

# Notes on Sermon for: Mid-Week Advent Service #2

Wednesday, December 11, 2019

## **Theme: Correctly Understanding Revelation in Eschatology**

### **Overview:**

- **Revelation written in code: apocalyptic language**
  - So that people in the Church familiar with OT symbolism would understand but Roman officials who were persecuting the Church would not
  - Has to mean something to the Church throughout history
- **Written to the Church as a message of comfort, hope, and victory**
  - Church will suffer through these things; otherwise why bother to tell us?
  - Message is that despite what we may see-CHIRST WINS
- **Purpose:**
- **7 Seals on a scroll, 7 angels blowing trumpets, 7 bowls of wrath**
  - 7 is the symbolic number of the triune God (3) working throughout the entire world (4 corners of the world)
  - When all 7 of these things have been brought to bear God's work leading up to the Last Day is completed.
  - Each one of these describes the same time period, but from a different angle, a different point of view
- **Revelation is not a linear timeline/historical account**
  - Where Chapter 1 begins with Jesus ascension and Chapter 22 is the end and the rest of the Chapters all flow like a timeline
  - Jewish thought and writing is more like a newspaper article
    - **Headline that grabs your attention**
    - **Then a short summation that is light on details**
    - **Following are the details listed in order of importance or interest and not necessarily in a timeline fashion**
    - **Example:**
      - **Headline:** Lamb of God Pastor charged with preaching for 30 minutes
      - **First paragraph following:** Worshipers were made to sit and listen while they missed important TV shows and some starved to death
      - **Next paragraph:** This Pastor has shown a history of not caring about the wants and needs of his congregation.
      - **Next paragraph:** how service began late, time sermon started, time it was completed
      - **Court date and charges he will face**

## First Reading: Revelation 6:1-17-7 Scrolls

- **Purpose of the Seven Seals:** Assure the Church that she will be defended and kept in her faith no matter what she suffers
- **Imagery with the Seven Seals:** The scroll is symbolic of God's will: all that must happen before Christ returns on the Last Day
  - **Revelation 1:1** 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,
  - **Revelation 4:1** After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

**The Lamb: Jesus Christ the Savior of the world and the head of the Church is the only one with authority to disclose what must happen-what is the will of God for the time in between Christ's ascension and return.**

- **Revelation 5:1-7** <sup>1</sup>Then 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 began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, 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.
  - Seven horns: Complete power and authority to rule
  - Seven Eyes: Spirit of God to see what is happening all over the globe

### The First Seal on the Scroll

**6** Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" <sup>2</sup>I looked, and there was a white horse. Its rider held a bow; a crown was given to him, and he went out as a conqueror in order to conquer. <sup>(a)</sup>

- Describes a spiritual evil-every form of tyranny that occurs on earth which uses power and force to impose the absolute rule of dictators who exploit, enslave, dominate and terrorize people. Includes both empires and people
- White horse: domination and tyranny often done with the implied or stated consent of God (or a god)

## **The Second Seal**

<sup>3</sup>When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" <sup>4</sup>Then another horse went out, a fiery red one, and its rider was allowed to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And a large sword was given to him.

- What follows tyranny? War and bloodshed
- This includes World Wars as well as police actions, rebel movements, and the bloodshed of terrorists

## **The Third Seal**

<sup>5</sup>When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and there was a black horse. Its rider held a set of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup>Then I heard something like a voice among the four living creatures say, "A quart of wheat for a denarius,<sup>[a]</sup> and three quarts of barley for a denarius, but do not harm the oil and the wine."

- Horse is the color associated with death. This rider brings famine and pestilence which are the result of war and bloodshed
- A denarius was a day's wage for the normal laborer. The basic foodstuffs of life cost a whole day's wage. Also the idea here is price control, which is found in times of famine. A normal day's wage should be able to purchase 8 to 16 times more than these amounts. Working families can get by, but just barely
- Oil and wine are not affected: economic imbalance-some things are plentiful while others are not. Especially with the wine: not a necessity but a luxury of the rich. Those who can afford the luxuries will still be able to do so
- Hunger, famine, and disease will always ride somewhere upon the earth until Christ's return

## **The Fourth Seal**

<sup>7</sup>When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" <sup>8</sup>And I looked, and there was a pale green<sup>[a]</sup> horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following after him. They were<sup>[a]</sup> given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague, and by the wild animals of the earth.

