

Article of the Month – February 2014

Missiological Observations in the NT (20) – Revelation

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Revelation of God's plans to His servants,¹ special as it is – certainly when angels are involved – is not abnormal. What we see in this book is very big, applies to the whole world, including all people and has to do with the end of the world missions era. When God reveals His plan, He includes the end of it. We see that He reveals His plans for *how*, *when*, *where* and *by whom* certain missionary actions need to take place. Earlier He revealed missionary plans to Jesus, Paul and Peter,² now to John and later still to many others. Without such revelation we would tend to do our own thing, without influencing the world as we could have, had we worked according to God's revelation. Our prayers for God to reveal His missionary plans to us must be continuous and fervent. Without Him we can do nothing.³

Another aspect is: did we work in the past according to what was revealed, or did we neglect it? If so, we cannot expect to receive fresh revelation. Revelation increases when obedient response increases. It means: *seeing* and *hearing* God's guidance, *feeling* His heartbeat and *joining* Him. Without revelation one runs wild. True revelation is a conviction, strong enough to die for. Without revelation no missionary survives long in the field. It distinguishes the owner from the mercenary.⁴ Every revelation starts with a meeting with the Revealer and developing a relationship with Him.⁵ Without divine revelation no one can be a revealer of God's will to others.⁶

Missionaries (apostles) that visit churches must be prepared to submit to testing⁷ by the leaders of that church, since they are responsible for her well-being.⁸

The Holy Spirit is pictured as 'seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth'.⁹ The two-fold mention of seven describes the complete missionary range of the Holy Spirit, expressed by the words 'sent out': the seven Spirits overlook nothing. This ministry is being executed by Christ, the Lamb Who has 'seven horns' – expressing 'all authority in heaven and on earth'.¹⁰ This perfect combination results in a representation of all ethnic families on earth before the throne.¹¹ Through His Spirit Christ leads the Church to reach that goal in all its completeness.

¹ Rev. 1:1

² E.g. John 5:19 (Jesus); Acts 9:16; 13:2; 16:6-10; 27:23-26 (Paul); Acts 10:9-20 (Peter)

³ John 15:5b

⁴ 10:11-13

⁵ Rev. 1:4-18

⁶ 1:19,20

⁷ 2:2b

⁸ 6,14-16,20

⁹ 5:6

¹⁰ Matt. 28:18

¹¹ Rev. 5:9; 7:9

Chapter six pictures some aspects of missions history. Christ's Gospel went out to conquer the world after He defeated death.¹² Almost at the end of this book we see His mission accomplished: He now has many followers.¹³ Then, the three next horses with their riders start to demolish the conquest of the first.¹⁴ The rider on the *first* horse is the Prince of peace.¹⁵ After Him the one on the *second* horse comes, taking peace away and initiate wars.¹⁶ Similarly, after the message of the first sounded 'I am the Bread of Life',¹⁷ the *third* causes famine on earth.¹⁸ Equally, after Jesus defeated death on the Cross, the rider on the *fourth* horse causes death in abnormal proportions.¹⁹

Throughout missions history we see that, when the Gospel advances, Satanic counter attacks try to destroy God's *work* as well as His *people*.²⁰ Missionaries at the frontlines must count with such attacks. They will conquer when they don't 'love their lives ... [unto] death'.²¹ Willingness to pay the ultimate price for the Gospel may become the missionary's most valuable weapon. Such preparedness should be the common characteristic of all true brothers.²² As long as that willingness does not become common among believers, the Church is not yet ready to face Last Days challenges.

