

Lent, Day 1  
Wednesday, March 6, 2019  
Ash Wednesday

### Revelation 1:1–8

Today is Ash Wednesday and many Christians around the world will gather for worship together. Today's worship is a bit unique due to the fact that we will have ashes smudged onto our foreheads in the shape of a cross. We will also have these words spoken over us, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." In other words we worship by remembering that we are destined to die one day. In a culture that has pushed death away this seems a very strange custom. However, from a Christian point of view, it is absolutely essential.

The churches to whom the book of Revelation was written knew about death. In fact they had a big question about it. The fastest growing religion of their day was the worship of the emperor, Caesar. Since Christians refused to worship him as a deity they were experiencing persecution, death, at the hands of the state. They were beginning to ask the question of who is actually the lord of the world; Caesar or Jesus? This revelation is a glimpse into the heavenly realm to show them that, despite appearances to the contrary, Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.

More than that, it was a rallying cry for these Christians to stand firm in their devotion and witness of Jesus's lordship over the whole world, even if it meant they were to die. The revelation itself is not first and foremost about "stuff" but about Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one who died, was risen, and was coming again to judge the world and set all things right. Or, in the words of the Revelation itself he is, "the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." The revelation of Jesus points to resurrection, the coming new life.

We are marked out with ashes and are reminded of our mortality, not because we are morbid, but because we are destined for more. In order to receive this "more" we must lay down this old, sinful, and corruptible life. That is what lent is about: preparing for the death and resurrection of Jesus by practicing laying down our old life. Only then can we take up the new life in Christ Jesus which will be taken up in resurrection and extend into eternity.

### Prayer

Revelation of God, reveal yourself to us during this season, so that you might be revealed in us to the world. Remind us of our end, so that in coming to the end of ourselves we might find you and your new life. Amen.