

Blessings and Benefits of Revelation

Revelation 1:3-8

Rev. Brian Bill

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Before we move into a time of preaching, let's begin by listening to the reading of some passages from Revelation, without interruption.

Revelation 1:3-8

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Revelation 1:12-18

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Revelation 4:1-6

¹ After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat

there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

Revelation 5:1-5

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Revelation 6:12–17

¹² When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Revelation 7:9–12

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and

wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Revelation 14:14–16

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” ¹⁶ So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Last weekend, we looked at the person, purpose, and process in Revelation 1:1-2 as we learned how *God unveils Revelation to surrendered servants who center their lives on Jesus Christ*. Today, we’ll consider the promise, peace, and power from Revelation 1:3-8. Here’s the main idea: *Jesus Christ, the risen and returning King, frees us to live faithfully in a world that opposes Him*.

1. The Promise. In Revelation 1:3, there are three present tense words that make up this promise of blessing: ***“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”*** Wouldn’t you agree that most everyone wants to have a blessed New Year? Here’s a question to ponder: *“Would I ever want to say there is a blessing from God that I’m not really interested in receiving?”*

The word ***“blessing”*** can be defined as, *“God’s active favor and life-giving goodness given to people, leading to peace, joy, well-being, fruitfulness, and right relationship with Him.”* Not surprisingly, there are a total of seven “Blessing” passages in Revelation which are all linked to end times rewards. The book begins and ends with a promise of blessing for those who read and heed it (1:4; 22:7).

- **Read.** The phrase ***“reads aloud”*** is emphatic. It was common to have someone read the Scriptures aloud in Jewish and Christian worship because copies of God’s Word were scarce and many people were illiterate. Nehemiah 8:3: ***“And he [Ezra] read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.”***

Jesus read in the synagogue from Isaiah (Luke 4:16-21). 1 Timothy 4:13 says, ***“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”*** Later, the office of “reader” became a position in the church, showing its importance. To apply this, you might want to do your daily Bible reading out loud, or choose to listen to the Bible on the YouVersion app. Fortunately, John didn’t say you have to *understand* everything in Revelation to be blessed. We’ll be blessed by reading and heeding what we do know.

- **Reflect.** The word ***“hear”*** means, *“to hearken with attention.”* I recently took a hearing test because I’ve been having trouble catching everything someone says, especially if they speak softly. I thought for sure I’d fail but somehow, I passed, which is a bummer because now I don’t have an excuse to tell Beth I didn’t hear something she said. When I told her about my test results, she smiled and said, *“It’s not your hearing. You’re just not listening.”*

She was right. There’s a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is the ability of the ear; listening is the posture of the heart. That’s why Jesus repeats this refrain seven times to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3: ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*** He’s not questioning whether we have ears. His concern is whether we’re listening.

- **Respond.** To ***“keep”*** refers to, *“watching, obeying, and guarding.”* The idea is to continue to obey orders. Psalms 119:4 says, ***“You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.”*** Jesus said it strongly in Luke 11:28: ***“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”*** Nancy Guthrie writes: *“It was written to evoke worship, confidence, anticipation, and hope...to get a sense of the big picture rather than obsess over the details...it should change how you think, how you feel, what you say, what you believe.”*

We’re to read, hear, and heed because ***“the time is near.”*** Because the return of Christ is close at hand, it should affect how we live. Ultimately, the question is not when Jesus will return but what will we do before He gets here? One way to live out the lessons from Revelation is to make sure you’re living on mission and sharing the gospel with intentional urgency.

Jesus Christ, the risen and returning King, frees us to live faithfully in a world that opposes Him.

2. The Peace. You and I can experience peace with the triune God because of His grace, and we can exhibit the peace of God when faced with trials. Verse 4 begins: ***“John to the seven churches that are in Asia.”*** John was obviously well known and doesn’t need an introduction. He was one of the twelve disciples, and he served as pastor of the church at Ephesus. These seven churches were located on the main Roman road that made a circular loop in what is now western Turkey. These churches are later listed in a clockwise order as Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Interestingly, the Apostle Paul also sent letters to seven churches.

