



PresPress

June 2024

Presbyterian Church of Novato, 710 Wilson Ave., Novato, CA 94947

REVELATION

How Do We Read & Understand this Apocalyptic Stuff Anyway?

A BRIEF NOTE

Okay, I won't beat around the bush: the article that follows is lengthy. But...I think it will help serve us well, dear saints, as we jump into our new worship series on Revelation coming in June 2024. So, I encourage you to take some time, read through this article. Think about it. Pray about it. Read it again. Do some of your own research. And then, let's let God fill us with the hope and reassurance that these texts bring to each of us, our church, our community, and the entire world.

THE 'LEFT BEHIND' WAY

"I think prophecy in the twenty-first century is having an identity crisis. We seem to think that prophetic texts in the Bible are the predictive forecasts of wild-eyed people who didn't bathe properly but saw the future with astounding clarity. And, we seem to think that we have the task of figuring out what they meant by all of their symbolic language, so that just before all of the predicted calamities come down on the world, we can be rescued by the "rapture" and will not be "left behind" to suffer through it...For reasons biblical and theological, I think we are wrong on both counts" (Dr. D. Mark Davis, Left Behind and Loving It).

For many people who grew up hearing or watching televangelists, the only version of 'the end of times' preached from the pulpits of prophetic preponderance took on the shape of the 'rapture-tribulation-second coming' scenario marked by sure and certain fantastical events as they were seemingly described in scripture. All of the symbols within the apocalyptic literature were on the verge of being decoded, unmasked, and understood by the wise and powerful theologians of broadcast and cable television, and thus the future-telling predictions exploded in the latter half of the 20th century.

The viewpoint above is a result of **Dispensationalist Theology**, fashioned in the early 19th century. This theological lens helped shape the "Left Behind" or "Rapture" theology that took pentecostal & evangelical churches by storm in the mid and late 20th century.

Dispensationalism is a way of interpreting scripture & history as 'divided into multiple ages or "dispensations" in which God acts with his chosen people in different ways' (Vern Poythress, "Understanding Dispensationalism"). It presumes a 'literal' understanding of biblical events & time frames which, when taken to its full extent, reimagines Biblical apocalyptic literature apart from its author's original purpose. What matters are the literal events, time frames, and chronology.

To the dispensationalist, we are living in pre-millennial times. In other words, before a period of time in which they believe Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years. Also, in this theological frame, there will be what is often called a 'rapture,' a word not found in scripture but nevertheless referring to a time when Jesus will supposedly take away all believers to be with him while everyone else will be left on earth for years of torturous life.

The dispensationalist might wonder if we are near that time of Tribulation marked by hardship, war, famine, & struggle. Of course, in each generation, different events have been interpreted as proof that we are near this terrible time: the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf War, 9/11, and, yes, even the state of the world today. We must be close! Look at the signs! It is just as predicted! To the author of Revelation, his predictions of such things would have been framed by the Roman persecution of the Church and the burning down of Jerusalem and the temple during the Jewish revolt some 25 years before his composition. To the author, it was in his generation that the vision was in motion.

In a similar way, some dispensationalists have interpreted Revelation to point toward the European Union or United Nations as the supposed 'one world order' as mentioned in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. More proof that we are closer than ever to the end!

The symbology of apocalyptic literature, to the dispensationalist, can be decoded and lead to inevitable, pre-prescribed outcomes. How many times have preachers and religious leaders gone so far as to predict the time and date of Jesus' 2nd coming only to be proven inaccurate? How many conspiracy theories have arisen assuming the 'mark of the beast' is our social security numbers, or our credit card numbers, or the mark of the Roman legion. To the original author of Revelation, it is most likely the "Beast" or 'antichrist' could have taken the form of the Emperor Nero.

CONTINUED ON PP.13



Session

Session Highlights – May 2024

At the May meetings, Session:

At the Special Session meeting of May 5, 2024, Session:

- Welcomed new members Wayne Anderson, Shiloh Ferreira, Alison Jones, Keith Loegering, and Maureen Wayne.

At the Stated Session meeting of May 15, 2024, Session:

- Approved the tag line, “Find Your Light!” to be used in promotional materials and social media posts for PCN.
- Approved the Mission Committee budget of \$80,000 for 2024.
- The Property Committee informed Session that painting, new flooring, and new blinds for the church office, hallways, and Christensen Room will begin this month.
- The Emergency-Safety Committee will use a *Safety Checklist for Houses of Worship*, provided by our insurer, Church Mutual, to identify, and correct if necessary, PCN safety issues. Elders will assist with this effort.

