Revelation 13-16 There may be trouble ahead Fintry, 23/5/2010, am

- Read: Revelation 13:1b-10, 16:1-7, 16-21
- How do we deal with this middle section of Revelation? There is opposition (13), there is wrath (16), there is trouble and conflict. To whom was this written, and with what purpose?

Chat with the Children

- How many different conflicts or divisions can we come up with:
 - football Inter Milan & Bayern Munich
 - team sport generally... football world cup
 - school houses Airlie, etc, Law/Moore/Bannerman/Clyde
 - warring countries North and South Korea...
 - opposing sides in conflict: Taliban and Western powers; Sudanese Government and opposition groups...
 - political parties: Labour and Conservatives, Lib Dems, whatever!
- Conflict at the heart of the universe as we experience it:
 - God and those who oppose him...

Introduction

- When you think about the world, how do you assess it?
 - in a good state?
 - the way it should be?
- Sure, there are some things that are good:
 - wonder of nature
 - joy of relationships, family and friendships when they are going well
 - thrill of new life, a baby born...
 - or the satisfaction of a job well done, a picture painted or taken, a room decorated, a garden gardened....

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- We all know the world isn't all sweetness and light!!
 - it may be the atrocities of genocide, the hate fuelled killing and torture of a Nazi Germany or a Rwanda or a DR Congo...
 - the suicide bombs of Iraq or Afghanistan... or London or New York...
 - the horror of child molestation...
 - and of a mother apparently brought so low that she would contemplate killing her own children
 - the insidious creep of cancer on the human body, or the devastation of dementia on the mind of someone we love...
 - the powerlessness of the human individual in the face of corporations and companies, governments and recessions, banks and institutions...
 - all the way to the barbed words and hurtful comments of classmates, work colleagues, or even more devastatingly, "friends"
 - the dreadful damage to self-esteem that hurtful words can do to us
 - the torment, confusion, pain and isolation that often flows from mental health struggles
 - the pressures of work, or the frustration of the dole
- When the world can be so great, how come its so often so awful?
- Scripture peels back the surface veneer of the world for us, revealing how things truly are:
 - (image: good/evil)
 - revealing the great divide, between God who made all things good
 - and all that stands in rebellion against him, all evil, all that is tainted and going bad

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The Beast out of the Sea (chp.13)

- Picture of all that opposes God:
 - whether Satan himself I think the dragon (v.2,4) is most closely identified with Satan
 - or any kind of way of living, dominion in life, that is opposed to God a political regime that opposes God's ways, or individual lives in the thrall of sin...
- Picture says to us: this is what evil is really like!
 - it is foul, corrupt, horrible, offensive, dreadful, stomach-churning...
- and we are caught up in it, we are sinners...
- That lie, that remark that puts someone down, that envious glance, that greedy, self-indulgent extra snack or drink, that lustful look, however minor it may seem, is part of the on-going conflict between God and all that has rebelled against him
 - it is a blasphemy, a standing against God and his goodness, a denial that he is Lord, a slight on his goodness...
 - an offering of allegiance to the beast...

The Bowls of God's Wrath (chp.16)

- Picture of the seriousness of God's response to sin, to the opposition of the beast and the dragon
 - sin matters...
 - plague kills: history programme about "plague" outbreak in Glasgow in 1920, not long after Influenza epidemic... bricked up a street!! The contagion of plague was present and the response of the authorities was to pronounce judgement on the street where the outbreak was focused, brick it up, and leave it to the consequences of disease
 - sin is even more serious than plague... and without a better treatment, the consequence for us sinners is to be bricked up and left with the consequences of our choices, to face the pouring out of God's wrath...

Conclusion

- There is more to this story!
 - but like a movie with various scenes, these are the scenes before us today...
 - sin is horrible, rebellion against God is foul
 - and without remedy we face his wrath, God allowing us to face the full consequences of rebelling against him, and against the very fabric of the universe he created, moral and spiritual as well as physical
 - and I am a sinner, you are a sinner, we are all of us on the wrong side in this dreadful conflict...
 - unless we place our trust in Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain, and are made by God saints, holy ones, rescued ones, redeemed ones...
 - then we change sides...
 - still in the conflict, needing to bear patiently the trials and tribulations of being the battle zone
 - and the direct attacks of our Satanic foe...