

Adult Faith Formation – Lent 2022

The Apocalypse or The Revelation to John

Week 5 – The Seven Bowls (Chapters 11: 14 – 16: 21)

The 7th trumpet and a victory celebration in heaven (11: 14-19)

- Angel blows 7th trumpet and voices in heaven indicate change of ownership: “the kingdom of the world now belongs to our Lord”
- The temple is opened and Ark can be seen
- Vs. 18 sums up the thesis of Revelation: the time of judgment has come
- Judgment has both a negative consequence for the “inhabitants” but a vindication for the “servants of God”
- 3 groups of God’s servants:
 - Prophets
 - The Holy Ones (baptized Christians)
 - Those who fear God’s name (a distinct group of individuals who have not had the opportunity to receive faith and baptism = the “God-fearers”)
- 7th trumpet also signals the 3rd WOE: the final judgment
- Importance of the Ark being visible:
 - 3rd of 4 storm theophanies
 - First appearance of the Virgin Mary (early church fathers referred to her as the Ark)

The Woman, the Dragon, and the Male Child (12: 1-18)

- Vision of woman clothed with the sun
 - She is: living icon of the whole church
 - Faithful people of both OT and NT
 - Physical mother of the Messiah
 - Israel = daughter Zion
- She wails in childbirth
- Red dragon positions itself in front of her, poised to devour the child
- This vision resumes the events of Genesis 3: 15 = conflict between Satan and humanity
- The child is caught up to God, the woman escapes to the wilderness where she is nourished

Mystery of Suffering

- Part of the mystery of suffering is its uneven distribution
- When suffering, pray for deliverance
- If God does not remove, embrace it with courage
- God allows those he loves to suffer

Battle in Heaven (12: 7-9)

- Battle between Dragon and St. Michael and their respective angels
- Dragon and angels are defeated and thrown to earth, but this does not render them powerless

Prayer to St. Michael

- 1886: Pope Leo added the Prayer to St. Michael to other Leonine Prayers recited at the end of Mass
- Prayer was suppressed and forbidden in *Inter Œcumenici* on 26 Sept. 1964, effective 7 Mar. 1965

- Reason: Emphasis must be placed on the Eucharist and not on private devotional prayers
- Numerous bishops/archbishops now encourage its reinstatement (Timothy Card. Dolan)

Celebration in Heaven (12: 10-12)

- Establishment of God's kingdom and arrival of salvation
- Christians have conquered Satan through 1) blood of the Lamb, 2) the word of their testimony as faithful witnesses, 3) willingness to die for their faith

Chapter 13: The Two Beasts (13: 1-18)

- Satan wages war through 2 beasts to whom his authority is delegated

First Beast (The AntiChrist) 13: 1-10

- rises from the sea (10 horns, 7 heads, resembles the dragon)
- beast is worshiped and praised with liturgical like worship
- power is irresistible, evil presents itself as good
- First Beast is associated with political power
- Authority over every tribe, nation, people, and tongue for 42 months

Second Beast (The False Prophet) 13: 11-18

- Rises up from the earth and controls religious deception
- Forces all people to worship the AntiChrist
- With the dragon, they form a diabolical Trinity
- As Jesus Christ received power from the Father, so the AntiChrist receives power from the Dragon, and as the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, so the False Prophet glorifies the AntiChrist
- All who worship the AntiChrist are given a sign on the hand or forehead = the number of the Beast 666
- Number stands for a person: The number is the least important aspect and probably only related to the 1st Century. (For 1st-century Christian 666 represented Nero)
- What should be sought in discerning the presence of the Beast in any time in history is a "family resemblance" between its Biblical portrait and contemporary reality
- Gematria = ancient practice of assigning numbers to letters
- GK Beast = therion – in Hebrew letters = 666
- GK version of Caesar Neron – in Hebrew letters = 666

It is incumbent upon Christians to discern the spiritual dynamics of the times in which they live.

