

Dr. Kümmel's thesis is that Jesus asserted that He would return within the span of the apostolic period. This coming again was not realized; therefore, Jesus was mistaken about His eschatological message. Dr. Kümmel claims that the biblical use of the terms *eggus* and *eggizein* necessitate that we hold to the doctrine of an immediate coming of Christ. Since there has been an almost 2000 year gap and still Jesus' words have not been fulfilled, He must have been mistaken. If He was mistaken, then He certainly could never be our Lord and Savior. Conscientiously study the two works listed in this note and you will see that our Lord was not mistaken, and we still anxiously await His appearance!

Earlier in this commentary we referred to the problem of Time and Eternity in Biblical Theology. Instead of writing a brief separate study we chose to include that problem in our *Special Study of a Theology of History*. See that *Special Study* and the appropriate section on time and eternity.

Special Study

Some Major Doctrines in The Revelation

We aspire to give, in brief scope, of the major doctrines in the works of John, but our specific point of departure will always be

The Doctrine of God

The doctrine of God which we encounter in *The Revelation* stands firmly on the O.T. foundation by claiming that God is one. The monotheistic emphasis is clearly revealed in John's cry that God is the "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." He is the creator, as John asserts—"for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created" (4:11). The whole earth is admonished to "worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters" (14:7). He alone is holy, and the four living creatures sing the praises of God - night and day saying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God"----(4:8). He alone is true. The martyrs cry—"How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:10). He will also call the dead into account. "And I saw the dead, the great and

the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." And the sea give up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades give up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (20:12-13). It is imperative that we keep in mind that these characteristics, and others we have not mentioned are also attributed to Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine of Angels

One need not read too extensively into contemporary literature on the biblical doctrine of angels until it is painfully apparent - that this doctrine is a stumbling block to our scientific age. Again and again we have read how this doctrine is dismissed as first century Rabbinical superstition, which the biblical authors (and our Lord also - John 1:51) unfortunately shared. Though we cannot critically discuss this matter here, we must note that the contemporary non-Christian mind has rejected every form of the traditional proofs of God's existence from Augustine, Aquinas, Newman, and all contemporary efforts to reconstruct these proofs in order to make them logically and psychologically compelling. They are not logically compelling to the intellectual of our day! When these arguments for a supernatural Being are repudiated, then it should come as no surprise to us that the biblical doctrine of angels, demons, etc. (the entire spirit world) is also rejected, because of the claim that the church is unable to provide defensible reasons for believing in angels as actually existing beings. Anyone can believe anything he choose, but if we are to attempt to communicate to the contemporary educated world, then we must provide *reasons* for believing a given doctrine if the belief in angels is to be elevated to a rational belief!

For our brief purpose here, we can do no better than to point out that the deity of our Lord is at stake. He affirmed that there are such beings as angels, and if He is mistaken, then He could hardly be the person who He claimed He was - God in human flesh.

Angels are referred to at least 73 times in *The Revelation* (though I do not thereby claim that the word always means the same thing in *The Revelation*). Each of the seven churches have an angel which is specifically referred to in chapters 2-3. In the

series of judgments, angels often revealed to John the content of his vision such as—"and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth"----(10:3). (Check Young's concordance for the 73 occurrences of angels and study the full doctrine).

The Doctrines of Heaven and Hell
(Hades is not equivalent to Hell)

It is common knowledge that the world view of The Bible has been under attack from the earliest negative critical period to Bultmann. Biblical cosmology does not present the universe as a three layered phenomenon - the heaven above, the earth as center (this is Aristotelianism but not the Biblical view) and hell below, as has been repeatedly claimed.

The Seer's doctrine of heaven includes instructions for all who would be inhabitants of the city of God. Only those who are faithful to the end - the same shall be saved! Only those who hear and heed the call of the Spirit and the Bride shall enter the new Jerusalem. Those who are victorious because of the victory of the Lamb will populate God's heaven. In *The Revelation*, heaven is the region from which God judges the world. Heaven is also the dwelling of the blessed. John said—"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away."----(21:1). Heaven will not be a utopia (etymology means - no place) created by applied technology and social engineering, but will be a reality when God's will and purpose is fulfilled.

