

Why call it "The Revelation"?



The Revelation of Jesus Christ, . . .

Revelation 1:1

I am truly concerned that most will experience the last book of the Christian Bible as an aberration, instead of as the crown jewel of Bible prophecy. Its opening words are telling: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* . . . "—as if we were being given a word portrait of all that is awesome and wonderful about the very Son of God. The writer soon continues, "*Blessed is he who reads . . .*"—encouraging us to remember and reach out for the opening theme of its ever increasing importance for "*the time is near*" (verse 3).

Then, after reminding us of the principle message of the New Covenant (New Testament, and second half of our Bible) —which is "grace and peace," along with the story of God's love and concern for His people, even though we may often make a mess of our lives and have to cry out repeatedly to "Daddy" (the Father) for mercy and forgiveness, so that we may truly have His peace—Christ, Himself answers and speaks:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Jesus makes this proclamation two times, in verse eight (above) and then again, just after the apostle John takes a moment to sign his name to the document in his opening (as they did in that part of the world, at the time: signing the letter in its opening). Jesus, again, reminds us of the real Authority behind this document:

saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Revelation 1:11

Thus it is, that we are immediately invited and introduced to this amazing capstone of Bible prophecy, promising the reader that all who seriously dig into its pages will be blessed by its reading as He warns us to resist the temptation to toss it into the dust bins of history: intoning a warning that all who would do so, may be following its pages into that very dust ourselves!

As we emerge from this introduction we are im-

mediately confronted with an incredible thought, as Jesus continues to dictate seven concise cameos of warning and encouragement to seven distinct and living assemblies upon the earth, at that time. For here Jesus addresses the “angel” (or messenger, or Pastor) of each of these churches located in Asia Minor, in what is now modern Turkey. Is Jesus telling us something, here, that is to be applied to all of this prophecy?

Earlier, within His introduction, He has inspired the scribe (the apostle John) to write:

⁷ *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

Revelation 1:7

Then, again, as John continues his dialogue and his recording of events, he reminds the reader of a primary reason for sharing these secrets:

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:9

It would appear that this is not “fake news”! It is not collusion with the enemy that we are witnessing here, but a true communication from Heaven: a warning and encouragement from the Home Office, that the Master of the Universe is soon to return to earth and that His agents of peace and salvation (the very church itself) must now ready herself for His soon returning. And did you notice? Our brother and companion (John) includes himself in “the tribulation and kingdom and patience” of our Lord, within troubling times.

No escapism, here.

Thus it is, that this remarkable communication at the very end of the Christian Bible “hits the ground running” with practical advice and warnings for His people within troubling times. For, although Christ did know that there would be seasons of rest and respite from the “trials and troubles of [this] world” —we are, indeed, going to spend eternity with God. That is, those who are His children will do so. It would appear that it is for this very reason that He now begins this amazing letter from the Isle of Patmos with personal communications to those most dear to His heart: to the Christian Church, within Asia minor.

Yet we must not forget the opening comments of this present communication and meditation upon the Revelation: that these writings are not an “aberration” within the Scriptures. For as I point out within my new

book soon to be released, there was an Old Testament prophet (Zechariah) whose prophecy also had four horsemen, within his own sixth chapter, as well as two witnesses (within his fourth chapter)—not to mention that its closing (fourteenth) chapter matches *exactly* the pattern given in the Revelation, as it describes Christ’s returning and soon coming reign, within the millennium! We see, therefore, that we would do ourselves a great disservice to assume that we must simply rely upon extra-biblical inputs, while ignoring the abundant internal evidence that would reveal to us how Heaven now sees our world (and indeed, this very country) that we now live in—as it is mentioned and even outlined in amazing detail, within this Book that so many assume is “unintelligible” and impossible to understand.

