

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 3

Hope (Hopeful Prophecy)



We have only one chapter from our companion book this week. And our author is still laying out the groundwork for understanding Revelation. Meanwhile, our series is already moving onto the actual text, jumping into the four horsemen and not waiting.

The Reverend Naylo Hopkins is scheduled to bring this week's message. I will be visiting Open Door Church.

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Survival Kit (Fighting Monsters)



I'm a big fan of watching how-to YouTube videos that I usually find after asking Google search a how-to question.

In preparing for this week's message on Revelation, I found another source that I haven't used before. The site is called wikiHow.

The platform's mission is to create an extensive library of knowledge about how to do things.

I googled the word Armageddon, and the site was listed near the top of referrals with the summary of How to prepare for Armageddon? The site offered a list of items to have on hand.

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MARCH 3, 2024

EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
WEEK!!

DONATE

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Hope (Hopeful Prophecy) *cont. from pg 1*

Jeremy Duncan, in *Upside-Down Apocalypse*, makes the case that the structure of Revelation mirrors the Book of Isaiah. Why would John make this choice if Revelation is apocalyptic? The answer is Revelation is a prophecy borrowing from the prophetic traditions, but using apocalyptic storytelling for impact. And it works.

Reading Revelation as prophecy is the key to breaking through the obscure symbolism borrowed from other prophets, including Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. And the prophetic tradition of telling a story three times. But remember, prophecy doesn't predict the future, although prophecy may illustrate possibilities. Rather, prophecy enlightens humanity by critiquing the present while revealing God's better plan. Prophecy presents hopeful new beginnings.

That is, prophecy points to a better future that is possible because God loves us and all that God created.

Consider the prophecies of Isaiah as three stories, or as one story told from three different vantage points. Isaiah begins with a focus on the lived experience of most individuals. The rich are getting richer and the poorer suffer. Sound familiar?

Revelation is not a story told with a timeline. Instead, Revelation loops back to retell the story multiple times while zooming out to tell the same story from a broader view.

In the first part, Isaiah makes the case that salvation is a call to repentance. A repentance that "illuminates the cost of our individual choices, involves us with restorative justice, and saves us from ruin." Revelation opens with letters to seven churches addressing the lived experiences of individuals facing injustice. John calls for healed relationships between persons facing hardships together. Living the way taught by Jesus.

Part two of Isaiah begins with a new vision. A similar break occurs in Revelation as John, once again, is under the control of the Holy Spirit. In

Isaiah, the story of salvation is told from the vantage point of nations. God disassembles empires. Armageddon, in both Isaiah and Revelation, is a showdown between God and the military machinery of nations. War is no more.

I saw the Lamb break open the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the flour living creatures say in a voice that sounded like thunder, "Come!"

Revelations 6:1-8

And now Isaiah, in part three, zooms out even further. Salvation includes the defeat of evil. Death is no more, not because we go to heaven, but life itself is transformed. Salvation is for all of creation.

Jeremy Duncan writes, "Personal transformation, social justice, and cosmic healing are implications of a victory already won." Personal transformation, crumbling of empires built on violence and greed, and the disarming of evil and the cosmic triumph of life over death. Salvation from three perspectives.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom Jonathon Misner
 Sylvia Pittman Terrance Williams
 Kim Sims Mirium Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Nancy Elston

PLEASE JOIN US EACH SUNDAY FOR OUR SERVICE AT 10:30AM. AND OUR SPECIAL SERVICES COMING UP WITH OTHER FLINT AREA UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES.

SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH -

REV. KIMBERLY METZER,
 PASTOR OF OPEN DOOR UMC
 SHE WILL BE OUR GUEST
 FOR THIS SUNDAY..

SO JOIN US!