End of 18th century = French revolution (destruction of the church)

20th century = National Socialism in Germany, Communism in USSR

Contemporary false ideologies

Now the reader needs a consoling message. Visions in Chapter 14 offer this and relate the intimate relationship between Christ and his people

The Lamb and His Companions (14: 1-5)

- Lamb stands on Mount Zion accompanied by 144,000 people (virgins) bearing God's seal
- Music from heaven but no one else knows the song, accompanied by harps
- Vision is within a time period while those on earth worship the Beast

Three Angel Heralds (14: 6-13)

- Symbolically depicts the proclamation of the Gospel to the nations

- Angel 1: Fear God and give him glory for the time of his judgment has come
- Angel 2: Fallen, fallen is Babylon
- Angel 3: warning against worshipping the Beast

Voice from heaven commands John to write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord..." They will 1) find rest from their labors, and 2) they can expect a reward because their works accompany them

Contemporary church theology *Lumen Gentium 16*

The Harvest of the Earth (14: 14-20)

- A final judgment in harvest imagery
- Grain harvest = gathering in of the just
- Grape harvest = destruction of the unjust
- Figure on a cloud with a gold crown is Christ and he is told to reap the harvest
- This is a judgment only of those still living on the earth

Seven Angels with Seven Plagues: The Song of Moses and the Lamb (15: 1-8)

The Song of the Victors in heaven

- Third and final sign that John sees in heaven
- turn

Apocryphal literature depicts the final triumph of God's kingdom in 2 ways:

- 1) pagan nations are defeated and destroyed in a final battle
- 2) pagan nations are converted and become worshipers of God

Revelation presents both pictures

The Heavenly Temple Before the Last Plagues (15: 5-8)

- Temple opens and 7 angels with the 7 plagues appear, wearing white linen with a gold sash
- 4 living creatures give the angels 7 bowls filled with the fury of God
- The human emotion of passionate anger (GK fury = human passion, anger, rage) is expressed, emphasizing the severity
- Temple fills with the smoke of God's glory so that no one can enter

The Bowls of God's Wrath (16: 1-21)

- God's final judgment is depicted as 7 bowls of wrath
- Bowls 1-4 (just as seals and trumpet blasts) function as a unit, but affect the entire world and not just a fraction
- Bowl 1: festering and ugly sores on those marked with the sign of the Beast
- Bowl 2: sea turns to blood and all in it die
- Bowl 3: rivers and springs of water turn to blood
- Bowl 4: poured out on the sun and cause it to burn people

Four-fold division of creation: earth, sea, rivers and springs, and sky. They should be interpreted as one event that sets in motion the destruction of the world.

Bowls 5 and 6 (16: 10-16)

- Bowl 5 is poured out on the throne of the Beast and his kingdom is plunged into darkness, produces utter terror among people
- Bowl 6 is poured out on the Euphrates and it dries up. Significance of the Euphrates as the eastern border of the Roman Empire and the dangers that lie beyond the river
- 3 unclean spirits (frogs) come from the mouths of the 2 beasts and the dragon. Their role is propaganda...they are to persuade the kings to engage in final battle

The opening of the 6th seal and the 6th trumpet blast were interrupted by visions that delayed the final sign. After the 6th bowl, there is no delay, but a brief message from Christ to his people: "Behold I am coming like a thief.....blessed is he who watches (GK = stays awake)

Armageddon = (Heb. Mountain of Megiddo)

The final (7th) Bowl of Wrath (16: 17-21)

- 7th angel pours his bowl into the air
- A voice from Heaven says "It is done."

The Seven Beatitudes of The Revelation

- 1) 1: 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen
- 2) 14: 13 Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord
- 3) 16: 15 Blessed is the one who watches
- 4) 19: 9 Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast
- 5) 20: 6 Blessed are holy are those who share in the first resurrection
- 6) 22: 7 Blessed is the one who keeps the prophetic message of this book
- 7) 22: 14 Blessed are they who wash their robes