

## The Revelation to St. John

Collect Prayer - First Sunday of Advent - Could have used Ps 95,96

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.

***Amen***

Are there questions or comments from the last session? For those of you following online you may email Fr. Bart at [frryanssc@frontiernet.net](mailto:frryanssc@frontiernet.net)

### I. The Characters Revealed in the Vision of John

#### A. God the Father

1. The throne is the symbol of Almighty Power
2. This is the Creator and the King
3. He is infinitely aware of the creation
4. What God has created is aware of Him and sings His praises

#### B. The Lamb - Jesus

1. In the throne room the Lamb is revealed
2. The Lion of Judah is not a lion at all but the slain lamb
3. The paradox is revealed in this dead is now alive - from death comes victory - the Alpha and the Omega -

#### C. Angels - The Symbolic World we are to "see"

1. Usually Messengers
2. Citizens of Heaven
3. Principalities, powers dominions and myriads of angels

#### D. The Dragon

1. Rome
2. The evil one - satan - the devil
3. The serpent - Genesis 3

## II. The Divine Liturgy

- A. Instructions - the Revelation is to be read at liturgy
- B. Visions of heavenly Liturgy
- C. The uniting of Heaven and earth in worship
- D. Preaching - The vision is explained

### ***Revelation 1***

*<sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. <sup>3</sup>Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.*

#### I. A Pastoral Letter to the Churches in Asia

#### II. The Revelation of Jesus Christ (God is the source) given to John

- A. John is the eye and ear witness to what God has revealed
- B. John is to be an instrument so that the world may hear and see
- C. John declares the end is near! - Sign on the street corner?
  1. John was wrong - The end has not yet come for the whole world
  2. John was right - the end has come for many - they have died to this world

*<sup>4</sup>John to the seven churches that are in Asia:*

*Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his*

*throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood <sup>6</sup>and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. <sup>7</sup>Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

*<sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*

I. The usual opening for a letter of the time - Grace and peace

II. The Seven Churches

A. Seven a divine number

B. Symbolic of all the churches in the world

III. The titles for Jesus speak to the reader of God's answer to Caesar's

A. Note the presence of Jesus not only in the future but now

B. How does he help us?

1. Liberation from bondage

2. Making us a royal priesthood

3. In the end He will come to us

IV. This address of full of comfort - God is the Almighty and Everlasting God

A. God loved us "while we were sinners, Christ died for us" - Romans 5:8

B. We have been set free from sin "if the son makes you free you will be free indeed" John 8:36

*<sup>9</sup>I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on*

*the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to La-odicea."*

*<sup>12</sup>Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; <sup>14</sup>his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup>his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; <sup>16</sup>in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*

*<sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. <sup>19</sup>Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter. <sup>20</sup>As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

I. The Startling Vision - reminds us of the first visions of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel

A. John is on Patmos - because of his preaching and loyalty

1. Vision is part of his ministry?
2. Vision is a reward for his ministry?

B. On the Lord's Day - Sunday

C. He hears a voice and is told to write to and for the church

1. Seven Churches are symbolic
2. The seven lamp stands connect the early church with Heaven

D. Note that what is said in Daniel of the Ancient of Days (God) is now said of Jesus

1. No Trinitarian Theology Yet - No Nicene Creed  
(Theology Note) For Christians, the understanding of God is changed because of the Incarnation of the Son

2. John consistently uses God language for Jesus - interchangeability

E. The vision is terrifying and yet comforting

1. "Do not be afraid" Mark 6:50 - Matthew 28:10

2. The Living one who died and rose

3. The first and the last

4. Note the parallel to the end of the Gospel of Matthew - 28:20

"Lo I am with you always, to the close of the age"

## **The Letters**

I. The same author and share the characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature

A. Same form, opening and closing

B. May have been a separate letter or letters at one time

II. These are not general letters but specific

A. Knowledge of the precise situation of each church

B. They involve a definitive plan and direction

II. Ordering of the letters - further editing for the final Revelation Book

A. Ephesus - censure and then praise

B. Smyrna, Thyatira and Philadelphia - even numbers - praise

C. Perganum, Sardis and Laodicea - odd - censure

## II. Formula of the letters

- A. To the angel of the church write -
- B. Explanation, recommendation, instructions
- C. Final instruction to "hear" What does hear mean? respond, act, do!

