

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“Trinitarian Salutations”

Revelation 1:4, 5

Introduction

1. True Bible believers affirm the Trinity. They believe in a monotheistic God who subsists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These persons are co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. It is a distinctive Christian doctrine.

2. John the apostle employs this doctrine in his salutation for this book. He writes to the seven churches in Asia Minor (v. 4). These were literal local churches. This very fact militates against the modern views of cell groups and house meetings which are opposed to organized local churches. Complementing this is also the fact that the doctrine of the local church does not counter the equally biblical doctrine of the universal church which incorporates all true believers world-wide as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

3. The usual greetings are sent to these churches: grace (is a Greek greeting) and peace (a Jewish greeting). The order is indicative of experience: grace precedes peace! But the big issue is that these two blessings flow from the triune God. The very mention of Him extends tremendous truth. Here is the ascription of praise to the trinitarian monotheistic God from Whom the grace and peace come:

1. GOD THE FATHER v. 4

a. He is. The articular participle calls attention to God’s eternality and immutability. The LXX has the same rendering of Exodus 3:14. God is the self-existent One and therefore to Whom all others are ultimately responsible.

b. He was. Here again an article is employed, but this time with a finite verb because there is no imperfect participle in the Greek. It is used to express God’s connection with the past. He has total identity with the past.

c. He comes. The articular participle here shows God’s total connection with the future. While some might have expected the future tense of the copulative verb, the use of the verb “come” is more consistent with the contents of the book. It also helps to show the identity between the Son and the Father.

2. GOD THE SPIRIT v. 4

a. Identity. This is an unusual expression, but it does refer to the divine Holy Spirit. Only He could be involved in the giving of grace and peace. No angel could do this (8:2). The expression is linked with the Father (4:5) and the Son (3:1). This confirms the truth of the Spirit’s relation to Father and Son (John 15:26). This whole truth is also linked with the Messiah (Zech. 3:9) and the Spirit (Zech. 4:10).

b. Activity. The plentitude of the Spirit’s power is evidenced by the term “seven.” It is the governmental aspect of the Spirit’s work which is involved here. His thronal fullness

and completeness of operation is clearly noted. The areas in which He moves are suggested by the Old Testament (Isa. 11:1, 2).

3. GOD THE SON v. 5

The name Jesus connotes His Saviourhood while Christ marks Him out as the Messiah. He is described as:

a. The faithful witness. The entire earthly life of our Lord is in view here (Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-9). The word “witness” is the same as “martyr” (John 7:7; 1 Tim. 6:13). He trod the path of faith and obedience and did not halt (Heb. 12:1, 2). The word “faithful” marks His total discharge of duty (1 Cor. 7:25).

b. The first begotten. Christ was not the first to rise from the dead (John 11), but He was the first over whom death no longer held sway (Ro. 6:9). In this sense, He is the “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20-23). But here He is called the first-begotten and this means He has certain dignity which none others have (Ps. 89:27). Hence, He is first-begotten 1) of Mary -- Mat. 1:25; 2) before all creation (Ro. 8:29; Col. 1:15); 3) by resurrection (Col. 1:18; here).

c. The prince of kings. The word “prince” is really “ruler.” He is Ruler of all kings (17:14; 19:16). He has won this by His resurrection and not as a token from Satan (Mat. 4:8f). Romans speaks of His work of redemption; Hebrews of His work as high priest and advocate; Revelation of His work as Ruler. Hallelujah.

Conclusion

Surely, our triune God is worthy of praise. May He be given it from our redeemed lips now and ever.

End Notes

1. Four approaches to the study of Revelation: a. Preterist views prophecies as already fulfilled. b. Historical views prophecies as a progressive history from beginning of church to end. c. Spiritualizing views prophecies as conflicts between Christ and Satan. Vaporizes grammar for 20:1-10. d. Futurist views prophecies from 4:1 - 22:24 as future. Employs literal interpretation.

2. Seven churches (v. 4) were best points of communication with the seven districts. Note “7” in Book (1:12, 16; 4:5; 5:1, 16; 8:2; 10:3; 11:13; 12:3; 13:1; 14:6). Also consider: 7 feasts (Lev. 23), 7 parables (Mt. 13).

3. Christ is at once the Prophet (faithful witness), Priest (first-begotten), and King (prince of kings).

4. “From” is used three times, once in reference to each member of the Trinity. The preposition used focuses on source ().

5. The “throne” (v. 4) anticipates the throne of God the Father (4:2, 5)