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A0534 – August 21, 2005 – Revelation 1-5 – The King is Coming

I. PURPOSE OF REVELATION

Revelation is the final installment in the Divine Library and the climax of God’s revelation. Whereas Genesis records the creation of the universe, the fall of man, and the fall of nature into so pitiful a state, Revelation reverses the order. Revelation records the re-creation of the universe, the resurrection of man, and the regeneration of nature. Yet this book remains a mystery for many people. There are four difficulties for men understanding this revelation:

1. Revelation is **highly visionary**
2. Revelation is **highly symbolic**
3. Revelation contains **a lot of prophecy** (history written in advance)
4. Revelation has **a uniquely miraculous origin** (all Scripture is miraculously given but Revelation has some unique aspects to its divine composition) and because of these four factors

Thus,

5. Revelation has been **misunderstood** and/or **assumed that it cannot be understood.**

However, the first word of Revelation contradicts the idea that its contents are mysterious?

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, (*apokalupsis Iesou Christou*)

The first word of Revelation, which serves as the title and purpose of the book, is the Greek word *apokalupsis*. The word means “to reveal” NOT “to conceal”. If it meant “to conceal or hide” then I could understand why the book would be mysterious. But Revelation was not meant to be mysterious. It was meant to be understood by all. It is clear that God’s intention is to reveal not conceal! Regardless of God’s intention it is a truth that Revelation remains a “mystery” for many Christians. For example, Martin Luther said, “**Even if it were a blessed thing to believe what is contained in it, no man knows what that is.**”¹ But if

the book's own title means "to reveal" why is it that Luther speaks as if the contents were "concealed"? Why such confusion? What is so secret about the Book of Revelation? The answer is "nothing, nothing at all is mysterious about the Book of Revelation".

In fact the message is quite clear when we read it straightforwardly: the book pits a Holy and Faithful God against a sinful humanity. I will Purge My Covenant People Israel and I will Punish the Nations who have so long cursed Her. She is My People and I am Her God. Touch the Apple of My Eye and I will destroy you. Blessing for blessing and curse for curse. For I am bound to My word with Israel and My word is bound to My nature and My nature is immutable. I have sworn to it, I will return to fulfill my covenants with My people Israel and establish My Kingdom for 1,000 years. Then I will abolish death, the last enemy and I will hand over My Kingdom to God the Father and We will create a New Heavens and New Earth where righteousness will dwell forever and there will be no more death, mourning, shouting, or pain. And Our glory will shine forth forever and ever. Now that is what the Book of Revelation is all about. It has a powerful message. But if the message is so clear why have so many missed the point? Simply because they refuse to interpret prophecy the way they interpret the rest of the Bible.

So, the name of the book is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" and the purpose of the book is the same "To Reveal Jesus Christ." Before 96AD the contents were unknown mysteries but now the cover is being taken away so we can see clearly God's plan for the present and future (Eph 3:5).

II. PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF ESCHATOLOGY

A special blessing is announced to those who read, hear, and keep the message of Revelation.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads and the one's who hear the words of the prophecy and keeps the things that are written in it, for the time is near.

Why is there a connection between **prophecy** and **blessing**? Because your view of the future determines how you live in the present. If you know that the stock market is going to crash next week, what will you do tomorrow? If you know when a thief will break in and steal this evening then what will you do now? All people have an eschatology (a view of the future) and that eschatology is linked to how we live in the present. For example, let's take the worldview of Hedonism. Hedonists (pleasure seekers) say we should "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die". That is an eschatology. If tomorrow we die then

what should we do in the present? The Hedonist replies, “eat, drink, and be merry”. Why does he reply this way? Because he believes death is a natural result and that death is the end of existence. Do you see how his eschatology determines how he lives in the present? There is a causal relation? Let’s be really politically incorrect and look at the worldview of Islam. Islamic theology has a view of end times, at least for the males. They believe that when the man dies he will be surrounded by 70 virgins who will do whatever he wants. If my death results in 70 virgins then how should I live in the present? Be a suicide bomber. One Islamist in Britain said, (QUOTE) Do you see how one’s beliefs about the future affect how they live in the present? Future beliefs are powerful motivators. In Revelation, God gives us an eschatology, the real eschatology. God even gives us a motivation at the close of verse 3. Christ says, **for the time is near**. That’s an expression of imminence. At-any-moment these prophetic events could begin to unfold. Therefore, since you don’t know when they will begin then you ought to be motivated to live a holy life in light of it. If you do you will be **blessed**. Christ is giving you a motivation to build up reward status.