Hell is a very unpopular doctrine in our day. How relevant to daily living is the biblical doctrine of Hell? How does the Bible harmonize God's righteousness, justice, mercy, and love with its teaching about final and irrevocable judgment upon those who are not found in safety of the everlasting arms of Christ? John tells us who will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem—"But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death"—(21:8). (Also see the brief appendix on *Yes, There Is a Hell!*)

The Doctrine of Hades

"HADES (*hades*), the region of departed spirits of the lost (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the Ascension of Christ). It has been thought by some that the word

etymologically meant the unseen (from *a*, negative, and *eidō*, to see), but this derivation is questionable; a more probably derivation is from *hado*, signifying all-receiving. It corresponds to "Sheol" in the O.T. In the A.V. of the O.T. and N.T., it has been unhappily rendered "Hell," e.g., Psa. 16:10; or "the grave," e.g., Gen. 37:35; or "the pit," Num. 16:30,33; in the N.T. the Revisers have always used the rendering "Hades;" in the O.T. they have not been uniform in the translation, e.g., in Isa. 14:15, "hell" (marg., "Sheol"); usually they have "Sheol" in the text and "the grave" in the margin. It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost; in point of time it is, for such, intermediate between decease and the doom of Gehenna. For the condition, see Luke 16:23-31.

The word is used four times in the Gospels, and always by the Lord, Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; it is used with reference to the soul of Christ, Acts 2:27,31; Christ declares that He has the keys of it, Rev. 1:18; in Rev. 6:8 it is personified, with the signification of the temporary destiny of the doomed; it is to give up those who are therein, 20:13, and is to be cast into the lake of fire, ver. 14."

The above quotation has been taken from *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, with their Precise Meanings for English readers, W. E. Vine, M. A., Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, N. Y., p. 187-188, fifth impression, 1952.

The Doctrine of The Devil

The high strategy of Hell is to convince us that Satan does not exist! Paul said that Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. John presents Satan as the great dragon; and he is unmistakably "the prince of this world." The great trinity of evil is very explicitly declared in the book of the visions of victory. The first Epistle of John also has a strong doctrine of "the anti-Christ." John speaks of "a synagogue of Satan" in the city of Smyrna. This phrase clearly speaks of a gathering of people who enthralled by Satan, and the power of darkness. Chapters 12 and 13 present us with the most extensive discussion of Satan in the book of the Seer of Patmos. The fall of Satan is mentioned in 12:7ff, and is in complete harmony with the O.T. teaching about Satan, his fall and his angels of darkness. This doctrine is not a late Rabbinic tale full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

John also gives expression to the doctrine of Satan in the Gospel record 8:44 (see also I John 3:10) compare the doctrine of evil, the personal forces of darkness in the Gospel, the Epistles, and The Revelation. How relevant is this teaching to our contemporary world situation?

The Doctrine of Christ

The grammatical structure of the title of *The Revelation* shows that the book intends to reveal the person and work of Christ. Dr. Merrill Tenny's work on *The Revelation* (pp. 117) already mentioned in the commentary) contains a chapter just loaded with excellent preaching materials on the doctrine of Christ in the last book of the Bible. (See also the materials on John's Christology in Charles, Swete and Gebhardt listed below in the bibliographical note. (Advanced students will need Holtz, *Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes*.)

John's first vision shows Christ as Lord of the Church 1:12-17). The second vision reveals the Lamb, into whose power and wisdom has been committed the judgment of the non-Christian world (5:1-14). In the third vision He is the Word of God leading the redeemed in their march of victory (19:11-16). The last vision places Christ in the midst of the new city of God.

The prologue introduces Christ communicating to the entire universe (1:108). The first vision presents Christ in the Church (1:9-3:22). The second vision reveals Christ in the Cosmos (4:1-16:21). John's third vision shows the Christ in Conquest (17:1-21:8). The last great portrait John provided of Jesus is the Christ in Consummation (21:9-22:5). This excellent outline could be used as one sermon on the *Christ of The Revelation* or as a series of portraits of Christ from the pen of the prophet from Patmos. (See *Special Study* on the great themes of *The Revelation* which provide great preaching materials from this sadly neglected book. The book is difficult, but as a part of God's final revelation it should receive more attention in the pulpit than it does.

The Doctrine of The Holy Spirit

There is nothing new added in *The Revelation* about the Holy Spirit, which is not already available in the other N.T. literature. We might expect to find an extensive presentation of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the only N.T. book of prophecy, but, as a matter of fact, we find very little specific teaching about the Holy Spirit. Yet, it is John that gave us some of the most extensive discussions on the Holy Spirit in the entire N.T. (see John chps. 14:16f, 15:26f, 16:1-14).

