Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 667: 11/01/2026



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week we take a fairly detailed look at the mysterious Book of Revelation, which is hard to cover briefly.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Book of Revelation. The reading is set in a "parenthesis," or pause, in John's account of the seven seal judgments Jesus unveils. We cannot overstate the importance of understanding a reading's context, especially when it comes to the end-time events portrayed in the Book of Revelation. When reading Revelation, remember that the story moves between visions of events on earth and things happening in heaven. Along the way, the action frequently pauses, or "parenthesis," as the vision shifts from earth to heaven or vice versa.

Looking back on today's reading beginning in chapter 6, Jesus pours out a series of judgments on the earth (Revelation 6:1-17). When the sixth seal opens, great signs appear in the sky (Revelation

6:12). This aligns with what Jesus said in Matthew 24:29-30. John said, "I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood" (Revelation 6:12). Jesus said about this in Matthew, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matthew 24:29). The next verse in this section of Mathew provides is with strong clue as to the overall context of the signs as it relates to Jesus' promised return (Acts 1:11). Jesus said, "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory" (Matthew 29:30, emphasis added). Jesus said He would return after displaying the signs in the sky, just before the seventh-seal judgment is poured out on the earth. This brings us to the parenthesis in the text from which we take today's reading: after the revelation of the sixth seal, but before the return of the Lord Jesus and the unveiling of the seventh seal.

Today's reading is another tangential pause in which John records the gathering of 12 groups of elect saints (believers) from within Israel. We have included the skipped verses to provide full context.

First Reading:

> *Revelation 7:2-4 NAS95 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:*
> *Skipped Verses:*
> *Revelation 7:5-8 NAS95 5 From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, 6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, 7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.*
> *Reading, Continued:*

> *Revelation 7:9-14 NAS95 9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; 10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." 13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

The angels divinely mark 12 "tribes" of Israelites, 12,000 from each group. The number 12,000 may not be literal (or it may be), but it indicates the task's fullness or completion. Regardless, this marking sets these people apart to receive God's divine protection during the balance of the tribulation period, about three and a half years. John makes this clear later in Chapter 12. "But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent" (Revelation 12:14). This "sealing of the bondservants of our God" is also indicated in the parallel passage in Matthew. Jesus says in that Gospel about this event, "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET, and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:31). This divine sealing, marking, or protecting occurs just before Jesus' return and the unleashing of the final judgments upon the earth, including the seventh seal, seven trumpet judgments, and seven bowl judgments. The bowl judgments conclude the wrath God has stored up to pour upon the unbelieving world at the end of the age. "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished" (Revelation 15:1).

In the reading, John said, "After these things," meaning after the sealing of the "144,000" (Revelation 7:4) and the outpouring of the first six seal judgments upon the earth. The scene now shifts back from events on earth to events in heaven. We must interpret the events in heaven cautiously because they occur outside the space/time domain we are bound to on earth. However, John's placement of this parenthesis here in Revelation is significant because it identifies the source of the great cloud of believers John describes. Verse 14 reveals that the "great multitude" (v. 9a) comes from "the ones who come out of the great tribulation." These "tribulation saints" are the

believers who are killed for their faith as the end of the age grinds to a halt during the reign of the Antichrist on earth. Later, John says about this wicked person, "It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him" (Revelation 13:7, emphasis added). During this terrible time, the reign of the Antichrist will be so strong as to almost fatalistically determine the outcome of each person alive on earth at the time. "If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints" (Revelation 13:10). The saints that are killed during this time will be divinely protected in heaven forever; in contrast to the "144,000," we saw who is divinely protected on earth during the tribulation period. This group in heaven will no longer hunger or thirst, or be too hot or too cold" (v. 16); "for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd" (v. 17a). Many of the Christian saints on earth during this time will be martyred for their faith, while the "144,000" will enter the Millennial Kingdom alive to repopulate the earth. When Jesus returns, He will gather the saints (believers) who have survived up to that point and those who died in the Lord. Saint Paul said about this, "*Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This is the return of the Lord promised in Acts 1:11 and the rapture (or catching up) of all believers, both alive and dead, as stated in this verse from 1 Thessalonians.