How should I live? In chapters 2-3 Christ evaluates seven churches and gives them seven basic instructions:

1. Right doctrine is good but living out right doctrine is better
2. Be prepared to die a martyrs death
3. Do not compromise with pagan doctrine because it results in pagan practice
4. Do not tolerate false teaching
5. Do not become complacent
6. Be ready for an at-any-moment deliverance
7. Lukewarmness makes Christ sick but fellowship with Him produces much fruit

The point is that Christ is giving us an any-moment eschatology so that we will live godly lives and will build up reward status.

III. THEME OF REVELATION

Like all books of Scripture, Revelation has a “theme”. What is a “theme”? A “theme” is the main idea of a book, article, or speech. Does anyone know what the theme verse of Revelation is?

Revelation 1:7 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. So it is to be. Amen.

John begins with the word **Behold** (*idou*) or better **Look! See! Listen!** Pay attention because I'm going to summarize the whole book in one verse! Pay close attention because I'm about to give the first prophetic announcement! **Look! See! Listen! He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the families of the earth will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.** Behold, the King! John is picking up a major theme of the OT. For example, turn to Dan 7:13.

Daniel 7:13 And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming,

So, the theme of the Book of Revelation, the main idea is the Bodily and Universally Visible Coming of Jesus Christ. The title **Son of Man** used in Dan 7:13 always refers to the future bodily coming of the Son related to mankind to rule on the earth. It emphasizes His glorified humanity. Christ will rule on the throne of David on earth in His glorified humanity.

How Does He Come? **He comes with the clouds** Why do we see Christ coming **with the clouds**? A cloud coming is a very common description in the Bible (cf. Dan 7:13; Matt 24:30; 26:64; Rev 14:14ff). When Jesus ascended from earth to heaven the angels said to the apostles,

Acts 1:9-11 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹ They also said, "Men of Galilee, "why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Thus, at His ascension Jesus bodily rose from earth into heaven. Thus, that **He comes with the clouds** indicates that Christ will come down from heaven to the earth.

Who Will See Him? When He **comes with the clouds, every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him**. The whole human race, dead or alive, will witness the return of Christ. Taken at face value this presents a problem for us. How can those who are dead and those who crucified Christ visibly see Christ's future cloud coming? I don't know, but what I do know is that this is what the word of God teaches and I know who God is. I know His power has the ability to open people's eyes to see things they otherwise could not see. One example comes to mind from the OT in 2 Kings 6:8ff. The Syrian king's war plans had

been made known to Elisha the prophet. When the Syrian king found out that Elisha had divulged their plans to Israel's king it infuriated him. He thus set out to destroy Elisha in the city of Dothan. Surrounding the city during the night with a powerful army, Elisha's death appeared imminent. Elisha's "servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ So he [Elisha] answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." God can open the eyes of anyone at anytime because He is God. Thus, it is not a difficulty for God to open the eye of every person both dead and alive to see Him, even those who pierced Him. This certainly refers to the both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel (Zech. 12:10ff; Acts 4:27).

Zechariah 12:10 they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

How Will the People Respond? In response to this great sight, those **families of the earth will mourn over Him**. Why will they **mourn over Him**? Because they have not trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior. They have instead hoped the judgments would cease. They have experienced an unthinkable amount of death, famine, ruin, devastation. These people are in a state of utter desperation. Their leader, the Antichrist) is dead, their revolt against their Creator has come to an end. The return of Christ is anything but a comfort to those who continually rebel against Him. He closes with the words **Yes, amen. Yes** would have been sufficient but **amen** is added. The two words, when used together strengthen one another. The force is that "truly these events are absolutely fixed." Christ's coming is not a prophetic possibility. It is an absolutely fixed occurrence. and every eye seeing Him is a fixed event that will cause every **family of the earth to mourn over Him**.

This is the great theme of the book of Revelation to which everything climaxes. Turn to...

Revelation 19:11-21 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike

down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

IV. OUTLINE OF REVELATION

The Book of Revelation can be divided into three parts. Can anyone tell me what those three parts are? Can anyone give me the key verse that outlines the Book of Revelation?
Rev 1:19

Revelation 1:19 "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things."

Does everyone see the three-fold structure of this verse? The Lord Jesus Christ is telling John to write three things (1:9-11).

1. **write the things which you have seen** (*eides* - aorist tense in contrast to present tense in v. 11). What has John seen so far? Beginning in v. 11 John saw a vision of the Glorified Son of Man. John is getting a preview of what every eye will see at the 2nd Coming. They will not see the meek and mild Jesus but a great warrior King dressed in flaming apparel. John gets a preview of Christ's appearance at the 2nd Coming. So, what verses contain the **things which you have seen**? Chapter 1:11-20. This is the first section of "The Revelation" (singular).
2. **write...the things which are** (*eisin* - present tense). John saw this vision in 96AD AD. What dispensation was John living in in 96AD? The Dispensation of the Church. So, John is being commissioned to write what Jesus says about the Dispensation of the Church. What chapters of Revelation does Jesus talk about the Church? Chapters 2-3.