Session will not meet in July, 2024.

Kathy Takemoto, Clerk of Session

MISSION

Where your treasure is, there your heart will lie also. ~Matthew 6:21

Below you will find evidence of the many places where your hearts, time and money are making a difference, both locally and abroad.



On Sunday, May 5, the Mission Committee announced a special C4DP Grocery Drive for a grocery delivery before Mother's Day, with an emphasis on **CHOCOLATE**. And the response was phenomenal.



Before the announcement, Audrey Boland and the Deacons had already sent Mission a \$50 Trader Joe's gift card and the mission committee came on board enthusiastically! Patty Reed suggested flowers. George Pilloton promised to cover that cost. And everyone was so **GENEROUS!**

Sally, Carol, and Sydney put the roses and baby breath in the Praun's gift bags, which were chock full of chocolate.

Thank you all for your generous support which made this Mother's Day exceptionally special for a lot of moms and kids.

Faith In Practice
Guatemala Medical Mission
March 1-10, 2024

PCN has supported the Faith in Practice Mission for many years through our budgeting, the annual Alternative Christmas Faire, and providing reading glasses for the mission to provide to clients in Guatemala. The objective of Faith in Practice is to provide medical care to the poor of Guatemala. Each year more than 2,500 volunteers from the US and Guatemala provide healthcare to more than 30,000 through an integrated and coordinated network of care.



Thank You Guatemala Mission Team!!

“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one” – Mother Theresa

This year the Faith In Practice medical team consisting of 27 physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, translators, pastor, support staff joined an equal number of Guatemalan volunteers traveling to Santa Rosa, Guatemala where we held our clinics for a week of medical service to those in need.

The following statistics outline the services provided,

- Approximately 1500 patient clinic visits, adults and children
- 275 patients referred and scheduled for surgeries
- 121 patients can hear with their new hearing aids
- Multiple women screened for cervical cancer and treated with cryotherapy
- Dozens of custom wheelchairs built and dispensed, plus canes and walkers
- Over 100 arthritic joints injected with cortisone
- Over 275 reading glasses fitted

The following internet link contains the log of activities for the annual trip that was performed in 2024. Please click on the link below to read the log of this incredible journey in God’s service to the clients in Guatemala. [2024 Faith In Practice Trip Log](#)



Take a Tour!

We invite you to join us for a behind-the-scenes tour of our weekly food pantry. Tours take place the first Tuesday of every month from 9 to 10 a.m. Sign up now for a tour in April, May, or June.

Go to the NMCS website, www.northmarincs.org to register.



Do you like to socialize and enjoy coffee?

The Deacons are looking for all and any PCN members who would like to help serve coffee during our prized 'Coffee and Conversation' hour after worship on Sundays. No experience necessary!! Time serving 25 minutes. Youth welcome as well for Community Service hours. Please reach out to Becky Praun/Deacon Moderator if you feel the call to serve in fellowship and fun with your faithful Deacons. Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration.

blessings,
Becky Praun/Deacon Moderator
beckypraun@yahoo.com
415 827 7685



DEACONS BLOOD DRIVE is scheduled for Sunday, June 9 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. There is a link on our website. For an appointment, visit donors.vitalant.org. Use your unique blood drive code: PCNovato or call 877-258-4825. For more information, see the flyer on next page or contact Becky Praun.

BLOOD DRIVE

Because of you, life doesn't stop.

SUMMER GAS GIVEAWAY

+ \$10 Gift Card



Donate June 1-30 for a chance to win one of five \$5,000 gift cards

Presbyterian Church Of Novato

Sunday, June 9, 2024
8:00 am – 12:30 pm

Trevitt Hall

710 Wilson Avenue
Novato, CA 94947



APPOINTMENTS
are encouraged.



Ask us how you can
POWER UP your donation.



Thanks to recent FDA
eligibility changes, **OVER 60%**
OF THE POPULATION CAN
GIVE BLOOD. See if you are
eligible to help save lives.

For an appointment, visit donors.vitalant.org.

Use your unique blood drive code: **PCNovato** or call **877.258.4825**.

To make an appointment:

SCAN QR



CALL
877-258-4825
877-25-VITAL



Use the
Vitalant
Donor App



vitalant.
Blood Donation



Incoming kindergarteners through 6th graders are invited to participate! Join us for 5 fun days, from June 17th – 21st, 9:00am - 12:00pm. Take kids deep into an amazing undersea adventure where they'll experience the ever-flowing, never-ending love of God. At Scuba VBS, kids will be immersed in the Word and discover what living water is really all about!!

