

Bible Study #30

5/10/22

Revelation 20

Revelation 20

- **Revelation 20:1-6** *“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven,...Satan will be loosed from his prison”*
 - After 1000 years, Satan will be released from his prison to attack the Church
 - Father pointed out that this idea of 1000 years has caused a great deal of controversy among those who see **Revelation** as being about something happening in the future
 - Many believe that the 1000 year reign of Christ is still to come

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- The Fathers of the Church identified the 1000 year reign of Christ as the “age of the Church”
 - Many ask when did it or will it begin
 - The answer is we do not know for sure
- Father spent a great deal of time in all his classes explaining how the number 1000 in the Bible simply means an immense amount of time
- It is so long a period of time that you can’t even try to count it
- **Psalm 50:7-13** ¹³ (God’s condemnation of the pagan idea of sacrifice) has a good example of this concept when describing all of the cattle on 1000 hills

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- The importance of this period of time for the reign of God is much greater than the periods of time the previous empire existed
 - The Greek Empire was relatively short-lived
 - Alexander the Great conquered Palestine in 331 BC and he died in 323 BC
 - The Roman Empire was the longest but only lasted from 6 BC until the 313 AD with the Edict of Milan allowing for Christianity to be accepted within the empire
 - The Kingdom of God will go on forever
 - Thus, whenever the 1000 year reign for the age of the church ends, Christ will reign supreme, and Satan will be released briefly from prison

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Many of us today may ask: How can Satan be in prison right now with all the evil in the world
- St. James wrote that we must “resist the devil, and he will flee from you”
- This means that he is in prison and has a limited ability to interact with us (Father compared this to how one interacts with a lion in a cage at the zoo – get too close and he will hurt you, otherwise all he can do is make a loud noise)
- Satan is completely bound within a cage
- Exorcists use the name of Jesus to free people from demonic possession

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Since we do not know when the age of the church began and 1000 only means an uncountable amount of time, we do not know when this age will end
- The devil will be released and try to bring all the nations in a fight against the church (God's people) and then Jesus will appear and throw the devil into the lake of fire forever(**Revelation 7-10**)
- Father said we have nothing to fear
- But, we understand that at the end of this unknown period, classic Catholic eschatology will begin (**Revelation 20:11**)
- Everyone raised from the dead will be judged for what he has done; the wicked will join the devil in the lake of fire, and the righteous will go to the New Jerusalem, the new Garden of Eden

Revelation 20

From Father Sebastian's Parish Presentation

Revelation 20

- **Revelation 20:1** *“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven,...who is the Devil and Satan”*
- Father started this chapter by pointing out the **wicked trinity** in the **Book of Revelation: Satan**, his puppet the **Roman Empire** with its own puppet the **religious authorities** of Asia Minor
- As discussed earlier, the purpose of the Roman Empire was to get all of the people to worship Satan
- Father pointed out how important it is for us to be grounded in the Jewish reading of history
- For the Jews in the Old Testament, and again in the writings of Paul, we see that the pagan gods were demonic forces (the most important god in most pagan pantheisms was Satan)

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- At this point in **Revelation**, we hear that a time is coming when the Roman Empire and those causing the problems for the Christians in Asia Minor were going to be destroyed, or captured, and throw in the lake of fire rendering them powerless
- At the same time, Satan will be handcuffed and lose his puppets
- Satan was seen as being chained, bound, and thrown into prison for 1000 years (a period of time beyond our ability to count)

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- As mentioned, the use of the number 1000 can be seen in **Psalm 50**, which condemns the pagan way of offering sacrifices, by believing that they need to feed God
- Father pointed out that we sometimes believe that when we fast or offer a sacrifice to God, it will satisfy or make God happy and thus, in some way, change Him
- But, God does not change and when we fast, pray, or offer a sacrifice, we are the only ones who change
- Again, in **Psalm 50**, we see how everything belongs to God

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- How many cattle would there be on 1000 hills in comparison to all the hills in the world?
- Thus, the number 1000 in **Psalms 50** simply means a countless number
- No one would ever believe that any one would attempt to count the number of cattle on these hills
- The reason that some scholars want to take this 1000 years number literally is because they are trying to set this passage within a specific time frame that will be played out in their lifetime

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- We need to keep this passage within its historical context from a biblical standpoint which means that the number is unknown
- Thus, the devil will be bound for a period of time beyond our ability to count or know
- This is the turning point in **Revelation** where we begin to hear about the “end of the world”
- Father suggested that there are certain historical markers here:
 - The battle of Armageddon has already happened
 - The beast from the sea (Roman Empire) will be long gone
 - The concerns of the 1st century Christians was primarily about what was going to happen to them, their children, and grandchildren in the future