- Death follows conquest, war, famine and pestilence. Pale Green: color of decaying flesh.
- These “horsemen” will be riding-present upon the earth. Not worldwide but affecting portions of the earth at any given time as shown by their being given authority of a quarter of the earth: affecting up to a quarter of the earth’s population at any given time in history

## The Fifth Seal

9When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they had given.<sup>(a)</sup> 10They cried out with a loud voice: “Lord,<sup>(a)</sup> the one who is holy and true, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?” 11So they were each given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little while longer until the number would be completed of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters, who were going to be killed just as they had been.

- Scene now shifts from what is happening on earth to the saint who have experienced death at the hands of what the horsemen bring. Most especially this focuses on those who have died for their faith, but also those who suffered because of their faith.
  - They are safe in the presence of Christ
  - They are under the altar: the altar of incense where the burning of incense symbolically represented the prayers of God’s people rising to Him. They are “praying”-speaking to the LORD on behalf of those saints still alive on earth. They did not take vengeance on their own against the unbelieving world but now call upon God to take vengeance on their behalf.
    - **Deuteronomy 32:35** “Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.’
- They are given a white robe: Symbolizing the righteousness we have been given in Baptism so that they stand pure and holy before God
- They are told to wait a little while longer: This is not due to God’s slowness or His indifference but His desire that all people be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. When He does execute His vengeance that will mean that all those who do not believe will be condemned.

## The Sixth Seal

<sup>12</sup>Then I saw him open the sixth seal. A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of hair; the entire moon became like blood; <sup>13</sup>the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; <sup>14</sup>the sky was split apart like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.

- This seal reveals prophetically what will happen directly proceeding Christ's return on the last day.
- It corresponds to Jesus prophetic revelation in **Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."**
  - John is painting a word picture of events that neither he nor we can understand. He is describing at the end how all that composes this world: the earth, sun, solar system, and universe will vanish. All reality vanishes so that all is left is mankind and God.
    - **2 Peter 3:10-13 "10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**

<sup>15</sup>Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup>And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, <sup>17</sup>because the great day of their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"

- The unbelieving world will finally be made to confront the truth: look into the face of the Savior who they refuse to believe in and the Gospel that they rejected throughout life. His holy appearance in all His glory and might will literally scare them to death. Then they will go off to everlasting condemnation.

### **The Seventh Seal**

**8** When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

- Instead of describing Christ's return and the New Heavens and New Earth instead we have silence. We have a pause in the Revelation: an intermission. We are to prepare ourselves for another look at this time in between Christ's ascension and return-but from a different angle.

### **Notes:**

### **Interlude: Revelation 7: Showing the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant**

- The Lord protects His Church on earth-sealed in Baptism so that on the Last Day none are lost but all will be gathered together before His throne in Triumphant Celebration

### **Second Reading: Revelation 8:6-9:21**

#### **The Seven Trumpets**

¶And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

- **Purpose:** Assure the Church that God will protect her in such a way and manner that she will be able to carry out her mission, no matter what she suffers
- **Trumpets:** Were used in the days of the Kingdom of Israel to warn people of impending danger. So these things are warnings for the unbelieving world that
  - There is a God who controls all
  - The world is headed toward a catastrophic end
  - You better be right with Him by faith before
    - The final end comes
    - Your end comes.

- The things brought on by the blowing of the trumpets
  - Are occurring in a limited fashion throughout the time of the Church
  - Will become more pervasive and more damaging the closer we get to Christ's return
  - Are aimed at the unbelieving world
  - The Church is made to suffer along with the world
    - As a witness to it as we continue to believe in God by faith
    - As we come alongside those hurting and speak the Gospel
    - We have the confidence of God's protection and help now and the promise of the Resurrection
- These first four trumpet blasts announce drastic upheavals in nature that cause physical harm to man and animals

### **The First Trumpet**

7The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire, mixed with blood, were hurled to the earth. So a third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

- 1/3 of the earth: not worldwide but more of the earth affected than with the seals
- Symbolically describing destruction of the earth's ability to support life for animals and humans
- We see a foreshadowing in the wildfires, but also includes the natural and manmade disasters such as deforestation, pollution, using up of the natural resources

### **The Second Trumpet**

8The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain ablaze with fire was hurled into the sea. So a third of the sea became blood, 9a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

- Illustration that brings to mind a volcanic eruption. Describes how the oceans and the animals that live within them will suffer destruction at the hands of nature and also at the hands of man
- These are happening in a limited capacity now such as oil spills, overfishing, pollution of the water.
- These will increase in intensity and destructiveness as we get closer to the end.

## The Third Trumpet

<sup>10</sup>The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from heaven. It fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water. <sup>11</sup>The name of the star is Wormwood, and a third of the waters became wormwood. So, many of the people died from the waters, because they had been made bitter.

