

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
New Testament Bible Reading
December 12 – December 18

Monday, December 12 – Revelation 3

Revelation 3 continues the letters to the churches. In verses 1-6, Jesus dictates a letter to the church in Sardis. This is a church that seems to be alive (maybe it had lots of programs for its members), but was really dead (verse 2). They apparently have become like the world around them—salt that has lost its saltiness, because their robes are no longer sparkling and white, but soiled.

The church in Philadelphia is written to in verses 7-13. This church is another church that is being severely persecuted and tested, once again by Jews (verse 9). Jesus encourages them to hang on and promises, that if they do, those who have persecuted them will see the truth and have to acknowledge that Jesus loved them (verse 9). Jesus further promises that those who hang on to their faith will have a permanent place in the eternal city of the New Jerusalem (verses 12-13).

The church in Laodicea was a church that thought they had it all (verses 17-18), but they were badly self-deceived. They weren't hot, they weren't cold, they weren't anything (verses 15-16), and Jesus makes it very clear that those who do nothing with what has been entrusted to them shouldn't expect Jesus to reward them. But Jesus doesn't just discard them, he gives them a chance and an opportunity to repent (verses 19-20).

Tuesday, December 13 – Rev 4: 1 – 5: 14

Chapter 4 opens with a vision of the throne room of heaven. Remember, as you read this, John is trying to describe the indescribable, so words can't really paint a complete picture. The important thing to notice as you read this is the brilliant throne that is in the center of everything. God is on the throne and everything in heaven and all of creation is praising him (verses 3-11). The 24 thrones that surround the great throne are probably representative of the 12 tribes of Israel and the disciples of Christ. Taken together these represent all of

the people of God. The four living creatures are created beings, which are probably representative of all of God's creation. The important thing as you read isn't to try to decipher what all of these things are, but to notice the worship that is taking place continually around the throne of God. Man is the only thing in all of creation that does not willingly worship the creator.

Chapter 5 marks the beginning of events which mark the end of the kingdom of this world. As to whether these events are in the process of taking place right now, or won't take place until sometime in the future, I don't think we can say for certain (although some certainly try to). The important thing to notice is that God has a plan for how events will unfold (that is what the scroll represents in verse 1), and that Jesus is the only one who is worthy to open the scroll and start the sequence of events which will usher in his new Kingdom. Jesus is the Lamb in verse 5, and he is the only one who is worthy to open the scroll and receive praise, honor and glory, because he was slain so that we could be his.

Wednesday, December 14 – Revelation 6

In the throne room of heaven, as Jesus opens the seals on the scroll one by one, things begin to fall apart here on earth. This is symbolically portrayed in verses 2-8 by four different colored horses being ridden by riders who bring war, famine and plagues to part of the earth. There is a variety of opinions as to what the white horse in verse 2 symbolizes. Some think it is the anti-Christ, or some other evil force, but I think that is mistaken, because colors are symbolic in this book. As we will see going through the book of Revelation, white always symbolizes purity and holiness. White belongs to the people of God. In Revelation 19, there is a clear picture of Jesus riding on a white horse to make war with the nations. Furthermore, notice the rider is given a crown and is bent on conquest. All this leads me to the conclusion that this rider is Jesus going out to conquer the kingdoms of this world so the Kingdom of Heaven can fill the earth. The next horse is red. Red symbolizes bloodshed and war and this rider comes to take peace away from the earth. The third seal sends a black horse and rider holding scales to earth. This horse and rider are symbolic of famine coming to the earth. The fourth seal send a pale (sickly or deathly looking) horse and rider to

earth. This horse brings death and sends unbelievers to Hades (the place where the souls of unbelievers go to await their final judgment).

In verses 9-17, the fifth and sixth seals are broken by Jesus. The fifth seal allows John to see those who have been martyred for the Kingdom of Heaven under the altar of heaven crying out for justice (verse 10). They are given a white robe (symbolic of purity and holiness) and told to wait a little longer. Now remember this book is written specifically to comfort and encourage those who are being persecuted for the sake of Christ. As this seal is broken, it reminds them that justice will come one day, and it also reminds them that while those who are unbelievers await their final judgment in Hades, those who love Christ will await the final judgment in Heaven in his very presence. As the sixth seal is opened, the judgment the martyrs have been crying out for is brought to earth. Notice the emphasis in verse 15 on how this judgment effects the kings of the earth—the very ones who have been persecuting the followers of Christ. It is an awful picture where there is no where to run and no where to hide from the wrath of the Lamb. Notice it is the wrath of the Lamb (Jesus) that they fear. We don't normally picture Jesus in this way, but we should remember that the Bible pictures Jesus this way as he seeks justice for his people.

Thursday, December 15 – Revelation 7

This chapter of the Bible has been terribly misinterpreted by the Jehovah's Witnesses. They interpret verses 4-8 as saying that out of all the people who have ever lived, only 144,000 will be saved. But that is not at all what these verses are teaching. To prove that all you have to do is look at the next verses (9-10). There is a great multitude that is saved from every tribe, tongue and nation. Clearly there are more than 144,000 that are saved. To understand what is being said we need to think of it as a math equation: $144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 1,000$. In the Book of Revelation the number 12 always is symbolic of perfection, and 1000 was the number of people necessary to have a multitude, so what John is conveying with the number is perfection squared times a multitude, an absolute perfect multitude of people. There is no one missing who should be there, and as verses 9 and 10 tell us, this great multitude is resplendent in their perfection and is too great to count. As they gather

around the throne, this great multitude of people is focused on just one thing—worshipping God and the Lamb who was slain for them.

