



Meditating on the Word

"In His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2)

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The Book of Revelation

Because of the style in which the book of **Revelation** was written and its underserving reputation, many people are afraid of the book of **Revelation**. Many of those people think it can't be understood, therefore they say, "Why study it?" The truth of the matter is the title of the book refutes those ideas. The word "revelation" means "to make known, a revealing." The name says you can know it! If it could not be understood, why would God have included it in the Bible? The truth Paul gave in **Ephesians 3:3-5** applies to the book of Revelation also. It says,

By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.

There are two primary views as to when the book was written: (1) During Nero's reign (AD 54-68) or (2) During Domitian's reign (AD 81-96). This writer believes there is more evidence to point to the time of Domitian. Stott says, "Nero's persecution had been sporadic – Domitian's more systematic. Nero's antagonism was felt only in Rome – Domitian's spread to Asia." Remember, this letter was sent to the seven churches of Asia. Also, there are numerous references in the book to people from all over the world (**Revelation 1:7; 5:9; 7:9; 12:5; 14:6; 15:6**). Really, to whom this book was originally sent, doesn't change the message. The message to all people is, "You will win!" William Hendriksen titled his commentary on this book **More Than Conquerors**, probably based on **Romans 8:37** (KJV).

Everyone needs to study this great book because it is a book which gives hope. The people to whom it was written were suffering persecution in the form of physical, intellectual, and moral. They needed to be encouraged. There is more persecution through these same three avenues today than any time in my lifetime. What encouraged them will also encourage us.

One learns a great deal from the **first seven verses in chapter one**.

1. The name of the book is "**Revelation**," not "Revelations" (**v. 1**)
2. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not the Revelation of John. God, the Father, is the one who gave Jesus Christ this revelation (**v. 1**).

3. The events foretold in this book were going to happen soon. **Verse one** says what was written, "**must soon take place.**" The same truth is taught again in **verse three** when it says, "**for the time is near.**" **The book is not about the end of the world. It is about what was going to happen to the Christians who lived or would live soon after John sent this book to them.** There is a little information about what the next life is going to be like in **Revelation 21-22.** All the other information told of events that were soon to happen.
4. There is a promise of a blessing given to those who: (1) Read, (2) Hear, and (3) Heed (obeys) the information in the book (**v. 3**).
5. The message was to be "**communicated**" (NASB) or "**signified**" [KJV] (**v. 1**). The word "signified" has the word "sign" in it. That helps one know that the message was going to be delivered by signs – pictures.
6. This kind of literature is called apocalyptic because the messages are delivered in picture form. John wrote about "**all that he saw**" (**v. 2**). Ten times in the first chapter a form of the word "saw" is used (**vs. 1, 2, 7, 11, 12(2), 13, 17, 19, 20**).
7. This book was sent "**to the seven churches** (congregations) **that are in Asia**" (**v. 4, 11**). There were more than seven churches in Asia because there was a church in Colossae and Hierapolis (**Colossians 4:13**). Probably, God, the Father, selected the number "seven" because in apocalyptic literature, seven stands for "perfection." It seems that in these seven churches one sees what a faithful congregation should be like and what a congregation should avoid. William Barclay says there are 54 groups of seven mentioned in this book (**Commentary on Revelation**). It is significant that the seven churches were all in Asia. This was the area where the most severe persecution occurred. Asia was the Roman province embracing the western part of Asia Minor (Turkey, today) of which Ephesus was the capital.
8. When Jesus returns, "**every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him**" (**v. 7**). There is no such idea in the Bible of Jesus returning secretly to take away some. He came first in the flesh to be a sacrifice and He will return the second and last time to judge the world and give eternal salvation to those who have been faithful and punishment to those who have been disobedient (**Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; John 5:28-29**).

Conclusion

Let's not be afraid of the book of **Revelation**. Let's not take the attitude that it can't be understood, therefore there is no reason to study it. Rather, let's study it, but let's understand that because it is a special kind of literature, we must get the message from the pictures and not try to make everything in the book literal. The best commentary on the book of **Revelation** is the **Old Testament. Someone has said that there are three hundred references to the Old Testament. What that picture meant in the Old Testament is what it means in the book of Revelation.** We need to study it because it gives us confidence and hope which Christians desperately need because we are living in a time when Christians and their beliefs are being attacked. We need confidence that we are going to win!

——— Wayne Burger