

1. INTRODUCTION

This commentary on the book of Revelation, otherwise known as the Apocalypse, is clear and simple, devotional and enlightening. Simple, because it is mainly concerned with the meaning of the text, and not so much with the author, date of writing, and background details that many commentaries give. What I believe to be the correct interpretation is presented with minimal discussion of alternative interpretations. It is devotional in that it emphasizes the Bible text and what should be our basic response. The general format for each passage is my own translation of the relevant Scriptures followed by commentary.

We are blessed if we read the words of this prophecy and take to heart what is written in them because the time is near (Rev 1:3). Don't ignore reading the Scripture portions carefully. Revelation is 'apocalypse' in Greek and means an unveiling. It is an unveiling and revealing of what must soon take place before the end of the world as we know it. It was written by John, generally believed to be John, the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' disciples in the first century. It is saturated with thoughts expressed by the OT prophets concerning the end times and the Messianic kingdom. Below each passage of Revelation are relevant verses from the OT, of which words in italics are alluded to directly by John. Jesus confirmed the words of the prophets, and we'll do well to study them and pay attention to them as to a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Pet 1:19).

More is revealed here about the end of this age than what the OT prophets knew. Jesus himself is the revealer (1:1), and he has revealed more to us here than what was written in the Gospels and the Epistles. Even so, we are not told everything. There are many mysteries, and scholars have different interpretations. There is a lot of symbolism and use of metaphor in Revelation. The reader should not interpret these symbols and metaphors literally. It was revealed to John in a series of visions, so Revelation is like a picture book. We need to think about the symbols and metaphors, and use our imagination to picture them and discern the truth being taught. This doesn't make it any less real. The symbols will be explained. Metaphors, by definition, should always be taken imaginatively, rather than literally. When John says he saw Jesus standing among seven golden lampstands with seven stars in his right

hand, he's telling us what he saw in a vision. We are then told that the lampstands represent seven churches, and the stars are the messengers of those churches. The primary meaning of 'angel' in Greek is messenger. Imagine the picture of Jesus standing among gatherings of believers, whose job is to bear light to the world. He is there to protect, guide, and empower the messengers, the church leaders, who teach the truth and inspire the believers through their preaching.

The series of seals, trumpets, and bowls all end with the Day of the Lord. There are many parallels between them. Some visions take place in heaven, others are on Earth. The book's climax is the return of the Messiah and his millennial reign on earth. The purpose of the book is to inform the saints about these future events (Rev 1:1). God's servants need to be prepared for the terrible time of persecution that is coming when the Antichrist wages war against God's holy people and conquers them, and everyone is invited to accept the gift of salvation.

The main end-of-age events and personages connected with the book of Revelation are explained before the commentary is given. This gives you a better appreciation of this wonderful revelation and just how the end-of-age events will pan out.