

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

consider . . . Jesus

Heb. 3:1

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The Time of the End

Part II

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (II)

John to the seven Churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne:

And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Rev. 1:4-8).

The opening three verses of the Book of Revelation relate both *the subject matter* of the book and *the means* which God used to convey His Word as the Spirit of God moved John to pen the things which he had both seen and heard.

The announced *subject matter* of the book is *an unveiling, a revealing of Jesus Christ*. It is an opening up and a making known of Old Testament Scripture *through the Word which became flesh, through God's Son* (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44, 45).

The means of conveying the written Word through the living Word was accomplished through *angelic ministry, with John being removed from Man's Day and placed, at a future time, in the Lord's Day*. And at this future time in the Lord's Day, John was allowed to see and hear that which the Spirit moved him to record.

The next five verses (vv. 4-8) then carry the reader through *a description of God's Son*, as God would have man to see and understand specific things about His Son. And this would be with a view to that about to subsequently be made known through an opening up and unveiling of *the living Word*.

The whole of the matter surrounding God's description of His Son throughout these verses centers around *regality*. And, reflecting back on the Old Testament, from which material in the Book of Revelation is drawn, the whole of the Old Testament moves toward a future day which is being revealed through God's Son in this book.

The One Whose right it is to rule is about to take the sceptre and reign over the earth, as seen in the second Psalm, the one hundred tenth Psalm, and numerous other Old Testament passages. And it is *these passages* — the written Word, the Old Testament Scriptures — which are being opened up and revealed in the Book of Revelation *through the living Word*.

The One Who Is, Who Was, and Who Is to Come

The words "which is, and which was," referring to God the Father in Rev. 1:4, are used in this same sense in four other verses in this book (1:8;

4:8; 11:17; 16:5). The words "and is to come" can be found in the first two references, the presence of these words is open to question in the third reference (some Gk. mss have the words, some don't), but the words are not found in the Greek text of the fourth reference. A word referring to *holiness* is used in the fourth reference instead — "the One existing, and the One Who was, the Holy [or 'righteous'] One."

The same things are said about both *the Father and the Son* through the statement appearing in Rev. 1:4 and then repeated in verse eight. The first reference (v. 4) has to do with *the Father*, and the second reference (v. 8) has to do with *the Son*. Thus, both the Father and His Son are seen as the One "which is, and which was, and which is to come."

The first two expressions ("which is," and "which was") are *timeless*. Both are translations of the same Greek word (*eimi*), which would not include any thought of a beginning or an ending (like the English words "to be" or "being").

In the Greek text, the first (translated, "which is") is a present participle, and the second (translated, "which was") is a verb in the imperfect tense. Both together show *continuous, timeless action existing throughout all of the past, into the present, without any thought of ending*.

Thus, as seen in these two verses (vv. 4, 8), both the Father and the Son *exist in a co-equal sense throughout all time, without reference to a beginning or an ending*. And *the coming of the Father (v. 4) occurs through a coming in the person of His Son (v. 8)*.

According to John 1:1, 14a:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And the Word was made ['became'] flesh..."

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The Time of the End —

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In verse one, *eimi*, the same verb used in Rev. 1:4, 8, is used in an imperfect tense three times in the Greek text (same tense as used in Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5). “God” and “the Word” are seen as *one and the same*; and *continuous existence, without reference to a beginning or an ending*, is seen occurring during past time through the use of this imperfect tense. Also, there is no definite article before “beginning” in the Greek text, for *God, His Son, and His Word* have no beginning, as they have no ending.

Then, in the first part of verse fourteen, *the Word* from verse one, which was identified as *God* and seen to have existed throughout all past time, “was made [‘became’] flesh, and dwelt among us...” The verb used in this verse (“was”), though translated the same as *eimi* in verse one, is from an entirely different word in the Greek text — *ginomai*. And *ginomai* in verse fourteen, unlike *eimi* in verse one, is not used in the same timeless sense.

Ginomai calls attention to a definite beginning point, which occurred at the time of the incarnation (which is shown by an aorist tense in the Gk. text [rather than an imperfect tense as seen with *eimi* in v. 1], with the aorist tense calling attention to a *past action which has been attained, completed*). The Word, inseparably identified with both the Old Testament Scriptures and with God, *became flesh* at a point in time in the person of the Son.

