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Reflections on the Book of Revelation

VOLUME ONE

TONY LING

Acknowledgments

Dedication

To Keri Jones, Noralv Askeland, and Chandrakant Chavada,
“...outstanding among the apostles.”

In loving memory of Hazel, 1943–2002, “prepared as a
bride...for her husband.”

Those closer to home have provided much needed practical help and support. For transcribing the original messages and helping to work them into readable manuscripts, I give grateful thanks to Heather Curshier, Kledi Murlan, Sara Cosgrove, and Jacqueline Hunter-Hodges.

My thanks to Ron Eagle and Matthew Ling, who ministered with me in the conference from which these words are taken. Their valuable contributions are not in this book, but they can be obtained in audio format from the School of the Prophets.

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Encouragement and support for this book has come from many friends and colleagues around the world. Thank you, brothers.

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To Geoff and Pam Grice and Dave and Su Gregg, part of the leadership team at Southport Community Church, I am indebted to you and appreciate you all.

The highest appreciation to my friend and fellow minister Trevor Lloyd, leading elder at Community Church, Huddersfield. Thanks, Trev, for all your hard work, encouragement, faithfulness—and occasional nagging. We got there in the end!

Endorsements

Tony Ling is an author you can trust. He takes the Book of Revelation out of the hands of weird end-time theorists and gives it back to the people of God as a word from the Lord to strengthen and encourage them right now. He connects Revelation to the whole of Scripture and shows that Jesus is at the center of its message. This book is not just for those particularly interested in Revelation, but for everyone who wants to grow in their faith.

Timothy Larsen, PhD

Professor of Theology
Wheaton College Wheaton, Illinois

Tony Ling opens up the Book of Revelation, changing it from something complicated and distant into a focused, helpful, and Jesus-centered Scripture.

Through his profound knowledge of the Word of God, he shows us that the Book of Revelation is, as it says in the first verse, "The revelation of Jesus Christ..." Jesus is the center, not only of the Church, but of the whole universe. The Revelation makes us see Him as the one who leads His people through to victory through all times.

The perspectives in this book inspire us to fulfill our Kingdom destiny here on Earth.

From my point of view, Tony Ling is the best person to write a book on this subject. Thank God he did it! I gladly recommend this book.

Morten Askeland

Leading Pastor, Christian Fellowship, Bergen
Principal, Bergen Bible School

In *The Lion and the Lamb*, Tony Ling has drawn on his vast knowledge of the great themes of Scripture to produce a thorough biblical exposition of the climax of God's Word. That is the beauty of this book: the author has broken out of the narrow confines of other lines of thought to place John's letter to the seven churches within the wider framework of the other sixty-five books in the Bible. And he achieves it in a style that is easy to read.

This is not just a book for those who want to know what Revelation is all about; it's for those who want to know what the Bible is all about.

Dr. Roger Aubrey

Principal
Covenant School of Ministries, School of the Word

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Foreword

Over the past two millennia, Revelation has evoked many different responses: faith, doubt, joy, dismay, triumph, anticipation—and certainly bewilderment and confusion. Some love to dwell in its pages (it was always my father's favorite book of the Bible), but others virtually ignore it, wanting to avoid the errors of those whose interpretations and applications did not stand the test of time.

Having personally read through the Book of Revelation many times, studied related books and commentaries, and preached through much of the text, I have over time come to the same eschatological position as the author's. But that is not to say you must agree with a particular position in order to benefit from this book. I found within these pages at least four powerful

“revelations” that go beyond doctrinal position: revelations that capture your attention and your heart and, if embraced, will transform your life and ministry.

First, Tony Ling makes absolutely certain that the center—the “jewel in the crown”—is always Christ Jesus. It’s all about Him! A few years ago at a Christian conference attended by some 17,000 delegates, I was greatly saddened to observe that in a five-day period only one speaker focused on lifting up the name of Jesus. In Christian bookstores we find innumerable books and magazines that are all about achieving success by simply following the methods and models used by the author. This book has nothing to say about methodology; it has everything to say about Christ.