- A word picture that brings to mind the earth's colliding with a comet or some other planetary object.
- Fresh water and the animals that rely on it to live and drink are affected including mankind
- Wormwood in the OT was a kind of bitter poison and was used symbolically to illustrate the effects of sin upon the human heart

## The Fourth Trumpet

<sup>12</sup>The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day was without light and also a third of the night.

- This may illustrate something that is going on today in the major cities around the globe where smog and pollution are so thick that they blot out the sun

<sup>13</sup>I looked and heard an eagle<sup>(a)</sup> flying high overhead, crying out in a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe to those who live on the earth, because of the remaining trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to sound!"

- A break in the account to prepare us for the next three warnings about demonic forces at work in the world

## The Fifth Trumpet

**9** The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth. The key for the shaft to the abyss was given to him. <sup>2</sup>He opened the shaft to the abyss, and smoke came up out of the shaft like smoke from a great<sup>(b)</sup> furnace so that the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. <sup>3</sup>Then locusts came out of the smoke on to the earth, and power<sup>(c)</sup> was given to them like the power that scorpions have on the earth. <sup>4</sup>They were told not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green plant, or any tree, but only those people who do not have God's seal on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>They were not permitted to kill them but were to torment them for five months; their torment is like the torment caused by a scorpion when it stings someone. <sup>6</sup>In those days people will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, but death will flee from them.



<sup>7</sup>The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. Something like golden crowns was on their heads; their faces were like human faces; <sup>8</sup>they had hair like women's hair; their teeth were like lions' teeth; <sup>9</sup>they had chests like iron breastplates; the sound of their wings was like the sound of many chariots with horses rushing into battle; <sup>10</sup>and they had tails with stingers like scorpions, so that with their tails they had the power to harm people for five months. <sup>11</sup>They had as their king<sup>[a]</sup> the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon,<sup>[a]</sup> and in Greek he has the name Apollyon.<sup>[a]</sup>

- The star that has fallen from heaven is Satan. The names given in Hebrew and Greek are the same: The Destroyer
- The creatures he releases from the abyss are his demons
  - The abyss not representing a physical repository for the demonic horde but instead symbolizing how they have been prevented from doing widespread spiritual damage the Christ. He has limited their evil activity so that the Church can do its job of proclaiming the Gospel.
  - Here as we get closer to the Last Day when Christ returns they are allowed to go forth and spiritually attack all those upon the world including the Church.
  - They are symbolized as locusts drawing on a word picture the Church in John's day would know well: how a horde of locusts could swiftly and completely destroy the crops in an area and then move on.
  - This describes demonic activity upon the unbelieving world. They are allowed to torment but not kill.
- Torment for 5 months: short periods of time of intense persecution just as locusts only have a short life span
- This and the woe inflicted by the next trumpet correspond with what is called "Satan's Little Season": a period where he and his demons are allowed freedom to inflict spiritual warfare upon the world.
  - Jesus predicted in **Matthew 24:21-24** <sup>21</sup> **For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. <sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. <sup>23</sup> Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. <sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.**

<sup>12</sup>The first woe has passed. There are still two more woes to come after this.

## **The Sixth Trumpet**

<sup>13</sup>The sixth angel blew his trumpet. From the four<sup>[a]</sup> horns of the golden altar that is before God, I heard a voice <sup>14</sup>say to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates." <sup>15</sup>So the four angels who were prepared for the hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of the human race. <sup>16</sup>The number of mounted troops was two hundred million;<sup>[a]</sup> I heard their number. <sup>17</sup>This is how I saw the horses and their riders in the vision: They had breastplates that were fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and from their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. <sup>18</sup>A third of the human race was killed by these three plagues—by the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur that came from their mouths. <sup>19</sup>For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, because their tails, which resemble snakes, have heads that inflict injury.

- These are the four angels that were "restrained" back in Chapter 7 while the Holy Spirit works to seal through Baptism all those Christ will all into His Church
- This describes demonic forces being used by God to inflict punishment and judgment upon the world.
  - This is describing spiritual warfare that may have some physical side to it as Satan gains control of world governments.
  - Foreshadowing of this could be things like the Nazi extermination of the Jews in World War II as well as other examples in history of ethnic cleansing
- Note that God is not killing people but is allowing these demonic forces to do so as judgment against the unbelieving world

<sup>20</sup>The rest of the people, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands to stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see, hear, or walk. <sup>21</sup>And they did not repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.

- Here we see the reason God allows this to happen: to turn the hearts and minds of people to Him in repentance. But unfortunately the response of people is to continue to turn away from God in anger and unbelief and blame Him for the judgment they incur upon themselves.

