

## The Revelation to St. John

### Collect Prayer - Second Sunday of Advent

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

***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)

We Continue with the Letter to the Churches

### ***Revelation 3***

*<sup>1</sup>“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. <sup>2</sup>Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup>Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. <sup>4</sup>Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup>He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. <sup>6</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

I. Sardis - thirty miles southeast of Thyatira

A. Former capital of the Lydian Kingdom

B. Site of a great citadel - never captured - but taken twice by stealth

C. Commercial City - prominent Jewish Community

#### D. Shrine of the goddess Cybele

In the ancient Asian religion, Cybele was primarily a nature goddess, responsible for maintaining and reproducing the wild things of the earth. As guardian of cities and nations, however, she was also entrusted with the general welfare of the people.

E. The Christ is presented in the vision in contrast to the goddess

1. He can restore life to the dead church
2. He is and gives the life giving spirit
3. He has not only the seven stars, but the seven spirits of God

II. The church at Sardis is in a stupor - pew potatoes

A. They are half hearted in their Christian Living and worship

B. They are reminded to be mindful of this divided nature

1. Christ will come as a thief - secretly - like the Citadel has  
before been taken
2. No one will know when - you can not defend against His  
coming

III. To the faithful Remnant

A. Your names are written in the "Book of Life"

B. Salvation is God's gift for us to accept or reject

C. Closing statement reminds us of Jesus in Matthew 10:32 and  
Luke 12:8

Matthew " Everyone who acknowledges me before people, I will also  
acknowledge before my Father who is in Heaven"

Luke "...the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of  
God"

*7" And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.*

*8" I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make*

*them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. <sup>11</sup>I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. <sup>12</sup>He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. <sup>13</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

### I. Philadelphia - 30 miles southeast of Sardis

- A. Founded 200 B.C.
- B. Prosperous city
- C. Center for the spread of Greek Culture to Lydia and Phrygia
- D. Jewish Community that is hostile to the Christians
  - 1. Open Door has many meanings
    - a. Christ is the door way to eternal life
    - b. Christian have been showed the backdoor as the way out of the synagogue
    - c. There is an open door for the spread of the Gospel as there was an open door for the spread of Greek Culture

### II. The problem is the Christian are poor and weak - oppressed by the Jews

- A. Unlike Smyrna the Philadelphians are promised conveys from among the Jews
- B. Because it is through their weakness that Christ will work - they are promised protection in the coming tribulation

This safekeeping does not mean they will not suffer, but that they will survive and have all the help they need - here the model is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane - he is strengthened by the visit of the angel, but He still is to suffer crucifixion

### III. The promise is for those who are faithful

- A. They will be preserved
- B. They will have a place in the kingdom of God - Echo of the Gospel of John 17:12 and 18:9

"Never to leave it... for Jesus has kept all whom the Father has given and none of them is lost..."

<sup>14</sup>*"And to the angel of the church in La-odicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.*

<sup>15</sup>*"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup>Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. <sup>19</sup>Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup>Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. <sup>21</sup>He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

#### I. Laodicea - 40 Miles southeast of Philadelphia

- A. Founded by Antiochus 250 B.C.
- B. Major commercial city under the Romans
  1. Clothing, carpets - black wool
  2. Medical School
    - a. Phrygian Powder - used for eye salve

## II. Church is satisfied and confident

A. Material wealth

B. Spiritual gifts

## III. Prophetic Response

A. Poor Blind and Naked - contrasts with the wealth of the city

B. True wealth is in Christ

1. True wealth - faith

2. True healing

3. Real clothing - spiritual clothing - Baptismal Gowns?

C. Strong admonition - Gold refined in fire

1. Refining out of love - not punishment

2. Love is not cruel but can be stern

## IV. The Eucharistic Promise - Remember our theology is not yet realized

A. Those who let Christ in will dine with Him now

B. And will have a chair in the kingdom at the supper of the Lamb

## **Summary of the Letters**

I. John is looking towards the heavenly Kingdom but is rooted in the Church he pastors - Is he the Bishop of these churches? He knows them like a Bishop would.

II. We read in the letters an important lesson about John - his uncompromising view of the Christian commitment

## **Revelation 4**

<sup>1</sup>After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup>At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! <sup>3</sup>And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. <sup>5</sup>From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; <sup>6</sup>and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: <sup>7</sup>the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup>And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!"

<sup>9</sup>And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup>the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

<sup>11</sup> "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for thou didst create all things,  
and by thy will they existed and were created."

