

St. Matthew's Church
Thursday Night Bible Study
Revelation
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Session VIII | 6 December 2018 | Chapters 10-12

I. Let's Take a Step Back...

- A. We're about to enter a tapestry of Biblical images.
- B. Recall the first verses:
The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to give the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it for the time is near.
- C. Recall the constant message of Christ: Repent. This message was foretold by John the Baptist, Jesus delivers it in fullness, and on Pentecost Peter gives it again. This is the consistent word to Israel. There were thousands who heard the call and repented. The leadership were largely unmoved from what we know.
- D. Revelation is a document unveiling the true nature of the cataclysm that befell Jerusalem in 70 A.D as being a judgment for their rejection of the Messiah. Yet that unveiling is at the same time delivered in symbolic language drawn from the vernacular of judgment intimately associated with the Jewish imagination, being drawn from the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.
- E. This gives sense to what the Scripture means by "the Day of the Lord." It means the time appointed when God will act to judge according to covenant faithfulness.

II. Textual Notes | Chapter 10

- A. The figure of the angel, given these specific descriptions that are drawn from Revelation 1, is most likely an image of Jesus Christ.
- B. The image of Christ is as faithful witness but also as the authoritative commander of all the earth and sea--this establishes a motif that will be important in the coming chapters.
- C. The figure declares "the mystery of God." which refers to a type of knowledge of God that was previously inaccessible but for the self-disclosure of God to the world through the New Covenant in Christ by the Spirit.
- D. The eating of the small scroll is sweet to the taste and disturbing to the stomach. It is a reference to Ezekiel 3, and signals the conscription of John into a new prophetic mission.

III. Textual Notes | Chapter 11

- A. The measuring of the court separates the authentic worship of God from the sacrilege of the unfaithful who will trample all that is not preserved from them in their rage against the covenant people.
- B. The two witnesses are figures of Moses and Elijah that ratify in Jewish legal fashion the testimony of the faithful one from chapter 10. They are killed in Jerusalem, which here is called Sodom.
- C. We're coming to a harsh reality here, so let's take a minute to remember:
 - 1. The Scriptures are firm in that when God speaks, that is reality and it demands obedience.
 - 2. There are consequences for living in a false reality.
 - 3. Those consequences are judgment and the irrepressible reality that God is making will not tolerate a competing vision.
 - 4. All that is not part of the world God is making will be destroyed.
- D. At the sounding of the 7th Trumpet (which invokes the imagery of Rosh Hashanah, a time when coronations usually took place) we hear proclaimed from heaven that the kingdom of the world is now the kingdom of Christ. It is a declaration of the domain of the coronated king, a completion of the image begun with the figure of Chapter 10 who stood with the whole earth under his feet and declared the covenant terms that applied to the whole earth.
- E. The song that is sung invokes the kingly imagery of ancient Israel, which has to be understood as a pattern of coronation. The kings of Israel, when coronated, then went out to battle (think Saul and David). This is reflected in the anointing of Christ as the Messianic King at the Jordan during His baptism--He then goes out to the wilderness to make war on the Devil--and is seen again here in the consummation of Christ's coronation as King over all things just prior to the war that will be made in finality on the unfaithful.

IV. Textual Notes | Chapter 12

- A. The imagery of the woman situates her as a symbol of Israel (with references to Song of Songs 6 and Isaiah 66). From her womb proceeds a new nation, a renewed covenant people. The incarnate expression of this symbol draws us to Mary, whose Son Jesus is the new nation.
- B. The Dragon here is a sign of all who oppose the bringing forth of God's people. We see this typefied first in Pharaoh's destruction of the male children of the Israelites in Egypt. The other is Herod the Great seeking to destroy Jesus after His birth to Mary. This affirms again the Marian image.
- C. The archetypal image here, too, is a recapitulation of the ancient enmity of the Serpent and the offspring of the Woman foretold in Genesis 3. The Dragon

always desires to consume the offspring of the woman, but only can strike their heel while the offspring of the Woman will crush the head of the Serpent and its offspring. The Dragon makes war on the Woman and her Child.

- D. The Child is caught up to the throne of God in heaven, again invoking that coronation imagery of Daniel 7 and fulfilled in Christ's ascension, while the Woman is provided for in the wilderness until the fullness of time should be fulfilled. This figures her as the Church.
- E. The War in Heaven reveals that God is above the fray. Instead He sends His champion Michael to vanquish the Devil and his angels. There is an exile of the one who tempts, the one who divides, and the one who accuses the faithful, along with all who follow him. At the defeat of the Devil there is a pronouncement of the victory of the Child and His people.
- F. The general proclamation of woe to the earth is not over those whose lives exist in the heavenly court but rather to those who inhabit the earth and sea, who are restricted to the outer court, the place of the unfaithful.