Many of God's servants will not be harmed because they are sealed,²³ but at the end more and more will lay down their lives for Christ and the Gospel.²⁴

When the full harvest of world missions has come in,²⁵ the sower and the reaper will rejoice together²⁶ but there will be no 5:9 & 7:9 without 11:7 & 13:7. After all, 'these in white robes' have come out of the Great Tribulation.²⁷

The darkest part of the night is still to come. After the woman²⁸ gives birth to the male child,²⁹ she is protected in a safe place during 3½ years.³⁰ Although her active mission seems over ('desert') she has other offspring: people are still being born again,³¹ some of them because they leave the apostate church.³² War rages against them³³ and some will be killed, but spiritually they are safe.³⁴

¹² 6:1,2

¹³ 19:11-16

¹⁴ 6:3-8

¹⁵ Is. 9:6; John 20:19,20

¹⁶ Rev. 6:3,4

¹⁷ John 6:35

¹⁸ Rev. 6:5,6

¹⁹ 6:7,8

²⁰ 6:9-11

²¹ 12:11b

²² 12:10

²³ 9:4; 7:3

²⁴ 11:7; 13:7; Dan. 7:21

²⁵ Rev. 5:9; 7:9

²⁶ John 4:36

²⁷ Rev. 7:14

²⁸ The woman is an image of the Church

²⁹ 12:1,5 the male child is an image of them that (possibly after martyrdom) will reign with Christ

³⁰ 12:6,14-16

³¹ 12:17

³² 14:6,7,14-16; 18:4

³³ 12:7

³⁴ 14:13

The Last Day saints continue to preach the Gospel, to no avail. People have become so hardened that they do no longer repent.³⁵ The night in which no one can work³⁶ has come upon the world. Yet, success or not, the Church's worldwide ministry goes on³⁷ until her voice is being silenced – albeit not for long.³⁸ They all come back with their Lord, raised, raptured and changed, to establish His Kingdom on earth.³⁹ The first act of the returned King and His new government⁴⁰ will be judgment over their enemies.⁴¹

Just as the missionary church has an interest in every people, tribe, language and nation, so does the devil and the beast out of the sea.⁴² This became already clear when Satan tried to tempt Jesus.⁴³ There will be war between them until the end, when the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.⁴⁴

The last war-scene before the Millennium is the triumphal ride of Christ with His army. We see several pictures of the true Church in Revelation and these have to do with her different missions. The mission of the *woman*⁴⁵ is to bring forth offspring. The first of these is the *male child*, called to rule, which will be his mission during the Millennium.⁴⁶ Another function is that of the *bride*: her mission is to develop the love relationship with her Lord.⁴⁷ The mission of the *army* is to join its supreme Commander,⁴⁸ defeating His enemies.⁴⁹ A similarity between the bride and the army is their clothing.⁵⁰ With the mission to rule,⁵¹ God's plan for man⁵² has become reality.⁵³ Clearing away the last enemies⁵⁴ the new era begins.⁵⁵ At its end there is another short war;⁵⁶ then we see the very last of the devil. The white throne judgment takes place⁵⁷ and the New Heaven and Earth come forth.⁵⁸

The Church's mission is to be ready and expectant⁵⁹ to save whoever can be saved.

³⁵ 9:20,21

³⁶ John 9:4

³⁷ Rev. 10:17; 11:3-6

³⁸ 11:7,11,12

³⁹ 11:15-17; 12:5; 19:6-9

⁴⁰ 20:4,6

⁴¹ 11:18,19; 14:17 – 19:2,17-21; 1 Cor. 6:2a

⁴² Rev. 13:2,7b

⁴³ Matt. 4:8,9

⁴⁴ Rev. 11:15; 14:17

⁴⁵ Rev. 12

⁴⁶ Compare 12:5 & 19:15

⁴⁷ 19:7

⁴⁸ 19:11-14

⁴⁹ 12:7-12

⁵⁰ 19:8:14

⁵¹ 20:4,6

⁵² Gen. 1:26,28

⁵³ Rev. 22:5

⁵⁴ 19:17 – 20:3

⁵⁵ 20:4-6

⁵⁶ 20:7-10

⁵⁷ 20:11-15

⁵⁸ Rev. 21 & 22

⁵⁹ 22:7-21