

Revelation 1:1d-3b

THE UNIQUE DELIVERY OF THE BOOK

and he sent and signified *it* by his angel (1:1d)

The book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible “sent and signified [communicated]” to its human author by an angel. The words angel or angels are used seventy-one times in the book of Revelation. Angels appear in all but two chapters (Chapters 4 and 13) in the book of Revelation. The references and activities of angels appear more in Revelation than any other book in the Bible. Therefore, the book of Revelation is an important source of information on angels and their ministry.

THE HUMAN AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God; and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. (1:1e:2)

The human author to whom the angel communicated the book of Revelation is here identified as “his [Christ’s] servant John.” This was John the apostle.

John has five books attributed to his name: The fourth gospel (The Gospel according to John), the three epistles of John, and Revelation.

The early life and personal history of John is worth noting: First, he was a fisherman by trade before his conversion (Matthew 4:21). Second, his father’s name was Zebedee, and no doubt a man of means (Matthew 4:21). However, we have no information in respect to his religious character, or his personal participation in the events of the Gospel history. Third, his mother’s name was Salome (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40). Salome was a follower of Jesus according to Matthew Chapter 20 and verse 20, she is seen again at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40).

Fourth, his brother’s name was James, also an apostle, who later was martyred under Herod Agrippa I (Matthew 4:21; Acts 12:2). Fifth, John and his family held a place of position and considerable influence around Jerusalem (Mark 1:20; Luke 8:3; John 18:5). Sixth, John had been exiled on an island in the Aegean Sea called Patmos. He was exiled because of his preaching and his testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:9).

Out of all that John had experienced and seen, nothing so touched him as did his experience on the island of Patmos. The enormity of the visions John received on that barren island staggered him. Throughout his gospel, John never directly referred to himself. Yet here he bookends his vision with the statement: “I John” (Revelation 1:9; 22:8). His mind was staggered by the visions he had seen.

He loyally “bare record [testified] of the word of God; and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all that he saw.” John had faithfully testified to the first coming of Jesus Christ, this is the

reason for him being on the island of Patmos. But now he will faithfully testify “of all things that he saw” concerning Christ’s second coming.

THE PROMISE OF THE BOOK

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: (1:3a)

Verse 3 begins with a promise of blessing. But verse three and its promise is only one verse of many in the book that promises blessing (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:14).

There is a change that takes place in this verse that is very important. The change is in the words he and they. He is in the singular meaning one and they is in the plural meaning more than one. The change is important because it depicts a first-century church service. In the first-century, it was common practice when the church gathered for service that one person (he) would read from Scripture aloud for all (they) to hear.

This practice was common no doubt because writing material was expensive and scarce – so were copies of the books that were parts of the biblical canon. One copy per Christian assembly was the best that could be hoped for. And sometime this general rule may not have been possible. Therefore, public reading was the only means that many Christians had for becoming familiar with the books of Scripture.

Since John declared the public reading of the Apocalypse, this in its self strongly argues that from the beginning he recognized it as a part of the New Testament canon. The book of Revelation is God’s final word to man. It marks the completion of the canon of Scripture. Its content encompasses the entire future of man’s day. Therefore, it is imperative that Christians pay diligent attention to the truths it contains.

Verse 3a says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep [heed] those things which are written therein.”

THE URGENCY OF THE BOOK

for the time is at hand. (1:3b)

The word “time” does not translate that which refers to a calendar or clock, but to a season or era. For example, when we see the leaves fall from the trees in autumn and the temperature begins to cool down, we say, that winter is at hand (near). The urgency of the book is seen in the phrase “for the time is at hand” [near]. John is saying that the next great era of God’s redemptive history is near. That the return of Christ is imminent – think of all that Scripture speaks of. Note, II Timothy 3:1-9, 13; 4:1-5 just to mention a few.

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