"THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION AND ITS REVEALER"

REVELATION 1:1-8

1-9-2022

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GOD PREDICTS THE FUTURE -- A Preface to Revelation

The word **"eschatology"** is the theological term used to describe the Bible's prophetic doctrine about the Last Days ("*eschatos*" = last [end]; "*logos*" = word or teaching). Hence, "eschatology" is teaching about the last days of this age and about the glorious eternity to follow.

The word **"Revelation"** (1:1 - "*apokalupsis" "apo"* = away from; *"kalupsis"* = to cover, veil, or hide); Hence, the full word refers to the removal of a covering; a taking away the veil; an exposure of something that has been hidden. In Revelation God unveils His mysterious plan for the Future of mankind and planet Earth.

"The study of Bible prophecy *(particularly the book of Revelation)* is fascinating and profitable. God has seen fit to draw aside the curtain of the future and to reveal enough of His heavenly plan to inspire His children with confidence and hope. Let us approach our study with joyous expectation" -- Charles Woodbridge

A. The Importance of Studying Revelation

What is the purpose for studying prophecy?

1. To teach us what God's plans are
   A knowledge of Bible prophecy "provides the believer with an optimistic philosophy if history" (Alva McClain)

2. To inspire us about the greatness of God (Is. 46:9-11)
   (He is omniscient [He knows all] and He is sovereign [He controls all])
   The Omniscience of God has foretold His plan (Is. 14:24; 44:28-45:1, 13; 46:9-10) and the Sovereignty of God will accomplish His plan (Is. 46:10b-11)

3. To assure us of the unity and reliability of Scripture
   A vast portion of the Bible is given to predictive prophecy. It is said that 333 distinct prophecies were literally and exactly fulfilled at the first coming of Christ (the chances of this happening by accident have been computed as 1 in 87,000--plus 90 more zeros).
   For every verse speaking of Jesus' first coming in Scripture, there are eight which speak of His second coming.

4. To encourage us to be faithful to God and His Word

   God's future program is a source of:

   a. Comfort to the sorrowing Christian (I Thess. 4:13-14; John 14:1-4)

   b. Strength to the Christian enduring testing (II Cor. 4:14-18; Rom. 8)

   c. Warning to the lazy, unfaithful Christian (II Cor. 5:9, 10)

   d. Correction to the Christian who places too much value on this life (II Peter 3:10-12)

   e. Reproof to the Christian who becomes doctrinally careless (II Thess. 2:5; II Pet. 1:19)

   f. Cleansing for the Christian who keeps his eyes on Christ and His future glory (I Jn. 3:2-3)(cp. W.E. Blackstone, Jesus is Coming, p. 180)

5. To wake us up to realize the extreme urgency of the hour in which we live (Rom. 13:11-12). God's longsuffering is so that others might be saved (II Pet. 3:8-9, 15)

6. To prepare us for the most dreadful time of persecution in human history -- the 70th week of Daniel (commonly called "The Tribulation Period") (Rev. 14:12)

7. To bless us with God's revelation about the future (Rev. 1:3)

B. The Method of Studying the Book of Revelation

1. **Pray** for the **Holy Spirit** to teach you His Word (John 16:13; Rev.2:7,11,17)

2. Allow the Bible to formulate your system of beliefs (your theology), rather than forcing your pre-supposed beliefs into the Bible

3. Interpret the Revelation **literally** unless an obvious figure of speech, metaphor, symbol or analogy is being used.

   Take God's Word for what it says, rather than allegorizing the Bible and dreaming up a deeper, hidden meaning that cannot be proven by the context, grammar, or by an accurate comparison with other Scripture.

   "An important rule of interpretation is that *what is literal must explain the figurative and never should the figurative be used to explain the literal*" (J.B. Smith, A Revelation of Jesus Christ, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa, p.16)

When a figure of speech is being used, God will draw attention to it by:

...using the word ***"like"*** (Greek: homoios)
["*His feet* <u>*like*</u> *unto fine brass" -1:15]*

...using the word ***"as"*** (Greek: hos)
[*"I...heard behind me a great voice,* <u>*as*</u> *of a trumpet - 1:10]*

...using an obvious **symbol** and then ***directly*** explaining or interpreting the symbol
["*The seven stars (1:16) are seven angels" (1:20)]*
[*"The seven candlesticks (1:13) are seven churches" (1:20)]*

...using an obvious **symbol** and ***indirectly*** explaining or interpreting the symbol
[*"Time, times, and half a time" (12:14) are 1,260 days (12:6)]*

...using an obvious **symbol** and requiring the reader to carefully ***cross-reference*** the rest of Scripture for the correct interpretation.
[*"A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (12:1)* represents *the Nation of Israel* (Genesis 37:9-11)]

4. Remember that God has <u>not</u> necessarily revealed <u>all the details</u> of His plan yet (Rev. 10:4)

5. Understand the <u>unique features</u> of Bible prophecy

   a. <u>Not</u> all prophetic passages are <u>chronological</u> (cp. Rev. 11 with 12:1-5)

   b. Often there are <u>time gaps</u> in prophecy (that were not discernable to the prophet himself) (Is. 9:6-7, 61:1-2; cp. Lk. 4:18-20; Dan. 9:24-27)

   c. Often there are <u>parenthetical interjections</u> that do not necessarily follow the events that preceded these episodes in chronological order.