The incarnation is nothing more and nothing less than *God becoming “flesh” in the person of His Son* (cf. John 10:30; 14:9). And, in turn, the incarnation is nothing more and nothing less than the Old Testament Scriptures (which are inseparably identified with God and are, in their entirety, about His Son) being set forth in a manner other than in written form. The incarnation has to do with *the written Word, being revealed through “flesh,” in the person of the Man Christ Jesus*.

In the preceding respect, as seen in John chapter one, *the Father, the Son, and the Word are inseparable*. Yet the Word is in man’s possession on earth today, with both the Father and Son

in heaven. And in heaven, the Son is seated on the right hand of His Father (Psa. 110:1; Rev. 3:21).

Explain the matter? Impossible! Finite, fallen man, relative to the discussion at hand, cannot go beyond simply reading and believing that which Scripture reveals. Man is not called upon to *explain an inseparable, yet separable, Father, the living Word, and the written Word*. Rather, he is called upon to *believe that which God has stated about the matter*.

Thus, as seen in the text and in corresponding Scripture, the Book of Revelation, being an opening up and an unveiling of God’s Son, is simply *an opening up and unveiling of the Old Testament Scriptures in the form of “flesh.”* And, as well, this book is *an opening up and unveiling of God, Who is “spirit”* (John 4:24 [not “a Spirit,” as in the KJV, but simply “spirit,” i.e., “God is spirit”; ref., NASB, NIV, Weymouth, Wuest]).

(The inclusion of an indefinite article in John 4:24 in the English translation completely changes the meaning of the verse and does away with the anarthrous use of the word seen in the Greek text. The Greek text, unlike English, does not contain indefinite articles, only definite. And *there are reasons why* the definite article is either used or not used before words. The inclusion of the article emphasizes *identity*; and when the article is not used, *character* is emphasized instead.

For example, I John 4:8b states, “God is love.” There is no article, and *character* is centrally in view. God, as to *His essence, His being, is love*. And the same thing is in view through the use of the word “spirit” in John 4:24. *Character* is centrally in view. God, as to *His essence, His being, is spirit*.

Note what the inclusion of an indefinite article in the translation of John 4:24 does to the meaning of the text. Reading “God is a Spirit” not only completely does away with the correct meaning of the verse but it moves the thought into *the physical realm* [where it doesn’t belong at all], leaving the reader with a completely erroneous view of God.)

Understanding that the Book of Revelation is a revealing, an unveiling of the Son, the inseparable connection between *God, the Son, and the Word* can, as well, be seen in the statement in Rev. 10:7:

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“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished [brought to an end, completed, fully opened up and revealed], as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (cf. Amos 3:7).

“A mystery” in the New Testament has to do with *Old Testament revelation further opened up and revealed in the New*. And since the Book of Revelation is about an opening up and revealing of the Old Testament through the One Who became “flesh,” inseparably identified with God, the things surrounding God would, as well, be opened up and revealed at the same time, through this same means.

That seen about God in the Old Testament, not fully opened up and revealed in the Old Testament (referred to as *a mystery* in Rev. 10:7), are seen as fully opened up and revealed *in the person of the Son* in the Book of Revelation.

That’s what the book is declared to be about. The book is simply an opening up and a revealing of those things from the Old Testament Scriptures which yet remain to be opened up and revealed about God and His Son. And this is accomplished by means of *God, through His Son, opening up and revealing Himself*, as seen in this book.

(The mystery of God can be fully opened up and revealed when the seventh trumpet has sounded — at a mid-point in the book — because, as the seven trumpets are contained in the seventh seal of the seven-sealed scroll [Rev. 8:1ff], the seven vials of wrath [about to be poured out] are contained in the seventh trumpet [Rev. 10:1ff].

Thus, the judgments contained through the sounding of the seventh trumpet include and have to do with

judgments seen in the seven vials. And when this trumpet has sounded, *the whole of God's judgments upon the earth-dwellers* can be looked upon as having occurred, for, as previously stated, the seven vials are contained in the seventh trumpet.

This is why in Rev. 11:15, with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, it can be stated:

"The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever" [ASV].)

The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth

The description of Christ is that of a *King with His co-heirs* (Rev. 1:5, 6). Israel and the nations are brought into the picture immediately following (v. 7). Then there is the picture of *His eternality*, with no beginning or ending (v. 8). And throughout these four verses (vv. 5-8), *the coming intervention of this individual into the affairs of man once again can be seen.*

Things are not going to go on and on, uninterrupted, in man's affairs as they occur during Man's Day. God works with *set times* (known only to Him) in connection with *circumstances* (usually brought about by man's failures). In history, God has always stepped into man's affairs when the time and circumstances were right. And He will do the same thing again yet future.

