**How Has Revelation Influenced You?**

PBS television aired a special program on the influence of the book of Revelation by St. John the Evangelist on Western Christianity. The first scenes of the program showed the Island of Patmos, the monastery of St. John and Orthodox priests in flowing robes chanting hymns in Greek. So controversial was the book of Revelations that the Orthodox Bible does not include it, the program said.

As I raised my voice in protest, "No, the book of Revelation is part of the Orthodox cannon of scripture!", the program turned toward Western Christianity, the Roman Church, indulgences and the Reformation's interpretation of the Papacy as the anti-Christ.

Like a ship sailing away from a calm harbor into an open sea where a storm was awaiting them, the Western Church ventured away from Patmos, away from the Church of St. John the evangelist and away from Orthodoxy.

I would like to place the question to us Orthodox, what has been the influence of the book of Revelation on Eastern Christianity and more specifically, how has it influenced us personally?

In case you have never read the book of Revelation, I will relate a few elements to arouse your interest in the hope that you will.

The first time I read the book of Revelation was when I went to Seminary. One night I decided to open its pages and begin. As I began reading, I couldn't stop. The words and prophecies created in me an immediate urgency to continue. "...blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near." (Rev. 1:3)

St. John began to give specific messages to seven Churches that were warnings about abandoning their first love for Christ and the need to repent or their light would be taken away. After giving warnings to the seven churches, John is brought up and shown what would take place next.

St. John is taken to a throne in heaven where Christ was surrounded by twenty four other thrones. There, John listened to the many eyed Cherubim's hymning God, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev. 4:8) As the angels sang, the twenty-four presbyters would fall on their faces in worship of the one seated on the throne.

By the twentieth chapter, St. John has a vision of the "book of life" by which the dead were being judged by what they had done. Names not found in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:12).

The last vision of St. John was of the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven prepared as a Bride for her husband - the Kingdom of God! (Rev. 21:2)

The first influence the book of Revelation is meant to have is the instilling of a realization that our future judgment before the throne of Christ begins today. We are inspired by the revelations to live as if these are the end times. The purpose of life is to prepare for God's Kingdom which has come, is present and shall come.

In truth, the day we die is our Day of Judgment, this is why we should live daily in a state of readiness. Whether or not we remain faithful in the face of temptation shall be our test. To not be taken in by the commercialism of the "Holiday Season"which is only a small refection of how the world takes the earth is man's final destination. Having an understanding of secularism as putting off, being ready, and behaving as if tomorrow will never come is crucial in our walking continuously in Christ.

Christians are like soldiers who arm themselves with the proper weapons. The Bible is the most neglected, unread book yet, it's the most important. Reading the lives of the saints gives us tangible witnesses that can be imitated and can be an endless source of strength in facing life's trials. Not only that, but we realize that the saints had a great awareness of their sins which was their source of healing. By praying daily we can be filled with God's grace to fulfill His holy will in our lives. The approaching of the holy chalice with a repentant heart joins us to Christ and one another thereby forgiving our sins and granting us a taste of His everlasting Kingdom. These are the armaments that ready us for the time of judgment.

Let us not forget that every time the Church assembles Christ does come. In our worship the second coming is actualized as we gather before His judgment seat, the altar His throne. Before we open our mouths to be filled with His body and blood, may we be found on that altar as having been offered to Him in love and service. The book of Revelation reminds us that worship is always a real encounter with the living Lord.

The Book of Revelation is perhaps the best description in human words of what God's Kingdom will be like. In the entry of the Theotokos into the temple, she becomes the Temple of Christ. As with every birth, love has created life and joy dawns in the hearts of all. In God's Kingdom, Christ becomes the Temple and the Sun, for the glory of the Lord is its light! (Rev. 21:22-23) He will illumine all and fill all with His love and grace. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4) Sound familiar, its from the funeral and memorial services of the Orthodox Church.

As Christ is born, let us cry out - "Glorify Him!" The only way Christ is glorified according to the book of Revelation is that we may be found as having the glory of God as our own radiance. (Rev. 21:11) His glory fills us when we have washed our robes (Rev. 22:14), our souls with the baptismal grace of tears of repentance. This is what will grant us the right to the tree of life.

May we forever embrace the Nativity of Christ by coming to His holy Temple and worshipping Him with the Cherubim, crying, "Holy, holy, holy are You O Lord, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna glory to God in the highest!"

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

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