## I. From Pastor to Prophet

### A. Chapter 2-3 practical writing to the Churches in Asia

B. Into the heavenly vision, but note John is still always connected to the reality and it's implication to the Church

1. Similar vision to Paul in II Corinthians 12:2 "I know a man in Christ who was caught up in the second heaven..."

2. The vision is dominated with the symbol of Divine Sovereignty - the Great White Throne

3. John's refers to God as the one seated in the throne - this is also political (John is saying not in Rome but in heave is the real authority)

4. Clearly we understand that John has not seen God, but like Ezekiel he refers to the light, the glory - this brightness reveals the presence of God and hides Him in the brilliance

## II. The Heavenly Ordering

A. The throne is surrounded by 24 other thrones - 24 Elders

B. Their role is to worship God and the Lamb

C. Note the number 24, not 12 or 7 not just the 12 tribes - or the 12 apostles nor the old perfect number **both and, not either or**

We are to understand their cultic role - they are **priests** and kings - they are the 'Royal House of the Priests of God" - those who are faithful and true

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Not and automatic inclusion with ordination - it is important for each of us to remember the priesthood of all believers - we are all anointed priest, prophets and kings by the reality of our Baptism - This house of priests more refers to this priesthood than the cultic priesthood of today

D. The four living creatures are the angels responsible for the physical world - the created Cosmos

## III. The Divine Liturgy

A. The Canticle in vs. 8 is based on Isaiah 6:3

B. The whole creation resonates with worship - Paul's writing the whole creation groans for redemption

C. This section reflects early Christian Worship

#### IV The Great Throne is the Center

A. Focus of Worship

B. Reminds us that even in the chaos God rules

C. This vision inspires us to more fitting, more perfect worship

V. Summary - Chapter Four is a celebration of the Redemption of Creation the fulfilling of God's Promise

***As we continue you will note this continued pattern - we could focus especially later on the negative - the woes, the destruction the troubles, but in reality this is a book about the Love of God the extends from the moment of Creation until the end of the Last Day.***

#### Revelation 5

*<sup>1</sup>And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals; <sup>2</sup>and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup>and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."*

*<sup>6</sup>And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; <sup>7</sup>and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; <sup>9</sup>and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals,*

*for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for  
 God  
 from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
<sup>10</sup> and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
 and they shall reign on earth.”*

*<sup>11</sup>Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living  
 creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering  
 myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a  
 loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power  
 and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and  
 blessing!” <sup>13</sup>And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth  
 and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “To  
 him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and  
 honor and glory and might for ever and ever!” <sup>14</sup>And the four  
 living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and  
 worshiped.*

I. How we interpret the Vision recorded in the Revelation to John? We are not to read and take literally everything that is recorded - rather we are to take literally the truth of what is being revealed

A. John turned - movement as if in time and space

B. In God right hand - contrary to the early vision of Glory and light now John sees the hand of God

C. God's right hand - The right hand symbolizing the power - Christ assent to the "Seated at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty"  
 Apostles Creed

II. Ezekiel 2:1-3:9 is the background for the Vision and the way we can understand

## **Ezekiel 2**

<sup>1</sup>And he said to me, “Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you.” <sup>2</sup>And when he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. <sup>3</sup>And he said to me, “Son of

man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. <sup>4</sup>The people also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' <sup>5</sup>And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that there has been a prophet among them. <sup>6</sup>And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit upon scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>7</sup>And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house.

<sup>8</sup>"But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you." <sup>9</sup>And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and lo, a written scroll was in it; <sup>10</sup>and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

### **Ezekiel 3**

<sup>3:1</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." <sup>3:2</sup>So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. <sup>3:3</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. <sup>3:4</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, go, get you to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them. <sup>5</sup>For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel—<sup>6</sup>not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. <sup>7</sup>But the house of Israel will not listen to you; for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart. <sup>8</sup>Behold, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. <sup>9</sup>Like adamant harder than flint have I made your forehead; fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house."

A. John, like Ezekiel is given a mission by God to take a message to God's People - to all of the Created Order

B. The beginning of the action is the scroll - eating or unrolling

### III. The Coming of the Kingdom of God

A. The Scroll Seals

1. The task for the Lamb of God only
2. Breaking the seal set into motion - not only revealing the truth of God Plan, but putting into motion that plan

B. John is told to look for the Lion of Judah - he sees the Slain Lamb

Here we are to understand Jesus as Sacrifice and note the power of the Cross - the ultimate power of God is revealed and made effective through the Cross. The Lamb has the power to reveal and make real the plan of God for the Ceated Order

C. The heavenly response to the Lamb is worship - the same worship offered to the "One who sits on the Throne"

D. The worship is a "New Song" - noting the new work of redemption and all join in this new song - all the Created Order

***This section also ends with a powerful and hope filled message - Like Paul and those who recorded the Gospels, the message is clear - the Power of the Cross - the ret to be named and codified, Theology of the Cross is clearly articulated by John.***

***This message is challenging and comforting to us. The victory has been one, the sacrifice made the plans set in motion, God is in control and all of the Created Order will join in giving praise with all men who accept the gift of the Salvation of God.***