The second key theme or revelation is one that would save many pastors and leaders from handling the message of God’s victorious Kingdom in a triumphalistic manner. It is that the Lion of Judah is also the Sacrificial Lamb—all-powerful and all-knowing, yet meek and humble of heart. How I wish this book had been available fifty years earlier. So many young leaders in the charismatic movement of the twentieth century (myself included) acted like the rich man of Proverbs 18:23: “The poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly” (NASB).

A third revelation concerns the indispensable place of prayer, as portrayed by the altar of incense. When I read this section in the book, I felt as if I was standing on holy ground. Tony writes, “When our prayers touch the throne, the throne touches our world. The Kingdom comes on Earth when the church specifically prays for it to come.”

Foreword

A fourth major theme I found in *The Lion and the Lamb* was that the Old Testament and New Testament are inseparably joined; Scripture portrays an unfolding of God's covenants from Genesis to Revelation. Tony obviously loves God's Word and (from my observation) loves truth regardless of the cost. He doesn't shrink back from speaking what's in his heart—and in so doing may offend some of our cherished beliefs or pet interpretations. If or when that occurs, I would simply encourage the reader to ask, does this measure up with Scripture?

All in all, this book is a rich treasure chest. Throughout *The Lion and the Lamb* we are constantly offered nuggets of "prophetic gold." On almost every page I found myself underscoring something that grabbed my attention or making mental notes to look up some related Scripture. I pray that this book will be a great blessing to many.

Barnabas Coombs
Salt & Light Ministries
Church Relief International

Introduction

I love the Book of Revelation. I have preached from its treasury many times over many years. I have meditated on it often, and I have always been inspired by the deeply devotional passages with which it richly abounds.

I have studied numerous commentaries on Revelation—from the serious academic and theological to the desperately weird and flaky. I am aware of the various “millennial” positions held by different scholars and continue to be amazed at the ever-growing catalog of candidates for the role of “the beast.”

But I am not a theologian, and this is not a commentary. This book is far from exhaustive in its treatment of John’s magnificent prophecy, for the chapters herein were originally spoken messages

delivered at a prophetic conference; they were designed to be practical and applicable.

I had previously taught the Book of Revelation to a Bible College class, and in the week that my wife died, we had been focused on the verse that says, "Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on." Suddenly it was very real to me. Upon the foundation of this verse I experienced such comfort, encouragement, and strength through the Holy Spirit as is hard to explain to those who have never known it for themselves. Experientially, I understood that this was the very purpose of Revelation. But, of course, one cannot interpret Scripture by experience. Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, and Scripture had already convinced me of the fact that Revelation was written not to predict some distant and obscure future but to encourage those who were living through (or immediately about to live through) the events portrayed with such drama, imagery, and prophetic poetry. But the first-century immediacy of Revelation in no way robs it of its potency or relevance—any more than Isaiah or Psalms have been rendered obsolete by the passage of time. It is the Word of God to every generation, profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness; it is living and active.

At one time, John tells us, "I wept and wept." But his weeping was not for his own isolation or discomfort. He cries when it seems that the purposes of God have ground to a halt—for there is no one worthy to open the scroll. But "the Lion of Judah...has triumphed" (Rev. 5:5). Then, says John, "I saw a Lamb." John looks to see the triumphant Lion, only to discover a slain Lamb. The Lion-Lamb identity of Jesus is a seamless robe of inseparable character. Although throughout the book

Introduction

John repeatedly identifies Jesus as the Lamb, it is always a Lamb of unconquerable strength, unmatched power, and irresistible authority. The Lamb has a Lion's heart. The Lion of Judah has triumphed; he has the ability to open the scroll and set in motion all the purposes of God. But he triumphed in the laying down of his life, for the Lion has the nature of the sacrificial Lamb.

Revelation is full of enigmas, but none more profound than this—a Lion with the disposition of a Lamb; a Lamb with the characteristics of a Lion. It is only in Jesus that these extremes of character, both essential for redemption and rule, can live in perfect harmony. He is the Lion and the Lamb.