

Revelation Bible Study

November 15, 2006

Focus: Revelation 1:1-3

“If there is any New Testament book about endings, it’s Revelation.”¹

“One of history’s abiding lessons is...that strong religious convictions can be quite divisive, even deadly.”²

- Church’s inquisitions
- Heresy Trials
- September 1998 in Ohio a lay leader in a church sat through a sermon on Revelation and then pulled a gun and shot the preacher several times. The arresting officer said the accused cited theological differences as the motive.
- Baptist State Convention meetings

The strange world of Revelation continues to prompt strange behavior.³

- How should we approach the meaning?
- How do we unlock the mysteries and reduce the “emotional heat”?⁴

First answer to meaning and unlocking mysteries – stay close to the text.

Revelation 1:1-3

- The book opens with a blessing for those who hear it and read it (Revelation 1:3).
- In the Greek text, the first word is: Ἀποκάλυψις (revelation). It’s also called a προφητείας (prophecy) in 1:3. We must remember these two words as we read Revelation. It’s a ‘revelation’ (the uncovering of something) and a ‘prophecy’ (the communication of something from

¹ William C. Turner, *Making Sense of the Revelation: A Clear Message of Hope*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), p. 9.

² William C. Turner, *Making Sense of the Revelation: A Clear Message of Hope*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), p. 9.

³ William C. Turner, *Making Sense of the Revelation: A Clear Message of Hope*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), p. 9.

⁴ William C. Turner, *Making Sense of the Revelation: A Clear Message of Hope*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), p. 9.

God.)⁵ The author claims to have received a communication from God of something that has been hidden.

- John says (1:1) that Jesus, "...made it known..." to him. The "it" here is the Revelation. The Greek word here comes from the root, σημαίνω (semaino). The noun form of this word means, "sign." The verb form simply means, "make known." The word often has the connotation, "make known by means of signs."⁶
- The idea of receiving visions of divine matters is thoroughly rooted in the OT (Isaiah 6:1-13; Jeremiah 24:1-10; Ezekiel 1:1-28; Daniel 7:1-28; Amos 7:1-9; Zechariah 1:7-17). See also some New Testament references: Acts 10:9-16; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4).
- From the outset, the reader is alerted to the fact that understanding the book will be a challenge. It's a revelation from God and is communicated in signs.

How does John describe the content of the vision?

- Two ways: (a) it concerns what must soon take place – 1:1; (b) it is the word of God – 1:2.
- John believed what was going to happen would happen soon...in the not-so-distant future. Note he says in 1:3 that the "...the time is near."

⁵ Joseph L. Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), p. 15.

⁶ Joseph L. Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), p. 15.