COMING UP THIS WEEK

MARCH 4 - 10

Mar 4	Mon	2:30pm	Staff Meeting
Mar 5	Tue	10:00am	Food Distribution
Mar 6	Wed	11:00am-1:00pm	Angel Closet open at South Flint Soup Kitchen
Mar 7	Thu		
Mar 8	Fri		
Mar 9	Sat	5:00-9:00pm	50th Birthday Dinner at Asbury Fellowship Hall
Mar 10	Sun	10:30am	New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).)

Upcoming Worship Series "Revelations"

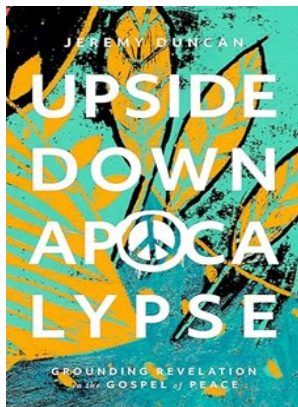


Welcome to our long-awaited series, *Revelations*. While I've occasionally referred to scripture from this mysterious book this is the first time we're dedicating multiple weeks to cover the entire book. Ready?

First, *Revelations* may be one of the most theologically abused books in the Bible. It's used to justify a myriad of questionable opinions and prejudices. *Revelations* lends itself to a variety of interpretations due to its layers of symbolism, metaphors and meaning. However, it is part of our bible and, as such, consistent with the God of Salvation found throughout the scripture.

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Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series is Jeremy Duncan's review of the Book of Revelations,

titled *Upside-Down Apocalypse: grounding revelation in the gospel of peace.*

Amazon's website describes his book this way:

The book of Revelation—which deals on a cosmic scale with good and evil, politics and empire, community and eternity—has intrigued and frustrated readers since it was written. How do we make sense of John's prophetic vision of cosmic war in light the nonviolence Jesus embodies in the

gospels? What does it mean to tell us about Jesus, our world, and the future of all things? As End Times conspiracy theories surge, it's more important than ever that we read the final book of the Bible without distorting the true message of Jesus.

In *Upside-Down Apocalypse*, author Jeremy Duncan draws on biblical scholarship and nonviolent theology to guide readers through the book of Revelation, understanding the vision of John in the light

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Asbury Staff

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South Flint Soup Kitchen

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Anthony & Jim Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium Nursery
Christine & Norma Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Revelations” ..cont from pg 4

And this is the main point of our series. Our plan is to review Revelations through the lens of the Gospels. After all, it is the same Jesus in all situations. The same Lord and Savior. The same God.

I am the first and the last,
who is, who was, and who is
to come.

Revelations 1:8

We are doing this series in cooperation with other Flint area UM churches. Two of our Sundays will feature guest preachers. The Reverend Naylo Hopkins, Pastor of Bethel UMC will be at Asbury on February 25th. And the Reverend Kimberly Metzger, Pastor of Open Door UMC will be with us on March 10th.

We have both a companion book and an outline of Revelations to follow. Our guest speakers will follow the outline of scripture, but the companion book is unique to our journey (see Book Club article).

Here is the outline for covering Revelations with chapters from our companion book:

	Scripture	Upside-Down Apocalypse
Feb 18	Revelation 1:9-18	Chapters Forward - 2
Feb 25	Revelation 6:1-8	Chapter 3
Mar 3	Revelation 16:13-17	Chapters 4-5
Mar 10	Revelation 7:9-17	Chapter 6
Mar 17	Revelation 21:1-5	Chapters 7-8
Mar 24	Revelation 5:1-10	Chapters 9 -10
Mar 31	John 20:1-18	Chapter 11

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on our [YouTube channel](#). We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#) at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse:grounding revelation in the gospel of peace*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

“Feed Flint”



“Feed Flint”

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A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:
flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

The spirits brought the kings together in the place called Armageddon. And when the seventh angel poured out his bowl in the air, a loud voice came from the throne in the temple, saying, "It is done!"

