

The Solemnity of Christ the King Year "B"
November 22, 2015/ The Cathedral of Saint Paul
Readings: Daniel 7: 13-14; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18: 33-37

"I am the alpha and the omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty." With these powerful words, the Lord God speaks of his tremendous majesty. This is only one of two passages in the entire book of Revelation in which God himself is the speaker.

The Book of Revelation takes its cue from the Old Testament Book of Daniel, from which we also heard this morning. Daniel wrote to strengthen people's resolve against persecution from a foreign ruler intent on abolishing their Jewish customs. Thus, when the Christians were fiercely persecuted in the reign of Domitian towards the end of the first century, the danger of apostasy was great. The Seer urges the people to remain true to their faith and to bear their troubles with fortitude. He assures them that Christ's triumphant coming is at hand. But "when" would Christ return?

Without question, the Book of Revelation is one of the most hotly contested books in the Bible, at least in part because it contains the one and only description of a thousand year reign in the New Testament. Is this a literal reference to a future earthly reign of Christ on earth for 1000 years? Or is it metaphorical language? Debate over the matter existed even in the earliest days of the Church.

Thankfully, great theologians such as Saint Augustine rejected a literalist reading of Revelation and offered a view of history largely free of speculation regarding the end-times. Throughout history, the *City of God* and the city of Satan were constantly at war with one another, hearkening back to the tension between Cain and Abel as a prime example. At the end of time, at the Last Judgment, the citizens of these two cities will finally be separated—the sheep from the goats (cf. Matt. 25:32-46), but God remains supreme and active in the world.

Augustine saw God orchestrating time and history like an “unchanging conductor...ordering all events according to His providence, until the beauty of the completed course of time....like the great melody of some ineffable composer.”¹ And herein lies a lesson for us today.

Yes, we will need to pass through a final trial, and yes this will unveil religious deception, the supreme example of which is the Antichrist, described in the Catechism as “a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of His messiah come in the flesh.”² Today, when we see the news of terrorist attacks, not a few people begin to ask- “What is the future- what is happening to the world?”

Today’s great feast reminds us that the Kingdom will be fulfilled by God’s victory over evil. Our Catholic faith teaches: “The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by an historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by **God's victory** over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven.”³ We are powerless to bring about the victory ourselves- it has already been accomplished through Christ.

On this Feast of Christ the King, at the very end of the Church’s liturgical year let us not fall prey to those who presume to predict the times and places. We must live each day, cooperating with God’s grace, bringing about His Kingdom by means of our love, our striving for peace, our pursuing justice.

Above all, let us remain serene in the knowledge that Jesus Christ has already won the ultimate victory; by his death on the Cross, he as made possible eternal life. God’s grace enables us to give powerful witness that love is stronger than hatred, the good will always triumph in the end over evil. May we never, ever doubt this reality.

¹ Augustine, Epistle 138, i, 5

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph # 675

³ cf. Rev 13:8; 20:7-10; 21:2-4 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph # 677