John begins with ***“grace,”*** which refers to God’s undeserved favor, and ***“peace”*** is the state of spiritual well-being that follows as a result. Grace is Greek, while peace (Shalom) has Hebrew roots. Both grace and peace come from God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son.

- **God the Father:** ***“From Him who is and who was and who is to come...”*** One commentator perceptively writes: *“These phrases are used in the Old Testament not to merely describe [Yahweh] as present at the beginning, middle, and end of history, but as the incomparable sovereign Lord over history, who is therefore able to bring prophecy to fulfillment and deliver His people despite overwhelming odds.”* These attributes emphasize His eternality and immutability and have their roots in Exodus 3:14 when God described who He is: ***“I am who I am!”***
- **God the Holy Spirit:** ***“...and from the seven spirits who are before the throne...”*** There are various interpretations of the expression ***“seven spirits.”*** I lean toward the explanation that there is one Holy Spirit with seven manifestations, because the number seven indicates fullness or completeness. Zechariah 4:2-9 describes seven lamps representing one Spirit and Revelation 4:5-6 identifies the seven lamps before the throne with the seven spirits. Many commentators point to the sevenfold Spirit of God described in Isaiah 11:2: ***“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.”***
- **God the Son.** We see this in Revelation 1:5: ***“And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.”***

According to John 18:37, Jesus said He was born for this purpose: ***“to bear witness to the truth.”*** Jesus is totally trustworthy and completely reliable. While others were raised from the dead, Jesus was the first to be raised to never die again. The word ***“firstborn”*** means, *“the premier one.”* In addition, He is the ***“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”*** (19:16). He is the commander of kings and the ultimate, unrivaled potentate.

After celebrating the doctrine of the Trinity, in the last part of verse 5 and the first part of verse 6, John focuses on three things that Jesus has done for us.

- **He loves us.** This is in the present tense, meaning His love is constant and continuous. He is for us, and not against us. God’s love is not increased by our obedience nor diminished by our sin.
- **He freed us from our sins by His blood.** The word ***“freed”*** is in the past tense, and means, *“to release, untie, and unbind.”* Jesus came to forgive us and to set us free from the bondage to sin. EBC member Chip Hesler writes: *“He sets us free from the addictions and dependencies which harass us, enslave us, and chain us down.”* If you’re struggling with this, Celebrate Recovery meets every Friday night at 6:00 pm. I love how the CR team is getting the word out in the community by putting up posters. I was thrilled to see some of the tabs have been taken from one I saw this week. We’re also offering a new Sunday elective at 10:45 called, “Life’s Healing Choices.”
- **He made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.** He’s released us from the penalty of sin, and He’s given us a new priestly position. This harkens back to Exodus 19:6: ***“And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”*** and moves us to the future as we see in Revelation 20:6: ***“...they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”*** One commentator captures it well: *“Like Old Testament priests, the entire people of God now have free, unmediated access to God’s presence, because Christ has removed the obstacle of sin by His substitutionary blood.”* I would add that as priests, we are to proclaim the gospel to our families, our neighbors, and to the nations.

As John contemplates all this, he bursts into the first of many doxologies at the end of verse 6: ***“...to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*** This doxology is addressed to Christ alone, which shows how the redemptive work of

the Son is central to the end times drama about to unfold. We see who the Son is in His revelation, resurrection, rule, redemption, and reign.

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3. The Power. After giving God praise, in verse 7, John is moved by the power that will be displayed when Jesus returns: ***“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen.”***

A couple weeks ago we took the time to explain some of the nuances of the word, ***“behold.”*** It means, *“to perceive through sight, to peer, to spy out, to gaze intently upon, to observe fully.”* It expresses strong feelings of surprise, hope, expectation, and certainty. It has the idea of vividness and emotional urgency and is used in the imperative, meaning it’s a command. It’s variously translated as *“Look! See! Pay attention! Take notice! Don’t miss this!”* The word ***“behold”*** is used 25 times in Revelation and is designed to grab attention and to signal that what follows is important, surprising, and worthy of reflection.

