

When talking about the Apocalypse some argue that the Book is not for non-believers. In a sense that is true for all the Bible but provided the reader is not presumptuous that everything written is just for them, a healthy approach can gain benefit from all parts of the word of God. Fundamentally if people are consistent, they would need to do their own translation of the Revelation rather than trust any unbelievers to be involved in any such work, but critics generally are poor at thinking things through carefully.

Historically the Apostolic Ecclesia has used passages from this Book in their public witness at least over the last 40 years in my personal experience. There are many useful verses to establish or support all the major doctrines of scripture from the literality of the Kingdom to the nature of Christ, from the understanding of Satan to human nature.

The Revelation is the only Book communicated from someone back from the dead. It is thereby a proof of his resurrection. If its message is restricted to only believers, then this point is redundant, as they will by necessity already be convinced of that teaching. Jesus' message to his disciples builds upon that understanding and impresses upon them the need to take the information seriously, "*I am he that liveth and was dead*". This is no optional matter, its not a take it or leave it, but involved with the Blessing that is available to those that read, hear and keep. You cannot keep those things that are written therein unless you have understood the message. So, we should strive for that clarity.

In the last chapter Jesus himself says "*Behold I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book*". Prophecy is not restricted to foretelling the future, but anyone who speaks on behalf of God is a Prophet, from Moses to Jesus. The Prophecy of this book includes but is not limited to what is revealed about the outworking of the divine purpose in history

from the time following his first mission, to his second appearing and the intervening period also. The additional doctrinal information also needs to be kept as does the general requirement to keep Christ's commandments. One of which is "*Let him that heareth say come*". This commandment is the need to outreach to those who do not yet hear, and it is no wrong to use this book to do just that.

In our Confession of Faith, in the section entitled Doctrines to be rejected section 21, there is the statement that "That the special blessings promised, with regard to the understanding of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, have no reference to justification of life". This reflects the seriousness of the subject, but more on that area another time.

Section 20 states that "That the prophecies of the book of Revelation will only be fulfilled after the return of Jesus Christ or that they were all fulfilled in the past". This doctrine to be rejected frames the need to avoid the non-fundamental but dangerous teachings that Jesus' message is limited to a generation either at the start or end of the long period of the times of the gentiles, but more on that in a subsequent consideration.

It will be noted from reviewing the rest of the Confession of faith that references from the Book of Revelation are frequently quoted as proofs. See for instance Commandment of Christ 20 "Hold fast your confidence and rejoicing in Christ Jesus till you die or he come". Rev 2v10-25 Heb 3v14. (That should be Rev 2v 10&25 "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer...be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life*". "*But that which thou hast already hold fast till I come*").

The book contains some of the strongest proofs for various doctrines in the whole of the canon of scripture eg. The non deity of Christ see Rev 3v12 where four times the resurrected glorified Jesus says whilst at the right hand of the Father that he has a God!

The Revelation details that the Truth holders will be persecuted into death, Revelation 13v7 “ *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them*”. The adversary can only overcome the saints physically never spiritually, so they had to disappear at least for a time during the period of this prophecy. Before his return Jesus must preside over the resurrection of the Altar community as Revelation 16v7 says “*And I heard another (voice) out of the altar say Even so Lord God Almighty true and righteous are thy judgments*”. There is a time then when the saints are asleep in the dust in the ground with no faithful living witness to expose the Beast and his minions. Matthew 16v18 details of the Ecclesia that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” so it had to be resurrected and be seen to be so.

Dr Thomas understood this, and it was a clash over this teaching which first put him on a collision course with the Campbellite movement and Alexander Campbell in particular as is recorded in the Apostolic Advocate. When certain Baptists pleaded that the Truth had never died out, he rejected their claims and insisted upon re-immersions because they were a corrupt church, and he believed as such cannot baptised into Christ. This issue is passed over or ignored by Christadelphians as it does not suit their agenda.

Understanding the Revelation gives an understanding as to when in the prophetic schedule the return of Christ is predicted. He comes as thief to those who are not prepared for him and who would want to be in that class of fools?

The Book of Revelation unseals the figurative prophecies like Zechariah and Daniel which were sealed up for hundreds of years until the time of the first coming of the Messiah. The themes found therein are carried forward to fruition by Christ in his revelation, providing more clarity on previous works of inspiration. “*Thou must prophesy again before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings*” 10v11. The work of John to bring this out before

everyone is another reminder that the Book is not exclusively given to the servants.

The Book gives a better vantage point as it builds up like a staircase upon the already laid foundation of the Hebrew prophets, allowing the sincere Bible student to see further than ever before in those areas which God has condescended to reveal. There is a message for every generation which is in keeping with the promise that *“Unto Him be glory in the Ecclesia by Jesus Christ through out all ages, world without end, Amen”* Ephesians 3v21.

God willing all of these points will be considered in fuller detail when the verse-by-verse study is recommenced over the next several years God willing. The Revelation has been continuously studied either directly or via Eureka in the Ecclesia in Dartford since its inception in 1946, sometimes bi-weekly but now once a month, so we do not lose sight of its vital message for today and every generation.

A Voice from the Altar

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