

## 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.