Revelation 16:13-17

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read chapter 16 of Revelation and pay careful attention to verses 13-17, it may be difficult to jump into the last part of a story, but this cycle of prophecy ends with a dramatic punctuation mark. What are your thoughts?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Survival kit*. Are you ever concerned that Armageddon is around the corner? What causes you to think this way? Have you ever considered that Armageddon as the beginning of heaven on earth? What does Armageddon look like to you?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.



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3410 Fenton Rd (3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)

Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or

Email us at southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

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of the Jesus we know through the Gospels—the full revelation of the Divine. Along the way, readers will discover what the writer imagines as he weaves this profound revelation of non-violent triumph and see with fresh eyes how the Prince of Peace turns violence on its head once and for all.

We have a limited number of copies Jeremy Duncan's book. But copies are available through most book retailers and libraries.

Here is the schedule of chapters for our *Revelations* Series:

Feb 18	Chapters Forward - 2
Feb 25	Chapter 3
Mar 3	Chapters 4-5
Mar 10	Chapter 6
Mar 17	Chapters 7-8
Mar 24	Chapters 9 -10
Mar 31	Chapter 11

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that weeks chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. You can purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse:grounding revelation in the gospel of peace*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at www.mightycause.com/feedflint

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427
or email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

The list included items I expected to find, like jugs of water and canned goods. But the list also included more disturbing items like a weapon, along with the warning to presume any other human you encounter is not your friend.

Mostly, Armageddon-like events are associated with natural disasters. But there are plenty of political confrontations that result in rumors and conspiracy theories of an Armageddon of a different sort on the horizon.

It's a presidential election year and the airwaves are filled with messages intended to spread fear, uncertainty and doubt unless a particularly candidate is elected. Some messages resonate when heard among the news stories of wars, terrorism, mass shootings, nuclear weapons in space, and destructive weather.

Remember the 1998 movie Armageddon, where Bruce Willis plays an oil driller sent to drill a hole in an approaching asteroid threatening earth's existence? Fifteen years after this movie was released, an asteroid named Chelyabinsk (chuhl-yaa-binsk) entered the earth's atmosphere over Russia's Ural region in February 2013. It was the second-largest asteroid to do damage to our planet in the last century, weighing approximately 12,000 tons and measuring 19 meters across.

When the asteroid entered the upper atmosphere at a shallow angle and high speed, it disintegrated, releasing a shock-wave that injured over 1,500 people and damaging 7,300 buildings.

This month marks the tenth anniversary of two groups, one led by NASA, responsible for identifying, tracking and planning a response to asteroids heading our way. By a strange twist of fate, the Chelyabinsk asteroid struck on the same day that the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Working Group on Near-Earth Objects met in Vienna to finalize a recommendation to the UN on how to defend Earth from possible asteroid impacts.

So what really is an Armageddon and why is it so often associated with the book we call Revelation, where the word appears only one time?

A book that doesn't mention asteroids, but describes the sort of monsters that we hope to avoid both in life and in our nightmares. The images found in Revelation, for most of us, are reminiscent of Marvel comic books. But the book is actually a beautifully written composition that reveals God's Word in Jesus Christ.

Written in the genre of apocalypse, with all the twists and turns of a must read classic, God reveals through the author, John, God's will for humanity. Peace on earth as it is in heaven.

Salvation is not just individual transformation. Salvation includes the dismantling of oppressive empires and their capacity for war. And ultimately, salvation means the defeat of evil and death.

Church, we have met the monsters of Revelation up close and personal.

The spirits brought the Kings together in the place called Armageddon. And when the seventh Angel poured out his bowl in the air, a loud voice came from the throne in the temple, saying, "It is done!"

Revelation 16:16-17

Our text for this week is the culmination of a third cycle of prophecy, commonly known as the "seven bowls of wrath." As chapter 16 begins, John once again hears a voice, but the voice is giving instructions to seven angels to "Pour out the seven bowls of God's anger on the earth!"