The current Middle East situation, for example, is not only *about to tumble completely out of control but it will tumble completely out of control.* God will allow this to occur *for a revealed purpose.* And, because the problem is of a *spiritual nature* which man has no control over, *man can't do anything about the inevitable.*

The whole of the matter lies in God's hands, under *His sovereign, providential control of all things.* And when the time and circumstances are right — when God's purpose for allowing conditions in the Middle East to become so completely out of control that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" — God will once again step into the affairs of man and straighten the whole of the matter out.

That's really what the Book of Revelation is about. It is about "the time of the end," when God once again steps into man's affairs — a time not only dealt

with extensively by the Old Testament prophets but a time which the world is rapidly approaching. And the book has to do with *more than God just stepping in once again.* The book details *a final intervention in order to bring 6,000 years of redemptive work to a close and usher in the Messianic Era.*

(For additional information on the Middle East situation, as it exists today, refer to the article by the editor, "The Intractable Middle East Problem.")

1) Seven Spirits, Faithful Witness

"The seven spirits" before God's throne (Rev. 1:4) are seen in connection with "the faithful witness" of the Son (v. 5). *These seven spirits* are referred to in Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6, and *the faithful witness* of the Son can be seen in Rev. 1:2, 9; 3:14; 22:20 (cf. John 18:37).

There is an inseparable connection between the two. "Seven" is a number showing *the completeness of that which is in view.* *The unveiling of the Son,* "which God gave unto him," is in view (Rev. 1:1). And *the seven spirits* emanating from God's throne, in connection with *the faithful witness* of the Son (contextually, the unveiling seen in this book), would show the manner in which all things surrounding the introductory statement in verse one is brought to pass.

The Father, through His Son, brings the whole of that which is in view *to completion.* And parts of verses four and five form additional commentary on verse one, providing the reader with more of an understanding of the means which God uses to bring to pass that about to be opened up and revealed in this book.

2) First Begotten, Prince

The words "first begotten" are a translation of the compound Greek word *prototokos.* This word is made up of *protos,* meaning "first" and *tikto,* meaning "to beget," "to bring forth." This is the word used in the Septuagint (Gk. translation of the O.T.) in Ex. 4:22, which states, "Thus saith the Lord God, Israel is my son, even my firstborn."

The word is used relative to Christ in Rev. 1:5 in exactly the same sense that it is used relative to Israel in Ex. 4:22. In both instances *God's firstborn Sons* are in view; and in both instances, *death, burial,*

resurrection, and ultimately *regality,* are inseparably in view as well.

Note how all of this is set forth in the Exodus account under Moses.

God's firstborn son, Israel, through a vicarious death, is seen as *dead* in Exodus chapter twelve (both *national Israel* and *individual Israelites* are seen in this respect, for a lamb dies "for an house [both for the house of Israel and individual families in the nation]" (cf. Ex. 4:22; 11:4, 5; 12:1ff). Then there is a subsequent *burial* in the Red Sea and *a rising up* out of the place of death on the eastern banks of the Sea, removed from both Egypt and the Sea (chs. 14, 15). And all of this is with a view to *one goal* — *realizing an inheritance in another land and exercising the rights of the firstborn therein.*

This is something set forth symbolically through baptism, relating to Christians, today.

Exactly as in the type in Exodus, baptism pictures *a burial after the firstborn has died,* vicariously (in this case, through appropriating the shed blood of Christ, available because of and through His finished work at Calvary). And, also as in the type, resurrection is to occur following burial, which is pictured through *a rising up* out of the baptismal waters, exactly as a rising up out of the Sea in the type. Then, having come up out of the waters, out of the place of death, the Christian is to "walk in newness of life," setting his mind on "those things which are above...not on things on the earth [exactly as the Israelites under Moses were not to look back to Egypt but out ahead]" (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 3:1, 2). And the end or goal of the matter for Christians under Christ is *exactly the same* as seen for the Israelites under Moses — *realizing an inheritance in another land and exercising the rights of the firstborn therein.*

This is the manner in which Christ is presented in Rev. 1:5, when seen as "the first begotten ['firstborn'] of the dead." And because Christ occupies this position, when "the manifestation of the sons of God" occurs, when God brings "many sons unto glory," God's Son will then occupy the position of "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:19, 29; Heb. 2:10).

