

Revelation 2-3
Justification in Revelation

INTRODUCTION

EX: Florida coast where you can walk out for 100-200 yards and the water is not much deeper than your waist, but when you reach the edge of the shelf, it drops off. The water turns from a clear green/blue to a dark blue. Parents warn their kids, "Don't get to near the shelf".

Revelation is a bit like that. So far, we've been in the water that has been fairly clear, but once we get past the 7 letters to the 7 churches, we'll feel like we stepped off the shelf. It will get deep, fast.

Before we get to the last of the 7 letters, I want to use Revelation to mark the occasion of this day – October 31st – REFORMATION DAY.

On this day 504 years ago, Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg Germany. He was seeking to promote a discussion of issues that had sprung up in the Roman Catholic Church, which was the only significant church at that time.

He was deeply troubled by the sale of indulgences, a term which means "permit". These indulgences were being sold as a sort of get out of jail free card, but in this case, it was "get out of purgatory". But it wasn't FREE.

At least it was to shorten the stay in purgatory; it still wasn't free.

The idea was that the purchase of an Indulgence for yourself or for a dead loved one would shorten the time and penalties involved in purgatory. This was seen as a half-way house between death and heaven. In purgatory the person would experience various punishments that would purge them from their sins committed on earth, so that they might gain the holiness needed to enter heaven.

The idea behind this was that some saints had done so many works of righteousness that they exceeded what was necessary for their own salvation that they had a surplus. This surplus merit was deposited in the **Treasury of Merit** and could be dispensed by the Pope to those who were in need. This spiritual redistribution of merit came at a price. You had to perform certain good works to earn an Indulgence. Or you could buy one for yourself or have it credited to the account of one already dead.

As it turns out the Pope was also seeking to build St Peter's Cathedral in Rome and needed the money. (Our Elders will be meeting Nov 15th to work out a similar arrangement to raise the remaining funds for the rehab of the house facility...JK)

Luther found the practice of selling indulgences to be corrupt and abusive, although in 1517 he was not opposed to the idea of purgatory or even indulgences themselves. He later changed his views and said it was unbiblical (What Luther Says).

This indulgence error came about because of a poor translation in the Latin Bible.

"Do repentance" was translated "Do penance" – i.e. works of satisfaction as a sort of payment for sin. This misdirected the focus of the Christian life.

Luther's first thesis was "**When Jesus spoke of repentance, he was referring to our entire life being one of repentance.**" (not Penance)

He understood that the work of Christ received by faith means that we have full pardon from sin and the full favor of God based solely on the work of Christ. We add nothing to what Christ has accomplished.

Nov 1 in Catholic tradition is "All Saints Day" when dead saints are honored. Thus Oct 31st is 'all hallows eve', which became "Halloween".

As an Augustinian monk, Luther had much regard for Augustine and his writings. Luther was struck by Augustine's focus on salvation as being totally a work of God and His grace, not something that we earn.

For Luther, the question wasn't **WWJD?**

The question was **WHJD? What Has Jesus Done?**

As I've mentioned before, my spin off of that, in terms of the Christian life is, "**DWJND**" – **Do What Jesus Never Did – REPENT**

The Christian life is one of repentant faith. We grow by and through repentance because true gospel repentance takes us to the cross where we meet Jesus. And we are changed by being with Him.

The hope of the Gospel is the foundation and motivation for repentance. The word 'repent' is used 14 times in Revelation. In five of the seven letters the churches are told to 'repent'.

There is a REPENTANCE theme in the letters to the churches and repentance was #1 of 95 Theses 504 years ago.

In developing a fuller theology presented in the 95 Theses, Luther came away with a clear and biblically based doctrine of how a believer might be just before God. It is called the doctrine of Justification, and it is the foundational teaching of the Bible. It should not surprise us that it is also the foundation of the book of Revelation.

JUSTIFICATION IN Revelation

Graeme Goldsworthy: [Gospel in Revelation](#)

- 1. THESIS The doctrine of justification is basic to the message of Revelation and is woven throughout the book. P.56**

The gospel is the GOOD NEWS of the historic events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for us. Justification is the formal or doctrinal term used to refer to what happens to the sinner who puts his or her trust for salvation in Christ alone by faith alone.

For a sinner to be declared righteous in himself, he must receive an alien righteousness by faith. **This righteousness, not of our own, comes from Christ. It is credited to us when we trust in Christ. The great transaction of justification on the grounds of Christ's merits is God's way of saving us.** The justified sinner is the one whom God declares to be "not guilty". He does this on the basis of Christ's righteousness which he imputes, or credits, to the sinner who believes the gospel. He or she thus possesses by faith everything that belongs to Christ as God's true man.

In Revelation John uses a variety of ways to present this gospel of our justification as the heart and soul of the Christian message. In the context of the sufferings of the Christians to whom he writes, John presents a message which is as relevant today as it was then: the Christian's comfort in adversity, his corrective in error, his motive for holiness, is the gospel and only the gospel.