Registration is \$60 for one child and \$30 for each additional child. Confidential scholarships are available to those in need.

Register Now at: www.pcnovato.org

Middle and High Schoolers – We have a spot for you as well!!

Come join us as a crew leader! We offer community service hours!

The crew leader will lead a small crew of approximately five elementary-aged kids. There's no preparation required but one-hour group training is encouraged. A good crew leader is a friend and helper for the kids and station leaders. They ask questions, take kids seriously, and encourage them throughout VBS.

We need volunteers! There are so many ways to be involved! If you are not available on the VBS dates, you can still help with the preparations! Or you can sign up for just one day! We have a place just for you!

- Decoration Team (Before VBS)
- Registration Table (1st day, 8:30am - 10)
- Station Leaders (8:30am - 12pm)



THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NOVATO

Annual Buckaroo Pancake Breakfast

 **July 4th, 7am - 10am** 

Novato Redwood Credit Union Parking Lot

www.pcnovato.org



Net Proceeds Benefit Homeward Bound



Station Helpers (8:30am - 12pm)

If interested please contact, Sydney Fletcher at children@pcnovato.org

You are invited to the **70th Annual Buckaroo Breakfast!** It is a traditional part of the 4th of July festivities in Novato. Breakfast is served from 7 to 10 am at the Redwood Credit Union parking lot at 1010 Grant Avenue in downtown Novato.

Enjoy eggs, pancakes, sausage, orange juice, and coffee.

Suggested donation: Adults: \$10, Children 5-10: \$5, Free 4 and under.

All our net proceeds benefit Homeward Bound.

Homeward Bound of Marin is the primary provider of Marin County homeless shelters and resources for homeless families and individuals in Marin, California.

Would you like to volunteer to help us serve the Novato community?

Volunteer opportunities are coming soon!



Things are 'under construction' in the church office, Christensen Room and Patio covering.

The Property/Refresh Committee's vision is in the process of coming to light. Painting, new carpet and blinds are being installed and the final artifacts and furniture will be placed soon. The new fabric covering on the patio is also in process of being installed.

Stay tuned for a 'Grand Opening' for everyone to enjoy our refreshing new look.

Many thanks to the following for prayer, discernment, vision, cooperation, and hard work.

James Wood, Don Erba, Jay Haney, Bill Walker, Bob Clausen, Brad Praun,
Patty Reed, Lamona Wood, Mary Contreras, Melodie Baird and Becky Praun.

Respectfully,
Property and Refresh Teams

EXCELLENT!
Congrats! BRAVO!
AWESOME!
YAY! way TO GO!
YOU ROCK! Fantastic!
AMAZING!



Grandson of Ray and Shirley Shanahan, SPC Jack Marshall Pechter, is a dedicated 68T (Animal Care Specialist) with four years of Army service, including a year in South Korea and three at Fort Cavazos. Currently pursuing a master's degree in psychology to become a clinical psychologist, he offers valuable advice to soldiers and students alike, "seize military opportunities and take it one class at a time." With expertise in animal care services, including medical treatment and surgical assistance, coupled with exceptional leadership and teamwork skills, SPC Pechter demonstrates a commitment to personal and professional development, balancing military responsibilities and academic pursuits effectively.



Westminster Woods has several camps this summer, including three different sessions of "Camp Soulspring" for ages 8 to 17; The Grove family camp that runs June 30 through July 5; a camp for high schoolers called "Woods to Waves" from July 21-26; and Friendship Camp for adults ages 18+ with developmental disabilities.

For more information, visit www.westminsterwoods.org/summer-camp.

“REVELATION,” CONTINUED FROM PG.2

Unfortunately, the dispensationalist view removes apocalyptic literature from its original context. It turns a vision into a roadmap, poetry into prose, & symbols into forecasts. It looks for more than what was intended by the authors: a linear, literal timeline and foretelling of events. Where the original intent of apocalyptic texts was to bring hope and help, the contemporary Church, under the influence of dispensational theology, has sown fear and fiction. Biblically literate peoples throughout the two millennia of the Church would have seen our contemporary idea of ‘literal’ apocalyptic events and said, “Are you kidding me!?”

Some scholars attribute the height of dispensationalist (“Left Behind”) theology emergence in the late 20th century to the need to put butts in pews; a revival using the age-old tactic: “show ‘em what they need to fear, and you’ll get ‘em in.” It worked for old school missionaries after nations were conquered. Fear, afterall, is a great method of controlling the masses.

