

Rapture & Revelation



“True godliness does not turn [people] out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it.”

-- William Penn

1st break:

Where does the idea of “eschatology” come from and what does it mean?

According to Rossing, what would a good “warning label” be for the *Left Behind* books?

Discuss some of the history and who created the notion of the so-called “rapture.”

Is there any part of Darby’s theology that is anything more than fantasy?

Where has your own life been influenced by these ideas about rapture and end times?

2nd break:

Why is countering this fictional Biblical timeline important?

Theologically and psychologically, what does the rapture mentality foster?

What does the God revealed in Jesus suggest about Jesus' character?

How does the vision of a violent apocalypse sync with that character?

Why does Crossan call violent apocalypse our "great Christian treason"?

3rd break:

What is the appeal of the *Left Behind* stories?

What are some of the possible elements of the "different story" Rossing sees a need for?

4th break:

How come so much environmental destruction has happened while Christian nations have been "in control"?

How does being compassionate as God is compassionate relate to creation?

How does Aquinas' definition of salvation resonate with your spiritual journey?

Why do the most important verses for us today involve the leaves from the tree of life?

If the church is called, with the prophetic Jesus, to eco-justice, what would that look like?

General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

Try it

Follow up with reading *Deep Economy* by Bill McKibbin and *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* by John de Graaf (now adopted into an award-winning documentary seen on PBS)

Words of Wisdom

The final scenes of Revelation close with an earth-centered vision of hope and healing.

Read Revelation 21 and 22

While Native American spirituality is often associated with honoring the sacredness of all creation, the same perspective resonates in Judeo-Christian heritage.

Read Psalm 19.1-4

Despite warnings in the gospels to the contrary, whole denominations of people are totally absorbed with the minutiae of Biblical prophecy and second-guessing the unfolding of history. The sign of Jonah, as Bill Nelson says, "...is not about a dumb fish!" Ironically, the "sign of Jonah" is a reminder of God's unpredictable grace. Jonah experienced firsthand how God short-circuits any legalistic understanding of rules or events that force the Divine to behave in a prescribed manner or show favoritism to one particular tribe or another.

Read Matthew 16:4 – and Jonah, for that matter!

Spirit Practice

Estimates suggest that at least fifty percent of the trash North Americans throw away is recyclable. What efforts do you and/or your faith community make to recycle as much material as possible? If your community doesn't already have a curbside-recycling program, is there a way you can advocate for one (or educate people to use an existing program)?

Composting is another option that requires discipline on a practical level but has rewards as a *spiritual* discipline, as well. Bits of kitchen waste, garden clippings, rotting flowers, egg shells, and coffee grounds decay into sweet-smelling, fertile, crumbly compost – but it takes intentional turning and working. It's not unlike the personal spiritual work necessary in the spiritual journey: if you're not intentional about doing something with your psychological/spiritual trash, it can start piling up in ways that make healthy living an impossibility. The metaphor of working a compost heap is a helpful reminder that part of caring for creation is to minimize waste and transform what some might consider worthless into something that renews the environment and promotes further growth. **Keep an eye out:** To help you get started, Starbucks offers bags of its used coffee grounds for composters to take home!