

Revelation 1:3f

1. In verse 3 we have the first of 7 Beatitudes in the book. If we want to understand the root of beatitudes see the Psalms: 1;1, 2:12, 31:1, 32:12, 33:9, 39:5, 40:2, and many more. Our utilitarian, angle seeking minds quickly grab onto them in search of a formula for acquiring our own blessings. Jesus' beatitudes wonderfully short circuit this temptation for us by their irony. We need a bit more care with John's beatitude here.
 - a. The beatitude begins we imagine by announcing the blessedness of the intended and imagined recipient of the letter who will be reading it to their congregation in Asia Minor. Also blessed are those who hear and those who "keep/guard/observe" what is written in it.
 - b. The basic meaning of the word is "to keep in view". Keeping in view that which is written in this book allows the Christian to live. Again, I think of Ephesians 6. "In the remaining time".
 - c. The conclusion is I think so often heard by us as a scary warning. "Clean up your act because judgment day is right around the corner." Nothing could be further from the intent. "Keep what is written here in view, and be encouraged because the time is near!" For the Christian beset by the empires of the world, the shortened time is a godsend.
 - d. The book itself in a sense puts our hearts on trial in terms both our love of the world and our anticipation of what is to come. Every Hollywood movie that tries to borrow imagery from the book of Revelation has the hero forestalling the "end of the world". Hmmm. Reflecting on this for a moment might illuminate some of our assumptions and anticipations.
2. "John to the seven churches in Asia."
 - a. These letters are to these seven churches, but they are also, quite obviously to all churches. "Seven" is a number of completion. This goes all the way back to Genesis. You'll see lots of "sevens" as the book progresses and the number gives a subtext of completion.
3. "Grace to you and peace". Notice the opening of most of the NT epistles. How do they open?
4. "From him who is and who was and who is to come." This formula is only found in the book of Revelation but it is not unique to the book. The forms seem to come out of Exodus 3:14. There are also forms of it in Greek mythology more in the sense of "was, is, will be". John has "is to come". What sense does this have for you?
5. "And from the seven spirits who are before his throne."
 - a. What is this about? These will show up again in 3:1, 4:5, 5:6 seems most helpful.
 - b. There is some debate as to what this means, obviously.
 - c. In 5:6 they seem to be sent out to do the will of God. These spirits are also closely connected to the lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. This Lamb is obviously Jesus.
 - d. In Isaiah 11, in the Greek version the "shoot" is given a seven-fold spirit:
 - i. "A shoot will come from the root of Jesse, and the blossom from this root will go up. Upon him will rest the spirit of God: A spirit of wisdom (1) and understanding (2), a

spirit of counsel (3) and strength (4), a spirit of knowledge (5) and piety (6), he'll be filled with the spirit of the fear of the LORD (7)."

- ii. For this reason many see the "seven spirits" as a "seven-fold spirit" which is the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. Seen that way this introduction is clearly Trinitarian. The grace and truth come from three sources:
 - (1) Father: "he who is, was and is to come"
 - (2) Spirit: "seven spirits before the throne"
 - (3) Jesus Christ
6. Jesus gets three titles here:
- a. All three terms are found in Psalm 89:19-37. What is that Psalm about? How does John see the Psalm in the light of Jesus?
 - i. Faithful witness: What commission is given in Acts 1:8? What commission is therefore given to these "seven" churches? What adversity are they facing? What are they tempted by? Who/what was Jesus the faithful witness of? How might this be an encouragement? Also see Is 43:10-13.
 - ii. "Firstborn of the dead": what might this mean? Remember in the OT the "firstborn" has a different position than the rest who follow. Jesus is firstborn in a sense of Creation 2.0.
 - iii. "Ruler of the kingdom of the earth." How might this bring comfort to John's readers? This often in the book refers to the adversaries of God and their satanic overlords.
7. Here we have a praise section:
- a. To him who loves us
 - b. And ransomed us
 - c. From our sin by his blood
 - d. And made us to be a kingdom of priests to his God and Father
 - e. To him be glory and dominion into the ages of ages Amen