Yet, before we put this short meditation upon the shelf of our minds, and continue on with the busy business of “real living” let us try to take a moment to reflect upon one practical aspect of this book, as we consider how Christ’s admonition to His Church seeks to prepare us for His soon returning in the skies. To do

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this, let us look at the very first, and last, of the letters to these seven churches, while remembering that since this is a prophetic book, there is an overall significance to the actual manner in which these seven mini-letters to churches are lined up. In other words, the first letter is written (in a sense) to the first church epoch/church age: Ephesus, the first of the seven churches, that represented the Church as she “emerged from the gate” to run the race for the finish line. The last of the seven churches mentioned, represents the church running in the very, very, last lap. Yet, let us remember that within any generation (this is a very big hint, from the soon to be released book) there is *always* a remnant of the faithful. In other words, within any generation, all who are faithful and diligent in their relationship with the Lord—may break out of the pack, so to speak, to run a “victory lap” to the finish line. Speaking of which . . .

There is a way to contrast these two opposing church assemblies, by using a movie, as a parable of sorts. We may do this by making a comparison of two men running a race—one running with divine purpose, and the other with less than a perfect heart. The movie that I refer to, of course, is *Chariots of Fire*: the award winning movie comparing two men: Eric Liddell and Harold Abrams, who both won gold medals in the 1924

summer Olympics in Paris France. If we were to make a small modification of the story, by considering Abrams to represent a true believer, we might say that Eric represented the man who refused to fall prey to the dangers encountered and succumbed to, by the very first church mentioned. For of that first church the Lord notes:

I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Revelation 2:1-3

There is no truly successful person who achieves success, or greatness, without diligence and hard work. You can't inherit true greatness. Billy Graham, for example, was born to Christian parents, and was given a good example of the protestant work ethic on an American farm. He later found and married the "ideal" wife, for an American evangelist (a daughter of missionaries to China) —yet, it was all to no avail if he were not willing to apply himself and seek God's face for himself—working diligently throughout his well lived life, as he heralded the gospel that would make it possible for God to so use and bless his endeavors. Yet, in a real sense, this is only half the story, for as we have already stated in our earlier set-up of this living "parable" of two runners (from the first and last of the Christian churches)—there is something that God demands of all of His faithful disciples: a wholehearted devotion to Himself, above all, without reservation.

This whole hearted devotion is what Eric Liddell, in the movie *Chariots of Fire*, most certainly epitomized, as he refused to compromise his beliefs—even though it threatened to deny him (in a very real and significant way) the dream and opportunity of a lifetime at the Olympic games. For he absolutely refused to compete on Sunday (which is generally considered the Christian Sabbath). Further, although he trained and ran very hard, his primary focus on pleasing the Lord so facilitated his more even handed approach to the games that it allowed him to wish even his opponents well, while competing wholeheartedly.

Thus, Eric Liddell typified the runner who did not "lose his first love" for God, and ran his race well (dying as a missionary in China, years later, as he completed his primary mission in life: telling others about Jesus).

Harold Abrams, however, typifies a person in the last of the seven churches mentioned within Revelation chapter three. Of the members of this fellowship, the Lord says:

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Revelation 3:17-18

Gold, "refined in the fire," This is something that Mr. Abrams never did learn how to acquire, for his one goal and desire was to simply gain the gold—without going through the fires of knowing what it is to truly know God, and love Him in spite of the difficulties and trials of life, it would seem. (Of course, we are here only using his life as a parabolic example, we do not know all the details of his personal journey.)

The general message being conveyed here is this: that wealth and position, "good luck" and even divine favor, are not enough to guarantee true greatness. There is an aspect of the human experience, and of true Christian maturity that demands our all; and for the Christian disciple, this includes an all-out, full bore press to the finish, with a heart that is totally sold out for the Lord. Said Jesus of those who would truly follow and please Him, for both now and eternity:

... "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Matthew 16:24-26

Indeed, when all is said and done, who would you prefer to be remembered as: As a world class athlete who won a mere golden medallion and men's accolades—or as a companion and soul winner, modeled after a humble and faithful evangelist, similar to Billy Graham? There are many callings and personal opportunities in life, both public and private, but the calling that really matters at the end of the race not for the Olympic gold, but for the eternal crown offered by the Lord.

This is the "revelation" that we really need!

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Revelation 3:21