

Web Summary

“Living Between the Beginning and the End”

Revelation 21

Sunday, January 3, 2010

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Revelation was written to the Christian church living under the persecution of the Holy Roman Empire (HRE) John, its writer identified himself as a *“companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus...”* Rev. 1:9 Banished to the island of Patmos, he received a vision from God – a vision of God’s enthronement. Enthronement as victory. There are some 31 references to God’s enthronement in this, the last book of the Bible. John was inspired to write Revelation from God’s heavenly throne room perspective. The Lord God identified himself as the Alpha and the Omega. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. God is also identified as the one who *“is, who was and who is to come.”* Rev. 1:4. Note this carefully: God, first and foremost *“is.”* He is there with each successive and passing year, decade, century, generation. God is present in the middle of it all. That is to say: God is in control. He is the Almighty – the Beginning (Alpha) and the End (Omega)

Rev. 21:3 reveals a word that is heard from the throne saying: *“now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them.”* The word used for dwelling has biblical terms such as tabernacle or temple at its root. It reminds us of the literal rendering of the gospel of John chapter 1:14: the word made flesh *“tabernacled among us full of grace and truth and we have beheld his glory.”* Here in Revelation a new Jerusalem is revealed literally *“prepared and perfectly adorned for her husband.”* Rev. 21:2 A little later she is described as *“shining with the glory of God.”* Rev. 21:10,11

It’s all God’s work. So, don’t stare yourself blind on all that’s wrong in this world – this side of the Omega – this side of the End. Allow yourself to be comforted by the glorious brilliance of the New Jerusalem vision revealed here – the Omega moment, the last moment, the fullest moment of salvation. I am the Alpha and Omega. In other words, what I start I will fulfill! Salvation from start to finish is God’s work! A salvation that takes place in the context of less than ideal and even horrible circumstances.

There may be storm clouds gathering or that have burst in your personal or family life. There are significant concerns about the world’s political and economic situation. As Christians, we can not help but be concerned about the increasing limitations that are being set on the practice of our Christian faith in the public square. All things that can cause us worry, anxiety and who knows what else. But God will complete his purpose for his people. How?

Through the Lamb, Jesus Christ. *“The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are”* the New Jerusalem’s *“temple.”* Rev. 21:22. *“The city will be in no need of the light of sun or moon, for the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp.”* Rev. 21:23

This revelation is not some kind of escapist vision of the end allowing us to sit back and relax to await its fulfillment. Jesus, the Lamb, during his earthly ministry said: *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* John 8:12. Whoever follows me... It is a following that does not come without cost. A cost we will gladly embrace and endure in light of the marvelous and victorious vision given. It will involve the cost of time, energy and money. Luke records Jesus as saying: *“if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross **daily** and follow me.”* Luke 9:23 emph. added.

To follow will require daily decisions – all part and parcel of the process of “overcoming.”

This is the promise: *“those who overcome will inherit all this (glory) and I will be their God and they will be my children.”* (paraphrase Rev. 21:7) This is profoundly covenantal language. Echoes of Jeremiah 32:38 and Ezekiel 11:20. Prophets who prophesied during times when Old Testament Israel found herself in dire straits of captivity and exile.

Indeed, despite whatever unpleasant or unfavorable circumstances of this age...remember: *“the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”* Titus 2:11-14