

A Special Blessing (Part 2)

Revelation 1:1-3

Thought for the Day: The blessing of God is for those who faithfully read and heed His Word, the Bible.

God's blessing is for those who take the Word of God into their heart and mind, by *whatever* means, and then put it into practice in their daily life. Reading or hearing the Bible and giving mental agreement to it is not enough! The blessing of God is for those who are living in obedience to His Word, the Bible.

I. The Prologue (1:1-3)

- A. The Basics
 - 1. Why the book is Important
 - 2. The author and date the book was written
 - 3. The basic message of the book
- B. The Title of the Book (1:1)
- C. The Chain of Communication (1:1-2)
- D. The Interpretation of the Book (1:1, 3)

...the things that must soon take place (vs. 1) **...for the time is near.** (vs 3)

- When did or when will the prophecies recorded in the book of Revelation take place?
 - 1. The Futurist (Literal, Normal) Interpretation: The events prophesied in chapters 4 to the end of the book are yet to be fulfilled in the future.
 - a. The symbols should be interpreted based on information provided in Revelation itself, or from other related passages of Scripture, mostly found in the Old Testament.
 - b. "The Apocalypse reveals the future. It is God's road map to help us understand where human history is going. The fact that it points to the time of the end is clear throughout the entire book. It serves as the final consummation of biblical revelation. It takes us from the first century to the last century. From persecution to triumph. From the struggling church to the bride of Christ. From Patmos [where John received the Revelation] to paradise." (*Ed Hindson, Approaching Armageddon, pp. 22-23*)
 - 2. The Preterist or Partial Preterist Interpretation: The prophecies of Revelation have already been fulfilled in the early centuries of the church, especially in the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The Second Coming of Christ has already taken place; we are living in the new heaven and earth.
 - 3. The Idealist (Spiritual, Allegorical) Interpretation: The events of Revelation are not literal—they did not take place in the past nor will they take place in the future. They are allegorical (having a hidden spiritual meaning that transcends the literal sense –*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*) and are meant to teach us timeless principles of the age-long struggle between good and evil.
- How are we to understand the phrases, "the things that must soon take place" (vs. 1) and "the time is near" (vs. 3). Three views:

1. These phrases can be understood to mean that, when the events described in Revelation begin to take place, they will take place suddenly, quickly, and without further delay—in a relatively brief space of time.
2. Future events in the Bible are often presented from God’s perspective. He is not limited in His consideration of time the way man is. Therefore, “Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). So, from God’s perspective, what John wrote 1,925 years ago was written less than two days ago!
3. “Since no man knows God’s schedule for the future, the time of fulfillment is always ‘at hand.’ These events are near in the sense that they are the *next* events on God’s prophetic calendar.” (*Mark Hitchcock, 101 Answers, p. 63*)
 - “The purpose of *soon* [and *near*] is to teach the imminence of the events foretold, not to set a time limit in which they must occur.” (*Robert Thomas*)
 - “Jesus Christ can come at any moment... We are always living on the edge of eternity. And we are to be living on ‘ready.’” Every generation who reads the Bible is to live as if these events could come to pass at any time. (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 65*)
 - “The imminency of these events, emphasized in Revelation from its commencement to its close, calls each generation to possess an attitude of expectancy and readiness.” (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 63*)
 - Note Revelation 22:20 – “He [Jesus] who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Revelation 1:1,3 and 22:20 bracket the entire book, pointing us to the imminent, soon return of Jesus Christ.
 - Therefore, we should be living in such a way that we are watching and preparing for these things to happen.

E. The Special Blessing for Those Who Read and Obey (1:3)

3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear...

- In the first century, very few believers had their own copies of the Scriptures the way we do today. When they went to the synagogue or to church, the Scriptures had to be read aloud so that they could receive the Word of the Lord. (e.g., 1 Timothy 4:13)
- First century Christians would be shocked and disappointed at the number of Christians today who do not bother to take their Bibles to church, and who do not give any attention to the Scriptures during the week. This is a sad commentary on the low value many believers place on the Word of God.

...and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

- It’s not just listening and giving mental assent to the Word of God that brings the blessing of God; it’s living in obedience to it! (Romans 2:12-13; James 1:22-25)
- Are we self-deceived hearers, or obedient doers, experiencing the blessing of God on our lives?

- “John did not send this book of prophecy to the assemblies in order to satisfy their curiosity about the future. God’s people were going through intense persecution, and they needed encouragement. As they heard this book, its message would give them strength and hope. But even more, its message would help them examine their own lives (and each local assembly) to determine those areas needing correction. They were not only to *hear* the Word, but they were also to keep it—that is, guard it as a treasure and practice what it said. The blessing would come, not just by *hearing*, but even more so by *doing*.”
(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Victorious*, p. 21)

Suggested Applications¹:

Know: God intends to reveal truth to us by means of His Word, the Bible, not conceal it from us. Therefore, we must always be careful to correctly handle the Word of God, remembering that Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture. (2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:11-14)

Grow: (vs. 1) We should live every day in the light of the Lord’s soon Return. (Matthew 24:36,42,44; 25:10-13; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 John 2:28) We should be waiting, watching and working as we look for the Lord’s coming. Does the prospect of His coming fill you with hope, or dread? (Titus 2:13)

Grow: (vs. 3) It’s not just giving mental assent to God’s Word that brings His blessing; it’s living in obedience to it. The measure of spiritual maturity is obedience to the Word, not just knowledge of the Word. (Psalm 1:1-3; 119:1-6; Proverbs 8:32-36; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 7:21-27; 12:49-50; Luke 6:47-49; 8:21; 11:27-28; John 14:15, 23-24; 15:14; 1 John 2:3-6; Revelation 22:7)

Know: (vs. 3) What is your attitude toward God’s Word, the Bible? Do you bring your Bible with you to church? Do you read and reflect on it during the week?

Grow: (vs. 3) Do you earnestly desire God’s blessing on your life? Are you committed to living in obedience to the Word of God? God’s blessing is for those who are doers of the Word and not hearers only. (Rom. 2:12-13; Jas. 1:22-25)

¹ The three **spiritual priorities** of a follower of Jesus Christ: 1) To **know** and love the Lord by pursuing intimate fellowship with Him; 2) To **grow** and become like the Lord by cultivating Christlike character and conduct; and 3) To go and **show** the Lord to others through faithful and fruitful service.