
啟示錄的歷史神學

Theology of History
in the Book of Revelation

林瑞隆

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Abstract

Set against the socio-political background of the first century, the author of the Book of Revelation had a strong interest in the theology of history, and faithfully and courageously proclaimed that God, rather than the Roman Emperor, is the Lord of history. This paper will argue that the Book of Revelation mainly deals with issues in the “present” rather than in the “future.” Roman emperors claimed that they were sons of God and rulers of history, but the author of Revelation firmly believed that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God and would prove to be the ultimate and true Lord of History.

This paper carefully examines the tenth chapter of the Book of Isaiah, and the idea that God, on the one hand, “used” the king of the Assyrian hegemony as a “tool” to punish Israel, before returning, on the other hand, to then discipline the arrogant emperor of Assyria. This emphasizes God’s role as the only governor of history. The author of Revelation expressed a similar belief. By describing the Christ as “beginning and end” and “alpha and omega,” not only did the author thematize the eternal nature of the Christ but also his absolute lordship over history. In this context, the author’s intention was to argue that Jesus Christ is the eschatological ruler of history.

This paper will argue that the Book of Revelation uses rich and fruitful imagery filled with sociopolitical meaning and significance. The Book of Revelation was written to teach the severely oppressed Christians of the first century, and to encourage them to keep the faith and courageously face the threats that arose from the gigantic hegemonic power of Rome. This paper will encourage modern readers to approach the Book of Revelation from this vantage point.

Keywords: revelation, theology of history, time/history, eschaton, political power

摘要

對照第一世紀前後羅馬帝國的社會—政治背景來說，啟示錄的作者對從信仰及神學的角度去看歷史很有興趣。實際上，啟示錄處理的問題不是「未來」，而是「現在」。羅馬帝國的皇帝主張他們是「神的兒子」，也是歷史的主宰，但約翰堅定地相信耶穌基督才是真正的「上帝之子」和真的「歷史主宰」。並且，歷史只在上帝的主權帶領之下，而不在羅馬帝國及其皇帝手中。世上所有的領導者有一天終會滅亡，隱入歷史，絕無例外。基督耶穌這位被高舉的上帝之羔羊會證明祂才是真的歷史的主。這位不擁有世上權力的耶穌，終將顯示祂的無權力之力量超越世上的掌權者。

本文特別檢視以賽亞書十章的經文，關於主前第八世紀時上帝先行「使用」亞述霸權的君王做為祂懲罰以色列的「工具」，隨後又回頭教訓、修理這位目中無人的傲慢皇帝的故事，說明上帝是真正的、唯一的歷史主宰。啟示錄作者也表達出相同的信仰。經文中多次陳述基督耶穌是首先的、末後的，或阿拉法、俄梅戛，這不僅闡釋了基督耶穌的永恆性，也說明了祂是歷史主宰的意義。在這樣的脈絡下，作者約翰要說的是：這位上帝的羔羊才是真正的終末掌權者（the eschatological ruler）。

本文也認為啟示錄是「一本內容豐富且深具社會、政治意義與內涵的信仰之書」，闡釋「基督信徒在面對一個可怕的政治霸權或權勢威脅時，應該如何在信仰上站立得穩並以信仰的勇氣去面對」。這一點，特別提醒現代信徒好好從這個角度去解讀啟示錄。

關鍵詞：啟示、歷史神學、時間／歷史、終末、政治勢力