

Bible Study #25

3/29/22

Revelation 12 (Cont)

From Father Sebastian's Parish Presentation

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- **Revelation 12:2-5** *“She was with child and she cried in her pangs of birth....one who would rule all the nations with a rod of iron”*
 - This is right from **Psalm 2:7-9***
 - This means that this child is the long-awaited Davidic Messiah
 - It says that the “dragon” was not able to devour Him as He was caught up to God and His throne
 - This is a direct reference to the ascension of Jesus
 - Later, we will see that the devil was trying to destroy Jesus at His birth by using Herod’s soldiers (massacre of the innocents)

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- In fact, the devil tried to kill Jesus many times during His life
- He thought that he had finally succeeded at the crucifixion until he realized that Jesus had risen and was caught up to the heavenly throne of God
- This is an image that John will discuss later in **Revelation 13** as he looks back to the image in Daniel of Jesus riding on the clouds
- Father then further clarified who the woman in **Revelation 12** was

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- Since we know the child here is Jesus, we can know that the woman is the Blessed Mother
- But, many commentators suggest that this passage is about more than just Mary
- It also presents a **bigger picture** of the of Israel in the 1st century
- For **Mary is** the pinnacle, the peak, and most beautiful example of this faithful remnant (**the daughter of Zion**)
- The rest of this remnant include all those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah to include: John the Baptist and his parents, and his disciples; the parents of Mary; and all the faithful people who were waiting for the Messiah to come

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- This image of the daughter of Zion (the faithful remnant) as a beautiful woman coming forth as the restoration is also described in **Zephaniah 3:14*** and **Zechariah 2:10*;
9:9**
- Thus, Mary is the woman who literally gave birth to “he who is”, who was literally the restoration, the new Jerusalem
- We will see this beautiful double image later in **Revelation**

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- **Revelation 12:6** *“they fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days”*
 - Once again, we see the 3 and ½ year image, this time referring to the faithful remnant
 - Just as Jesus is seen as the manifestation of His people, so again we have this double image of Mary as the symbol of the faithful people for whom has come the Messiah (who will be received into the Kingdom of God through the new covenant)
 - The woman, taking on the image of the faithful Christians, will have to flee into the wilderness

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- As we have seen, the Christians fled Jerusalem just before its 3 and ½ year siege by the Romans
- They fled to Pella, a city across the Jordan in the desert
- Jesus was born, then taken up, then there was a fight between the devil and God's people (the faithful remnant) for 3 and ½ years
- We can also see the 3 and ½ years as a reference back to **Daniel 7:25***; **12:7*** (this is something John expects his listeners to remember)
- Father pointed out again, that the book of **Revelation** was not about the future or the present, but the time of the author and his audience in the seven churches of Asia Minor under Roman persecution
- It was to remind them that they were not alone as these things had happened before!

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- This pattern happened before as seen in **Hebrews 11***
- So, the same thing happened here to the Christians of Asia Minor as they were living within Salvation History
- Jesus was born and the devil tried to destroy Him
- He was victorious through His resurrection, and is now in the heavenly throne room
- The devil then tried to destroy the Apostolic Christians using the Roman army when they destroyed Jerusalem

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- The Apostolic Christians heeded the warning of Jesus and fled to *Pella*, a town across the Jordan in the wilderness
- John's message is that if God took care of Jesus and the Apostolic Christians, then He will take care of the Christians of Asia Minor

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- **Revelation 12:7-12** *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon;...because he knows that his time is short”*
- This was in response to the concerns of the Christians in the seven churches who were asking if they would survive this persecution
- John’s response was that the devil had already been defeated

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- **Revelation 12:13-14** *“And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth,...to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time”*
 - This little segment on the Angelic battle (the cosmic battle between good and evil) was happening in heaven
 - He then returned to the historical context of the faithful Christians fleeing from *Jerusalem* to *Pella*
 - Here is a reference to their crossing the Jordan in haste as the woman *was given two wings of the great Eagle* (this meant she could flee with great speed)

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- **Revelation 12:15-16** *“The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman,...the dragon had poured from his mouth”*
 - Father pointed out that when the Christians fled Jerusalem, the first obstacle they encountered was crossing the Jordan River
 - This was a reminder of Israel fleeing Egypt during the Exodus, and having to cross the Red Sea
 - Like the earlier Israelites, the Christians were concerned that the Roman soldiers might be pursuing them
 - We are not sure how the Jordan was parted

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- There is a parallelism between God protecting the Hebrews in their crossing the Red Sea and His protection for the Apostolic Christians crossing the Jordan
- The image should help us think about how God takes care of His people
- It could even be applied to how God's people were saved in Noah's ark
- It also recalls the creation story in **Genesis 1**

