

H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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Seven Churches - Part I

Introduction

Traditional interpretations of the book of Revelation are reflected in the various versions of the Bible, and the translation of verse three - in particular the last phrase:

Analytical-Literal: Happy [*or, Blessed*] is the one reading [*to the assembly*] and the ones hearing the words of the prophecy and keeping [*or, obeying*] the [*things*] having been written in it, for the time [*is*] near!

World English Bible: Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written in it, for the time is at hand.

Revised Standard: Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

Contemporary English Version: God will bless everyone who reads this prophecy to others, and he will bless everyone who hears and obeys it. The time is almost here.

Montgomery's New Testament: Blessed is he who reads, and they who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep what is written in it. FOR THE CRISIS IS AT HAND.

Living Bible: If you read this prophecy aloud to the church, you will receive a special blessing from the Lord. Those who listen to it being read and do what it says will also be blessed. For the time is near when these things will all come true.

At a first glance, it would appear that what is written in the book would begin to take place in John's day, or shortly thereafter. Because many apply the symbols in a literal historical setting, the result is that there are different interpretations happening from John's day until the end of time. Some Bible versions interpret the "hearing" to be by those hearing someone read the book. However, here is how the literal Greek should read in English: *Happy is he who is reading, and those hearing, the words of the prophecy, and keeping the things written in it - for the time is nigh!* (Young's) Reading, hearing and keeping are all verbs in the present tense. The concept here is not something that happens in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense. The ear is a symbol for perceiving, considering. Job compares it to 'giving ear' and 'tasting': **Job 34:2-3: 2. Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear** (consider what I say) *unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat.* - think spiritually. When we hear something that disagrees with the truth as we understand it, we reject it, much like the tasting of food we dislike and spit out. Jesus told his disciples that if they did not have ears to hear, their hearts were yet hard (Mk 6:51; 8:17-18). Seven times in the book of Revelation we are told to "hear the spirit" (cf 2:7 - 3:22). Happy is the one reading and hearing God explain the words of the prophecy - when this is happening, YOU KNOW the time is near!!

Rev 1:1: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John*: It is necessary that three key words be understood. So, a good place to start is with the word translated "revelation" and made the title of the book.

Revelation: The Greek is *apokalupto* (Strong's # 602) is a noun which means, *a laying bare, making naked*, being derived from a word meaning, *to uncover; lay bare; to reveal a thing which was concealed or covered up*. The proper meaning of the noun is *that which is made nakedness*. This is a very interesting concept in that the Bible begins with man covering his nakedness, and ending with that nakedness being uncovered. Our heavenly Father has set-up the uncovering by Jesus Christ and the cross. By revealing the truth that Jesus is a real, and the only begotten son, who has a beginning, and who the Father gave for the world, brings a revelation also of the Father and his love for each of us, personally.

Notice the use of the verb form of the word *apokalupto*: **Lk 2:34-35**: 34. *and Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother; 'Lo, this [one] is set for the falling and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against... 35. that the reasoning of many hearts may be revealed ⁽⁶⁰¹⁾.'* (Young's) I could say, that the reasoning of many hearts is to "be made naked, or the true motives exposed." Adam and Eve are described as covering their naked loins with leaves, when the true nakedness, which they did not understand, was inward - they did not know God. Look at another example: **Mt 10:26-27**: 26. *Fear them not (those slandering you) therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear (perceive God is telling you), that preach ye upon the housetops.* When these verses are connected to those preceding, it can be seen that what is being revealed are the issues of the heart, whether covered intentionally, or, buried so deep we cannot see them, and how they influence what we do. Everything about the human heart will be revealed.

Shortly: The word translated "shortly", which is actually two Greek words: *en tachos* (1722 + 5034), which means "in quickness, or speedily", and in some contexts implies "a short time." To humans, quickness means in a relatively short period of time, and certainly in our lifetime. Even in God's time for earth, almost 2000 years is not quick, or short from our perspective.

Tachos, is one of six derivatives of *tachus* (5036). All are adjectives or adverbs meaning quickly, speedily, one of which is used in the book of Revelation (5035) seven times, and always translated "quickly." Probably the best example of *tachos* (5034 - a neuter noun) outside Revelation is in **Rom 16:19-20**: 19. *for (news of) your obedience has come to all. I rejoice, therefore, concerning you. But I wish you to be wise, indeed, as to the good, and pure [unmixed] as to the evil; 20. and the God of the peace will tread down the adversary under your feet in quickness [speedily, quickly]; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen! {Greek Interlinear} (supplied by author) [another meaning of the Greek] The point Paul is making is that when a person is wise in good things, and purified from the evil, the adversity in the heart is quickly subdued. This will happen in a short period of time, AFTER a person begins the process. This is the concept of the book of Revelation, and therefore, makes sense that it was written for the last generation.*