ANOTHER WAY?

Regardless of what some people might think, the dispensationalist view has never been the only theological lens for reading scripture - including the apocalyptic texts - as a means to understand eschatology (the theology of the last things). In fact, it’s a rather recent creation that our Reformed denomination rejected from the outset.

Eschatological texts include poetry, symbols, references to other scriptures and stories, analysis of the present time within which the author composed his/her work, and prophetic vision toward the future. The purpose of such texts were to bring hope and reassurance, not to scare the pants off the reader. To this end, the poetic language is not meant to be taken as literal pronouncement but to always point toward and reference the hope that is to come; that which all of scripture has pointed toward from its inception. To interpret poetry literally almost guarantees misunderstanding. The dispensationalist, while acknowledging the author’s use of poetry, sacrifices the literature’s intentional ambiguity in poetry in order to accommodate a literal, episodic narrative.

In contrast to dispensationalism, Reformed churches stood on what was called **Covenant Theology**. In this theological lens, apocalyptic texts can only be read in light of the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. All of scripture is viewed in light of what God has been doing all along, namely redeeming and rescuing the cosmos.

Paul S. Karleen, a dispensationalist describing covenant theology puts it this way: *“There is a soteriological [regarding salvation] unity in the covenant of grace; it joins all God’s people across the testaments; to ask if we are to take the prophets literally is to ask the wrong question; the issue of the interpretation of the prophets is not one of literal versus spiritual/metaphoric/figurative but of the relation of the OT and NT, which is determined by the Covenant of Grace.”*

Covenant theologian, Gerhaardus Vos, in one of his best pieces of writing, reinforces this idea that the Covenant of Grace is THE grand, unifying theme that connects and shapes all of scripture including apocalyptic literature:

“...the leading principle of the covenant...is nothing but the open eye and the clear vision of the Reformed believer for the glorious plan of the grace of God, which arouses in him a consciousness of the covenant and keeps it alive, and which causes him to be so familiar with this scriptural idea and makes this train of thought so natural to him. How else could he receive and reflect the glory of his God, if he were not able to stand in the circle of light, where the beams penetrate to him from all sides? To stand in that circle means to be a party in the covenant, to live out of a consciousness of the covenant and to drink out of the fullness of the covenant” (Paul Martin Henebury, PhD, “The Eschatology of Covenant Theology”).

In other words....it's all about grace. It is THE hermeneutic [lens] for interpreting scripture, how we connect the OT & NT, how we live every day, and, yes, how we interpret and understand eschatology and apocalyptic literature. It begins and ends with the covenant of grace.

Anthony Hoekema (1913-1988), another covenant theologian, writes in a similar vein: *“Amillennialists [covenant theologians who do not ascribe to a thousand-year period of Messianic kingdom on earth] do not believe that sacred history is to be divided into a series of distinct and disparate dispensations but see a single covenant of grace running through all of that history. This covenant of grace is still in effect today and will culminate in the eternal dwelling together of God and his redeemed people on the new earth”* (Anthony Hoekema, “A Brief Sketch of Amillennial Eschatology”).

While amillennialism is not the exclusive eschatological view of the covenant theologian, it does give us an example of how the covenant of grace shapes the interpretation of apocalyptic literature. It is not about literal time periods and ages (dispensations). It does not assume God simply acts differently in one episodic narrative to the next, but it is about a fulfillment of God's promises in God's time. In this approach, dwelling on the details of apocalyptic texts in a literal sense misses the point. It does not account for the theme that permeates all of scripture: namely God's grace.

So while the dispensationalist seeks to poke at and decipher every literal detail in apocalyptic texts, the covenant theologian leans on the words of Jesus, “It is not for your to know the times or the seasons the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7) and on the grace that defines the nature and being of God and of humanity. For the dispensationalist, the literal language of Revelation in particular is harsh, hard, terrifying, and brutal. It points toward death and destruction as God lays out God's final plan for creation. To the covenant theologian, the poetic language harkens back to previous biblical stories, symbols, and metaphors that

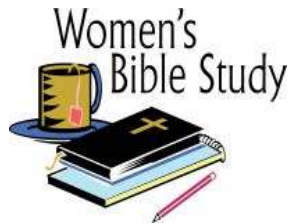
remind us of God's grace & mercy, pointing us, not at destruction and death, but cleansing, renewal, and rebirth. To the covenant theologian, eschatology is not about the end of all things, but the redemption and renewal of God's good creation.

Okay...that's probably enough background to wet your appetite, or...it's more than you bargained for.