John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (see 1:10; 4:2 - for the phrase "in the Spirit"). He also speaks of "spirit of error" and "the spirit of truth" (I John 4:6). He also warns Christians not to believe every spirit, "but prove the spirits, whether they are of God:". . . . In *The Revelation*, John clearly speaks of the personality of the Spirit as independent of the Father and the Son (1:5; 4:5; 22:17; 2:7; 14:13). The activity of the Spirit is delineated in 5:6 (" . . . which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.") The Spirit speaks to the churches in 2:7, 11, 17) and gives the last invitation to "Come" in 22:17.

We have been invited to the great banquet hall of Christ through the proclamation of the word of God - impowered by the Holy Spirit!

The Doctrine of The Eternal Gospel

John does not employ the word evangelize (or any form of it) in any of his writings, but he does give us an amazing picture of an angel flying in the meridian with the eternal Gospel. All can hear this messenger of God! (For an excellent, brief study of the word Gospel - *euaggelion* see Swete's great work, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Eerdman's, reprint, p. 1). The Greek words *aiōnian euaggelioai* should not be translated "the everlasting Gospel" as is found in A.V. The content of this good news is the announcement of the coming again of Jesus Christ and the final results which this coming will bring to the whole of mankind. John reveals the audience of the angel in these words "unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people."----- God's message of judgment is not the message of an angry God, who demands that man placate His wrath. God's will has been and remains the same, only those in Christ can escape God's judgment of condemnation. Study the entire section of scripture - 14:6-7, where this angel and the Eternal Gospel is mentioned.

The Doctrine of Christian Life

All of John's writings speak eloquently of the Christian Life. His First Epistle is preoccupied with *The Tests of Life*. What is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian life? John answers to this question. The First Epistle asserts that we walk in the light when we love in the Christian

sense, when we believe the truth, and when we behave in accordance with that belief - see Robert Law's classic work on the First Epistle - *The Tests of Life*. The Christian life is a pilgrimage to the heavenly city. Only those who persist unto the end shall wear the victor's crown. Only those who thirst for the fountain of the water of life (21:6; 22:17) have yielded themselves to the master.

We note a great emphasis on the prayer of life of the saints in *The Revelation* (see 4:10, 11; 5:8-10, 16-18; 7:10; 15:3-4; 12:10, 11; 19:1-7). The same book calls sinning Christians and entire congregations to repentance (chps 2-3). Only the persistent pilgrim will walk in the streets of the new Jerusalem (also see *Special Study on Victory* in this commentary). See the brief discussion and bibliography for further study in the *Special Study* on *The Anti-Christ* in this commentary.

The Doctrine of The Consolation of The Christian

What possible consolation can there be for Christians who are passing through the fires of persecution? What can words do to comfort? Often it seems to be the Christian's ultimate blessing to hope against hope! John claims that Eternal Life is the Christian's present possession. The ultimate consummation of Eternal Life will come when God's purpose is fulfilled and the curtain comes down on the great drama of *The Revelation*. Our consolation comes through the forward look of hope. Christian hope is not an effort to escape from reality or to avoid this world, but we look forward to that hour when Jesus comes again. In that hour "we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Thanks be to God that "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1). This is our sole source of consolation whether during first century persecutions or present burdens.

The Doctrine of The Judgment

John dramatically pictures the great judgment morning in 20:11-15.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead,

the great; and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

John clearly states that there will be a day of reckoning for all men. Education, wealth, social status will not avail any thing on that day! Even those who have died in the past will not escape, because God shall call them to life again and will judge "according to their works whether bad or good." There is no possible way to escape God's judgmental condemnation, except one be found in Christ.

The Doctrine of Works

At least since Luther's interpretation that redemption involved "Faith Alone" (*ganz allein*) from the human side, the tension between Faith and Works has generally permitted protestant thought. Paul and James are very clearly not making contradictory claims about Faith as Luther claimed. One of John's central concerns in the Gospel and First Epistle is to show that belief and behavior are inseparably related. (Note that the golden text - John 3:16 - contains not the noun faith, but rather a present tense form of the verb - "God so loved. . . , that whosoever keeps on believing (present tense verb) on him should not perish, but have eternal life." It is one of the purposes of verbs in any language to show the type of action being performed by the subject of a sentence. One should be amazed, even upon a first reading to note the doctrine of works in *The Revelation*. Exegetically, we can easily establish that the works which John speaks of as essential for the ultimate victory of the Christian are absolutely necessary for our redemption. Psychologically it is not difficult for us to understand how Luther could revolt against the Roman Catholic system of works, which dominated the practical life of the medieval church, but it does not follow from Roman Catholic perversion, that the Bible claims that a sinner need have only faith if he would be saved. (Note the often quoted passage in Acts 16:31—"Believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved". . . . The form of believe is very clearly a verb and not the noun form, faith.

