**Book of Revelation Sermon V**

**Salvation Belongs to Our God**

Theme of Revelation: Peel back the layers of history and even the terrible persecutions and what do we find? **The lamb is on the throne and God is in control.**

Last week: Rev 4 the movie begins with God on the throne.

Message: When we are persecuted, when we lose a job, undergo hardships, when we go through Covid-19, we need to look to God on the throne!!!!

Throne 38 times in the book. 17 times in Ch 4,5.

Rev 4:4 24 elders on 24 thrones These elders represent us!

We are dressed in white and wearing golden crowns.

4:6 A sea of crystal. It represents separation from God. (but this “sea” is removed in Rev 21. “There is no more sea.”

Four living creatures = four cherubim Kept Adam and Eve from Garden of Eden.

They fiercely defend the holiness and honor of God

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!!!!

We are saying: You are worthy, O God, to receive glory and honor and power!

**Revelation Chapter 5**

Scroll with seven seals that, symbolically, contains the message of Revelation. The perfect seals require someone perfect to open them.

5:5-6 God to us: Do not weep!!! Enter Jesus

Jesus is a lion a powerful ruler

Jesus is the Root of David the Messiah

Jesus is a Lamb who looks as if he were slain.

A lamb with seven horns (power) and seven eyes (omniscient).

Jesus takes the scroll because he is worthy.

Rev 5:8-14 Worship. We are singing: Jesus, you are worthy. Why?

v. 9 Because he gave his life to redeem every tribe, language, people and nation

v. 10 Because he made us kingdom of priests with an intimate relationship with God.

Summary so far:

Trust in God who sits on the throne

Trust also in me who is a worthy lamb who was slain so that you can worship God.

Structure of Rev 6-20:

Seven seals Ch 6-7

Seven trumpets Ch 8-9

Seven symbolic creatures Ch 10-15

Seven bowls Ch 16-17

All God’s enemies destroyed. Ch 18-20 All have to do with the judgment of God

**Revelation 6: Opening of the seals.** Seal = something not yet revealed.

Rev 6:1-8

Rev 6:1 Come! Come see the vision. Imagine the scene!!! The sound of hoof-beats and enter a White Horse! The main action begins.

For us: A bunch of tanks….

6:2 First seal opened. What is revealed first?

The picture of a warrior on a white horse with a golden crown and a bow = Parthian warrior/king. They are the only ones in memory who defeated Rome (Carrhae 53 BC)

6:3-4 Next: A red horse. This horse represents war which will come to the earth. …given the power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. A large sword. It probably symbolizes persecution which accompanies those who preach the gospel.

Will this impact God’s people? Yes!

6:5-6 The third seal. A black horse. Famine. Scale for measuring food. Whole day’s wage just to buy sufficient wheat to stay alive. Note, oil and wine are still flowing, so the wealthy are not hurt by this famine. It probably represents the financial hardship to come on the Church because of persecution.

6:7-8 The fourth seal. A pale (yellow-green) horse. Death (with Hades right behind) The power to kill ¼ of humanity by the four (partial) judgments: war, famine, disease and wild beasts. (parallel Ezek 14:12-20).

Message: Judgment is coming on Rome. It may represent martyrdoms which are coming on the Church as well.

Message to us: God will come against his enemies—those who oppose the gospel.

Q: How do you feel about the prospect of persecution which might include financial hardship and even death?

Rev 6:9-17

6:9-11 The fifth seal. Reveals the souls of those killed because of the word of God and their testimony (original witnesses of Jesus?). Martyrs.

Our sister in Yemen.

v. 9 Martyrs are “under the altar” This represents the blood of a life which is shed on an altar which pours down “under the altar.” The martyrs are a sacrifice for God.

v. 10 How long…. Before God judges the wicked. Retribution, not vindictiveness, is a good thing. Right now, I cannot relate to this sentiment, but I believe we will when we reach heaven. We will agree with these martyrs that God’s judgment on those who oppose Jesus is a good thing. This sentiment—asking God to come in judgment on God’s enemies—is a common theme in Psalms (Psalm 94:1-7) and is in common in Revelation (Rev 16:5-7)

Application: Romans 12:17-21 Do not repay evil for evil. Do not cut off that aggressive driver. Do not get your enemy fired. Live at peace with everyone

Do not take revenge.

Brothers and sisters, do not take revenge, but leave room for God to take care of these people.

No, love your enemy, protect her, provide for him.

God: I will avenge; I will repay.

v. 11 Answer: not yet (“until the full number…). Wait a little longer until the ones to be killed in the persecution prophesied by Revelation is complete. God will judge Rome but Rome has some more persecuting to do first.

God: When will you bring the Covid-19 pandemic to an end?

God: Trust in my timing.

God: When will you judge my tormentor at work?

God: When will you come to rescue me from the one who abuses me?

God is true and just in his judgments.

