

Date: 29.04.2020

Time: 7.30pm

Prayer Meeting taken by: Rev Gavino Fioretti

Psalm: 97:1-8 (Scottish Psalter)

Scripture: Revelation 12

Outline: The Church

a) Introduction

1. The description of the church

2. The enemy of the church

3. The lessons for the church

MORE ABOUT THE CHURCH

- **Introduction**

A new section: There are two sections in the book of Revelation. Chapters 1 to 11 are the first section. Chapter 12 marks the start of the second section. New symbols are introduced.

The right question: We can approach the book of Revelation with the wrong questions, especially asking “when”; asking “when was this, has this already taken place?” or “when will this be?”

The right question to ask is “what”; we should ask, “What does this symbol mean?” or even “Why is this symbol being used?”

The precise meaning: The focus in this section is on the church. This is not so much the visible church, such as a church denomination, but instead the spiritual church.

The church is not only referring to the New Testament church. The woman in this chapter is a picture of God’s people. Before the birth of her child refers to the people of God in the Old Testament. After the birth refers to God’s people after Jesus. The woman is a symbol of Christ’s church.

1) **The description of the church**

Beautiful: The description of the church is beautiful. Verse 1 provides us with a glorious description. The church is clothed with the sun, moon and stars. We’re provided with a picture of purity, perfection and holiness. This is the church chosen by God, redeemed by Jesus. This church is beautiful.

The description takes us back to language used in Song of Songs, with the Bridegroom (Christ) in love, seeing only the beauty of His beloved (the church).

We don't feel like beautiful Christians, but we're beautiful in the eyes of Jesus. We're beautiful and so precious in His eyes. When God says something, He declares it to be so – and so we are beautiful because He creates that beauty in us by Jesus.

Central: The church is central in God's providence and in the unfolding of God's plan in history. From the church Jesus, the Messiah would come. Because of this, the devil would and does come against the church. The gates of Hell will try to prevail against the church, but will not succeed. The devil doesn't need to do anything with the rest of the world, but uses his resources against the church. The church is central.

Delivered: God in His providence keeps His church from the attacks of the devil. He is active in protecting and delivering His church. The church is preserved, kept and watched over by God. It doesn't matter how much the devil tries to attack and overthrow the church, God will protect His church forever.

Family: The church is made up of brothers. It is a family. We're not an institute. We're not just friends, people with a shared belief or theology in common. We're a family. We're one in Christ and that makes it easier to pray for each other and to care for each other.

Sacrificial: We must be witnesses for Christ willing to give our lives for our testimony because we love Someone more than our own lives. Being a Christian involves sacrifice. You will suffer. Being a witness for Christ involves suffering and sacrifice. Where we are, we don't experience persecution like some of our brothers and sisters across the world. We might have our faith tested unto death.

Worshipper: We have a description of a worshipping church. Salvation has come because Jesus has come and the devil has been defeated. The church's response to God's salvation is with worship. We're here to respond to what God has done with worship.

Conquerors: We are given a description of a triumphant church, achieved by Jesus who has defeated the devil. Jesus' victory is ascribed to His church. We are more than conquerors through Christ. On the cross, Jesus defeated what was against Him and against us. There is not a post-church time. Other religions will pass, but not the true church of Jesus. We have the victory.

2) The enemy of the church

Satan: The enemy of the church is the devil. The dragon symbolises the devil in this chapter. It is a fearful, dangerous and powerful enemy.

Satan's army: The devil is not alone. He is not all powerful or omnipresent. There are other fallen angels with him. He has an army working with him trying to achieve his purpose.

Satan's objective: The devil's aim is to destroy Christ and His church. He tries to destroy God's people as the One who would defeat him would come from the church. The devil failed to destroy the Messiah and so he fights against God's people, the church. The devil fights against us.

Satan's condition: The devil's power is limited. His attacks are intense and there will be suffering. But with the death and resurrection of Jesus, the devil is bound and limited. He is not able to do all that he wants to do. He knows that the time will come when Jesus will return and Jesus' victory will be full. Death, sin and the devil are awful enemies, but they have been defeated by Christ. The one who would constantly accuse us before God isn't allowed in the presence of God anymore. He is imprisoned by God's power.

Remember to have a biblical balance. Don't attribute everything to the devil. Neither attribute nothing to the devil. He is a fearful enemy, but do not despair as he is a defeated enemy. We have the victory in Christ.

3) The lessons for the church

Spiritual trials: We're involved in spiritual warfare, not a physical one. We need to use spiritual weapons, not physical ones. Our weapons won't work. We need spiritual weapons. The preaching of the Word is vital. Committees, presbyteries, finances are not what a church needs to stand against the devil's attacks. We need God's Word. We need prayer. We must start fighting with spiritual weapons in this spiritual war or we'll never win.

Expected trials: We don't like suffering, but we shouldn't be surprised when the church is persecuted. This doesn't mean that we rejoice in these trials, but we aren't surprised by them. The devil hates Christians because we are the bride of Christ. Suffering is part of being a Christian.

Limited trials: The time of suffering is limited. It's a brief time that won't go on forever. In a sense, the battle's already been won – the enemy is defeated. Jesus has won. Our suffering is for a time.

This gives us a healthy reminder. We give too much time and too much of ourselves to what we experience in this life. We're too pessimistic because we forget to lift our eyes to Jesus. Remember, we are more than conquerors because of Him.