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 45: 04-27-2025



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John is the last of the apostles who had traveled with Jesus, witnessed His crucifixion, and fellowshipped with Him after His resurrection. In exile, John received a vision of the Lord Himself. What he writes is so important that Jesus told him, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it." That in itself is enough reason to study this Book, for it reveals the concluding events in God's ultimate plan of redemption. The details of John's vision are complex and confusing, and a thorough knowledge of the rest of God's revelation (the Bible) is helpful in understanding the unfolding of the plan. John addresses his writing to "the seven churches that are in Asia." Those geographical sites in Asia Minor were in what is now Turkey, real places in real-time.

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Note: Verses 15 – 16, omitted from the reading, are included below.

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John is in exile "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (verse 1). The other apostles have all been killed, but John remains to hear this final revelation of Jesus. He hears a voice instructing him to write what he is about to see and hear in a book and send it all to seven existing churches where the Gospel has been preached and received. What he sees in his vision is overwhelming. First, he sees someone "like a son of man" in the middle of seven lampstands. The description of the man clearly pictures the Lord Jesus, perhaps in a glorified, majestic state. "Son of man" is the title Jesus most often refers to himself. Each of the descriptions of this man is of interest and undoubtedly reflects something of His divine nature and activity. Of special interest is the reference to "a sharp two-edged sword" out of His mouth. It reminds us of the statement in Hebrews 4:12, "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword . . . discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The reference is not just to the written Word of God, the Bible, but any word from God.

John's reaction was similar to Isaiah's in Isaiah 6 when he saw the Lord "high and lifted up" and Job when he finally encountered God in person (chapters 40 & 41). God's presence causes one to fall upon his face in an abject sense of his unworthiness and recognition of the worthiness of God.

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Chapter 20 of John's Gospel is a highlight. It begins with discovering the empty tomb, confirming the miraculous resurrection of the Lord Jesus! It includes several appearances of Jesus to His disciples and some significant statements to be considered. John concludes the chapter by telling us that Jesus performed many other signs. He has chosen only certain ones to bring his readers to faith in Him.

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The first event in today's reading must have been a shock to the disciples who were meeting privately, probably in secret, in a closed room. It was the same day of the resurrection, and Peter and John had already observed the empty tomb. Mary had had a personal encounter with the risen Jesus, initially thinking he was the gardener. Apparently, the disciples were confused, not understanding Jesus' earlier teachings about these events. All of a sudden, Jesus appears in their midst. He acknowledges their fear and encourages them, saying, "Peace be with you." The following words in this first of several significant statements in this encounter are surprising: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." They will likely not fully understand this instruction until they have further teaching before His return to heaven and the events of the Day of Pentecost. Then, they disperse over the world to preach the Gospel.

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We're all familiar with the doubts expressed by the disciple Thomas. Like many of us, "seeing is believing" to Thomas. He was absent on this occasion, and when others told him about what had happened, he simply could not believe it. A week later, Thomas is given the opportunity he thought he needed to believe; the proof stands before him. Immediately, he recognizes the truth; his doubts depart, and he worships, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus then offers another critical statement: "Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." How blessed we are today to know of the work of Jesus to be our sacrifice for sin and give us the faith to believe when we have not seen with our eyes, but realizing instead that "believing is seeing."

Finally, John says that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples that John does not write about. He chose only seven great signs that prove Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, and he recorded them "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

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John's reaction was similar to Isaiah's in Isaiah 6 when he saw the Lord "high and lifted up" and Job when he finally encountered God in person (chapters 40 & 41). God's presence causes one to fall upon his face in an abject sense of his own unworthiness and in recognition of the worthiness of God.

The response of the "Man" to John in verse 19 is insightful. It likely provides a key to the

understanding of the relation he is about to record. He is to write about three topics: 1) what he "has seen," no doubt the revelation of the Son of God; 2) "the things which are," referring to the character and action of the seven churches to which he is to send the letters (chapters 2 & 3), and 3) "the things which will take place after these things." Chapter 4 begins, then, the revelation of what is yet to come in God's completed plan.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

Chapter 20 of John's Gospel is a highlight. It begins with the discovery of the empty tomb, confirming the miraculous resurrection of the Lord Jesus! It includes several appearances of Jesus to His disciples and some significant statements to be considered. And John concludes the chapter, telling us that there were many other signs that Jesus performed. He has chosen only certain ones to relate that are given to bring his readers to faith.

Gospel Reading:

> *John 20:19-31 NAS95 19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." 24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." 30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

The first event in today's reading must have been a shock to the disciples who were meeting privately, probably in secret, in a closed room. It's the same day of the resurrection, and Peter and

John had already observed the empty tomb. Mary had actually had a personal encounter with the risen Jesus, at first thinking he was the gardener. Apparently, the disciples were confused, not having understood Jesus' teaching them in advance about these events. All of the sudden, Jesus appears in their midst. He knows of their fear and encourages them with "Peace be with you." The next words in this first of several significant statements in this encounter are surprising: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." They will likely not fully understand this instruction until they have further teaching before His return to heaven and the events of the Day of Pentecost. Then they disperse over the world to preach the gospel.

Another noteworthy word from Jesus bestowed the promised Holy Spirit on them. From this point on, they would carry the message of the Gospel with the clear offer of the forgiveness of sins to all who will hear them and respond to the truth in faith, acknowledging Jesus as Lord.

We're all familiar with the doubts expressed by the disciple Thomas. Like many of us "seeing is believing" to Thomas. He was not present on this occasion and when the others tell him about what happened, he simply cannot believe it. A week later, Thomas is given just the opportunity he thought he needed to believe; the proof stands before him. Immediately, he recognizes the truth; his doubts depart, and he worships, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus then offers another important statement: "Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." How blessed we are today to know of the work of Jesus to be our sacrifice for sin and give us the faith to believe when we have not seen with our eyes, but realizing instead that "believing is seeing."

Finally, note that John says that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples that John does not write about. He chose only seven great signs which prove Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, and he recorded them "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways does John's message in Revelation resonate with you during your own trials and tribulations (revelation 1:9)? How does reading his revelation of the Lord help you through these things?

Challenge: Have you read the Book of Revelation? This Book promises a blessing to those who read it (Revelation 1:3). We urge you to read through this important Scripture, taking into account the Old Testament references that are noted in your Bible.

2. In what ways does Thomas' experience give you hope as one who may have never seen the Lord Jesus? (We qualify this because of some of the events we have heard about in Islamic regions where the Lord has appeared in dreams and visions).

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