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- **Revelation 12:17** *“Then the dragon was angry with the woman,...And he stood on the sand of the sea”*
 - What happened at this point was that the *Apostolic Christians* had fled *Jerusalem* and were now safely in *Pella* (beyond Satan's grasp as he had hoped to use the Romans to destroy the Christians)
 - Father said that we will see the transition from the dragon to the Roman Empire in **Revelation 13**
 - After the devil failed to destroy Jesus, and later the *Apostolic fathers*, he was trying to destroy their descendants (the *Apostolic Christians* of Asia Minor)
 - As a reminder these 7 churches were historically established by Paul and later came under the leadership of John in the latter part of the 1st century

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- They can be seen as the fruit, or children of the mother church in Jerusalem
- The question John was asking was: Did they have confidence?
- Because if they keep the commandments of Jesus and walked in His ways (as they had the protective mark of Baptism on their foreheads), Jesus would take care of them
- At this point, the dragon was angry with the woman (the *Apostolic Jewish Christians* of Asia Minor who came from the mother church of Jerusalem)
- The rest of the woman's offspring were these Christians under Roman persecution
- Father reminded us that keeping the commandments of God bears witness to the testimony of Jesus

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- The first and greatest commandment was to have no other gods before Him
- The making of images of idols (worshiping false gods) has been and remained the problem throughout Salvation History (from the golden calf to the possible apostasy of the Christians in Asia Minor)
- It is all about sin, which in the end is idolatry
- The worship of something material rather than the creator of the Cosmos

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- Thus, John was reminding them, not only of God's protection, but that it was the keeping of the covenant that would save them
- They must remain faithful or fall prey of either feinting apostasy or actually apostatizing in the midst of these very severe persecutions that they must patiently endure
- Father concluded this section by reminding us of the importance of the historical context of these 1st century Christians and the role the Roman empire played upon them
- Without this history many turn Revelation into a message for the present day and the end of the world

Revelation 12 (Cont)

- The passage ends with the dragon standing on the sand of the sea
- Anything that came from the sea was from the Gentiles
- Father pointed out that at this point, the dragon was not just Satan but also the puppet master who tried to control all of these events

We will next turn to **Revelation 13**

Revelation 13

From Father Sebastian's Parish Presentation

Revelation 13

- **Revelation 13:1** *“And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its head”*
 - We hear a description of Satan just like in **Revelation 12**, but we see a second distinct character coming out of the sea who looks and acts like the red dragon
 - This means there is an obvious connection between the two beasts as the second one will serve as a puppet master
 - Father suggested that when we hear these images, as good biblical scholars, we should think of **Daniel 7:1f**
 - But first, let us review King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in **Daniel 2**

15 Daniel 605-535 BC Exile

- An Exilic prophet (along with Ezekiel and Jeremiah)
- Was a small boy (approximately 14 years old) when taken into exile during the 3rd year of King Jehoiakim (605 BC)
- Was exiled along with a cross section of prominent citizens, craftsmen, and other prominent young men of Jerusalem
- He was of noble or perhaps royal descent
- Prophesied over a long period of time (70 years) with various visions

Daniel 2

- To get a good understanding of these images, we need to review Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in **Daniel 2:31-45** where we were introduced to the great statue with:
 - A head of gold
 - A chest of silver
 - A belly of bronze
 - Legs of iron (with feet and toes made from iron mixed with clay)
 - A stone not cut from human hands
- Daniel told the king this was history

The Four Empires Impacting on Israel

- 586-538 BC The Babylonians
- 538-322 BC The Medo-Persians
- 332-63 BC The Greeks
- 63 BC-330AD The Romans

Daniel 2 (Cont)

- Then a little rock, not of human origin, arrived and turned into a mountain
- Daniel told the king that this was about the coming history
 - The golden head was Babylon
 - The silver chest was the Medo-Persian empire (thus, with two arms)
 - The belly of bronze was the Greek empire
 - The legs of iron was the Roman empire which eventually would be divided into two parts (thus, with two legs)
- Eventually, during the time of the Roman Empire, the small stone would be the Kingdom of God which eventually would replace all the previous empires

Daniel 2 (Cont)

- The only thing left will be the stone that will grow into a mountain and last forever (the Kingdom of God)
- Then later, in **Daniel 7 and 8**, Daniel will have a very similar vision presenting the same historical events with different imagery
- After understanding the dream, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the construction of a golden statue to be worshiped
- We know toward the end of his reign, King Nebuchadnezzar gains wisdom and seemed to support the Jewish faith

Daniel 3

- **Daniel 3: 1-3** *“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits...worship the golden image”*
 - After constructing this statue, he decreed that whenever any one heard music, they were to fall down and worship this statue upon penalty of death
 - This led to the story of the *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego* and the fiery furnace