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Father suggested that this is a common practice for almost every parent
- Even though the exact time when the Roman Empire was captured by the Kingdom of God is not known, some great insights can be found in the **Book of Daniel**, where we see the succession of empires culminating in the destruction of the Roman Empire by the Kingdom of God
- Father suggested that this took place at an incredible moment in the history of the Church during the **reign of Constantine** (306 to 337 AD)

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Until that moment, Christianity was persecuted as an illegal religion in the Roman Empire
- Sometimes the persecution was mild and at others it was very severe
- Nero (54-68 AD) was bad, but Domitian (81-96 AD) was worse (and other waves of persecution followed)
- Yet, the more the Church was persecuted, the more forceful and dominant Christianity became
- Constantine (who was a pagan) realized that it would be a very bad political move to continue to persecute the Christians as they were in the majority of the population

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- He was no fool and realized that a kingdom divided against itself could not stand
- He saw that over the previous three centuries, the more they were persecuted the larger they grew in number
- Father said that Constantine realized this and there may also have been some divine intervention involved
- So, he legalized the practice of Christianity, and it soon became the state religion

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- He then called a council of the bishops of the church in order to get them on his side
- This was the **Council of Nicaea (325 AD)**
- Even though historians debate these events, Father suggested that this was the primary focus of the description of the destruction of the beast from the sea, and the false prophets in **Revelation 19**
- Whatever the case, eventually Satan was at a point where he no longer had his puppets and was bound for 1000 years, basically unable to do what he had been doing before against the Christians

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- It seems to have lasted from the time of Constantine until today (some 2000 years)
- This period of time may last many more thousands of years
- It is possible that we are still living in the era of the early church
- But, the **Book of Revelation** talks about the second coming of Christ
- Some day He will return, and some day Satan will be released from His prison
- But, during the age of the Church, Satan is described as bound

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Many today seem to question this because there is so much evil in the world, how could things get worse?
- We do not know when the end is coming, and it really does not matter, for until it comes, Satan is bound
- Father said that as a priest, he has witnessed exorcisms and he is convinced that Satan is bound
- The only evil power Satan has over men is when (as the old saying goes) good men do nothing

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Father suggested that this has been getting worse in the last few decades or maybe the last century
- Even though Satan seems to have grown in boldness and strength, he remains only a roaring lion in a cage
- We must be consoled in the fact that Satan is bound
- We are living in the age of the Church and are awaiting the second coming of Jesus
- Most likely, this will continue to be like our ancestors, and continue to safely pass on the gospel that we have received to the next generation and the next until He returns in His glory

Revelation 20

From Father Sebastian's Parish Presentation

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- **Revelation 20:11-15**

- This is the beginning of the description of the end of the world (at the end of the reign of the church, after the 1000 year reign of Christ)
- At that point, Satan will be released from prison to gather together all the nations together for one last-ditch effort to defeat the church (which will come to nothing)
- Everyone will be raised from the dead, the “books will be opened,” and all will be judged by what was written in the book concerning what they had done in their lives, and then cast into the lake of fire

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- But, there will be opened a second book, the Book of Life
- If your name is written in that book (the Book of Life) you will NOT be judged by what was written in the other book
- This is the Book of the Baptized, and you will not be judged by whatever you did before your baptism that may be written in the first book as it will be forgiven by your baptism
- St Paul wrote that the old man is dead upon Baptism
- From this comes a new man, a new creation comes forth and God does not look upon what was done on the previous side of Baptism

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- That is the great beauty of the baptismal font
- When one exits the font, he is without sin and it is hoped that he will sin not more
- But, as many do sin after Baptism, we have been given the Sacrament of Confession
- Unfortunately, those not baptized will be judged by what they have done and many will be thrown into the lake of fire with the Dragon, the beast, and the false prophets
- The baptized will rise and see the “New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21

Revelation 21

- **Revelation 21:1-2** *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;...prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”*
 - Father pointed out that the idea of a new heaven and a new earth takes us back to the creation story
 - A New Jerusalem is **coming down** (Father said to underline this 1000 times)
 - The end of salvation history is not about us flying up onto the clouds, but God coming to us as in Genesis 1-3, where He came to dwell among men on the earth!
 - He also came to dwell among His people when He gave the tabernacle to Moses

Revelation 21 (Cont)

- This also happened when He entered the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple (He came to dwell among His people)
- Again, this is how we must understand the Incarnation (God came down from heaven to dwell among His people)
- The angel said after Jesus ascended into heaven, that Jesus would come back among His people at the end of Salvation History
- This all began with God being willing to come among His people (that is what eternity is all about)
- Father said there is no dualism here

Revelation 21 (Cont)

- **Revelation 21:3** *“Behold, the dwelling of God with men....neither shall there be mourning or crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away”*
 - Father reminded us that there is nothing in this passage about man dwelling with God
 - It is all about God dwelling with man
 - The heavenly Jerusalem will descend to the earth
 - The Kingdom of God formerly in heaven will now be on the earth
 - This is the replanting of the Garden of Eden which is described as the “New Jerusalem”