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Prologue (Rev.1:1-8)

Inscription (1:1-3)

The opening verses introduce the book to us, so that we may immediately turn to the text of this last book of the Bible.

The book is known as *The Revelation to John*. The verses 1-3 show who the first author was of Revelation, who the first recipient, who the agent to deliver Revelation to the writer, and for whom it was put into writing.

The word “revelation”, a translation of the Greek word *apocalypse*, literally means *unveiling*. The book unveils, discloses things which cannot be known without special revelation.

This revelation is committed to writing in the book. Therefore, we should not treat it as a puzzle which we must solve, but as a mystery which has been unveiled for us.

The LORD once spoke, according to Genesis 18:17, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do...?” The LORD wanted to share his plan with Abraham. He acts in a similar way with us by revealing “the words of this prophecy” (v.3). These words of prophecy are, however, as v.1 literally says, “signified” to John, i.e., made known, for the greater part, in the language of signs and symbols. It is important to realize this for symbolic language should be understood figuratively.

To understand and interpret the book correctly, one must discover the meaning of the several signs and symbols found in the visions John received. Sometimes it is the Lord Jesus or the interpreting angel who points out the meaning. In other instances other books of the Bible help to understand a particular vision. Verse 1 states that Revelation shows the things which must “soon” take place. Therefore, the idea that Revelation

The Lord's Self-proclamation (1:8)

The prologue closes with a self-proclamation. The question arises whether the text refers to the Lord Jesus or to the LORD God. In support of the former interpretation it has been pointed out that vv.7 and 12ff. speak of the Lord Jesus; He, therefore, would be the speaker in v.8.

The preceding passage, however, speaks of God as well. Verses 1 and 4 point to him as the ultimate giver of Revelation. Moreover, the name “who is and who was and who is to come” in v.4, as in other passages where this is used, refers to God. The name “the Almighty” also refers to God. Therefore, it seems better to understand the self-proclamation as a reference to God. The three names once more give assurance of the trustworthiness of the book and the certainty that the revealed things will be fulfilled.

Questions for Review

1. What is the purpose of the book Revelation according to v.1? Do you know a book of the Old Testament which is similar?
2. The symbolic number seven has often been interpreted as being composed of three, the number of God, and four, the number of man and his world; why can that be done but what is against this interpretation in v.4?
3. Why are the Spirits standing before the throne?
4. What assurance is given to the believers in the name “the first born of the dead”?
5. When did Christ become “the ruler of the kings of the earth”?
6. How will Christ's return to the world differ from his departure out of the world on Ascension Day? (v.7) What significance is there to this difference?
7. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet. What does the LORD reveal by calling himself the Alpha and Omega in v.8?

Questions for Discussion

1. How do we apply Revelation correctly in our daily lives? How should it affect how we live?
2. Revelation is addressed to churches in v.4 and not to individual believers; what does this imply? Is church membership required by God, or simply optional?
3. What responsibility is implied in the privilege of being “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” mentioned in v.6? Does this speak to the current trend of churches trying to be more appealing to worshippers and “seekers”? If so, how?
4. Zechariah 12:10 is partially quoted in v.7. In our verse, however, the promise of Zechariah 12:10 has become a threat. What causes this change? Should this verse cause fear in our hearts?