The big idea is that even though this world does not recognize or treat God's people (saints) well, these verses reassure us that God will bring justice and provision in life to come, with eternal comfort. We see how Jesus acted as the divine Shepherd of His sheep in heaven.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from First John, where believers are called the Children of God.

Second Reading:

> *1 John 3:1-3 NAS95 1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has*

> *not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

In the reading, God affirms that, as believers, we are "children of God" (v. 1b). This contrasts with those whom Saint John called "children of your father the devil" (John 8:44), the default category for everyone who is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Children of God, we will become like God when we receive our eternal bodies at the Lord's return (Acts 1: 11), either at our death or during the rapture of the church, as described above (1 Thessalonians 4:17). In the end, we will join into the great cloud of witnesses before the throne of God.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The reading from Saint Matthew is from the section known as the Sermon on the Mount. Here we see Jesus as the Shepherd of His Sheep and teaching the ethics of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Gospel Reading:

> *Matthew 5:1-12 NAS95 1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

In this reading, Jesus announced nine blessings, each opening with "Blessed are." Jesus fulfills the role of Prophet by offering a series of blessings, a word that means "happy." This contrasts with the usual words of the Old Testament prophets, who announced a series of curses and woes against those who refused to follow God. Jesus came to announce that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and this is what the kingdom looks like. Therefore, recognize that the Sermon on the Mount is not a list of new things people must do to be right with God, but a list of the defining qualities of people transformed by God.

Jesus is redefining the blessed life. Think about how these traits contrast with the world's definition of blessing.

Someone living the blessed life:

1. Is poor in spirit, meaning humble, which leads a person to recognize their spiritual need for God.

2. Mourns, meaning they recognize that this world is not their home and look to God for comfort.

3. Exhibits gentleness, meaning they don't have to be aggressive to get things done because their heart is established in Christ's power.

4. Hungers and thirsts for righteousness, meaning they prioritize eternal things over finite satisfaction in the world.

5. Shows mercy because they were offered mercy themselves through God's forgiveness and can extend it to others.

6. Is pure in heart, meaning they are not entangled in the world's evil ways, including lying, deceiving, and manipulating people to get their own way.

7. Is a peacemaker, not just someone who tries to keep the peace at all costs. They actively seek peaceful solutions even in difficult situations, which forces them to rely more deeply on God.

8. Endures persecution with a vision toward eternity, knowing that it is better to suffer than to succumb to temptation to compromise.

9. Endures insult for proclaiming the truth (the Word of God), just as the prophets did.

In summary, Jesus raised the bar of understanding to show people that righteousness wasn't a bunch of behaviors you could earn by trying harder, but qualities of the heart made possible only through God's transforming power. These nine traits result from being born from above (John 3:3). Instead of leaving us depressed because we can never be this good, Jesus delivered this sermon to invite us into a new way of life. This new way of life recognizes that our self-righteousness is as filthy rags before the LORD (Isaiah 64:6). We must come to the place where we receive Christ's righteousness into our hearts as a substitute for our former way of life (Romans 3:21-22). Jesus went before us as the extreme example of divine forgiveness. Jesus not only forgave those who sinned against Him but also bore the penalty for their sins. Through His example, we can persevere in forgiving those who sin against us.

Reflection Questions

1. How do you respond internally when you read the Sermon on the Mount? Does it feel like another list of impossible feats you must accomplish to win God's favor? Or have you responded to Jesus' invitation to live in the kingdom (where He is the King of your heart), and the Sermon on the Mount reflects the work He is doing in your life

2. If you do feel that Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is a list of impossible feats you need to accomplish, pray and journal this week about ways in which you can change your understanding of God's love for you as a believer in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.