

Revelation 21:1-8

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." 5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

On All Saints Sunday we celebrate with thanksgiving the lives of those that have advanced through a rite of passage to eternal glory. Revelation is the last book of Bible and makes the Bible complete from beginning to end. In the beginning the problem that God faced was that the first humans did the one thing that God told them not to do. There was only one rule that existed and they broke it. Then throughout the Bible we see repeatedly the conflict between good and evil as God works to undo the damage caused by Satan's influence on a fallen humanity. The corruption of humanity that begins in Genesis is carried throughout the Bible through conflict and a repeat cycle of transgression. Revelation is interesting, confusing, and scary, but in the end God prevails.

I think it is important to learn about the way the churches are addressed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Each church is addressed by their problems and each situation is a lesson for the contemporary church. The churches assume they are OK and think that they are on the right path only to receive the Lords criticism. John sees cosmic changes in a series of visions, records them as instructed, and sees the lamb that was slain. The lamb opens the scrolls as each seal is broken. John is allowed to see in each scroll a future disaster with Christians being martyred for their religion. Revelation is totally different from the other books of Bible but we also see a commonality where the biblical God is involved with humanity. This is a positive parallel with the other biblical books and their lessons. God is just and loving. Since God is of this nature, character, and personality, the world that God created should also be just and loving. However, an unjust world does not follow the will of God and people suffer the consequences. In the end God prevails, sets things straight, and rights the wrongs. People are encouraged to remain faithful as the Bible paints a picture of comfort for those that suffer and remain faithful until the end. Heavenly bliss comes after the suffering with no death, no sorrow, no crying, and no pain. In the end God wins and Satan loses. Good overcomes evil and the people that love and follow God live with God forever in divine favor.

In the Scripture we see the divine presence of God that is not absent from the world. The vision is of a new heaven and a new earth. This is different from most of our

expectations. This is not a rejuvenated earth with the sea missing. The holy city is the new Jerusalem – not the old, but the new – coming down out of heaven. God’s voice is heard and proclaims that all tears are wiped away with no more death, mourning, or crying. God makes all things new and we get a glorious fellowship that is reserved for the good and obedient that remain faithful to the end. Get adopted us to be children of God to dwell in communion with God having a moral and spiritual fellowship with the divine. The bad are those that contradict God and fail to be faithful to the end. They get the fiery destruction that awaits them. In our state of mortality, death is the end. With God among the faithful, death ceases to be with no blurring of morality.

When I was in seminary there was a duality of beliefs about the nature of creation. God created from nothing or God created from chaos. My position is that God created out of chaos. In Genesis 1:2 the earth was a formless void. God created earth from some sort of unorganized existence. In the biblical progression of things God takes the chaos of life and organizes it. During times of prosperity people tend to turn away from God and in their despondency they turn back to God. This dynamic is happening in our world today. In the Bible the cycle repeats over and over again throughout history, within the realm of contemporary society, and on into the future. I think it is harder to remain faithful during good times than hard times due to the spoils of surplus. The human way is selfish and destructive. God’s way is love, peace, and justice. The Advent of Jesus came at a time when the human way took precedence over God’s way. The return of Jesus will come at a time when the human way takes precedence over God’s way. I don’t think God is happy with a religion that is reformed by Jesus but failed to follow his commandments of love and unity but instead follows rules of injustice, selfish ambition, and hoards wealth while the world starves.

I know that God is happy with faithful people that tithe their talents and finances, make up a faithful church, stay together in love, and follow the teachings of Jesus when the rest of society does not. I know God is happy with people that remain faithful until the end which will come unexpectedly. No longer will there be separation between heaven and earth. The scripture paint a picture of the redeemed being taken up to heaven. But here in Revelation God is coming to dwell among us. This is like the Advent of Christ. The world did not anticipate the divine living among us when God came to live with us, among human beings as a human being. Throughout history there is great suffering due to sin and evil. Now sin and evil are completely conquered. The consequence of sin is gone with no more tears, suffering, or mourning. On All Saints Day, we honor our loved ones that have passed. Let us remember their love and devotion and honor Jesus for showing us the way.