

St. Matthew's Church
Thursday Night Bible Study
Revelation
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Session XI | 20 December 2018 | Chapters 15-16

I. Let's Refresh on the Problem of Covenant Disobedience...

- A. At the time of the writing of Revelation, the issue of Israel's forsaking of its covenant identity came to a point in their collusion with the Roman Empire.
- B. This collusion was most articulate in the collaborative effort of Christ's Crucifixion, which required a coordinated effort between the Sanhedrin and the Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate.
- C. We've been following the interpretive theory so far that suggests that the orienting event for understanding Revelation is the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD.
- D. Given the Olivet Discourse and the Temple Cleansing narratives in the Gospels we've cross-referenced for its Christological language of timely judgment for Israel's covenant disobedience, we've come to see the Fall of Jerusalem as a summary judgment for Israel's rejection of its covenant identity in crucifying God's Anointed Messiah.
- E. Seen in this way, we're seeing the most immediate application of Revelation's symbolic language of judgment as being the vengeance of God against the cosmic enemy of the Messiah (the Dragon) the Kingdom-enemy of the Messiah (Rome) and the betrayal of the Messiah by the people of the Covenant (Israel).
- F. The three-fold rejection of the Messiah is a culpable rejection.

II. Textual Notes | Chapter 15

- A. Three signs in Revelation
 1. Chapter 12 | A sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun
 2. Chapter 12 | Another sign...a fiery red dragon
 3. Chapter 15 | Another sign...seven angels with bowls of judgment
- B. The Bowls have a parallel relationship to the Trumpets, yet in the latter there is an incomplete scope to the judgment whereas in the Bowls there is a "fullness" of the judgment poured out. (Ex. in the Second Trumpet the sea is struck and a 1/3 of the life in it dies...in the Second Bowl the whole sea is struck and everything dies).
- C. The sea of glass mingled with fire draws back to Chapter 4, but also to the OT in which the Red Sea (a sea mingled with blood) is an image of all rebellious and chaotic powers of the world that vaunt themselves against God. God alone has the power to calm the sea and here his saints are shown standing over it like Jesus in the Gospels and like God in the Creation singing over it and proclaiming the

victory of God as the fulfillment of their conquest over the Beasts and the Dragon and those who followed them.

- D. The Song of Moses could be a reference either to Exodus 15 or Deuteronomy 32, which gives it the dual-inflection of being a song of victory and also an indictment of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness.
- E. The opening of the Temple sequence refers back to two critical OT scenes: when Moses dedicated the Tabernacle, it was filled with the glory of God so that none could enter. Then, when Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem the glory of God so filled the Temple that no one could go into the Holy Place. (See I Kings 8:10, 11:2; II Chronicles 5:13-14).

III. Textual Notes | Chapter 16

- A. The plagues poured out echo the judgment of Egypt in the OT for its oppression of Israel. Here there is a consummation of that judgment as the plagues are poured out on the whole creation afflicting those who have oppressed the Messianic people. What was then known locally is now known universally.
- B. The Seven Beatitudes of Revelation
 1. Revelation 1:3 | Blessed are those who read and hear and keep it...
 2. Revelation 14:13 | Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...
 3. Revelation 16:15 | Blessed are those who keep watch...
 4. Revelation 19:9 | Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb...
 5. Revelation 20:6 | Blessed is he that takes part in the resurrection...
 6. Revelation 22:7 | Blessed are those who keep the prophecy of this book...
 7. Revelation 22:14 | Blessed are those who do His commandments...
- C. "It is done!" should remind us of Christ's word on the cross. This is an aligning of the judgment of the world with Christ's perfection of covenant faithfulness on the cross, revealing the disobedience of the whole world and indicting the world for its rebellion. The victory of Christ on the Cross is seen here fulfilled at the cosmic level at the end of all things.

IV. What's to come in Chapter 17...

- A. The image of the great prostitute is a symbol that makes best sense to interpret as God's own people because of the repeated, extended OT references to God calling Israel a harlot for its idolatry and fornication. The nuptial imagery of covenant in the OT gives this sensibility to Israel's rebellion. The repeated allusions within Revelation itself to covenant unfaithfulness as adultery and harlotry show this to be more plausible.
- B. The Harlot will be seen as the antithesis to the Woman clothed in the Sun in Chapter 12, the consummation of covenant infidelity (unfaithfulness) and the consummation of covenant purity (the great Virgin Bride to be revealed).