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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
REVELATION 1:1-8
NUMBER 1

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

REVELATION 1:1-8 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

The Book of Revelation is "Union Station" for the Word of God. All trains come into the station here. The more you understand the rest of the Bible the easier it is to understand Revelation. This book is not as difficult as many others in the scripture. Revelation has a long introduction. In fact, the whole first chapter is the introduction. In order to understand Revelation, you must know something about dispensations.

We call Dispensations the divine viewpoint of history.

1. The Age of the Gentiles.

This is the age from Adam to Abraham
There was one race and one language
Four divine institutions--Volition--Marriage--The Family--The Nation
It covers approximately 2,000 years

2. The Age of Israel.

Multiple races--Many languages
From Abraham to Pentecost
Covers the periods of the Patriarchs, The Law, and The Tribulation

3. The Age of the Church.

Jews, Gentiles, and Believers--Many races and languages
From Pentecost to the end of the Church Age
The Church responsible for Missionary Activity and Evangelism

4. The Age of Christ.

The 7 year Tribulation period (End of the Jewish Age)
The Return of Christ
Christ's Reign of 1,000 years
The Last Judgment
His Eternal Kingdom

It is also necessary to understand the five cycles of discipline as outlined in Leviticus 26.

The Book of Revelation covers three periods--The Church Age, The Second Advent of Christ, and the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Outline Of Revelation

1. Chapter 1--The Introduction
2. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the TRENDS in the Church Age.
3. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the Church in Heaven after the rapture.
4. Chapters 7-18 describe the Tribulation (One exception will be pointed out later)

5. Chapter 19 describes the Second Advent of Christ.
6. Chapter 20 and 11:15-19 describe the Millennium.
7. Chapter 21:1-8 gives a picture of Eternity.

The remainder of the book takes us back for a general review. This book is not difficult if you properly understand dispensations. The Book of Revelation is laid out in a dispensational pattern.

The major part of the book deals with the Tribulation.

Chapters 6-18 are divided something like this--

1. The Seals. Seals are a general summary of the Tribulation.
2. Revelation 7 is evangelism in the Tribulation
3. The Trumpets. Revelation 8-11 depict the Tribulation with reference to the Gentiles.
4. Revelation 12-18 depict the Tribulation from the standpoint of the Jews.

Another way to state the outline might be as follows--

Chapter 1--The Glories Of The Person of Jesus Christ.

Chapters 2-3--The Trends Of The Church Age.

Chapters 4-5--The Church In Heaven

Chapters 6-19--The Tribulation On Earth And The Second Advent Of Christ.

Chapter 20 and Chapter 11:15-19--The Millennium

Chapter 21:1-8 tells of the Eternal City

So if you understand dispensations then the Book becomes very simple. In verses 1-2 we have the title of the book.

Notice the words above say "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine".

John was not divine. Divinity and deity belong to God alone. He was a saint, but so is every other believer also a saint. The moment anyone accepts Christ 34 things happen to him, five of which are accomplished by the Holy Spirit. One of these accomplishments is the baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby every believer is entered into union with Christ. Saint, holy, holiness, sanctify, and sanctification all come from the same word and mean set-apart. John was a saint, set-apart, and so are you and every other Christian. So this title printed above verse 1 is erroneous and the real title is found in verse 1.

Please notice it is not "Revelations" but "Revelation" in the singular. Only one revelation in the book and this is Jesus Christ. The title is "THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST". It speaks of his first and second advent, his being seated at the right hand of God, how he is related to human history, and the Millennial Age.

REVELATION 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John". "Of Jesus Christ" is a subjective genitive and it means "Concerning Jesus Christ".

"Which" is a relative pronoun and refers to this whole book.

It should read "The God" and this is a reference to God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, the author of the divine plan.

"Gave" is an aorist tense and refers to the point of time when God gave this revelation unto Christ.

"Unto him" is a reference to Jesus Christ. It is a "dative of dignity" and means the one receiving this revelation is co-equal with the one who gave the revelation.

"To show" means to reveal, to make known. This is an aorist, active, infinitive and goes back to a Sunday morning in 96 A.D. when this sermon was given by Jesus Christ to a congregation of one man, John.

