

Resurrection and Revelation

Thomas Robinson, *Apocalypse Today 1*, May 27, 2018

Revelation 1:1-18

¹ A **revelation** (*apokalypsis*) of **Jesus Messiah**, which **God** gave to him to show to his bond-servants what **must quickly happen**, and he **signified** it by sending his angel to his bond-servant **John**, ² who testified to all that **he saw** – to **God’s message** (*logos*) and the **testimony of Jesus Messiah**.

³ **Blessings** on the one who **reads aloud** and on those who **listen** to the words (*logos*) of the **prophecy**, and on those who **hold on** to the things written in it. For the **significant moment is near**.

⁴ John, to the **seven churches/assemblies** that are in Roman Asia: Grace to you and peace from **“the one who is”** and who **was** and who **is coming**, and from the **seven spirits** who are before his throne,

⁵ and from **Jesus Messiah**, the **witness**, the **faithful** one, the **firstborn of the dead**, and the **ruler** of the kings of the earth.

Yes, the one who **loves us** and **freed** us from our sins by his **blood**,

⁶ and he **made us a kingdom, priests** to his God and Father, **to him** belong the **glory** and the **might** through the ages of ages. Amen.

⁷ Look, **he comes with the clouds**, and **every eye** will see him, even those who **pierced** him, and all tribes of the earth will **mourn** on account of him. Yes. Amen.

⁸ **“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”** says the LORD God, “the one **who is** and who **was** and who **is coming**, the **Almighty**.”

⁹ I, **John**, your **brother** and partner in the **suffering** and **kingdom** and the **endurance** in Jesus, was on the island called **Patmos** on account of **God’s message** (*logos*) and the **testimony of Jesus**.

¹⁰ I was **in Spirit** on the **Lord’s day**, and I heard **behind** me a **great voice** like a **trumpet** ¹¹ saying, **“What you see write** onto a **scroll** and **send** to the **seven churches**: to **Ephesus** and to **Smyrna** and to **Pergamum** and to **Thyatira** and to **Sardis** and to **Philadelphia** and to **Laodicea**.”

¹² Then I **turned to see** the **voice** that was speaking with me, and when I **turned I saw seven golden lampstands**, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands **one like a son of man**, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ But his head and **hair** were white like wool, white as snow, and his **eyes** like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His **feet** were like polished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his **voice** was like the voice of many waters. ¹⁶ In his **right hand** he was holding **seven stars**, and from his **mouth** came a **sharp two-edged sword**, and his **face** was like **the sun** shining in full strength.

¹⁷ When I **saw him**, I fell at his feet as if **dead**. But he laid his **right hand** on me, saying, “Don’t be afraid, I am the **first** and the **last**, ¹⁸ and the **the one who lives**. I **became dead**, and look **I am living through the ages of ages**. And I have the **keys** of **Death** and **Hades**.”

Exodus 3:14 LXX

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am the One who is. ... Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, ‘The One who is has sent me to you.’”

Isaiah 11:2, 4 cf 49:2

² And the LORD’S Spirit shall rest upon him, Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, Spirit of counsel and of might, Spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD.... ⁴ He will make right decisions for the downtrodden ... and strike the earth with the rod of his mouth.

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ “I saw visions in the night: With the clouds of heaven one like a son of man came ... to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples ... should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion....”

Daniel 10:5-6

⁵ I looked and saw... a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold ... around his waist. ⁶ His body was like yellow jasper, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a crowd.

Zechariah 12:10

¹⁰ “... when they look on me ... whom they have pierced, they shall mourn, as for an only child....

Colossians 1:18

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

The Adventure of the Apocalypse for Today

We begin a journey with John’s Revelation/Apocalypse (Gk *apokalypsis*), last book of the Bible.

It completes the Good News of Jesus in the NT. It’s last scenes take us back to Eden, but now seen in the midst of a vast city. Written by a Christian named John, late in 1st cent.

It’s message is basic: The church is small and suffering, doomed in a vast, powerful empire, but it carries God’s own power of Jesus’ cross and resurrection. It’s part of God’s great story from creation to new creation. He turns all appearances upside down: kingdom, priests.

Revelation is fascinating and intimidating because of its amazing images right from the start. It raises questions. Is it a code for the future? Is it for me? Where am I in all its rush of images? Why do some today apply it to headlines (embassy in Jerusalem), while others avoid it?

An Unveiling – From God through John to Us

Revelation draws on a long, varied tradition. It is an unveiling in visions like Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah saw. It’s a first-person narrative of what John saw and how he reacted. It’s a letter from John to churches that contains letters from Jesus. It is testimony to Jesus that embodies God’s message/word. It is just full of references to OT scripture, but no quotes.

John knows he’s describing strange things that from the very start carried mystery. But even the mystery is illuminating. He sees visions, not events. He emphasizes steps of revelation.

1. God. 2. Jesus, 3. Angel, 4. John’s visions in images that he perceives, 5. John must choose words to write about the visions in a scroll, 6. Scroll to churches, 7. Reading aloud.
8. Listeners hear the words and use them to imagine John’s vision, its impact and meaning. God builds this distance into the process. We are not looking directly at events.

The process of interpretation centers at two points: 1. When John turns vision into words. A scene can be described in many ways – a room, a sunset. John describes his visions in words that richly echo the prophets and OT in general, conscious of prophetic tradition.

2. When we draw on our knowledge and experience to turn his words back into our own conscious images. Each one different. We become part of the revelation process.

More about Who? and How? Less about When?

So much of the history of interpreting Revelation has been about when the world will end.

When is “soon”? Are we in the end-times? We’ll explore some of these interpretations.

But Rev 1 emphasizes that it’s more about who! To whom does this world, life, the future belong? How does that one show his character, purpose, power? How do we testify?

God is being, also past and moving toward us. The Spirit spreads like seven spirits everywhere. Jesus is center of Revelation, God through death born in new life, ruler of all, lover, savior, giver. No sword in his hand, only a sword of his word. The stars, suffering believers, are in his hand. Life became dead, now lives, gives life. He owns (keys) death and all beyond.