

## *Homily for November 29<sup>th</sup> 2018*

Today's readings present to us two catastrophes of judgment and one celebration beyond any human experience.

Using what is called apocalyptic language – the language of exaggeration, St. John in Revelation and Jesus in the Gospel describe cataclysmic, earth shattering events. In Revelation 18 we have represented the Fall of Babylon, which was St. John's way of depicting the ultimate judgment on Rome and by extension any earthly empire that sets itself up in opposition to God and his reign. The extensive, definitive and final judgment are expressed with poetic power:

***Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!  
It has become a dwelling place of demons,  
a haunt of every foul spirit,  
a haunt of every foul bird,  
a haunt of every foul and hateful beast.<sup>1</sup>***

Fallen, haunt, foul are the words that govern the movement of the poem. This is a representation of the soul of the City which is then paired with the outward activity carried out daily.

<sup>22</sup> ***and the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters  
will be heard in you no more;  
and an artisan of any trade  
will be found in you no more;  
and the sound of the millstone  
will be heard in you no more;  
<sup>23</sup> and the light of a lamp  
will shine in you no more;  
and the voice of bridegroom and bride  
will be heard in you no more***

This passage, which represents the judgement and destruction of every godless empire is coupled with Jesus' teaching in Luke of another prediction of Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD. We know this is what Jesus is referring to when he says:

*“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near...  
and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

Jesus describes the atrocities ahead for Jerusalem, indicating that Rome will play a strategic role in administering God's punishment. Jesus draws from several OT passages that describe Jerusalem's destruction in the past and reapplies them to its devastation in the near future (A.D. 70). Casualties falling by the sword recall Jeremiah and Ezekiel; the city trodden down evokes Isaiah, Daniel and 1 Maccabees; and the times of the Gentiles refer to God's use of foreign

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Re 18:2). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

armies to chastise Israel, as in Deut 28:49: “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you do not understand”.<sup>2</sup>

In this world there are manifestations of evil that infect civic societies, like Rome, and religious societies, like Israel that do face the judgment of God. In the Providence of God, Rome is used to judge Israel and John, within a decade of Jerusalem’s destruction, is given a vision of Rome’s destruction, which would not ultimately happen until the early 5<sup>th</sup> century.

The present world is one where the outward activities unfold much as they did in Rome and Jerusalem. God is always examining the heart and wants us to be aware of how corruption can so easily affect societies of country and Church.

So how do we take heed to the warnings of Revelation and Luke? By keeping before us the one celebration beyond any human experience described in Revelation 19:

***Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”***<sup>3</sup>

The experience described after the Tribulation of Judgment is one of invitation. Jesus in the Gospel speaks about this wedding banquet in terms of our redemption drawing near. This is a theme of celebration, because our relationship with the Lord will no longer be impeded by the corruption of fallen societies. No, we will enter into that society where the governing word is “Hallelujah”. “Praise the Lord” Four times in Revelation 19 Hallelujah is used, the only place in the New Testament. The praise of the wedding banquet is to inspire us who are still in the world to take to heart our Collect Prayer:

***Stir up the wills of your faithful, we pray, O Lord, that, striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion, they may receive in greater measure the healing remedies your kindness bestows.***

This vivid and unusual language called apocalyptic is intended to stir us up so that in a world where all hell breaks loose, we may keep before us the wedding invitation that is ours, not as guests of the wedding supper of the Lamb but as those who will in Heaven be Married to the King of Kings and Lord of Lord.

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<sup>2</sup> Mitch, C. (2010). [Introduction to the Gospels](#). In *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The New Testament* (p. 147). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Re 19:9). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.