It was a Sunday morning church service on the Island of Patmos about 12 miles off the coast from Ephesus. We have sermons in the Bible by Moses and Isaiah and Simon Peter and Stephen, but the book of Revelation is one sermon preached by Jesus Christ to a congregation of one and John didn't look at his watch during the delivery of the whole sermon. It probably took all day. It was such a shock for John to see Jesus Christ preaching the sermon that he fainted. The preacher had to revive the congregation and then the sermon went on. Later on Christ would bring these things back to the memory of John so he could write them down and pass them on to the church. Christ wanted his people briefed on the things that were to happen later on in the future. It is important for us to know what will happen in the future, what will happen to the church and what will happen in the tribulation and the second advent and in the Millennium. We also need to know what will happen in his Eternal Kingdom.

"His servants" is a dative of advantage and it is to their advantage that they know these things. (And please remember--every believer is in full-time Christian service just as much as the Pastor.)

"Things which must shortly come to pass" are the things we are to study.

"Sent and signified by his angel". We often read in the Bible how an angel is used to communicate truth for God. A classical example of this is when the angel Gabriel brought information to Daniel.

"John" refers to the author of the fourth Gospel, also 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, and now the one who is to receive this sermon from Christ on a Sunday morning on the Island of Patmos.

REVELATION 1:2 "Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

"Who" is a relative pronoun referring to John.

"Bare record" means to give witness.

"The Word of God" is exactly the same way John began his Gospel in JOHN 1:1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"Even of the testimony of Jesus Christ". So John was the human author, but the Holy Spirit was the divine author.

REVELATION 1:3 "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Here we see the first "Blessed" listed in this book. This is a special book for here we read there is a special blessing to the one who teaches it and the one who hears it. There are seven blessings mentioned in this book. To the believer this book is a blessing and to the unbeliever this book is a cursing. To the world at large it is a description of things that are to come.

The Seven "Blesseds" in the Book of Revelation.

1. REVELATION 1:3 "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." This blessed has to do with those who teach and those who learn this message. If you will persist in this study, you will receive a special blessing.
2. REVELATION 14:13 "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." This is a special blessing given to those who die in the Lord. This is "Dying Grace". God provides grace for the living and grace for the dying. In Heaven believers will receive the ultimate blessing God has provided for all of his people.

3. REVELATION 16:15 "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." This blessing is for those who are alert concerning the second coming of Christ.
4. REVELATION 19:9 "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." This is a blessing for those who attend the wedding. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.
5. REVELATION 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." This is a blessing for those who have part in the first resurrection. The first resurrection is composed of four parts.
 - a. Christ the firstfruits. In Leviticus 23 we are told of the meaning of the feast of the firstfruits. They were to wave a sheaf of grain as a forecast of the harvest to come. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the firstfruits, a forecast of our resurrection.
 - b. The second part of this first resurrection is the rapture of the Church.
 - c. The third phase of this first resurrection is at the end of the Tribulation. These are the Tribulational martyrs and all Old Testament saints.
 - d. The fourth part of the first resurrection comes at the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ. These are the Millennial saints and those believers who were alive at the time of the second advent. So the first resurrection is composed of every believer who has ever lived from Adam down to the end of time.
6. REVELATION 22:7 "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." The sixth blessing is for those who keep the content of this book.
7. REVELATION 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." This is a blessing for those who keep his commandments and this involves the will of God as revealed in scripture.

Look now at this blessing which is promised here in verse 3.

1. Blessed is he that readeth. It doesn't mean readeth but it means "to analyze". Readeth is a present, active, participle and means to keep on analyzing, teaching. This refers to the work of the pastor-teacher to analyze this book and to teach it just as I am doing here.
2. The second part of the blessing is for those who persist. You can't get it by coming once or twice. I expect half of you will fall by the way-side before we are through. If you stick with it you will be blessed. "Hear" means those who keep on hearing consistently.
3. The third blessing is for those who learn the doctrine of this book and store it away in the mind so it can be used in experience. "Keep" is a present, active, participle and means to guard that which belongs to you. Be alert and know where you stand. "Which are written" is a perfect tense and means it was written in 96 A.D. and the truth will stand forever. "For the time is at hand" and means the time is at hand when you need doctrine and you need to apply it to your situation. The time to use doctrine is always at hand.

In the next verses we now come to the human author and the subject. John was the human author.

