

The Triumph of the King—Revelation Prologue (Rev. 1:1-6)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/5/2015)

Introduction

1. The goal of the Revelation
 - a. To encourage believers throughout the last days with the message that—
 - b. God is working out his purposes even in the midst of tragedy, suffering, and satanic domination.
2. The declaration of the book—victory over the forces of evil
3. The interpretation of the book—four positions; Preterist, Historist, Futurist, and Redemptive–Historical Idealist
4. The date for the writing of the book—A.D. 90
 - a. The church of Ephesus (2:4), founded about A.D. 52, had lost its first love.
 - b. The city of Laodicea was devastated by an earthquake in A.D. 60/61.
 - c. Early Christian writers, including Irenaeus, place the book during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81–96).
 - d. Rome is identified with Babylon, something not referred to until after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
5. The nature of the Revelation—to instruct the church on its conduct in the midst of an ungodly world.
 - a. Worldliness is living in and assenting to a culture that makes sin normal and righteousness abnormal (David Wells’s definition).
 - b. Modern evangelicals tend to see and to dismiss the book as not relevant to the here and now.
 - c. Although prophecy, the message should be understood in the OT light of *forthtelling* (exhorting) and not just *foretelling*.
6. Should Revelation be interpreted literally or symbolically?
 - a. God communicated to John by His angel (1:1), the Greek verb (*semaino*), translated in the KJV “signified,” argues that the message is to be communicated by symbols.
 - b. The allusion is to Daniel 2:28, 29, and 45, both passages containing four critical elements: (1) a revelation, (2) God showed, (3) concerning what will come to pass, (4) and He “signified” it.
 - c. It is impossible to interpret literally most of what is in the visions.
 - d. There is clearly a symbolic significance in the use of numbers throughout the book.

I. The Opening

1. The Revelation —*apokalupsis*, apocalypse, a disclosure of truth previously unknown (v. 1)
 - a. Both *of* Jesus and *from* Jesus
 - b. Of things that must *soon* (or quickly) take place—because they are secured by God’s sovereign purpose
 - c. “Signified”—symbolically made known to prepare His servants for things soon [quickly] to take place
2. To John who bore witness to Christ (v. 2)

Note 1 John 1:1, 2 and observe “seen with our eyes” and “we have seen it.”

3. A beatitude for John’s audience (v. 3)
 - a. There are seven beatitudes in the Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6 22:7; 22:14) .
 - b. Focus on (1) hearing and obeying the message; (2) enduring suffering because of obedience; (3) persevering in faith and purity; and (4) being faithful even unto death.
 - c. Compare 22:10 with Dan. 12:4; unlike Daniel, John is told not to seal his prophecy because the time was near.

II. John’s Greeting

1. A letter to seven churches
 - a. There were other churches in Asia Minor (e.g. *Colossae*); thus, seven probably symbolized all the churches this message was intended to reach.
 - b. It has been suggested that these seven churches were on the Roman postal route in Phrygia.
 - c. The number seven had significance to the Jews, especially in extra-biblical apocalyptic literature.
2. The Trinitarian representation
 - a. The Father, the eternal One (Ex. 3:14)
 - b. The Spirit, as seven before the throne (c.f. Isa. 11:2–3; Zech. 4:6, 10; Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
 - c. The Son, Jesus Christ
3. The threefold designation of the Son
 - a. The faithful witness—the source and focus of the revelation
 - b. The firstborn of the dead—divine proof of His authority (c.f. Col. 1:18)
 - c. The ruler of kings on earth—the power and purpose of His triumph expressed in chapter 19
4. A glorious work accomplished
 - a. His motive—love for His people
 - b. His action—freeing His people from the guilt and penalty of their sins by His blood-shedding
 - c. His purpose—establishing His kingdom and the priesthood of His people
 - d. His end—glory and dominion forever

Conclusion

Jesus is accomplishing what Adam failed to accomplish—dominion over the whole earth (Gen. 1:28) to the glory of God (Num. 14:21; 1 Chron. 29:11; Psa. 57:5; 72:19; Isa. 6:3; Hab. 2:14).

His people are His means to accomplish this task. How are we doing? Our incentive for doing so? *“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen”* (v. 7).