Next, in verses 13-17, John is told where all these people have come from. They are those who have come out of all the struggles of this world and trusted Christ as their savior (verse 14). That is each one of us who is trusting in Christ, and now notice what they are doing and what is being done for them. They are before the throne of God, and are serving him day and night. That is how we will spend eternity. It is a marvelous place to be, because will spread his tent over them and protect them—giving them everything that they need, and wiping every tear from their eyes.

Friday, December 16 – Revelation 8

The opening of the seventh seal starts the final judgment on the kingdom of this world. Notice how this cycle of judgment begins in verse 3. It is with the prayers of the saints. What have they been praying for? Justice (6:9-11). These prayers are taken by the angel at the altar and mixed with smoke from the incense to go up before the Lord. This explains why the angel takes fire from the altar, and then hurls it to the earth. It is done at God's command in response to the prayers of the saints for justice. This begins a series of events that bring desolation to the earth. They are very reminiscent of the plagues that fell on Egypt as a result of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart. Beginning in verse 6 there is a series of trumpet blasts. The first blast sends hail, fire and blood hurling to the earth, which causes a third of the vegetation of the earth to be burned up. The second blast, of the trumpet, causes what John describes as a huge mountain of fire (a volcano?) to be thrown into the sea causing its desolation. Next, the third trumpet sounds which causes a great start (meteorite?) to desolate the fresh waters of the world. The fourth trumpet blast causes darkness to fall upon the world as the light of the sun, moon, and stars is diminished (smoke from raging fires?). While all of this is going on a final warning is given to the inhabitants of the earth. This warning comes by way of an eagle which circles above with a message of woe (a curse) because of what is about to happen as the final three trumpets blow. **It is important to point out here that references to the inhabitants of the earth, or the world, in the book**

of Revelation refer to those who are not the people of God, that is, people who have not trusted Christ as their savior.

Saturday, December 17 – Revelation 9

In today's reading the next two trumpets blow, which signals the next calamities that are about to fall upon the world. In verse 1, John makes reference to a star that fell from heaven to earth. Most likely this is a reference to Satan, who fell from heaven (Luke 10: 18) to earth. Next we are told that this star that fell is given a key which opens the shaft of the Abyss (in the New Testament the Abyss refers to the place where demonic spirits dwell, think of it as the gateway to Hell). When the Abyss is opened, John tells us that things like locusts come swarming out of it. But clearly they are not locusts, because they do not eat the vegetation, but rather attack humans who are not part of God's Kingdom (those who do not have the seal of God on them—this seal of God is not a visible, but the Spirit dwelling in them). Notice once again, the close connection between what happens as this trumpet blows and the 8th plague that fell on the Egyptians (the plague of locusts that harmed only the Egyptians) that God unleashed on the Egyptians as Moses tried to lead Israel out of captivity. Notice that these locusts/scorpions have the power to torture but not to kill. More than likely these locusts/scorpions are demonic forces. Notice in verses 1-6, that while it is Satan who opens the door, this is only done with God's permission, and God has set limits as to what these demons can attack and how they can attack.

As John continues to describe these locust like creatures in verses 7-12, it becomes even clearer that they are not literally locusts, but this is a symbolic representation. Remember, John is trying to describe in words things that haven't been seen before and to do that he is trying to use things that people can make references from. From the description of these creatures, it becomes clear that what John is trying to convey is that the people have no power over these creatures, they are seemingly invincible. In verse 11, John tells us that their king or leader is Abaddon, or Apollyon, which means destroyer and this is a clear reference to Satan.

The sixth trumpet blast releases four angels who have been kept in heaven for this very moment. These angels are sent to earth along with

multitudes from heaven to kill one third of humanity. That sounds horrible, but here is the key verses to look at in this passage—verses 20-21. Even in spite of all of this terror, mankind still refuses to repent and turn to God. There is still time to do it, but there is no desire to do it. This shows the complete hardness of man's heart (just like Pharaoh's), and man's complete rebellion against God.

Sunday, December 18 – Revelation 10

Before the seventh trumpet blows, John tells us that a mighty angel comes down from heaven with a little scroll. This mighty angel is not Jesus, but rather an angel who has been given great power. Notice his description and that in verse 2, John tells us that he set one foot on land another on the sea, which demonstrates his power over all of creation. The little scroll probably represents the Gospel of Jesus Christ. John is told to take it and eat it—that is to make it part of his inner being. The Gospel tastes sweet to John, because it is the message of salvation for him and all who believe, but it makes his stomach sour, because it is also a message of judgment and destruction for those who refuse to believe. Verse 11 tells John that he must prophesy against the people, nations, languages and kings of this world. That is the message of the Book of Revelation. It is sweet to those who believe, as Jesus is coming back to take us home. It is bitter for those who refuse to believe, because Jesus is coming to judge and destroy those who are rebellious.