

Revelation or revision

Last night I heard a preacher say, "The book of Revelation is finished, it has all, already taken place." This statement had stabbed me, like a knife in the chest, and I went to bed thinking; how does one refute that comment? Don't they know better? And I drifted off to sleep, dreaming

I hear the sound of the ocean washing on the shoreline. An old man is hunched, writing with haste on a scroll. A flickering oil lamp lights the small table where he writes. There are a number of other scrolls laying about him. A young man, well groomed, dressed like a prince, is slouched on the bed by the window.

"They won't read it," he says defiantly to the old man, "it's way above their understanding and sounds too far fetched."

The old man splits the tip of his quill in annoyance, shedding fine drops of ink on the parchment; "Oh yes they will!" he replies to the youth, "it will make quite an impression, to say the least!" Carefully mopping up the spill with a cloth. He then picks up a new quill, hurriedly dips it in the ink and carries on writing.

The youth mutters something under his breath and fades away, into the wall.

A voice is heard, calling in the street, "John, John, have you finished? The boat is leaving today!" A young man enters the room just as the old man puts down his quill; picks up the parchment and blows the damp ink dry, as he eyes his visitor.

He is dressed in an odd collection of clothes, and sandals worn but serviceable, wearing a huge smile he beams at the old man.

"There, it's finished," he announces, "I've just completed the last one. Help me, gather these together will you?" Carefully, they collect the scrolls from around the room, stacking them in order and rolling them together tightly, they tie a ribbon of cloth around the bundle and place them gently within a large clay jar. Tying down the lid securely with a long strip of leather, they carefully seal the neck of the jar by applying beeswax around it's rim.

"That will keep it dry for the crossing," the old man says, as he hands the jar over to the young man. "Now it's up to you," he says nodding, "make sure you give it to no one, but our scribes."

"Don't worry John, I won't let you down," the young man promises, giving the old man a hug. "I'll let you know what they say, when I return."

"God's speed," John bids him. The young man waves and hurries from the room, with the sealed clay jar tucked securely under his right arm.

There's a snigger from the bed, the surly youth had reappeared just as he was before, reclining on the bed. "It will never get there," he whines. "It's not up to you Satan, now be gone." the old man retorts and throws his ink soaked cloth at the vanishing intruder.

Oh, it's a dream is it? What day is it? Sunday; and this Revelation thing is still bothering me. I decide to write down my thoughts, and see where it goes.....

The dark side (demons and evil spirits) of scripture are largely ignored by preachers.

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." (Mat 8:16-17)

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Mat 8:28-29)

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. (Mar 1:23-26)

At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. (Mar 1:32-34)

For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known. (Mar 3:10-12)

When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" (Mar 5:6-8)

When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. (Luk 4:40-41)

When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. (Luk 8:28-31)

From these verses it is clear that Jesus was made known to the prophets and also to the demons who could identify Him from a distance. Jesus was not just the Son of Man, sent to die for our sins, but He was the Son of God in human flesh, completely susceptible to the world and all sin's evil. Jesus is very clearly revealed for who He really is by the four gospels. What then is the purpose of the Book of Revelation as it was written around 90AD, long after the destruction of Jerusalem?

I believe the answer is that the four gospels reveal the Son of Man, Jesus Christ in His role as the supreme sacrifice for sin, that we may be redeemed to Our Father, made righteous by reconciliation to Him. Throughout the Bible there are many mentions made to Judgement day, the day when all wrongs will be put right. Jesus will no longer occupy the position as a high priest, interceding on our behalf with Our Father. As surely as the door of the Ark was closed by the Lord, there will come a time, when the offer of redemption will expire, and Jesus will come back to earth with His angels to retrieve the righteous, and 1000 years later to execute judgement on the unrighteous. This is what I believe the book of Revelation is all about, the final role that the Son of God will fulfil as the avenger of the righteous and destroyer of the wicked. Moses understood this clearly when he wrote :

"For the Lord will judge His people and have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is no one remaining, bond or free. He will say: 'Where are their gods, The rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you, and be your refuge. Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand. For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, "As I live forever, If I whet My glittering sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy." ' Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people." So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. (Deu 32:36-44)

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the Lord of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the Lord of hosts. (Mal 4:1-3)

There were only eight people in the Ark along with the animals etc. who survived the flood, the judgement of water. Will man again be so arrogant and stupid, to ignore the offer of salvation from sin, and wait instead for their judgement of fire? Or will people realise their mistake whilst there is still an open offer by God's grace, and accept the redemptive sacrifice of His Son. We know that not all Christians will truly take up the offer, with dedication and understanding, as it is written.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' " (Mat 7:21-23)

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