

LESSON 2

3. THE TIME OF THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

As I have already stated, there are two main views about the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation-1. Before 70AD and 2.about 90AD. The earlier date is held by those who support the Preterist interpretation of Revelation, while the majority of Bible commentators hold to the later date. According to early historians, this book was composed near the end of Domitian's reign, around the year 95 AD. While some contend for an earlier date, 68 or 69 AD, in the reign of Nero or shortly thereafter, the majority of scholars accept the later Domitian one. Those who favor the later date appeal to the earliest external testimony, that of the Christian father Irenaeus (c. 150-202), who wrote that he received his information from people who knew John personally. Domitian, according to Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263–339), started the persecution referred to in the book. While some recent scholars have questioned the existence of a large-scale Domitian persecution, others note that Domitian's insistence on being treated as a god, caused a great deal of friction between the Christians and Rome.

Eusebius was a fourth century historian who preserved many early writings. He is credited with quoting Irenaeus' testimony (abt. 180 A.D.) that John wrote the book of Revelation near the end of Domitian's reign. Domitian was executed in 96 A.D. "Eusebius quoted also Hegesippus' testimony [abt. 150 A.D.] that John returned to Ephesus upon being released from exile after the accession of Nerva in A. D. 96 (HE III. xx)." Nerva was the successor to Domitian and served as the Roman Emperor from 96 A.D. to 98 A.D.

Barring any evidence to the contrary or attacks on the credibility of Eusebius, this information presents a real problem for those who hold to the early date (abt. 64-68 A.D.) for the writing of the book of Revelation.

4. THE SOURCE AND ORDER OF THE REVELATION

verses 1-2

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him," It is important for us to understand the Divine origin of all revelation. This gives us its credibility and its authority. It is at this very point that Satan and all his ministers have attacked the Word of God. Satan said, *"Hath God said..."?* (Gen. 3:1). Biblical revelation has its origin with the eternal Godhead. It is the Will and Mind of God expressed to mortal beings.

a. In the Old Testament

Time and time again we read in the Old Testament, *"God said,"* or *"the Lord spake"*. Peter tells us that the Old Testament writers were *"holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* (2 Pet. 1:21). Paul says, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"* (2 Tim.3:16)

During the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, He quoted many times from the Old Testament. After His resurrection, Christ, on the road to Emmaus, rebuked the two disciples because they did not fully believe all the prophecies about His suffering and resurrection, so *"beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."* (Luke 24:27)

b. In the New Testament

In Hebrews, Paul tells us that, “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;*” (1:1-2).

In His teachings, Christ told His hearers, “*All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*” (Matt.11:27) At His transfiguration we read, “*While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*” (Matt.17:5)

Therefore, the final and complete revelation of God to man is found in the New Testament. It is from God the Father, to Jesus Christ and His apostles by the Holy Spirit.

John 5:19-20 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

John 7:16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

John 8:28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

John 12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

John 17:7-8 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

1 Peter 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves (Old Testament prophets), but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

God did not give His revelation to conceal the truth but “*to shew unto his servants.*” Moses told Israel, “*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*” (Deut.29:29) At another time, Moses told Israel, “*I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD:*” (Deut.5:5)

Public preaching and teaching of the Word of God was the ministry of Jesus Christ. John calls Christ the “*logos*” of God. It was the same kind of ministry which He gave to His apostles and to His churches (Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Secrecy

is Satanic. The characteristic of the ministry of the apostles was the public preaching and teaching of the Word of God to all who would hear. They understood they were to shew forth the final and completed revelation of God.

Romans 16:25-26 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Ephesians 3:3-5 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

This is the last message of the Book of Revelation. “*And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*” (Rev.22:6) The preaching and teaching of the Word of God is to be the ministry of New Testament churches today. The church of Jesus Christ is not a secret organization set in the world to hide its message, but rather it is a light set on a hill to give light to the blind in the dark world. While we well understand that regeneration is the sovereign immediate work of the Holy Spirit, we also understand that the Gospel is to be preached unto all kinds of people. This is for a two-fold purpose: 1. the conversion of quickened hearts, and 2. the condemnation of the unbelievers in the Day of Judgment before God.

