

Revelation 1:1-3

The End Times

In my last post, we reviewed a brief **Introduction to Revelation**. In this post, we begin our verse-by-verse study of **The Revelation of Yeshua the Messiah to Yochanan**.

"¹ This is the revelation which God gave to Yeshua the Messiah, so that he could show his servants what must happen very soon. He communicated it by sending his angel to his servant Yochanan, ² who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah, as much as he saw. ³ Blessed are the reader and hearers of the words of this prophecy, provided they obey the things written in it! For the time is near!" ~ Revelation 1:1-3 (CJB).

"This is the revelation which God gave to Yeshua the Messiah..." It is important from the beginning to understand that the central figure of this book is **Yeshua the Messiah** and the central theme is **His Second Coming**. Yeshua is both the One revealed (referred to variously as Son of Man, Lion of Judah, Lamb, Word of God) and the Revealer. **God** transmits the unveiled truth to **Yeshua**, and **His angel** conveys it to **Yochanan** for **God's servants** in the churches. ¹

"... he could show his servants..." It seems obvious that this revelation is intended for the servants of God. God has never given us any portion of Scripture that was not for our edification. A **"servant"** in Scripture pertains to the position of bondservant. One who has been redeemed and set free, but chooses a life of obedience to the one who set him free.

"What must happen very soon." Compare this with: ***"But there is a God in heaven who unlocks mysteries, and he has revealed to King N'vukhadnetzar what will happen in the acharit-hayamim [End Times]. Here are your dream and the visions you had in your head when you were in bed. ²⁹ "Your majesty, when you were in bed, you began thinking about what would take place in the future; and he who reveals secrets has revealed to you what will happen."*** ~ Daniel 2:28-29 (CJB)

To what degree the writers of the Brit Hadassah regarded the **End Times** as imminent is debatable. Contrast, for example, **1 Corinthians 7:29-31** ² with **2 Kefa 3:2-10** ³. Yet they did urge believers to stay alert, for the Messiah may return without warning, like a thief in the night (cf. Matthew 24:32-25:30, Mark 13:32-37, and 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3).

The prophecy **must happen very soon** because it is secured by God's sovereign purpose and power. It will take place **soon**, because **"the time is near."** In the epilogue, Yochanan, unlike Daniel, is told *not* to seal

¹ As most of my regular followers know, I abhor the word "church" in discussing the activity of the Messianic Kehilah (see my explanation for why in the Glossary). However, I have decided to bend my thinking in this series since when we talk about the **End Times** we frequently use the phrase **"Church Age."** Beginning in chapter 2, we will dive into the letters to the **"Seven Churches."** So, for purposes of being politically correct, I will acquiesce.

² ²⁹ ***What I am saying, brothers, is that there is not much time left: from now on a man with a wife should live as if he had none — ³⁰ and those who are sad should live as if they weren't, those who are happy as if they weren't, ³¹ and those who deal in worldly affairs as if not engrossed in them — because the present scheme of things in this world won't last much longer."*** ~ 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (CJB)

³ ⁸ ***Moreover, dear friends, do not ignore this: with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some people think of slowness; on the contrary, he is patient with you; for it is not his purpose that anyone should be destroyed, but that everyone should turn from his sins. ¹⁰ However, the Day of the Lord will come "like a thief." On that Day the heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will melt and disintegrate, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up.*** ~ 2 Peter 3:8-10 (CJB)

his prophecy. **"Then he [an angel] said to me [Yochanan], 'Don't seal up the words of the prophecy in this book, because the time of their fulfillment is near'"** ~ Revelation 22:10 (CJB). Whereas Daniel was told by his angel: **"But you, Dani'el, keep these words secret, and seal up the book until the time of the end. Many will rush here and there as knowledge increases."** Daniel 12:4 (CJB) Yochanan's visions are important for his first-century readers as well as for later generations of believers.