John claims that men will be judged "according to their works" (20:1-15). John is not speaking of legalistic works, as if we were still under Old Testament authority, but of works which flows out of the committed life. Protestants in general will acknowledge that a true believer produces good fruit, but John is going far beyond this claim; he is claiming that we cannot be saved without these works. The faith that John is speaking about (like Paul and all other N.T. authors) produces "the endurance of the saints 2:19; faithfulness in persecution 2:13; 13:10" (see Charles pp. cxv-cxvi).

The Doctrine of The Church

John uses both the plural and singular form of the word Church in *The Revelation*. John moves from seven actually existing congregations in Asia to the imagery of The Bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9). The imagery of the marriage of the Lamb is clearly a metaphor for the Church (19:7ff). "The Spirit and the Bride say, come." (22:17).

The Church's ministry is not discussed in this last book of the New Testament, but Swete is certainly mistaken in asserting that John—"speaks of the itinerant, charismatic, ministry of Apostles and Prophets, but not of the bishops or presbyters and deacons who were doubtless to be found in the Christian communities of Asia" (Swete, p. CLxvii). The New Testament is too clear on the matter of the nature of the ministry, and government of the Church for us to spend much time refuting Swete's assumptions based on later ecclesiastical development.

The Church is the fellowship of the redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The Church is ultimately victorious, because of the victory of the Lamb. John speaks of individual congregations, Christians and The Church Triumphant in the City of God. The Church alone will be ready when the Lord of Glory appears a second time to render judgment. Only the persistent pilgrim can shout with John—"Come, Lord Jesus" (22:20).

Note: The following works will be helpful in further study of the great doctrines available in John's works.

R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, volume I, section 12, pp. cix to cxvii. Some Doctrines of our author. He discusses - The Doctrines of God, Christ, the Spirit, Works, the first Resurrection, the Millennium, and the second Resurrection.

Hermann Gebhardt, *The Doctrine of The Apocalypse* and its relation to the Doctrine of the Gospel and Epistles of John, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, 1878. This is a great, old work, but is still quite readily available as a used book, though sometimes quite expensive. There is a vital need for a new work of this subject in view of the vast contemporary critical literature on *The Gospel, The Epistles, and The Revelation of John*. This work is filled with running debate with the leading 19th century theologians therefore much of the content is irrelevant except for considerations in Historical Theology. The same is also true of the great theological commentary on the First Epistle of John, Robert Law, *Tests of Life*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark. This is an excellent examination of the First Epistle of John and should be reprinted.

Gebhardt considers the doctrines of God, Angels, Heaven, The Devil, Perdition, the Earth and Mankind, Christ, The Spirit, The Gospel, Christian Life, Christendom, AntiChrist, The Last Things, The Call to the World to repent, the consolation of the Christians, The Future of Israel, The World in Wickedness, The End of the World, The Coming of the Lord, The Resurrection of Believers, The Judgment, and the Final State. Gebhardt provides an excellent analysis of the major doctrines of The Revelation in pages 1 through 303 from 304 to 424 he compares the theology of the Gospel, Epistles and The Revelation. Gebhardt also shares some of the negative German attitudes of his day toward the Bible and its doctrines. We shall consider only some of the doctrines discussed in the last section of Gebhardt's work.

G. B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895. This is still a valuable work to consult, but like Dr. Steven's other works, it clearly reveals that he does not have an adequate view of The Scriptures as the Word of God.

Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John. op cit.*, chp. 14, Doctrine, pp. clix to clxxiii. There is much valuable material in this excellent reprint. Dr. Swete discusses the doctrines of God, Christ, the Spirit, the Church, Salvation, Angels, the Last Things, and Christian hope.

Special Study

Titles For Christ in The Revelation!

(These titles and their significance can provide excellent preaching materials for a series of sermons).

This appendix does not pretend to give an exhaustive list of the titles applied to Christ in *The Revelation*. Neither does it claim anything resembling an adequate discussion of these great names and phrases which describe the nature of the person of Christ, and the function of His work as redeemer.