

Revelation 11-12

First reviews of ch. 11

Two backdrop issues

What is Hebrew mythology?

What is angelology: the study of messengers

Issues raised by the exile and return

Note the Book of Ezra

Ch 11.

Two witnesses

Moses and Elijah

Joshua and Zerubbable (heir to the throne)

Peter and Paul

Their mission: brief and then they die, killed once their job is done

Based strongly on Zechariah ch. 4 (Zech is post exilic)

Olive tree: sanctity, healing, nourishment, permanence

These guys have Mosaic and Elijah levels of power (eg closing sky water to blood)

We note similar rebuilding theme in Haggai (post exilic)

Measuring rods

Followed by the Beast of the Abyss

Identification with Nero (r. 54-68)

24 elders – they are still there (note male gender)

Serve as a chorus, as in Greek drama to repeat the most important stuff

To Review

This is not prophetic (foretelling) but apocalyptic (happening now)

Central theme of Revelation: we are in the midst of a cosmic conflict which we only barely understand (ref. the Bedouin watching fighter planes)

To claim that we understand everything about salvation is a vanity

Recall the Protestant claim: the Bible makes all things clear

Vs Catholic claim: much of our faith is shrouded in mystery

Examples: the Harrowing, Purgatory, the Most Holy Trinity

Chapters 12-13: The woman, a dragon and two beasts

Up until this point we have had visions looking up, in the cosmos. Now we are going down to the earth...and its not a pretty sight – after which we will resume our observation of heavenly things

12:vv 1-6: Who is this woman?

Blessed Virgin Mary – note the origin of the stars in artistic media. She is pregnant with a son who will rule the world, and is persecuted and must flee
It is the Hebrew people of the Old Covenant: 12 stars = 12 tribes, had to march through the desert

It is the Church, persecuted by the Roman Empire. “Ecclesia” is a female noun. Like Israel, she is forced into the desert

1260 days: typical of apocalyptic – mysterious signs of number 4.3 years The more important issue is that God takes care of her.

BUT – why must this have only one meaning?

V. 14 Wings of an eagle: the swiftest of all birds, a symbol of both Rome and Zeus

Vv7-12: Who is this dragon?

A the text says it is the devil. He is called the deceiver and the accuser and is defeated

The “whole world” fell with Adam

b. Allegorically it is probably the Roman Empire: red as in the red military cloak it sweeps away a third of the stars, just as Rome bashed many cities

c. Reference to Leviathan, Behemoth

d. 7 heads and ten horns. At the very least it is pretty nasty

v. 3 “Seven heads and ten horns

Augustus (31 bce–14 ce)

Tiberius (14–37 ce)

Caligula (37–41 ce)

Claudius (41–54 ce)

Nero (54–68 ce)

Galba (68–69 ce)

Otho (January–April 69 ce)

Aulus Vitellius (July–December 69 ce)

Flavius Vespasian

Titus Flavius (destroys Temple in 70 AD)

Domitian

If we reject the 3 in the Year of Four Emperors, Titus is #7

Total: 10 horns? Client states to Rome, Governors

Rome Seven heads and diadems. Rome and its seven hills?

V7 St Michael the Archangel: insp for famous prayer of Leo XIII

Daniel 10:13 and 12:21

Only appearance of Michael in book

Note the angels tied to nations (153?)

Ref. to origin of pagan gods: fallen angels

Origin of the account of satan falling from heaven (satana: “accuser”)

A brief history of the evil one

The problem of evil: a monotheistic issue (ref. Judaism and Rabbi Kushner)

Note monolatry vs monotheism

Note role of exile and II Isaiah

Job and his sufferings: you do not get to figure it out

Why was Satan cast down? Not simple insurrection but envy

Vv 10-12 The song of the redeemed

Songs are always written for the victors (Pindar)

v. 11 "Testimony" witness, Martyr

It is the Christian who conquers by his/her own blood

Note the fury of the vanquished evil one – he is defeated but still spews out hatred: is the woman the church?

v. 18 stand by the river or "I took a stand"

1. V. 1-8 The Woman and the dragon

a. Who is the woman?

i. Mary there are many similarities

ii. Israel

iii. The Church: "ecclesia"

iv.

v. 18 stand by the river or "I took a stand"

An example of monolatry:

Psalm 82 A psalm of Asaph.

God takes a stand in the divine council,

gives judgment in the midst of the gods

2 "How long will you judge unjustly
and favor the cause of the wicked?"

3 "Defend the lowly and fatherless;

render justice to the afflicted and needy.

4 Rescue the lowly and poor;

deliver them from the hand of the wicked."²

5 "The gods neither know nor understand,

wandering about in darkness,

and all the world's foundations shake.

6. I declare: "Gods though you be,"³

offspring of the Most High all of you,

7 Yet like any mortal you shall die;

like any prince you shall fall.”

8. Arise, O God, judge the earth,*

for yours are all the nations.

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