

PROMISES & BLESSINGS

in the Book of Revelation

Doug Rowston

PROMISES & BLESSINGS in the Book of Revelation takes the reader on an interesting journey through the last book of the Bible. This study looks at seven promises to those who conquer the powers of evil and death by faith in Christ the Victor. It also looks at seven blessings for those who read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the message of the Revelation to John. A special feature is the inclusion of pen portraits of the Martyrs of the Twentieth Century whose statues adorn the west front of Westminster Abbey in London, England.

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*This book is dedicated to
Basil S. Brown
and
William E. Hull
my mentors
in the study of the New Testament*

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Cover Photographs

Front: Cave of the Apocalypse Patmos

Back: John the Theologian Patmos

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Preface

The book of Revelation continues to attract readers with its intriguing symbols and dramatic contents. George Beasley-Murray, James Blevins, George Caird, Colin Hemer and Stephen Smalley are among modern New Testament scholars who have written helpful commentaries. The present work focuses on the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 as well as the seven blessings scattered throughout the rest of the book.

On the one hand, some parts of Revelation are more accessible to us. The letters to the seven churches have a regular pattern. Accordingly, we examine each letter with reference to the context, the description of Christ, the commendation and criticism of the church, the promise to the conqueror and some connections with today. On the other hand, other parts of Revelation can be hard to follow. Scattered through the book are seven blessings. By examining their contexts, contents and connections we may gain an appreciation of these 'beatitudes' and their contribution to the overall structure of this dramatic and intriguing concluding book of the Bible.

In addition, there are pen portraits of the ten martyrs of the twentieth century whose statues adorn the west front of Westminster Abbey. I was strangely moved when my wife and I visited London and saw the ten statues of such a varied group of Christians who died for their faith. The message of the Revelation to John addressed people who were willing to die as martyrs in the first century. The martyrs of the twentieth century who are remembered at Westminster Abbey represent countless Christians who have died in modern times for their

faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord. The book of Revelation continues to speak to situations of persecution and oppression.

The exegetical insights and devotional reflections have been written for people both inside and outside churches. *Promises and Blessings* could well be of interest in home groups as well as for personal reading. The Revelation to John has an abiding relevance. John's expectation of the future, faith in God and patient waiting for divine action are features which spoke to past generations and continue to speak to us today.

The dedication indicates my indebtedness to Rev Dr Basil S. Brown, whose meticulous teaching encouraged my love of New Testament Greek at Whitley College in Melbourne, Victoria, and Rev Dr William E. Hull, whose inspired supervision made my doctoral studies at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, so fulfilling.

I wish to thank my wife Rosalie for her patience and love during the writing of this book. I am also grateful to my brother Laurie for his conscientious checking of the completed draft of this work.

After working as a theological lecturer, a religious education teacher and a local church pastor, I was blessed in semi retirement to be adjunct lecturer at St Barnabas College in Adelaide, South Australia, in association with Charles Sturt University. I continued to learn with its faculty, staff and students of the grace and peace of Christ.

Doug Rowston