## Notes:

**Purpose:** Assure the Church that God will protect her in such a way and manner that she will be able to carry out her mission, no matter what she suffers

### **There is another break in the action:**

- The Church is encouraged in its mission to be witnesses to the world despite increasing demonic control and persecution
- Symbolically we see that beneath all the events of history is the battle that is Christ Vs. Satan. Despite how it may appear at times that evil is triumphing (just as it appeared so when Jesus died of the cross) the truth is that Christ is and will be victorious at the end. And because He is so will be His Church

### **Third Reading: Revelation 16:1-21**

- **These are bowls of God's wrath:** Just as the Trumpets are warning of God's impending judgment here is that judgment coming before the end of the world
- **God is answering the prayer of the martyred saints**
- **These bowls are being poured out at the same time as the trumpets are sounding and as the four horsemen are riding.**
  - Those catastrophes that do not take the life of unbelievers have the purpose of warning
  - Those that do take the life of unbelievers serve as judgment: as their time of grace, time to believe the Gospel has passed
  - As the Church lives though these things they function to
    - Draw us closer to our Savior who protects our faith through whatever catastrophe may fall
    - If they end taking our life we are saved into the arms of Jesus

### **The First Bowl**

**16** Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven<sup>[a]</sup> bowls of God's wrath on the earth." <sup>2</sup>The first went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and severely painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.

### **The Second Bowl**

<sup>3</sup>The second<sup>[a]</sup> poured out his bowl into the sea. It turned to blood like that of a dead person, and all life in the sea died.

### **The Third Bowl**

<sup>4</sup>The third<sup>(a)</sup> poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup>I heard the angel of the waters say,

You are just,  
the Holy One, who is and who was,  
because you have passed judgment on these things.

<sup>6</sup>Because they poured out  
the blood of the saints and the prophets,  
you have given them blood to drink;  
they deserve it!

<sup>7</sup>I heard the altar say,  
  
Yes, Lord God, the Almighty,  
true and just are your judgments.

### **The Fourth Bowl**

<sup>8</sup>The fourth<sup>(a)</sup> poured out his bowl on the sun. It was allowed to scorch people with fire, <sup>9</sup>and people were scorched by the intense heat. So they blasphemed the name of God, who has the power<sup>(a)</sup> over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

### **The Fifth Bowl**

<sup>10</sup>The fifth<sup>(a)</sup> poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People<sup>(a)</sup> gnawed their tongues because of their pain <sup>11</sup>and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they did not repent of their works.

### **The Sixth Bowl**

<sup>12</sup>The sixth<sup>(a)</sup> poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east. <sup>13</sup>Then I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming from the dragon's mouth, from the beast's mouth, and from the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup>For they are demonic spirits performing signs, who travel to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for the battle on the great day of God, the Almighty. <sup>15</sup>"Look, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who is alert and remains clothed<sup>(a)</sup> so that he may not go around naked and people see his shame." <sup>16</sup>So they assembled the kings at the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.<sup>(a)</sup>

- From this section of Revelation comes the term: Armageddon
  - While Biblical Scholars are unsure of what this name is or what it means since it is spelled slightly differently the existing Greek manuscripts
  - Many believe it refers to the Plain of Megiddo along the coast of Palestine. It was a place many battles were fought in the Old Testament. The actual translation would render it “Mount Megiddo” which doesn’t exist.
  - John is not referring to any particular place on earth but instead is describing the work of Satan at the end to incite the unbelieving world to rise up and wage war on the Church.

### **The Seventh Bowl**

<sup>17</sup>Then the seventh<sup>[a]</sup> poured out his bowl into the air,<sup>[a]</sup> and a loud voice came out of the temple<sup>[a]</sup> from the throne, saying, “It is done!” <sup>18</sup>There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. And a severe earthquake occurred like no other since people have been on the earth, so great was the quake. <sup>19</sup>The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations<sup>[a]</sup> fell. Babylon the Great was remembered in God’s presence; he gave her the cup filled with the wine of his fierce anger. <sup>20</sup>Every island fled, and the mountains disappeared. <sup>21</sup>Enormous hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds,<sup>[a]</sup> fell from the sky on people, and they blasphemed God for the plague of hail because that plague was extremely severe

- As this 7<sup>th</sup> bowl of wrath shows Satan’s war waged to destroy the Church will be unsuccessful. The Church does not fight, doesn’t need to. Christ returns in power and glory and it is all over, it is done. Satan and evil are forever defeated.
- It is during this time when all eyes are focused upon earthly events that Christ will return-unexpectedly, but with power and great glory.