This week's text is among the best-known images of Revelation. The seven seals and four riders. The four riders take us back to the chariots of Zechariah pulled by horses of differing colors. I'm looking forward to what Pastor Naylor has to say about John's vision.

Rome claimed to bring peace on earth. And those living within Rome's boundaries as citizens benefited from Rome's subjugation of other nations. Violence never brings lasting peace. But the peace of Christ endures forever.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [*website's*](#) homepage - [*Click here to watch.*](#) This button takes you to our [*YouTube channel.*](#) You can find more information about us on our website at [*FlintAsburyChurch.org.*](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org)

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to [*connect@FlintAsbury.org*](mailto:connect@FlintAsbury.org) or let us know when you send a message through our [*website.*](#) We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [*Newsletters.*](#)

Pastor Tommy

Parts of our series was inspired by Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse: grounding revelation in the gospel of peace.* Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

The seven angels are introduced in the preceding chapter. Each angel is associated with a plague. Leading up to this third cycle of prophecy, we read about seven letters to seven churches, seven seals, and seven trumpets. There is a logical pattern here.

In Revelation chapter 11, verse 18, after the last trumpet sounds, we find a worship hymn that ends with the line: "The time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth!" The tension builds as John describes the characters appearing in this round of prophetic drama.

In chapter 12, a child is born and saved from a dragon. The dragon is thrown down to earth where he pursues the child's mother to no avail. Two more monsters appear in chapter 13 — one from the sea and one from the land. The one from the land looks like a lamb, but sounds like a dragon. It is a counterfeit lamb that convinces people to worship the sea monster.

The sea monster is positioned as the anti-Jesus persona. This figure is more often referred to as the anti-Christ, even though this term is never used in Revelation. We read dramatic illustrations of what it looks like turning away from the Way of Christ. This is not a title but a functional role that applies to every one of us at one time or another.

The beast is the embodiment of empire and its systems of oppression that create privilege for some at the cost of others. And this beast is powerful. But its power comes from brute force and violence which are counter to the peace offered by Jesus.

All of this buildup prepares us for the pouring out of the seven bowls. And one by one, John describes chaos and mayhem. The build up leads us to a final showdown. The war to end all wars when all the military machinery on earth gathers for the final battle.

And then the last bowl of wrath is poured out. The seventh angel pours out his bowl in the air, and a loud voice is heard saying, "It is done!"

The end! No shots are fired! Roll the credits. Evil is defeated by the very Word of God.

We have met the monsters. The beast from the sea — our love of political power. The beast from the land — our religion turned sideways. And the figure who rides the beast — the prosperity that overtakes human flourishing.

In all these monstrous examples, Revelation lays bare the conspiracy that traps us—the resignation that there is no possibility greater than what we already know and experience. And we discover it is our collaboration with and benefit from the systems that oppress God's creation is the remaining problem. A problem solved only by the Way of Jesus Christ.

Friends, our willing participation leaves its mark. We take part. We buy, sell and trade in ways that prosper ourselves. But the problem is not so much our shopping list. The problem arises when we slowly, but steadily, come to believe that our well-being is tied to the success of the empire.

God is victorious. And Jesus Christ shows us that the way to victory is self-giving nonviolence. The spiritual battle that remains is the practical experience of living out this truth in everyday life.

But if your politics serves you and not your neighbor, it is evil. If your religion hides the violence of your voting record from you, it is evil. If you don't want to be marked with the beast, then push back against systems, even if they benefit you, whenever they oppress others.

The warnings of Revelation, while written in a different time, are relevant today. The symbols and metaphors stretch our imagination and expose our vulnerability with incredible lucidity.

Evil sneaks its way back into our story, disguising and transforming itself, again and again.

And its goal continues to be simple but threatening — evil hopes to make us think we can worship the Lamb without making hard choices. But the Lamb is life abundant — life eternal. Jesus Christ is the Way of salvation.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to connect@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#). Pastor Tommy

Parts of our series was inspired by Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse: grounding revelation in the gospel of peace*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

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