the church's year is good for taking stock of our inner beliefs. What happens when we die? When we are scared? When we feel a failure?

2) Read Matthew 25:31-46. What comes before this parable in the same chapter? See the punch lines of previous parables in 24:44, 24:48-51, 25:12-13 and 25:21.

The parable in 25:31-46 is often used to urge people to do good and to see Jesus in others. Obviously not wrong, but is there more?

Who are those on the King's right? See verses 34 and 37. What makes someone righteous and blessed?

If we are not righteous and blessed (the natural human condition without Christ?) what fate awaits? *Various attempts are made to soften verse 46; the word for 'punishment' is also used for pruning in horticulture; it is Jewish over-statement, and so on... but one cannot read the Bible consistently and do away with a divide which can become permanent.*

What good news is there in this parable?

How are our attitudes changed, not just outward actions?

Have a go at combining the teachings of Rev 1 with the teachings in Mt 25. What is the fate of the wicked? Those who refuse to believe in Christ? Those who are hypocritical?

What is the fate of those who do give themselves in trust, even when they don't have all the answers and see the unrighteous thriving? What effect will meeting with Jesus have?

NB we are not called to judge others or to speculate on the fate of others. Use this study as a spur to your own trust in Christ, and renew that now through prayer.