6:12-17 The sixth seal. Earthquake, sun turns black, moon turns red, stars fall from the sky, the sky recedes like a scroll and the mountains removed. Everyone hides in caves and among the rocks. This is classic apocalyptic.

Judgment is coming.

The Day of the Lord is here. (Isaiah 2:10-21 for example. Also Joel 2:10, 31 Isaiah 34:4 Nahum 1:5 for sun, stars, etc. ). This is not literal, of course, but it is real. From the OT examples, we know that this is about the fall of a nation (Rome), not the end of the world.

An ironic description: v. 16 the wrath of the lamb.

The wrath of Jesus is coming on the Roman persecutor.

On the Day of the Lord, God’s enemies—the atheists and unbelievers will say

“Fall on us, Hide us” Utter terror. The economy is falling apart. We are falling into war….

Rev 6:17 Rhetorical Question: Who can stand under this terrible tribulation?

Maybe you have felt this lately! You have felt overwhelmed.

We need another look in God’s throne room.

We need Revelation Chapter 7.

The picture so far: Despite what we see in the news, God is in control and he will judge those who oppose us.

**Rev Chapter 7** An encouraging interlude (because we need one)

Read Rev 7:1-9

v. 2 An angel comes “from the East” (where the sun rises, where God always comes from, the temple faces East).

Four angels hold back the coming winds = God’s activity. Holding back judgment.

v. 3 Another angel. Do not harm the land, sea or trees.

God’s people are sealed (sealed = protected from the coming wrath. sealed = ownership.)

Ezek 9:1-4 those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in Jerusalem.

Who is sealed?

144,000 or them (all of all of all of God’s people God’s people)

Why 12,000 from Judah, 12,000 from Reuben, etc.? To emphasize that ALL Christians are sealed and under this protection.

Note: The list is not that given in Genesis. It includes Levi and Joseph but not Dan, Ephraim (centers of calf-worship).

What is this seal? Ephesians 1:13-14. It is the Holy Spirit, “who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

When you were baptized into Christ you received this seal.

Q: Does this sealing mean that the Christians will escape physical suffering in the coming tribulation? Answer: No! In Ezekiel 9:1-6, the righteous are sealed from judgment, but definitely not from the destruction about to come on Jerusalem (Ezek 21:3,4).

Q: Who are these 144,000?

A: They are the “Great multitude that no one could count.”—all the redeemed, but more particularly, the early Christians who were to be protected when God judges Rome.

This is us. What are we doing?

v. 9 White robes purity

palm branches A symbol of joy (Jesus entering Jerusalem).

A symbol of the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Jews built booths of palm branches to celebrate having a relationship with God. A celebration of salvation.

The point for the Christians: No matter what is coming up, no one and no thing will be able to steal your joy or your salvation.

Read Rev 7:10-17

A third worship service, like Rev 5.

What are we loudly proclaiming? Salvation belongs to our God and to the lamb.

That is what God wants you to remember. Whatever happens, who is on the throne and who is in the throne-room?

Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks and honor.

(v. 13) An elder: Who are these people a (symbol of)? Are you getting this, John?

Apparently, a rhetorical question (v. 14) Sir, you know.

These are those who survive the coming tribulation/persecution and overcome by the blood of the Lamb. What a great assurance.

v. 15 God spreads his tabernacle over them. They are in his tent. He will dwell with them.

v. 16 We will never hunger or thirst.

v. 17 Why? Because the lamb is at the center of the throne, and he is our shepherd. He will lead us to springs of living water (which is the Holy Spirit).

What have we learned:

It will get bad sometimes. God will not let sin go. He will judge, and even we may get caught up in it. God will deal with his/our enemies.

But, behind the scenes, Jesus is still on the throne. God is protecting us. We have a seal that guarantees the final outcome. This calls for patient endurance of the saints.

Rev 8-9 The seven trumpets. More judgment on Rome. 1/3 (rather than ¼) destroyed. The imagery of these judgments come directly from the 10 plagues in Egypt.

Wormwood. Crazy locust-soldiers

Unfortunately (Rev 9:20-21) the people still did not repent.

Rev 11:1-12 This may seem terrible, but, believe it or not, it is part of an encouraging interlude.

Rev 11:1-6 God measures the Temple. God will protect his people (who are the temple, by the way. 1 Cor 3:16-17, Eph 2:21) Measured = protected. Zech 2:1-5 very similar.

But the outer court—the court of the Gentiles (Herod’s temple) will not be measured (ie the Gentiles will persecute the church—will trample on her v. 2--but God will protect the heart of the church, which will be protected from the coming wrath).

The outer courts will be trampled for 42 months (3-1/2 years). There will be a limited period of judgment (as described in the rest of Revelation) but the Church will be protected from that judgment and will not be destroyed.