5. THE PROMISED BLESSING

verse 3

a. the promise “*blessed*” This is a blessing promised from God. It is the same word that Christ used in His sermon on the mountain. He used it in the upper room when He said to Thomas and the other disciples, “*because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*”(John 20:29). It may not necessarily be a physical blessing, but it most certainly will be a spiritual one.

b. the people to whom this promise is addressed- (1) to the readers, (2) to the hearers, and (3) keepers of the prophecies of this book. There is not another book that we might read that can give us this blessing. We may not understand all that is written, but we are promised a special blessing for reading it. So, we should read it, we should hear it and we should keep its teachings. “*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*” (22:14)

6. THE PURPOSE OF READING, HEARING AND KEEPING THESE WORDS

“*for the time is at hand*” - This phrase and the one in verse one, “*things which must shortly come to pass*” -has been used by the Preterists as the bases of their teaching that the Book of Revelation was written before 70AD. To the full Preterists, 70AD marks the consummation and fulfillment of all prophecy. They teach that Revelation is but a historical account of what happened between 33 AD and 70AD. This would necessitate that everything in the Book of Revelation would have happened in less than 40 years. The Greek word “*tachos*” which is translated in verse one as “*shortly*” is also used in

Luke 18:8, where the word is translated “*speedily*” and in Romans 16:20 where the word is translated “*shortly*.” Yet, in the context of both verses, the setting is certainly at the end of time, when Christ shall come to judge the world, which has not happened yet.

The phrase “*the time is at hand*” in verse 3, is the same phrase used by Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter four where we are told that “*Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” v17 and in chapter 10 when He told His disciples to “*go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand*” v7. The same word is used in John eleven and verse 18, where we read, “*Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.*” We are told by the Apostle Paul to “*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. (Phil.4:5)* and by James to “*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*” (James 5:7-8). The words “*at hand*” and “*nigh*” are translated from the same Greek word, “*eggus*” in Rev.1:3.

While the phrases in Matthew are to be understood to refer to the immanent coming of the kingdom of God in the spiritual sense, for the kingdom was established during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Yet there is a future and literal manifestation of that kingdom, therefore we are taught by Christ to pray, “*Thy kingdom come.*”

The phrases in the other scripture references certainly can not be interpreted to mean immanent, but rather, near or close by. Such is the understanding we should also give to the phrase in Rev. 1:3. Especially in light of the scriptural principle set forth in II Peter chapter 3:8

B. FROM THE APOSTLE TO THE CHURCHES

1:4-9

John tells his readers that this letter is addressed first “*to the seven churches which are in Asia.*” There is no reason to believe that it was only for those seven churches, as it was customary that all church epistles were circulated among all the churches that were nearby. “*And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*” Colossians 4:16 Also, there is no reason to interpret these seven churches as being seven periods in church history. They were seven literal churches that were in close proximity of the island of Patmos.

The word “*churches*” is very important. The word is used about 34 times in the New Testament of which it is found 11 times in the Book of Revelation. The Greek word “*ekklesia*” means a local called out assembly. There are those who try to make the word to mean also a universal, invisible church. Such definition is contrary to the definition for the word given by all Greek scholars. The use of the plural word destroys any idea of a universal church.

Acts 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Acts 16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Romans 16:4-5 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Romans 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

1. IT IS FROM GOD THE FATHER-*from him which is, and which was, and which is to come (v.4) - that which Is, is time itself; which Was, is the eternity before time and that which Is to Come, is the eternity which shall be when time is no more. This is the Eternal Godhead, the JEHOVAH GOD.*

Exodus 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12 I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.

According to what we read in Rev.3:1; 4:5; 5:6, “the seven Spirits which are before his throne;” represent all the angelic host.

2. IT IS FROM JESUS CHRIST

VERSES 5-7

a. He is the faithful witness- **trustworthy**

1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

b. He is the first from the dead

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

c. He is the Prince (chief ruler) of the kings of the earth

Psalms 47:2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

1 Timothy 6:14-16 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

d. He has loved us

e. He has washed us *1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

f. He hath made us a kingdom of priests

f. He is coming to be glorified before all v.7 II THESS. 1:7-10