Signified: The third word to consider is the verb *semaino* (4591), the noun (4592) of which is equivalent to the Hebrew word *'owth* (226). One of the main definitions of *'owth* given by Gesenius is "the sign of anything which cannot itself be seen." Today, the word "symbol" is used, as circumcision, which can be seen, is a symbol of the removing the hardness of the heart, which cannot be seen (Dt 10:16; 30:6). The feast days and tabernacle services are rich with symbols to be applied in our day. Here is a New Testament example: **Jn 12:32-33**: 32. *and I, if I may be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' 33. And this he said signifying by what death he was about to die.* (Young's) "He said this, giving a sign, or symbolizing the nature of the death he was to die." Physically, the Son of God was lifted up on a cross. But, the principle of understanding what God would have us to know, is to lift the whole event of the cross into the heaven (spiritual understanding from God), and by the symbols (discussed in other studies) understand our own hearts, and the nature of the death we must die to live out the principle of God's love, manifested by the cross. The last book of the Bible is a revelation, given in symbols, which reveals, not only the world, but the church, or assemblies of those professing to believe in God. These assemblies consist of those who are

primarily serving self for various reasons, and the those who are sincere in their service. Out of these groups will come the 144,000 and the great multitude, mentioned in chapter seven. The 144,000 are the firstfruits, which by their experience are the first to become complete (perfect) in Christ. This group will be formed in the last generation when God moves to save His people from a world that is destroying itself.

Man with the Evidence

Revelation 1:1 states that the book is a revelation of Jesus Christ given him by God, identified as his Father (1:6). This book makes a clear distinction between the authority and knowledge of the Father and Son, and showing clearly that they are two individuals. Chapters 4 & 5 describe the Father as being on a throne and Jesus as the Lamb having been slain, who became the faithful witness (1:5) and the author of our eternal salvation (Heb 5:9). Jesus, the Son of God, is the man with the evidence! Think of it this way, it is the uncovering of the Son, and the process of growth through which we come, as we grow in God's knowledge, by allowing Him to change our hearts.

There are descriptive phrases that apply to Jesus, used in one verse - **Rev 22:13:** *I am the Alpha and the Omega - the Beginning and End - the First and the Last.* (Young's Bible) (see also 1:8, 11; 21:6) These three phrases are all emphasizing the same thing. The Greek phrase Alpha and Omega, we would say in English, A to Z. That is, Jesus is to us A to Z, beginning and end, the first and last of all that we need for salvation. He is the door into the sheepfold (Jn 10:7); we can only come to the Father by Jesus (Lk 10:22; Jn 3:35-36; 5:19-23). He is the way, the truth, the life (Jn 14:6). It is the Father who sent the Son into the world (Jn 3:17), and put eternal life in the Son (Jn 5:26), so that all who honor the Son also honor the Father (Jn 5:23).

The phrase "first and last" is used in the Old Testament regarding Yahweh (the Lord in English Bibles): **Isa 48:12:** *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.* **Isa 44:6:** *Thus saith the Lord (Yahweh) the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord (Yahweh) of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.* This concept is implied in - **Isa 43:10:** *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God (Hebrew = El, 410 - god-like one) formed⁽³³³⁵⁾ (first), neither shall there be after me (last).* Jesus said of himself: **Rev 1:17-18:** 17. *...Fear not; I am the first and the last:* 18. *I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore...* He is saying - Fear not, I am the way, the living one, and I became a human being and died for you, and, behold, I am living into the ages of the ages. Amen! Jesus is the 'only begotten' Son, and there is no need of, nor will there be any other.

The same Hebrew verb translated formed⁽³³³⁵⁾ in 43:10, is used in Gen 2:7 saying that man was formed of the dust of the ground. Why would Isaiah apply this word to El? Because he is writing about the Son of God. The Son was not created as is mankind, but was brought forth physically, while his mind, his way of thinking was formed, or created by the Father as He taught his Son, much like humans teach their children. **Rev 3:14:** *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;* The mind of the Son and the mind of the Father are one; they are in unity in the way they think, and it is this mind, this way of thinking, God will give to us (Phil 2:5; Jn 17:21) today.

While the Jews knew about and expected a Messiah, they did not, nor could they understand completely what the Messiah was all about until he came and they experienced him. It is the same for man today. God has given mankind an overview of sinful self and contrasted it with the nature of Himself. Along the way of seeking the Father through the Son, God will show us, through our experience, the things we are doing and why. Only by looking through His eyes and thinking the way He does, can we understand and become like

Him.

Jesus Christ is the 'faithful and true witness' (Rev 3:14) through whom we see and experience the Father's love for us. By reading, hearing and keeping the things written in the Revelation, we partake of Christ's throne, as he partakes of his Father's throne (3:21), and we are *beheaded* (spiritually) *for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God*. Instead of worshipping the beast (self) and forming its image, we form an image to Jesus Christ. Praise God!!

Summary: A lot of time has been spent on Revelation 1:1 because it is critical to be in the right frame of mind for understanding the message contained the book. The "reading and hearing" discussed earlier in the study, has to do with hearing and understanding God's explanation to the heart, as one reads the book, which principle actually applies to the entire Bible. Hearing and receiving God's word will give one an intellectual knowledge. An understanding heart comes by the experience of living what you have learned - Jesus is the example.

The book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John to the seven churches in Asia. These assemblies (churches) are referred to as "cities" and "candlesticks", each having a "star", or a messenger, symbols of something to be uncovered. The details of this experience will be discussed in the next part of the study. It is absolutely necessary that a person understand the teaching of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And, if you are not familiar with Bible applications of symbols, types or allegories, look at some of the basic studies first (God's Way of Teaching, or the Symbol's List). This is the method which God has chosen to conceal the truth, and one of the reasons man has not understood the writings to date. Only our heavenly Father can explain what is written, and that will be through His only begotten Son - the Son of His love from eternity. I pray our hearts be always open to the bountiful grace of God while studying. **Pr 25:2**: *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.* Amen.