42 months = 1260 days = time, times and half a time

1. The period the church will be persecuted Rev 11:2

2. The period during which the two witnesses testify Rev 11:3

3. The period over which the Woman is nourished in the wilderness Rev 12:6,14

4. The period of the Beast’s authority Rev 13:5

5. The period the little horn persecutes the saints Daniel 7:25

6. The period of the abomination of desolation by Antiochus Ephiphanes Dan 12:11 (1290 days for some reason)

11:3-6 The two witnesses. These represent the Christian witness which will still shine during the time of great trial. (“The witnesses represent the militant spirit of true Christians and their testimony” Summers) Two Olive trees = the priestly and the kingly power (Zech 4:12-14 These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth ie Zerubbabel (civil, royal) and Joshua (priestly) Two lampstands = Church. By the power of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:4-6), disciples—priests of the living God—will testify about God in troubled times.

Why two witnesses? To represent their power.

v. 5-6 And they (we!) are powerful!! Fire from mouth, shut up heavens, water to blood.

11:7-12 The Roman persecutor (the beast… the first of the seven mystical creatures) will attack the witnesses—the Church.

Some will even die (their bodies will lie in the street of the Great City = Babylon = Sodom = Egypt = Rome—a city ruled by Satan Rev 13:7). The world will gloat over the persecuted church. But God will raise them up (both *temporally*, as the Church will survive the persecution and grow even more and *spiritually*, as the martyrs will be raised from the dead). The intense persecution will only last 3-1/2 DAYS (not years).

Q: Do you feel like you “torment” non-Christians some times? (11:10).

v. 11 They will come back (breath will enter them, Cross-reference Ezekiel 37. The Valley of Dry Bones.

Rev 11:15-19 The seventh trumpet. Another worship—a fourth one—breaks out in heaven. (4:8-11, 5:9-14, 7:10-17 and 11:15-18).

This is the end of Act 1 Act 2 is about to start.

**Revelation Part II Ch 12-22**

Rev 1-11 What is going on up front.

Rev 12-22 What is going on behind the scenes. The heavenly battle which underlies the outward battle.

Rev 11:19 Then God’s temple in heaven was opened. Rev 12:1 A great sign appeared in heaven.

**Revelation 12 The Woman and the Beast.**

Rev 12:1 A great and wondrous sign: The woman is Israel, who is about to give birth to a son (Jesus). This part is a flashback.

The woman in Rev 12:

She is Israel

She is the Church

She is God’s kingdom in any of its aspects.

Scene reminiscent of Genesis 3. A woman, a serpent, a man-child and the seed of the woman all in view.

12:3 Another great and wondrous sign: an enormous red dragon. Satan

7 heads (great wisdom)

10 horns (very powerful)

7 crowns (great authority (on the earth at least))

A seven-headed beast [not dragon] will, in another context (Rev 17, Rev 13), be Rome.

12:4 apocalyptic imagery. Satan tries to prevent the birth.

…or kill the baby when he is born (Herod tries to kill Jesus, but fails)

1/3 of stars cast down. Some of God’s people are taken out by Satan/Rome? (Daniel 12, for example) (maybe)

12:5 But Jesus (who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter) is born, despite his efforts. God takes him to his side where Satan cannot get him.

12:6 The imagery changes. After Jesus’ ministry the true Israel is the church, so now the woman who goes out into the desert is the church. Either way, whether Israel or the church, the true Israel is the Kingdom.

Goes out into the desert. Israel/The church is being persecuted, but protected by God for an unspecified limited time of persecution. Imagery being taken from Elijah and the 3-1/2 year drought during which he was taken care of (1 Kings 19:1-18)

Rev 12:7-12 The scene shifts to heaven. War in heaven.

Try to imagine what this “war” is like. Battle scenes: Luke 4:1-13, Matt 26:36-46.

Satan is defeated and cast down. What, exactly, does this mean? Is he now less powerful? Probably not.

Satan is a 3-time loser. He lost his battle to kill the child. He pursued the “child” to heaven and was soundly defeated. He then went after the children of the woman (the Church) and was defeated in that as well.

Implication for the church: You will undergo some vicious persecutions for a time! But the final result is assured.

Satan the deceiver (12:9) and Satan the accuser (12:10)

Which means is Satan most likely to use on you? Are you the accused or the deceived type?

How do we defeat the Dragon: his lies and accusations? 12:11

1. By the blood of Jesus

2. By our testimony (remember the two witnesses in Rev 11). Sharing our faith is essential to overcoming the lies and the accusations.

3. By our willingness to sacrifice our lives rather than do the bidding of the dragon. Can you say this to God? They “loved not their lives” What about you? Galatians 2:20

12:12 Bad news for us. Satan is ticked of and he is coming after us!

12:14-15 The woman taken care of for a time, times and half a time. (1 Kings 19:1-18 Elijah parallel)

12:15 Satan thinks he can use water to keep God’s people in his possession. He fails again, like he did with the Red Sea. Like Israel and Egypt. The earth swallow up the water and God’s people go free.

12:16-17 Satan goes after the Christians “her offspring.” Who are her offspring?
“Those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (in the face of the upcoming persecution)”

Satan is thrice defeated! This is the message of Revelation. But…. Tribulation still awaits.