Here’s what we should behold: Jesus ***“is coming with the clouds...”*** The “Coming One” was a title for Christ, used nine times in Revelation. This is not a reference to fluffy cumulus clouds, but to the visible manifestation of God’s presence. This takes us back to Daniel 7:13: ***“And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.”***

God descended in a thick cloud at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:9), led Israel by a pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21), revealed His glory at the Transfiguration when a cloud overshadowed the disciples (Matthew 17:5), and a cloud received Jesus into heaven at the Ascension (Acts 1:9). In Scripture, clouds consistently signal the majestic presence and glory of God, making Revelation 1:7 a declaration of Christ’s divine return in unmistakable glory.

When Jesus came the first time, only a few noticed; when He comes again, ***“every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him...”*** This is a fulfillment of a prophecy found in Zechariah 12:10: ***“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for***

him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”

John 19:37 also references this passage after the soldier pierced the side of Jesus: *“They will look on him whom they have pierced.”* At His return, some will worship *“and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him.”* In Zechariah, mourning led to repentance; here mourning will lead to remorse. *“Even so”* is Greek for an emphatic yes, while *“Amen”* is Hebrew for *so be it*. Together this double affirmation forms a powerful, wholehearted expression of vigorous approval and reminds us that the gospel is for Jews and Gentiles.

In verse 8, God declares His identity: *“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”* Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, forming a merism, which is a figure of speech that uses opposites to emphasize the whole. God is not only the beginning and the end, but everything in between. Once again, we see that God is immutable and eternal. He is the God of the present, the past, and the future. He is *before* all things and will remain *beyond* all things.

He is also called *“the Almighty,”* a title meaning ruler over all things, used nine times in Revelation. This affirms that God is omnipotent, possessing unlimited power. He is El Shaddai, God Almighty, Yahweh Sabaoth, the Lord of the Angel Armies, and sovereign over heaven and earth. Interestingly, this might have been an indirect critique against the emperor, who claimed to be the almighty ruler.

Colin Smith summarizes the storyline of the Bible well: *“The Bible is one story that begins with two people in a garden and ends with a crowd, too many to number, in a city. In the Bible, God tells us the story of how we got from this beginning to where we are today, and how we will get from where we are today to the ending He has revealed.”*

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We began the sermon by reading and hearing God’s Word. We’ve spent time considering how we can obey it. Now we’ll close with some more reading and hearing which hopefully will lead to more heeding.

Revelation 19:1–2

¹ After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
² for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

Revelation 19:11–16

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Revelation 20:11–15

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:3–8

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I

am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Revelation 22:17-19 (stand and read together)

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

(period of silence)

Recently, I read a powerful account from a missionary who had the privilege of slipping into a restricted, totalitarian country where following Christ can cost you everything. He was there to encourage a small underground church. During his short visit, he spent time fellowshiping with these brave brothers and sisters. One evening, as they shared stories of faith amid hardship, he asked them a simple question: *“What are your favorite books in the Bible? Which ones speak most deeply to your hearts in these difficult days?”*

Without hesitation, they replied, *“Daniel and Revelation.”* Curious, the missionary pressed further: *“Why those two?”* One of the leaders, a man whose eyes had seen far too much suffering, broke into a wide, radiant smile. He leaned forward and said, *“Because they teach us that no matter how dark it gets, no matter how fierce the persecution or how powerful the governments are that oppose God... in the end, our God wins!”*

Please stand. I’ll read the first part of Revelation 22:20 and I’ll ask you to read the second part loudly. We’ll conclude by reading verse 21 together.

Pastor: He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.”

People: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Everyone: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Go Team Partner Interview (Tim Downs)