

## Chat with the Children

- Who is your favourite superhero?
  - what about them do you admire?
  - would you like to be them?
  - why?
- Part of what we will be doing in Revelation is refreshing our picture of Jesus - **the one we can look to for help in whatever trouble we face, our truly super hero!**

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## Introduction

- Old advert: Universal Maths: one teenager = two phone lines?
  - (doesn't work as an advert since everyone has mobiles now!!)
  - there are supposed to be some classical teenager traits...
  - "I'll be in by 10" can mean something slightly different!
  - **untidy bedrooms;**
  - **not only are bedrooms untidy, they are also very often peculiarly decorated!**
  - no doubt I'll find out what the current trends are soon enough, but often in the past there would be **pictures reflecting teenagers "heros": Rob Pattinson or Kristen Stewart...?**
  - maybe film posters, or band posters, or ...
- Teenagers aren't the only ones who need heroes, people to look to for example, aspiration, challenge.
  - they just get to express it more directly!
- We all need heroes.
- Supremely, Christians believe, that hero figure is found in Jesus Christ:
  - he should be the our example, the one we pin up - not on our bedroom wall so much as in our hearts.
- One of the facets of the Book of Revelation that has particularly struck me has been the pictures of Jesus, and his Kingdom, His way of doing things, it paints
  - that's one of the things we'll be looking at as we begin to work our way through the book of Revelation over the next few weeks;
  - begin looking at the first picture, from end of chapter one, but helpful to fill in some of the background to help us understand some of the tools John uses to paint these pictures of Jesus, which are designed for us to learn from and be encouraged by

## Revelation

- The book and something of its background - literary style, geographical destination, overall structure.

### Revelation as Letter

- To the seven churches in Asia - particular people in mind, in a particular context - and from a particular, known individual (John).  
**(map)**
  - so not meant to be obscure to them, and clear to us;
  - rather most of the identifiable references to human powers, governments and so on are contemporary - Rome, not USA/Russia/EC/...

### Revelation as Apocalypse

- Revelation of God's purpose in history.
  - very symbolic in language and thought;
  - using extremely vivid word pictures, almost like dream sequences, to portray God's action in history:
    - the on-going struggle between good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of the all-powerful and all-good God.
- Compare with modern political cartoon:

- symbolic pictures to make some kind of point about what is happening in the contemporary world;
- inhabited by stock characters - John Bull and Uncle Sam - and animals symbolic of their countries - lion for Britain, bear for Russia, eagle for the USA - occasionally given human features to identify a particular leader...
- for example, when Britain is weak, the lion is mangy and tatty, when Britain is strong, the lion is proud and well groomed.
- Portrayals of monsters and beasts in Apocalypses generally were very often as stereotyped as those we use today:
  - for example, the city of God, drawing on all the OT sentiment about Jerusalem, then take that picture of the centre of God's people, the capital, the place of worship, and perfect it - and you get the glorious city of God, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, a passage towards the end of Revelation we'll look at later in the series.

### Revelation as Prophecy

- But Revelation wasn't simply a detached lesson in a God's eye view of history.
- It was intended to be "taken to heart" (v.3), translated into action.
  - readers are meant to take heed of the warnings and encouragements contained in these pages.
- As such Revelation can also be described as prophecy, for prophecy is not simply a declaration of what God will do, but also a proclamation of what God wills to be done by men and women.
- So John, in his extended letter, adopts the style of the apocalyptic to exhort the lazy and weary, console the tempted, and strengthen their courage - the work of the prophet!

### One Like a Son of Man

- So come to this first, vivid picture of Jesus, especially looking at vs.12-20:
  - lampstands: lamps/stars are the churches and their angels; portrayal is of Jesus as head of the Church, upholding, leading, disciplining, trimming wicks, guiding
  - like a son of man: fully human
  - robe & sash: power, authority, riches
  - white hair: purity, absolute holiness, not tainted by sin in any way, and also reflecting on Daniel associations with God as judge from the picture there
  - eyes blazing fire: penetrating judgement; can't pretend before God; sees right to the heart of our real motives
  - feet of bronze: strength, and beauty - very precious
  - voice like rushing waters: God's voice, cf Ezekiel - power, majesty, glory in the roar (stand next to a Highland river crashing through a narrow crevice in the rocks....)
  - double edged sword: Jesus word, word of judgement, for the world and in light of what he goes on to talk about to the seven churches, a word of judgement on his own people, calling them back to holy living
  - first and last: (cf alpha & omega); initiator of creation and also one who has purposes right to the end! Nothing that is happening now is pointless, or outside God's knowledge and purposes
  - living (was dead): as alpha & omega he is eternal; but that is not some kind of detached transcendent state - been through death, and conquered it! Has power over life and death, holds the keys to death & hell
- **Wow!**

### Conclusion

- Fix eyes on Jesus - for all that is in your present, and future.
  - he's more than able to cope!