G. Goldsworthy...p46

The subject of Revelation is not based around apocalyptic images that speak of the end times just before the coming of Christ. This pastoral, prophetic, and apocalyptic letter is built around the Hope that is ours in the Lamb who was slain. Revelation is rooted in the historic reality of the life, work, death, resurrection, ascension, rule, and return of Christ.

Revelation deals with a cycle of judgements and patterns that continue through this present age until the final day of the return of Christ and the coming of the New Heaven and Earth. But that great eternal future

for the people of God is built upon the saving gospel of the Lamb who was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah – Jesus Christ.

Our future is shaped by His past.

We can enjoy what Christ deserves because we are united with Him by grace alone through faith alone. Revelation is the unveiling of the HOPE that Christ has reserved for us.

1 Peter 1 written before Revelation expresses a similar theme – Hope and perseverance in the face of trials:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

What scripture teaches is that those who trust in Christ alone for salvation are given a new status or position before God. Rather than being separated, guilty, cut off, hostile, and objects of wrath, IN Christ we have the status of being 'justified' – a righteous standing before God because of Christ. Our sin is put on Christ and His righteousness is given to us.

The GOOD NEWS is that in Christ God sees US covered by Christ.

The GOOD NEWS is that in Christ God sees me (and you) JUST-IF-IED NEVER SINNED and JUST-IF-IED ALWAYS OBEYED.

Jesus got what we deserved so that we can get what He deserved. That is the GOOD NEWS and the Hope OF THE GOSPEL.

Being united to Christ by faith, we are seen as free from sin, free from condemnation, and are accepted as beloved children of God.

That message permeates the letter of Revelation. 1:1ff

In his initial greeting to the recipients of his message **John identifies the source of all their salvation as Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Here he refers to the life, death, resurrection, and present Lordship of Christ.**

John then goes on to speak of the effects of Christ's death using familiar Old Testament ideas:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1 :5b-6). P. 47

In chap 5 we see the creatures in heaven and the twenty-four elders singing a new song to the Lamb...

“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

10 You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

And the angels join in praise to the Lamb...

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying,

“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

14 And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

This theme of the ‘lamb who was slain’ is at the core of our justification and the book of Revelation. This leads us to another THESIS from Graeme Goldsworthy

THESIS: The Lamb-Lion tension shows that the gospel is the only key to the understanding of the Book of Revelation. 30

The Lion is the image of the glorified and reigning Christ. He alone can unlock the kingdom of God to us and make its reality known. But, like John, we can see the Lion only as he has come to us in the form of the slain Lamb. The ‘lion’ imagery is referred to six times in Revelation but none are a description of Christ as he is seen in heaven. We expect to see Aslan – big and majestic- but John describes a lamb who was slain.

Jesus is referred to as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but he is seen as a lamb that was slain.

5:5 “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”

6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain... (MORE ON THIS IN CHAP 5)

John points to the gospel-event- the living, dying, and rising of Jesus Christ- as the key to the revelation of the kingdom. It is thus also the key to the Book of Revelation.

The slain lamb idea is central to the gospel, but it is counter-intuitive to us. John ascribes glory and dominion to the one who suffered. The world doesn’t think that way. We ascribe glory to the winners, not the losers.

We have a hard time understanding that Jesus won the Victory through His suffering and death. The Greeks and the Jews FROM the time of Christ until now don’t understand this.

1 Cor 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

The Jews could not believe that a Messiah or savior would suffer and die in such a way. They were looking for a hero who would deliver them from Rome like Moses delivered them from Egypt.

The Greeks loved philosophy (‘lover of wisdom’) and a man dying for those who scorned and hated him just didn’t make sense. In their way of wisdom, the gospel did not compute. It goes against the way of works righteousness found in all religions.

EX: Graduate student from Saudi Arabia at CSU – in explaining the grace of God in Christ it was clear that it didn’t make sense – “file not found”. Islam, like all historic religions, secular philosophies, and even modern “woke” religions are based on works. Sadly, for most, if not all of those, forgiveness and salvation are beyond reach except for the enlightened elite.

Works righteousness may sound inclusive because “any good person can be saved.”

But in reality, it is very exclusive because “no one is good; no one is righteous.”

In the world of works righteousness there is no salvation for people like me, or you.

This is why we sing of ‘amazing grace’. It is amazing to us. No one but God would have conceived such a great salvation.

No one but the triune God – Father-Son-Holy Spirit could design, accomplish and apply such a great salvation on behalf of weak, hostile, helpless, and hopeless sinners.

This good news, this HOPE UNVEILED
is spiritual food for our hungry hearts
It is water for our thirsty souls
It is comfort in times of trial
It is joy in times of sorrow
It is peace in times of turmoil
It is our strength when we are weak, frail, and burdened for our sin.
It is the anchor of our souls when we face the accusations of the evil one.
It is our refuge in times of weariness
It is our robe of righteousness when we must give account to a Holy God.
It is our lifeline when we close our eyes in death.

DO YOU SEE THE BEAUTY OF THIS GREAT SALVATION?

IF SO, IT SHOULD GRIP OUR HEARTS as we remind ourselves of it every day.

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