

September 5, 2021

Revelations 21:1-6, 22:1-5

No children's message today. I am very proud of Morgan, Chloe and Hazel who were confirmed last Sunday. We celebrate with you and your families. God bless you all and may you continue to grow in your faith.

Adult's and everyone else: The passages this morning carries within these words great hope for the future. That as we pass and suffer through our trials and tribulations there is always hope for the future. For the believing Christian that hope is rooted in our faith in God. John tells us in Revelations that our God is just and is the One who renews creation.

John starts his gospel with his own creation story. It is an expansion on the one in Genesis and is even a pre-creation story. John sets his creation story in the cosmos and it revolves around Jesus as the word or logos. When we come to the Book of Revelations we should look at it and read it as John's second gospel or a continuation of the first one. Both books together form one huge cycle of creation. Spoiler alert: Revelations ends with nature being renewed in a new garden. This sounds a lot like Genesis and the fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer.

The other writers of the New Testament teach that this present world will not be destroyed. That this world we are currently in will be totally renewed. John shares that with us in verse 5, "Behold, I will make all things new." 2Peter 3:13, "Never the less, we according to His promise look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." This will be a new heaven and earth free from human corruption. One that has been purified, transformed and glorified. John's message is not all gloom and doom. It is very positive with great hope for the future. You have to read to the end of Revelation to get this. John is encouraging his communities to remain faithful to God and have hope in His Son.

John talks about the first cosmos passing away along with the sea. This may concern some ecologist of our day. At the time of Revelations writing, the sea symbolized the turbulence and chaos of life. It is ironic that the book of rules for the Eastern Orthodox churches is called the rudder. It steers the ship called the church through the stormy waters of this era. John encourages us to remain faithful because in the Lord's day all the chaos and troubles will come to an end.

John talks about the New Jerusalem that will be built by God. John is really talking about the church and how it will be perfected. The Holy Spirit is going to have to work hard with us on that. The church will be the bride waiting for her husband. The husband being Our Lord Jesus. In the church calendar, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week are considered the three days of the Bridegroom. The Old Testament

prophets talked about a restored and exalted Jerusalem. This was an idea that was in the minds of the people of John's day. Is 60:1-22, 65:17-25, Ezek 40-48.

John reminds us that when the church is perfected, only then will Christ dwell and live amongst us. This starting to sound a lot like the Garden of Eden when God walked the Garden. Scholars call this the Immanuel prophesy. It became fulfilled with the Incarnation of Jesus and is completed when Jesus dwells with His people. This is to restore the paradise of Genesis. St. Paul talks about it in his second letter to the Corinthians as he quotes Ezekiel 37:26-27, "I will dwell with them and walk among them, I will be their God , and they shall be my people."

We truly start to hear the references to the garden, water and trees in chapter 22: 1-5. The Tree of Life is an old Christian symbol for Jesus. Mind you it is one we don't use too much today. The Tree of Life is Christ. Who spread out His arms on the cross like a tree. The cross itself is the Tree of the Curse. Sounds a lot like the trees in the Garden of Eden. John tells us in verse 3 that there will be no more curses in the Holy City of God. It is the new Eden where we can't mess things up. The curse of Genesis 3:14-19 is completely removed. The fruits on this Tree of Life in the City of God reverse the effects of the fruit from the tree of disobedience in Genesis 3:2-11.

At this time in history it was a common belief that a good Jew or Christian could not look at God and like. Only Moses was granted that privilege. Yet in the age that is to come, those who bear Jesus Christ's name on their foreheads will see Him directly. This does not mean that we should go out and get tattoos on our heads. In some parts of Ethiopia and Eritrea that is exactly what they did but for other reasons.

In the New Testament all who believe in Jesus Christ are granted to bear His name. John references this to the practice of the High Priest in the Temple in the Old Jerusalem. They wore the name of God on gold plates that they put on their turbans when they entered the Holy of Holies. In the New Jerusalem, we who bear Christ's name in our hearts and minds are part of the new priesthood of believers.

In the end Revelations is all about renewal. The renewal of the earth and the heavens and ourselves. There is great hope for the future that is rooted in our faith in God. Keep your faith and hope in God and God only. Stay away from emperor worship and the new forms it may take in our age. Some say there is even an ecological message of hope in this book. God is still in charge and the Holy Spirit is still at work and moving amongst us. God is not going to pluck us out of this world as it seems to implode. We have work to do with the Holy Spirit to build heaven here on earth as the Lord's prayer instructs us to do. We have only briefly scratched the surface of this book and the depths it contains. Keep reading and learning because that is what a confirmed Christian should do. God bless, Pastor D.