3. **write...the things which will take place after these things** (*meta tauta*). What does Jesus mean by **after these things**? After what things? After the Church. And what chapters of Revelation does Jesus talk about the Church? Chapters 2-3. So, where would you expect to find **the things which will take place after** the Church? Chapter 4:1. So, let's turn to Revelation 4:1.

Revelation 4:1 "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

Do you notice any similarities between the last phrase in 1:19 and this verse? What are they? How about the phrase **take place after these things**.

Rev 1:19 "Therefore write...the things which will **take place after these things.**"

Rev 4:1 "Come up here, and I will show you what must **take place after these things.**"

Do you see the connection the Lord Jesus is making between 1:19 and 4:1? Good. Thus, we can safely conclude that Jesus Himself gave us the outline of the Book of Revelation. We didn't have to manufacture an outline. The outline comes right from the word of God.

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| 1. the things which you have seen | (past) | 1:11-20 |
| 2. the things which are | (present) | 2 - 3 |
| 3. the things which will take place after these things | (future) | 4 - 22 |

This verse also reveals a crucial bit of information. If the things in chapters 4-22 **will take place after the things** in chapters 1-3 then what is the implication of this verse? Does anyone see what this verse also assumes? (Wait for an answer). This verse assumes a chronology. The things in chapters 4-22 **must take place AFTER the things** mentioned in chapters 1-3. Well, what are the things which happen in Chapters 2-3? The Church age. Ok. Now, what are the things that must take place **AFTER** the Church age? That is, what is described as happening in chapters 4-22?

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| 1. The Church | (Rev 2-3) |
| 2. The Tribulation | (Rev 6-19) |
| 3. Christ's Second Coming | (Rev 19) |
| 4. The Millennial Kingdom | (Rev 20) |
| 5. The New Heavens and New Earth | (Rev 21-22) |

As long as a person can agree that we are in the Church (Rev 2-3) then what does this information tell us? What can we deduce from these facts?

1. We can conclude that the Church will be completed *before* the Tribulation
2. We can conclude that the Church will not go through the Tribulation
3. We can conclude that the Church will be removed from earth *before* the Tribulation
4. We can conclude that the Church will not be on earth at Christ's Second Coming
5. We can conclude that the Church is not the Kingdom
6. We can conclude that the Church is not building the Kingdom
7. We can conclude that the Church is not in the New Heavens and New Earth
8. We can conclude that the Tribulation occurs after the Church
9. We can conclude that the Tribulation precedes Christ's Second Coming
10. We can conclude that Christ's Second Coming has not happened yet
11. We can conclude that Christ's Second Coming is after the Tribulation
12. We can conclude that Christ's Second Coming is before the Millennial Kingdom
13. We can conclude that the Millennial Kingdom is not present in any form now
14. We can conclude that the Millennial Kingdom is wholly in the future
15. We can conclude that the Millennial Kingdom begins after the Second Coming
16. We can conclude that the Millennial Kingdom is not the New Heavens and New Earth
17. We can conclude that the Millennial Kingdom is before the New Heavens and New Earth
18. We can conclude that the New Heavens and New Earth are wholly in the future
19. We can conclude that the New Heavens and New Earth is the grand consummation of God's plan
20. We can conclude that the New Heavens and New Earth is the final state of things
21. We can conclude that once established the New Heavens and New Earth will remain for eternity future

Now, what interpretations of Scripture do these 21 conclusions de-bunk? In other words, what views can't be true in light of what we have concluded?

1. Mid-Tribulation Rapture (#1, #2, #3, #8 above)
2. $\frac{3}{4}$ Tribulation Rapture (#1, #2, #3, #8)
3. Pre-Wrath Rapture (#1, #2, #3, #8)
4. Post-Tribulation Rapture (#1, #2, #3, #4, #8)
5. Roman Catholicism (#4, #12, #13, #14, #15)
6. Preterism (#4, #7, #10, #18)
7. Amillennialism (#4, #12, #13, #14, #15)
8. Postmillennialism (#6, #12, #13, #14, #15)
9. Covenant Premillennialism (#13, 14, #15)
10. Progressive Dispensationalism (#13, 14, #15)

Now, what view of Scripture do these 21 conclusions affirm?

1. Pre-Tribulation Rapture (#1, #2, #3, #4, #8)
2. Premillennial Return of Christ (#11, #12)
3. Classic Dispensationalism (#13, #14, #15)

These conclusions prove that from a normal reading of the Book of Revelation, God is saying: “be counting on a Dispensational, Pretribulational, Premillennial eschatology.”

The bottom line is Right Practice requires Right Doctrine. We want to have the right eschatology so we can live godly lives in the present and build up reward status.

ⁱ Alva J. McClain, [*The Greatness Of The Kingdom*](#) (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 6.

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