

Bible Study of The Book of Revelation - Session 2

February 26th, 2012

Revelation: God-centered (theocentric) and “Trinitarian” in John’s own terms

Opening formula: Rev 1:4-5 – only epistle with Trinitarian greeting

God’s self-description Rev 1:8 (21:5-8)

the Alpha and the Omega (the beginning and the end, the first and the last): 7x

Isaiah; God as sole creator and sovereign lord of history

God precedes all and is the purpose and end of all (eschaton)

Beginning and end: Greek tradition re-used by Jewish authors

Alpha and Omega also as divine name IAO

who is and who was and who is to come: 5x

YHWH speaking from the burning bush in Exodus

John’s use of “is to come”

Eternity in relation; extends from Israel to whole world

the Lord God the Almighty: 7x

Standard translation of the expanded divine name in Hebrew scripture

NB: “pantokrater” is “ruler of all things”

The one who sits upon the throne: 7x Rev. 4:2

Faith in God’s sovereignty over all things

Heavenly throne room as ultimate reality

Earlier visions Isa 6, Eze 1

Continuous worship: to know God is to worship

Religious image: four creatures worship ~ temple

Political image: 24 elders, council of rulers who acknowledge God’s authority

Criticism of Roman power and claims: system as a whole corrupt and evil

The beast - military and political power of the Roman emperors

The harlot – prosperity from economic exploitation

Divine holiness in judgment: lightening and thunder as symbol of both

A transcendent sovereignty –

God the Creator: Rev 4:11

Jewish monotheism: doctrine of creation, practice of worship

Eschatology: creator as source of new creation

Resurrection as participation in the new creation

A faithful creator: rainbow as image of promise

The Lamb on the Throne

Rev 22:13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Christ as divine agent in creation (beginning) and as fulfillment (end)

Rev 1:18 "I was dead and behold, I live forever." "I have the keys of death and Hades."

Close connection in prolog and epilog: identification of God and Christ

Rev 5: 8-13 Jesus is worshipped (mark of the divine): expanding out from the four creatures and the elders to all of creation; includes God and Christ

A high Christology: What Christ does (save, rule, judge), God does

Christ: the divine present in the world as one who conquers by suffering

The victory of the Lamb and his followers

Human name Jesus 14x; Christ 7x; Lamb 28x (7 with God) – 4 as number of the world;
Lamb 28x = symbol of worldwide victory (peoples and tribes and languages and nations)

Christ's role is to establish God's kingdom on earth: Rev. 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,"

Three major themes

Messianic war: victory is larger, not military; multiple refs to Psalm 2; conquers first in death and resurrection, then through his followers, finally at parousia

Eschatological exodus: liberation bought by Christ (Passover Lamb)'s blood

Witness (martyr): Jesus "true and faithful witness" ; followers continue his witness; show true God vs. falseness of worldly kings

Christ's death: "you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; 10 you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth"; his followers continue Christ's conquest through their own sacrificial deaths which reveal truth

The scroll: Rev 11:1-13: the church (two lampstands) witnesses to God, is killed, raised from the dead and "the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven." – converting the world by their testimony of Christ

The Spirit of prophecy

“The seven spirits” 4x – the fullness of God’s power sent out into all the earth – closely associated with the victorious Lamb

“The Spirit” – 14x – 7 to the churches, 7 others

Seven spirits – Zechariah and sevenfold lamp stand – “eyes of the Lord which range throughout the earth” – also the Lamb with “seven horns (strength) and seven eyes (wisdom)” – implementing the Lamb’s victory throughout the earth through the power of the truth

“The Spirit” – the divine activity in and through the churches in their mission of witness and prophecy – also, specifically in John’s prophecy –

The seven messages: emphasis on truth; Christ (true and faithful witness) who has knowledge of the churches’ true situation offers choice of repentance or judgment (cp world);