      Example: After the Seventh trumpet of the Day of the Lord's Judgment is sounded at the <u>*end*</u> *of the 7 year tribulation ((11:15-19), God backs up and interjects two parenthetical chapters which focus on the* <u>*mid-point*</u> *of the 7 year tribulation (12-13).*

   d. Often, future events are recorded as if they had already occurred (EX: Rev. 20:15; compare Is. 9:6, 5:13, 53:12). Why?

      1) To express the <u>certainty</u> of fulfillment (Is. 46:10)

      2) To express the <u>viewpoint</u> of the prophet who was seeing the vision of the future (EX: Rev. 20:15)

I. THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS IMPORTANT (v. 1-3)

A. Revelation is important because of its source (v. 1-2)

V. 1

"The Revelation" = lit. a revelation (no article); a revealing; an unveiling.

The word describes an opening up to sight that which was previously covered.

ILLUS: of a huge cover that is removed so that you can see the prize or gift that was underneath.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ" = the phrase could mean a revelation about Jesus Christ (objective genitive, in which Jesus would be the content of the revelation) OR a revelation from Jesus Christ (subjective genitive, in which Jesus would be the giver or the source of the revelation).

While much of the book is devoted to describing the person and works of Jesus Christ, the Revelation covers more than a treatise on the doctrine of Christ.

It covers all end-time events that Jesus hast he authority to unfold. It is an unveiling from Christ. God the Father gives Christ the revelation to show us what will take place (SEE Rev. 5:6-14 - Christ takes the book from God and opens the seals).

1. The Father planned it (v. 1)

2. The Son revealed it (v. 1)

3. An angel brought it (v. 1b)

4. John wrote it (v. 2)

5. The Spirit speaks it (Rev. 2:7 etc. - "hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches").

"Must shortly come to pass" -

"Shortly" = speedily. We get our word "terchometer" from it, which measures speed.

Greek = "the things which are necessary to happen with speed."

In other words, when the things in this book begin to occur, they will be fulfilled with speed (swiftly) (7 years) - unlike the view of many who view this book as having been fulfilled through the centuries.

When this book begins to unfold in fulfillment, the situation will be like a woman in travail ready to give birth to a child; there is no way out until it is done (cp. I Thes. 5:3). It comes suddenly and ends quickly.

V. 2

"All things that he saw" = John saw one picture (scene) after another as God unveiled the future before his eyes.

John received a panoramic view of the likes that no Hollywood motion picture could depict. We will have the privilege of seeing through the eyes of faith what he saw, as we read this book.

B. Revelation is important because of its promise (v. 3)

"Blessed" = describes one who becomes the privileged recipient of divine favor. One who is fortunate to receive showers of good things from God.

"Blessed" = this is one of seven beatitudes or promises of blessings in the book of Revelation -

1. Rev. 1:3

2. Those who belong to the Lord and therefore refuse the mark of the beast in the tribulation are called blessed. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . ." (Rev. 14:13)

3. Those in the Tribulation who remain spiritually awake and dressed are called blessed. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15).

4. Those who make it to the marriage supper are called blessed: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the lamb" (Rev. 19:9).

5. Those who are resurrected before the Millennium are called blessed. Rev. 20:6 - "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

6. The book closes in a similar way as it began: pronouncing blessing on those who obey God's Word -Rev. 22:7 - "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

7. Rev. 22:14 - "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

"He that readeth" - refers to the one (NOTE - singular) who would publically read this book before others. I will be blessed for reading and preaching the book of Revelation to you.

"They that hear" - (plural) those who listen as it is read. You will be blessed for coming faithfully to church to hear the proclamation of this book.

"Keep" = to <u>hold on to</u> what God says. To <u>preserve</u> what you hear in your heart and mind. To not be a "forgetful hearer" but one who pays <u>serious attention</u> to what he has been taught (cp. Rev. 12:17; SEE: 22:7).

The reason why the readers of this book are blessed is: "for (because) the time is at hand." I.e., the season (of the end) is near.

The angel later tells John <u>not</u> to seal up (keep hidden and closed from our view) "the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10).

No other book in the Bible promises a blessing to the reader, listeners, and doers like Revelation.
And yet many have never taken the time to read it. Many are afraid of it, and view it as totally incomprehensible.

II. THE CHRIST OF REVELATION IS IMPORTANT (v. 4-8)

v. 4

The book was addressed to seven local churches that existed in John's day. The descriptions of these seven churches will characterize the spiritual situation of churches in the last days.

"Grace" = the unmerited favor of God

"Peace" = the consoling blessings of God

Even believers need the grace and peace of God.

NOTE: Grace and peace only come from God. He is the only source of those blessings.

Grace and peace come from:

1) The Father - "Him which is, . . . was. . . and is to come" - a reference to the eternal nature of God. The one who is = YAWH (a prominent name for God from the Hebrew "to be" verb).