## III. The letters of Revelation are crucial to understanding this Book

- A. Specific Letters addressed to churches and the church
- B. The instruction fit our needs as well as their needs
- C. The comfort they offer is for them and for us
- D. The message that is most important is that there has been and never will be a perfect Christian Community - That should give us great hope!

## **Revelation 2**

*<sup>1</sup>“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. <sup>2</sup>“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; <sup>3</sup>I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. <sup>4</sup>But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. <sup>5</sup>Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. <sup>6</sup>Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’*

### I. Ephesus

- A. Privileged and wealthy - chief port in Roman times for Asia

B. The temple of Artemis - Diana - one of the Seven Wonders of the World

C. Site of the imperial cult worship

D. Paul visited twice the second time for three years (Acts 19-20)

E. The issue for the Ephesians is the struggle with unorthodox teachers

1. Started with Paul's letters
2. Nicolaitans are rejected

Nicolaitans - May or may not have been a real sect - rather may have been the groups that occur over time that want to take a easy route rather than observing strict discipline - Nicolas is the Greek equivalent of Balaam - In the middle ages the term Nicolaitans was addressed to priests that were married rather than embracing celibacy - we are to understand return to nature worship, cult worship or the ancient gods

F. The problem at Ephesus is not their theology but their lack of love - their rigid enforcement of the faith has caused them to loose their love for one another - looking at each other with suspicion and outsiders because they may taint the faithful with wrong ideas

*<sup>8</sup>“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. <sup>9</sup>“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup>Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. <sup>11</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.’*

I. Smyrna - 35 miles north of Ephesus

A. Wealthy City

B. Temple of Tiberius - emperor cult worship

C. Large Jewish population and they are antagonistic to the Christians

1. Jews are merchants
2. Christians are generally poor in a rich city

### 3. Jews enjoyed protection *religio licita*

D. Christians claimed to be the true Israel Romans 9:8

E. The second death is the lake of fire - not experiencing the Resurrection

## II. Message one of encouragement

<sup>12</sup>“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. <sup>13</sup>“I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. <sup>14</sup>But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality. <sup>15</sup>So you also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup>Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.’

## I. Pergamum - 40 miles north of Smyrna

A. Administrative head of Asia for the Romans

B. Religious Center

1. Cult of Zeus

2. Cult of Asclepius - God of healing

3. Emperor Worship - temple built 29 B.C.

C. The problem with this church is again the Nicolaitans

1. The church has not rejected the teaching or the teachers

2. The church is directed to repent or face Christ

3. The weapon of Christ is the Word

D. Those who repent are promised reward

1. Hidden Manna - popular Jewish idea - God will again feed people with the bread of Heaven - Eucharist?

His

2. White Stone

- a. White is the symbol of purity
- b. New name symbolizes new life a new beginning

The central message for us is that the church is under attack from within and from outside sources- the secular world and those in the church that want to get along

*18“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19“‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality. 22Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; 23and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. 24But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden; 25only hold fast what you have, until I come. 26He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, 27and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; 28and I will give him the morning star. 29He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

## I. Thyatira - forty miles southeast of Perganum

- A. Longest and most difficult letter
- B. In a valley - manufacturing site
- C. Home of one of Paul's first converts - Lydia - seller of purple goods

## II. Home of many trade guilds

- A. Livelihood depends upon guild membership
- B. pagan - cultic meals
- C. John's stance is radical
  - 1. No compromise with the pagans
  - 2. No dealing with Jezebel - prophetess that taught to get along with culture - a direct rival to John

III. No special task for the faithful in Thyatira - just hold fast to what you have

Interesting parallel with the first ecumenical councils teaching - Acts 15:28  
 " It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden...that that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols...and from fornication."

This is precisely what the cultic pagan worship of the guilds involved - ritual meal following the sacrifice of an animal to the gods and then debauchery.

IV. The letter closes with exhortation for endurance - overcome the world

- A. The challenge - the victors will rule with the Lord and smash the nations
- B. This contrasts with the comfort offered to those who are faithful

Here is the paradox - God who is comfort and God who is the righteous judge