

BIBLE STUDY
October 26, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

Revelation 7: 2-4, 9-14

1 John 3: 1-3

Matthew 5: 1-12 A

1. Revelation 7: 2-4, 9-14

- The Book of Revelation is said to have been written by the evangelist John. Its literary genre is that of an apocalypse which is written to give hope and strength to people who are being persecuted. An apocalypse uses extravagant imagery and symbolism borrowed from the Old Testament especially Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel. The symbolic descriptions are not to be taken literally but are meant to picture the wrath of God for sin and the Christian's trust and hope in God's ultimate victory over evil and how those who are being persecuted now will share in his victory.
- The Book of Revelation is written to give hope and encouragement to Christians who were being persecuted by the Roman emperors. The suffering Christians are urged to never give up hope, to not compromise their faith, and to trust that they will be victorious when God triumphs over evil.
- Numbers have symbolic meaning. 4=the world, 6=imperfection, 7=totality or perfection, 12=the tribes of Israel or the 12 apostles, the New Israel, 1000=immensity 666=each letter of the alphabet was assigned a number. This could refer to Caesar Nero. Babylon is Rome and the beast is the Roman emperors.
- The book of Revelation has meaning for Christians of every age because each generation struggles with the battle between good and evil. Each generation must remain faithful against the challenges of each age. Every Christian must hold onto hope of God's ultimate victory over evil and the triumph of good.
- It is risky business to try to identify current event and persons as fulfilling the prophecy of the book of Revelation. The events it has in mind are those of the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperors. It is much better to focus on the hopeful images of God's triumph and to take heart from the assurance of God's victory and our share in it.
- 7: 1-The earth is seen as a table or a rectangular surface. The number 4 refers to the world or the earth with four angels in the four directions. The east was seen as the land of light (sunrise) and where paradise (Eden) was found.
- 7:2-3-the seal was like a signet ring that was used to impress the identification of the owner on wax. It signified ownership, possession. The servants of God will be marked with the seal of God to show that they belong to God and are to be kept safe from the coming catastrophe.

- 7:4-144,000=12x12x1000: refers to the twelve tribes of Israel expanded and multiplied to become the New Israel based on the 12 Apostles.
- Eleven tribes are named. The tribe of Judah is listed first because Jesus is called the Lion of Judah. The tribe of Dan is omitted because there was a tradition that the anti-Christ would come from that tribe.
- Then, there is a vision of the faithful Christians before the throne of God. This vision is to encourage the persecuted Christians to hold onto their faith so that one day they can join this multitude.
- 7:9- no one can count-those who are saved are beyond counting. They include all people of every race, people and tongue. They wear white robes and carry palm branches which are a sign of victory and faithfulness. The white robes remind us of the robe of baptism.
- 7:10- They worship God in song and by bowing down before him. They are participating in a heavenly liturgy of worship and praise.
- 7: 11: A vision of heaven in worship before the throne
- 7:12-The song of praise
- 7:13-14-There is a dramatic enactment---sort of a call and response—a ritual of naming the identity of the multitude. They are the ones who have survived the persecution. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- 7: 15-17: A very biblical description of heaven. They worship God day and night. God who sits on the throne protects them; they neither hunger nor thirst; neither sun nor heat affect them; Jesus is the Lamb who gives them life giving water which is his grace that flowed from his side on the cross. The imagery is from Isaiah, and John's Gospel. God wipes every tear away.

2. Matthew 5: 1-12A

- The Beatitudes comprise the prologue to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. The nine Beatitudes contrast the present situation with the reality of the Kingdom of God to come.
- Those who remain empty in this life, not filling up on the things of this world, are blessed (happy, fortunate, to be congratulated) because they will be filled up in the Kingdom of God. They describe the attitude of Christians who choose to not identify with the values of this world and anticipate the values of the Kingdom of God. They live in this world with their eyes on heaven.
- Poor in spirit=empty so that God can fill them up. Those who are materially poor know that they need God.
- Mourn: feel the sadness of those who are persecuted, oppressed, and marginalized. They refuse to be consoled by worldly pleasures. They do not flinch from being present to those who suffer.
- Meek: The humble and lowly in contrast to the proud and the greedy
- Hunger and thirst for righteousness: Those who desire God with their whole being
- Merciful: Those who enter into the chaos of another out of love.

- Clean (Pure) of heart: those who do not let the passing pleasures of this world distract them from God. The pure of heart are totally focused on God.
- Peacemakers: those who build bridges, rip down walls, and bring enemies together in peace.
- Persecuted and insulted: those who do not lose faith, who hold out to the end, who are faithful to what they believe in. Those who are not beholden to the opinion of others.

3. 1 John 3: 1-3

- This letter written by the evangelist John or his disciples is almost a commentary on the Gospel of John. It is written to refute those who denied the humanity of Christ and saw Christianity as a way to union with the divine through special secret knowledge. They denied the importance of relationships in the community and concern for our brothers and sisters. That is why the love of God shown in the love for neighbor is so important (2: 1-6).
- 3: 1-The greatest sign of God's love is that he has made us his true children. We are that now. It is a present reality and will be revealed fully in the kingdom of heaven. In our humanity---our flesh and blood---we are already children of God. The reason that Christians are persecuted is the same reason that Jesus was persecuted—people cannot believe that God would actually dwell within us and make us his children.
- 3:2-We are God's children now but it will be revealed fully in heaven. When Christ is revealed, we shall be like him because we shall see him just as he is.
- 3:3- if this is our hope---what we trust will happen—what God has promised—we keep ourselves pure, i.e. we obey his commandments and we imitate Christ. He becomes our focus.