THE SCRIPTURE IN THE BIBLE DID NOT ORIGINATE IN THE MINDS OF MEN. GOD SO DIRECTED THE WRITING OF SCRIPTURE THAT WITHOUT WAIVING THEIR HUMAN INTELLIGENCE, THEIR INDIVIDUALITY, THEIR LITERARY STYLE, THEIR PERSONAL FEELING, OR ANY OTHER FACTOR, HIS COMPLETE COHERENT MESSAGE TO MAN WAS RECORDED WITH PERFECT ACCURACY, THE VERY WORDS OF THE SCRIPTURE BEARING THE AUTHORITY OF DIVINE AUTHORSHIP.

REVELATION 1:4 "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" So John was the human author. It was addressed originally to the seven churches of Asia. These are the seven churches in the Roman Province of Asia. John had jurisdiction over these churches and they are in a small area and when placed on the map, they make almost a complete circle. These seven churches have certain things in them that parallel the trends we will find in all the churches of the Church Age. So in these seven churches you find conditions which exist in the church today.

This is the salutation.

"Grace" is the first word of his message to the churches. Grace always emphasizes who and what God is. Grace means that God does the work and God gets the credit. So the issue is this--The work of Christ versus the work of man. The issue is divine good versus human good. When you use grace then the result is "peace". Peace is always the result of grace at work in the life. God is to receive all the glory and man is to receive none.

Which is--which was--and which is to come.

This is a picture of Jesus Christ as John saw him that Sunday on the Island of Patmos.

"From" is the preposition "apo" and means from the ultimate source of him.

"Which is" is a description of Christ seated at the right hand of God.

Christ is absolutely unique, different. He is different from God in that he was man, and he is different from man in that he was God.

"Which is" comes from the Greek word "Eimi" and means the absolute status quo. It is a present, active, participle and means he will always be the God man. There will never be a time when he will not be resurrected humanity plus deity.

"Which was" is the same verb but is imperfect tense and means he was God in eternity past.

"Which is to come" This is a reference to his Second Advent. It is a dramatic present and though it is to happen in the future, it is pictured here as an ever present reality.

"The seven spirits which are before his throne" simply describes the Essence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Christ is in his being, as God. Seven is the figure used for perfection. This phrase is used in Ezekiel 3:9 and 4:10 and in Revelation 4:5 and 5:6-7 and in 1 Peter 3:12. This describes the Essence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was no longer on the earth. He was seated at the right hand of God to complete the Angelic Conflict, and during the Church Age, Jesus is seated there and will be seated there until he comes back to fulfill the fifth cycle of discipline to the Jews and complete the four unconditional covenants to Israel.

REVELATION 1:5 "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" Now we go back to the incarnation. Even from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness. When Christ was on earth he perfectly revealed God the Father.

"The first born of the dead" is a more correct reading. The firstborn is the one who had absolute rulership, was the priest, and had the double portion. Jesus Christ is the absolute ruler in his humanity. He is Prophet, Priest and King.

"Of the dead" refers to the first resurrection.

He is the "Prince of the kings of the earth" because of his cross and resurrection. He rules all kings of the whole earth.

How did he get to this position? He purchased it.

Unto him that "loved us" it is present, active, participle and means he keeps on loving us to the end of time.

"Washed us" is an aorist tense and refers to the point of the cross.

The force of "washed us" is really "loosed us or released us" and this refers to the point of time when we believed in him.

"From our sins in his own blood"

The blood of Christ is always presented as the figure to represent his spiritual death on the cross for our sins.

REVELATION 1:6 "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

These are the representatives of Christ.

"Hath appointed us kings" This is aorist tense and refers to the time of our salvation when we were appointed kings forever.

Also ever man was made a priest. This is the priesthood of every believer. Glory and dominion refers to the double portion each one will receive.

REVELATION 1:7 "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

Even so, Amen." This refers to his Second Advent.

Every eye shall see him because of the total darkness that will cover the earth and he will light the universe.

"Even so I believe it" I am reserving a discussion of the Second Advent for Chapter 19.

REVELATION 1:8 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He will keep on being forever the Alpha and the Omega. So here he is saying that he is going to give us enough information about himself so we can truly know him.

"The almighty" refers to the Essence qualities of God.

So this introduces to us the Lord Jesus Christ who is the central figure of the Book of Revelation. This is "His unveiling".