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How the First-Century, Asia Minor, Jewish Christians Understood the Book of Revelation
Abbreviations: FCAM JC – First-Century, Asia Minor, Jewish Christians; RE – Roman Empire; FW – Faithful Witness

Book of Revelation – 2. Overview – c. Themes

Two Core Themes

1. **Chapters 4 and 5 – The full realization of God's presence**, and Yeshua's role as the Lamb Who brings about God's purposes for His Kingdom to be fully realized.
2. **Chapters 12 and 13 – The cosmic struggle between us and satan** (the dragon/serpent), the beasts he empowers, and the result of his resistance against God's purposes (the suffering of the FWs). John wants his readers to embrace the reality of the political, religious, and economic powers in the world that do dragon work and cause suffering, whether or not they are experiencing it in the moment.

Four Theological Themes

1. **The Establishment of the Cosmic Rule of God** – Yahweh, the King of creation, will bring creation to its rightful conclusion and its full expression through the self-sacrificial death of the Davidic King, Yeshua, not through the Jewish expectation of a militaristic leader.
2. **The Role of Faithful Witness (FW)** – We are His Image Bearers. He invites us, blesses us, and gives us opportunity to oppose evil and establish His redemptive kingdom. We are FWs by:
 - Mirroring Jesus. John urges the FCAM Christians to follow in his footsteps.
 - Giving our worship and allegiance to Him over any other earthly power!
 - Resisting nonviolently against the evil forces of this world. Our engagement in intense political, economic, environmental, and social issues is the criteria to be a FW. John cares about those who suffer from this engagement. We are a part of His new heaven and new earth project.
3. **The Defeat of Evil** – and the inauguration of shalom.
4. **The Consummation of the Kingdom** (the New Heaven and the New Earth) – Chapters 21 and 22 are John's goal. Evil has been defeated, the FWs vindicated, and Yahweh's kingdom established.

Four Themes in Yeshua's Teaching Reflected in Revelation

John did not have access to the Gospel accounts as we know them. He relied on the Gospel traditions and the stories passed down about Yeshua.

1. The 7 Blessings

The similarity between Matthew 5 and Revelation verses:

1. 1:3 – “Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it for the time is near.”

2. 14:13 – And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write: ‘**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!**’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors for their deeds follow with them.”
3. 16:15 – “Behold, I am coming like a thief. **Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes**, so that he will not walk about naked, and people will not see his shame.”
4. 19:9 – Then He said to me, “Write: ‘**Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.**’” And He said to me, “These are the true words of God.”
5. 20:6 – “**Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection**; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”
6. 22:7 – “And behold, I am coming quickly. **Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.**”
7. 22:14 – “**Blessed are those who wash their robes**, so that they will have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the city by the gates.”

2. The Fulfillment of the Kingdom

The similarity of Matthew 6:10 and Revelation 11:15-18. (Also, see the similarity of Matthew 6 and Revelation 8:15, 16:18-21, 21 and 22):

- Matthew 6:10 – Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Revelation 11:15-18 – Then the 7th angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” And the 24 elders who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give You thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, the One who is and who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants, the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

3. The Predictions of the Suffering and Vindication for Disciples

- Matthew 24 – The preparation and prediction of suffering and promised vindication.
- Revelation 6:9-11; 19:6-9 – The suffering and final rejoicing.

4. The Role of Faithful Witness

The similarity of Matthew 28 and Revelation 11:3:

- Matthew 28 – The invitation to be witnesses to the Kingdom and to join His work in bringing about a new heaven and a new earth.
- Revelation 11:3 is a parable that invites us to live missionally. “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”