

## The Book of Revelation Study Notes: 2

### Revelation 1:1-3

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, <sup>2</sup> who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. <sup>3</sup> Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

### Revelation 1:1-3: The Prologue

- V.1, Reveals the method and transmission of the revelation.
- Not direct, but mediated through divine, angelic and human agency.
- Five-fold transmission: From God, to Jesus Christ, through an angel, to John, ultimately to all who read, hear.
- V.2, concerns *the testimony of Jesus Christ*. Two Options:
  - Can refer to John's testimony concerning Christ, see v. 9.
  - Can refer to the message, Christ himself gives to John.
  - Both options are theologically sound and good.
- V.3a, offers a blessing for *those who read, hear, and heed this prophecy*
  - The first of seven blessings (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14)
  - Blessing promised to those who "read", "Hear" and "heed"
  - Revelation described as a "prophecy," see Rev 22:7, 10, 18-19.
- V3b, *For the time is near, but, how should "near" be interpreted?*
  - If taken literally, and it refers to things which must shortly take place (v. 19), then a Preterist reading fits best, ca., 67-70 A.D.
  - Idealists argue the time is always "near" because the visions are not time specific, but timeless.
  - Futurists see "near" as "soon", by divine standards (2 Pet 3:8), or "suddenly" when he does come, or "certainly" in assurance.

### Revelation 1:4-6

*John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, <sup>6</sup> and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

### Revelation 1:4-6: A Letter from the Triune God

- Recipients:** to seven churches of Asia (v. 11), thus a circular letter.
- Salutation:** *Grace*, means of, *peace*, result of salvation (Eph 2:8; Rom 5:1).
- Sender:** from the Triune God:
  - God the Father, the One who is, who was and who is to come (Exod 3:14)

- God the Holy Spirit, the Seven Spirits (See Isa 11:2)
- God the Son, Jesus Christ, underscoring his completed mission:
  - *the faithful witness*, encouraging faithfulness in tribulation.
  - *the firstborn from the dead*, guaranteeing the sure resurrection.
  - *ruler of the kings of the earth*, exercising absolute authority.
- **Doxology:** John praises Christ,...
- *Who released us from our sins*, thus implying a 2<sup>nd</sup> Exodus (1 Cor 5:7)
- *Who has made us priests to His God*, thus the church assuming Israel's titles (Exod. 20:6; cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9)
- Both Father, Son, worthy of eternal dominion and glory.

### Revelation 1:7-8

*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. <sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

### Revelation 1:7-8: The Promise of Christ's Return

- John announces the sure coming of Christ, but how so?
- **Futurists, historicist**, take this prediction literally, at the end of the age.
- **Idealist** see this as a continual "coming" in judgment through history.
- **Preterist**, see Christ coming historically in judgment to destroy Jerusalem through the agency of the Roman Empire (67-70 A.D.).
- A Three-fold Dimension of Christ's Ominous Coming
  - *Coming with the clouds*, used in OT of historic acts of judgment (Isa. 19:1; Ps. 104:3)
  - *And every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him*; possibly referring to Christ's immediate tormentors, or, spiritually, to all unrepentant sinners.
  - *And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him*, can mean literally all the gentile nations, or specifically, the tribes of Israel (see Zech. 12:10).
- This prophecy anticipates the fulfillment of Revelation 19.
- V.8, A four-fold Self-Description, but of Whom?
  - *I am the Alpha, Omega, the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*
  - While the titles describe God, they can also describe Christ (see Rev 22:12,16).
  - While the antecedent is Jesus in v.7, the title could also apply to God.
- Rev 1: 17-18 identify the speaker as Christ, *the first and the last*, using similar terminology.
- Thus, this divine title used exclusively of God in the OT could also be attributed to Jesus.

### Revelation 1:9-18: A Vision of Christ Glorified

*I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to **Ephesus** and to **Smyrna** and to **Pergamum** and to **Thyatira** and to **Sardis** and to **Philadelphia** and to **Laodicea**." <sup>12</sup> And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; <sup>13</sup> and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man,*

*clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. <sup>14</sup> And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup> and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup> And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. <sup>17</sup> And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.*

### **Revelation 1:9-11: The Setting for the Vision of Christ Glorified**

- **Where:** It happened to John on the Island of Patmos:
- An island in the Aegean ocean, where John had been banished because of his stand for Christ.
- **When:** It happened on "the Lord's Day"
- Some take this to mean, John was raptured by the Spirit to the future to behold "the Day of the Lord" the apocalyptic vision ending in Christ's second coming.
- More probably, John received the vision on Sunday, the church's day of worship.
- **To Whom:** John, the author of the Apocalypse
- Thus, in keeping with prophetic custom (Daniel 12:4)
- **What:** John directed to write and send the vision to seven churches:
- There were other churches in Asia not mentioned (e.g., Colossae, Hierapolis, Troas).
- Seven probably chosen to symbolize completeness, the whole church.

### **Revelation 1:12-16: The Vision of the Glorified Christ**

#### **Revelation 1:9-18:**

- *Jesus in the midst of His church, among seven golden lampstands; symbolic of the Menorah, the candelabra used in the priestly service in the temple, reminding us that the church gives forth the light of Christ (Phil 2:5; Eph 5:8-13)*
- *Jesus like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle,*
- *Not identical to Daniel 10:5-6, Jesus wearing priestly not military apparel*
- *Jesus, head and hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup> and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.*
- *Symbolizing his eternal nature, power, penetrating vision, irresistible judgment*
- *Jesus right hand held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.*
- *Symbolizing the authority and power of His word over the church.*
- *Reminding the church that she stands before His face continually (2 Cor 4:6)*

#### **John's Reaction & Christ's Comforting**

- *John fell at His feet as a dead man.*
- *Echoing a similar experience by Daniel (Dan 10:8-9)*

- Other prophets in the OT experience similar reactions (Ezek. 43; Dan. 10)
- However, contrast with the believer's ability to "stand" strong "in Christ"
- Jesus laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,<sup>18</sup> and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
- Laying on of hands, used to reinvigorate the prophet (Jer. 15:17)
- The glorified One, Christ, assuming divine prerogatives (first and last) and reminding John of his sacrifice and his victory at the resurrection.
- Christ holds the "keys" to death and Hades, thus custodian over who lives or dies.

### **Revelation 1:19-20**

Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.<sup>20</sup> As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

### **Revelation 1:19: A Three-fold Prophetic Development**

- Write therefore the things which you have seen,**
- Some see a reference to John writing the gospel by his name, remembering what he had beheld long ago (1 John 1:1).
- Most probably it refers to the vision of the exalted Christ right then and there.
- And the things which are,**
- Futurists see a reference of Rev 2-3, which describes the multifaceted state of the church.
- "after these things" may also refer to events during the church age.
- And the things which shall take place after these things.**
- Preterists see an immediate fulfillment, referring to things surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- Others see a longer period of time.

### **Revelation 1:20**

As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

- The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches.
- Seven in number thus typifying the whole church, throughout history.
- The seven stars represent either "guardian angels", earthly messenger, or the local pastors of the churches.
- Most probably they represent pastors, elders, bishops, since they have the responsibility to relate the letters to the congregations they serve.