Either way... are you ready for this worship series on Revelation??!!

If you answered, "Uh...not anymore," then that's a great place to start: with an open heart and an open mind ready to listen anew. In this brief series, we will not have time to cover much of the book of Revelation, but it is my hope that we can begin to think through and process this text with a more keen eye toward grace and with the hope that these texts offer the world.

With Grace & Peace,
Adam



And the walls came tumbling down.... Join the new Women's Bible Study with the book of Joshua (\$10) on September 12 when the WBS resumes study after the summer break ending class on May 2.

Join us on Zoom Thursdays from 10 to 11:30 a.m. with Carol Dacquisto leading the study, using the NavPress "Life Changes" study guide. Our next study will be Joshua.

God raises up Joshua who is a second Moses, faithful & strong, leading the Israelites. God promises to be with them. He promises the same to us, today.

Our dedicated project for more than 40 years is Tabs for Kids – collecting pop tabs from aluminum cans from PC members, friends, and neighbors. They are donated to the Shriners Hospital for Children in Sacramento which sells them to a recycling company. Proceeds are used to assist parents' families with care expenses.

If you want a wonderful way to connect to the PCN community and learn about the book of Joshua with a warm and open group of women contact Carol Dacquisto, lead teacher, at 415-892-2070; Margaret Franz-Costello, assistant, at 415-806-8849 or Karen Carlson at 415-382-9616.

Grace and Peace,
Carol Dacquisto, Margaret Franz-Costello and Karen Carlson

Here is the Zoom link and passcode:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81284025735?pwd=VTY4cWFJQWtDTlpUVE9MT0ljL1dHdz09>

Meeting ID: 812 8402 5735 Passcode: pcnovato



Join us for the inspiring 8am Summer Sunday Bible class/David C Cook study as we bat around Expressing Hope, Expressing Hope, and Eternal Hope. It's a winner !

The Sunday Morning Adult Study Group will continue meeting via Zoom (until further notice) at 8:00 a.m. Please sign on to join a wonderful group of adults who share what they are learning about God's Word. The link to sign on is at the end of this article. If you want or need materials, please let Larry Dacquisto (415-898-0711) know, and we will see that you have the appropriate materials.

The quarter (March, April, May) is entitled "**Examining Our Faith.**" In this quarter, we will explore the fullness of faith as a response to God's desire to be in relationship with us. To be faith-less is to turn away from God – to put trust in something, or someone, other than God. The lessons of this quarter ask: Is your faith steadfast? Are you contending for the faith? What can today's Christians draw from these ancient accounts that will help us grow more deeply in faith?

Unit 1 has lessons drawn from Jude, Second Corinthians, First Peter, Acts, and Mark that invite learners to turn the challenges of life into opportunities for nurturing a vibrant faith instead of giving up, turning away from God, or rejecting faith. It includes the Easter lesson.

Unit 2, lessons from Luke and Matthew discuss the range of Christian faith.

The lessons in **Unit 3** from Romans encourage believers to continue standing in the faith.

Study Leaders,

Larry Daquisto, Carol Dacquisto, Karen Carlson and Doris Dooley

Link for the Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88401949220?pwd=QS9MMHJsbU5TVtJ6enVpU1hDL0VNQT09>

Meeting ID: 884 0194 9220 Passcode: pcnovato



REQUESTING A PRAYER BLANKET is easy. Email Tonya Church or Becky Praun. Give us the recipient's first and last name, address, phone number, and what colors they like. We try to send a prayer blanket that is meaningful for the recipient. Questions? Contact Tonya at tonya.church@comcast.net or Becky at beckypraun@yahoo.com.



WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP

Spend time praising God for His many blessings through prayer and receive His assurance for you. Together we seek His intimate presence, led by the Holy Spirit and fed by scripture. Meetings are the first Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Use the same Zoom link each month. Contact Janis West at Janisw99@gmail.com with questions.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81107446679?pwd=Yy9ub1pReGdMTHVhbDJpRzhHVVdHQQT09>

Meeting ID: 811 0744 6679 Passcode: pcnovato



MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Come join us for study and fellowship. We meet every **Wednesday at 7:15 a.m.** via Zoom. All men are welcome. To be added to the Zoom contact list, contact Walt Campbell at (415) 497-5157.



Here's an important number to jot down: (415) 472-0911. This is the **non-injury** lift assist phone number from the Novato Fire Department. If you or someone you know has fallen and you can't lift him/her, the fire department will come help!



•HAPPY•
Father's
DAY