2) The Spirit - "The seven Spirits" - must be a reference to the Holy Spirit for the following reasons:

   --Grace and peace only come from God.

   --If the spirits represent angels, why are they distinctly separated in Rev. 3:1 (cp. 1:20 with 3:1).

   --Compare the 7 lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5 with Zech. 4:1-6); compare the seven eyes (Rev. 5:6 with Zech. 4:10).

   --The number 7 is associated with completion, fulfillment, and perfection (Examples: Gen. 2:2 - creation; Ex. 20:10 - Sabbath rest; Lev. 14:7 - sprinkling of a leper 7 times, then pronounced clean; Naaman immersed 7 times before leprosy healed - II Ki. 5:14; 7 years of tribulation) (cp. Ryrie Study Bible note on Rev. 1:4 regarding the number 7).

   ***The phrase "Seven Spirits" refers to the Holy Spirit in His fullness. The seven-fold perfection of the Spirit (cp. the Spirit's description in Is. 11:2 - "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of

wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

3) The Son (v. 5)

Verses 4-8 describe the exalted Christ.

A. His words are believable (v. 5a)

"Faithful witness" = one who gives a trustworthy testimony.

His faithfulness as a witness shows that Jesus only tells the truth and always tells the truth.

In Rev. 3:14, He is called: "the faithful and true witness" In 1:2, Jesus' testimony is one an equal level with the Word of God.

He not only tells the truth, He is the truth (Jn. 14:6). He who is called "the Word" is faithful! What He said while on earth was absolutely true. What He said from Heaven that is recorded in this book of Revelation is absolutely true.

B. His resurrection is pre-eminent (v. 5b)

"First begotten" = lit. first born. Just as the firstborn son in a Jewish home received certain rights, privileges and authority, Jesus (who is the firstborn from the dead) holds rights, privileges, and authority that no one else shares.

He who was the first one to be resurrected with an incorruptible, immortal body is the one who now has authority over the grave (SEE Rev. 1:18; Jn. 5:21-29).

C. His reign is universal (v. 5c)

"The Prince" = lit. the head or one at the top; the ruler.

Jesus is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16).

While Christ is ultimately over every king even today (He has all authority - Mt. 28:19), the reference here no doubt alludes also to His reign over those kings which will reign in the future (SEE: Rev. 17:12-14).

Jesus "calls the shots" in world affairs.

D. His sacrifice is efficacious (v. 5d-6a)

Christ's sacrifice was not a mere example. It was effective to release you from sin and its penalty.

"Love and sacrifice" always go together.

"Washed us" = loosed us; freed us; released us. Nothing can unshackle sin's grip from your life except the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nothing can release you from out of ( ) the prison of sin except the ransom He paid with His blood.

HYMN - "Nothing but the Blood."

Because of Christ's blood, we will one day reign as kings with Him (Rev. 20:4).
We right now are priests who offer up "spiritual sacrifices" to God the Father and intercede for others in prayer.

E. His glory and dominion are eternal (v. 6b)

Because of who Jesus is (God the Son) and because of what He has done (Loved us and washed us), He deserves all the glory (praise, credit, honor).

Even though we are called "kings and priests" and will yet reign with Christ, we must never forget that He made us such.

It is because of Him that we anticipate that future privilege.

We will indeed reign (Rev. 5:10; 20:6), but our oversight is ultimately under (subordinate to) His reign.

All the dominion (rulership) is His!

READ: Rev. 5:9-14.

Christ is due glory and dominion forever.

Does He get it from you now?

*Does your life magnify Him? ("...Do all to the glory of God" - I Cor. 10:31)

*Does He rule in your life? Nothing is what it should be in our lives unless He is on the throne of our lives.

F. His coming is certain (v. 7a)

"He cometh with the clouds" - not the ordinary clouds of nature that Jesus descends into, but clouds that went with Him into heaven (Acts 1:9; Dan. 7:13) and clouds which He will return with.

To a Jew, clouds are associated with God's presence (Mt. 17:9 - "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.")

EX: the pillar of cloud that led Israel (Ex. 13:21 - "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night." Ex. 16:10 - "And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.")

The time of the coming mentioned here is at the end of the Tribulation (SEE Mt. 24:29-31).

G. His presence will be unavoidable (v. 7b)

"They also which pierced Him" = Israel.

Zech. 12:10 - "And I will pout upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Israel will recognize Jesus as their Messiah. And they will weep (in sorrow and repentance) over the one whom their forefathers pierced (Jn. 19:37).

H. His name is wonderful (v. 8)

"Alpha & Omega" = first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, indicating the eternal and infinite nature of God.

Who is the Alpha & Omega? The Godhead. Specifically Jesus Christ (cp. Rev. 1:11-13).

The Lord Jesus is the beginning (Rev. 3:14; cp. Is. 41:4) and end of all things.

Jesus is the Author & Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

"The Almighty" = the omnipotent one; (the all-powerful one).
Jesus said: "All power is given unto Me. . ." (Mt. 28:19)