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The Time of the End —

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Note Col. 3:3, 4 in this respect. The third verse has to do with Christians during present time, and the fourth verse has to do with Christians during future time (*cf.* John 12:23-25):

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Christ being referred to as “the first begotten of the dead” in Rev. 1:5 in connection with Christ also, immediately following, being referred to as “the prince of the kings of the earth.” The word translated “prince” in verse five is *archon* in the Greek text, referring to a “ruler.” And this is in connection with the whole of the matter — *the immediate context, the book as a whole, and related Scripture.*

3) Loved Us, Loosed Us

Based on manuscript evidence and contextual usage, “loosed” rather than “washed,” would appear to be the preferred translation in Rev. 1:5.

In the Greek text, the word for “loose” is *luo*, and the word for “wash” is *louo*. There is not only a close spelling of these two words but a similar-sense etymological use as well. Some manuscripts have *luo*, and some have *louo*. A letter has either been dropped or added to the word. And, considering the context, which is *regal* (a king frees by issuing a royal decree), evidently the latter has occurred, making the KJV text incorrectly read “washed” instead of “loosed.”

The whole of the matter begins with *redemption*, a “loosing” from sin, which is with a view to ultimately bringing fallen man back into the position where he can realize the purpose for his creation in the beginning — “...let them have dominion [‘let them rule’]” (Gen. 1:26-28). And God’s love surrounding the matter is

seen in God’s *character*. God, as to His essence, His being, is “love” (I John 4:8). This is why John 3:16 begins, “For God so loved...” As seen in this verse and elsewhere, God *will not* manifest Himself apart from His revealed character.

(Note something often misunderstood relative to God revealing Himself through *love* — God’s harsh treatment of individuals and nations during and at the end of the coming Tribulation, along with His treatment of the unsaved following the millennium.

On the former, God’s love for His son, Israel, is so great that He has decreed that *blessings or curses* are contingent on man’s treatment of His son [*e.g.*, Matt. 25:31-46].

On the latter, God’s love for His Son, Jesus, is so great that He has decreed that *man’s eternal destiny* will rest on man’s acceptance or rejection of His Son. [*e.g.*, John 3:18; Rev. 20:11-15].)

God’s redemptive work, emanating from His love, began in Eden following man’s sin. God slew one or more animals, took the skin, and clothed Adam and Eve. *Death and shed blood* occurred, which set an unchangeable pattern for God’s continued redemptive work.

The matter is seen in a two-fold sense in the story of the Israelites under Moses in the type in Exodus.

First, a redemptive work resulted in the death of the firstborn in Egypt; *then, a continuing redemptive work* (for a people already redeemed) subsequently occurred through Aaron’s high priestly ministry after the Israelites had been removed from Egypt. And both were based on *death and shed blood* and were with a view to that which lay out ahead — *an inheritance as God’s firstborn son, to be realized in another land.*

The matter, as well, is seen in a two-fold sense with respect to Christians under Christ in the antitype today.

First, a redemptive work has resulted in the death of the firstborn in the world

(exactly as it occurred in connection with the death of the firstborn in Egypt over 3,500 years ago); *then, a continuing redemptive work* subsequently occurs through Christ’s present high priestly ministry for Christians, who are in the world but not of the world (exactly as seen through Aaron’s ministry in the camp of Israel [John 15:19; 17:14-16; *cf.* John 18:36]). And, exactly as in the type, both are based on *death and shed blood* and are with a view to that which lies out ahead — *an inheritance as God’s firstborn son, to be realized in another land.*

4) Made Us a Kingdom, Priests

The expression, “kings and priests,” in Rev. 1:6; 5:10 could be better translated, “a kingdom, priests.” The expression is similar to and in keeping with the one in I Peter 2:9, “a royal [‘kingly’] priesthood [referring to a *body of priests in a kingdom*].” And the Septuagint translators used the identical wording seen in I Peter 2:9 (relative to Christians) in God’s description of Israel in Ex. 19:6 — “a kingdom of priests.”

The picture is that of *one kingdom with a body of priests*, whether in a past or future theocracy, and whether relative to Israel or Christians.

In the past theocracy, “God,” in the nation’s midst, was *the King*. “Israel,” because of God’s presence as King, formed a *kingdom*; and the Israelites in the kingdom were looked upon as *priests*, with the nations to be ruled by and blessed through Israel, “a kingdom of priests.”

This is the position which Israel will occupy yet future when the theocracy has been restored, with Christians occupying *exactly the same position from a heavenly sphere under Christ*. And Christians can occupy such a position only because, “in Christ,” they are “Abraham’s seed [the only seed through which all spiritual blessings flow], and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).

— To be Continued —

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