

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, and background details 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 lays emphasis on the Bible text and what should be our basic response, not on exhortation or application to the Christian life. The general format for each passage is Scriptures on the left-hand page and commentary on the right.

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 'unveiling', an unveiling or 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 Old Testament prophets concerning the end times and the Messianic kingdom. Below each passage of Revelation on the left-hand page are relevant verses from the Old Testament, 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 prophets knew. Jesus himself is the revealer (1:1), and he reveals more to us here than what we have in the Gospels or 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 by using our imagination, picture it, 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 is telling us what he saw in a vision. We are then told that the lampstands are 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.