Without doubt the early church lived in expectancy of the imminent return of the Lord; but so should every generation of believers. The Brit Hadashah expresses a tension between imminence and perspective; the time is near, yet the end is delayed. **"So stay alert, because you don't know on what day your Lord will come. But you do know this: had the owner of the house known when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you too must always be ready, for the Son of Man will come when you are not expecting him."** ~ Matthew 24:42-44 (CJB)

Sterns opines that *"A more strained rendering of the Greek, especially in view of verse 3 (**"For the time is near"**), is, "what must happen rapidly"; i.e., once the events described commence, it won't take long for all of them to occur."* Angels play a significant role in the book of Revelation. ⁴

"Blessed are the reader and hearers of the words of this prophecy..." This is the first of a series of seven beatitudes that are found in the Book of Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14).

"Blessed," as found here, is the same word that is used in Matthew (5:3-11) in the Sermon on the Mount. The word means happy, holy, or content.

"...provided they obey the things written in it! For the time is near!" This first beatitude in Revelation says blessed, happy, holy, or content is the one who reads, hears and keeps the things that are written in this book. Some might use the words, "cranky" or "critical" to describe those who read through this book. However, God says if you read this book, if you listen to this book, and if you keep or guard the truth that is revealed in this book, you are following the pathway of divine blessing. Take note of the fact that Revelation is a prophetic book. It is the last prophecy given by God to man. In the book of Revelation we find a compilation of all other prophecies in the word of God. Prophecies that are not previously fulfilled are consummated in the book of Revelation. There is no more God given, written revelation to man after John wrote Revelation. ⁵

This is also sound advice from Mr. Jones:

*"Now concerning the interpretation of Scripture, always use the literal approach. The only exception to this rule comes when, within the passage itself, it is obvious that it should be interpreted symbolically. The Bible does use figures of speech. God gives this revelation to Yeshua, who gives it to an angel, who communicates it to John, who writes it down for Christians throughout the ages. The angel mentioned may have been an Old Testament prophet. The word angel doesn't always refer to a spiritual being it can actually mean **"messenger."** On two other occasions (Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9) the angel continues sharing with Yochanan. However, Yochanan on those occasions makes the mistake of bowing before the angel and receives a sharp rebuke in return. The angel identifies himself as being one of the brethren, and in Revelation 22:9 as being one of the prophets. There is no other account of an angel of heaven speaking of himself with such description."*

Now that we have looked at what Scripture says and looked at several commentaries for enlightenment, let's take a few moments to look at how the **Four Views** of interpretation look at Revelation 1:1-3.

⁴ "Jewish New Testament Commentary" by David H. Stern

⁵ The above two paragraphs appear in "A Layman's Commentary on Revelation" by Don Jones.

It should come as no surprise that the phrases "*must happen very soon*" and "*For the time is near!*" get the only attention in this passage. As a matter of fact, we don't get a lot of dissension until we get to Chapter 4.

Special Comparative Note on Revelation 1:1-3

Historicist Approach: **Historicists** see fulfillment as beginning shortly after Yochanan's time, but extending long beyond through the entire age of the church.

Preterist Approach: The earlier date of the writing prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE is more comfortable for early-date **Preterists**. Later-date **Preterists** apply the fulfillment to the fall of Rome centuries after Yochanan's time.

Futurist Approach: **Futurists** see the terms "*very soon*" and "*near*" having some meaning other than which first comes to mind. (1) Very soon can mean shortly or quickly thus meaning there will be a rapidity of fulfillment whenever the proper time may come, but may be thousands of years later than Yochanan's time. (2) Very soon means that *the time is near* may be taken literally, but that Yochanan is speaking per God's ways as noted above in 2 Kefa 3:8. Even an event two thousand years removed might be regarded as *near* from God's perspective.

Idealist Approach: For Idealists, the time is always *near*, since visions transcend any particular time.

In my next post, we continue to our verse-by-verse study of this fascinating prophesy. As we go through the letter, I'll continue to present the different views as we come to passages that are interpreted differently by the adherents to those views of interpretation presented in Part 1 of the Glossary.