

Beatitudes of Revelation

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The book of Revelation is a wonderful book. It was written by John, the beloved, on the isle of Patmos over a half a century after Jesus went back to heaven. John had been banished there by the Roman emperor. Rome had tried to get rid of him by putting him in a great pot of oil, but the Lord protected His servant, and no harm came to him. So they decided to banish him. Patmos is a little island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor. I suppose that his enemies, and even his friends, thought that John's usefulness was at an end. But I suppose one of the greatest, if not the greatest, thing that was accomplished by John was the writing of this book of Revelation which came as a result of the visions that were given to him on this rocky island.

So we see another illustration of the fact that God makes all things work together for good for His children who love Him. No matter what happens to a Christian, he knows it was not something that just happened. God is carrying out His own fixed purpose in everything.

The book of Revelation contains seven beatitudes, seven blessings. Usually when we think of the beatitudes we think of the sermon on the mount where Jesus gave the wonderful message starting with, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The word "blessed" means happy. God wants us to be happy. One of the sons of Jacob was named Asher, and Asher means in Hebrew happy, or blessed. I hope there are some Ashers here, for we can all be happy and blessed if we will carry out what is written.

It is impossible for all seven blessings in Revelation to apply to one person. But if anybody gets any of the blessings, he will get five of them.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand"
Revelation 1:1-3.

Who is the blessing for in these verses? He that reads and hears the words of this prophecy. The words are interesting. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear." In the days when the Bible was written there were no printing presses such as we have today, and no means of multiplying copies by the millions. So there

were very few copies. When John wrote this book he sent it to the seven churches in Asia, and doubtless made seven copies. One went to Ephesus. One went to Smyrna. One went to Pergamos. One went to Thyatira. One went to Sardis. One went to Philadelphia. One went to Laodicea. And when that epistle went out somebody got up and read it to the church.

So at the beginning of this message John put down what God told him to put down—a blessing for the one who reads and hears. But watch. The one who reads and hears is to do what with what he reads or hears? Keep it.

The word "keep" is an interesting word. It is sometimes translated give heed to, or pay attention to, or observe. It includes the idea of paying close attention, and carrying out what we hear. You can see that the blessing would depend upon that.

Isn't it a wonderful thing when we study this Book to know that there is a special blessing pronounced upon the study? Oh, I want that blessing. You want that blessing. We all want the practical blessing of it day by day, and that is why we are going to keep it and not forget it. We are going to carry it out.

Some people say the book of Revelation is a mystery and cannot be understood because it is sealed. But its very title shows that isn't so. It is the book of Revelation. What does revelation mean? Something closed up? Oh, no. Something opened up. Something concealed? No, something revealed. Isn't it a strange thing that the only book God calls the Revelation men say is closed up? I will tell you why. The Devil does not like this book. If there is any part of the Bible that the Devil hates it is this book of Revelation, for it shows him up. It unmasks him. It also reveals Jesus in all His wonderful beauty, His wonderful character, and His wonderful plans for His people.

So Christ foreseeing that Satan would make a special effort to keep people from studying this book put a special blessing on the study of this book to encourage us.

Revelation 14 is really the heart of the book. It contains the great threefold message in Revelation 14:6-12. The three angels flying in the midst of heaven with eternal good tidings to preach to those who dwell on the earth. The announcement of the present judgment, the fall of Babylon, the warning against the beast, the image, and the mark. And then the picture of the saints who accept this message.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" Revelation 14:13.

In the next verse the coming of Jesus is pictured. And in between the proclamation of this message and the coming of Jesus is put, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." From the time this message is preached until

Jesus comes a special blessing is put on the dead who die in the Lord. Another translation puts it, "Those who die in union with the Lord." Another one puts it, "Those who die as Christians." In other words, those who go to sleep in Jesus.

There has always been a blessing for those who go to sleep trusting in the Lord. But this is a special blessing from the time this message has been preached. I wonder why there is a special blessing for them? For one thing, there is shown upon the people who hear and accept and carry out this last threefold message the accumulated light of the ages. They enter into a understanding of God's purpose for the human family. And his goal is the development of a people who keep all His commandments, and who are looking for the coming of Jesus.

It is true that those who die will die short of His appearing, but they are going to be awakened to see Jesus come. Having heard this message, if we are called to lie down and sleep for a little while, it is going to be a wonderful thing to go to sleep with this blessing sounding in our ears.

There is another reason why this is a special blessing. Those who live through to the time when Jesus comes are going to go through a terrific time of trouble.

"And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" Daniel 12:1.

And while it is going to be a thrilling thing to live through that and witness for God, He knows that for some it is going to be better for them to lie down and sleep through it. He knows what is best for each individual. So He says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."

Whichever way God selects for me, I say it is all right. What do you say?

There is another blessing spoken of here. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." The life and influence of a good man does not die when he dies. Just as the sun sets behind the western hills and casts its glory, and the whole sky is lighted up with the golden rays, so when the righteous die the influence of their lives, their works, continue on to bless all who knew them, and still others.

Isn't that a blessed thought? The Devil can't do anything against the children of God. Not one thing. Even if he kills them he is simply putting them where he can't do anything against them. He can't tempt them anymore. If the Devil had any sense he would do some things differently. If he had any sense he wouldn't be the Devil.

The next blessing is pronounced parenthetically during the description of the sixth of the seven last plagues. In Revelation 16 we see the sixth angel pouring out his vial upon the river Euphrates. The waters are dried up, and the three unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of the false prophet, and they go out to gather the nations to battle on the great day of God Almighty. And in the middle of that is thrown in a blessing:

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" Revelation 16:15.

This is Jesus. He comes as a thief. What a warning. He says when the world is gathered to Armageddon there is going to be an exposure of some people, and there will be some who have their clothes on, and keep them on.

Those garments reminds us of the third chapter of Revelation:

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" Revelation 3:17,18.

What is that white raiment?

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" Revelation 19:8.

The garments, the white robes, are the righteousness of saints. Righteous lives. Righteous doing. Now the only kind of righteousness that poor sinners can ever get is the righteousness of Jesus. Won't it be a wonderful thing to enter in with Christ into such an experience that His righteousness actually becomes ours? Not only imputed to cover our past weaknesses and failures, but to give out in doing His way and living His life day by day. Isn't that a wonderful thing?

Jesus says that when that awful times comes and the whole world sees the law of God in the heavens, and the whole world is brought to the time of revealing what is true and what is not true, it will be a wonderful thing to have garments that stay with us during that time of exposure.

Millions of people are going to be exposed when that time comes. Professors of religion, even ministers of the Gospel who have made great professions. Their unholy pretensions are going to be stripped from them, and they are going to be left desolate and naked. They are going to be shown up for what they are.

We had quite a storm last Sunday. In the night there was a big tree that blew down upon the road just a few hundred yards from our house. The next morning someone told us it was there, so I took my axe and my wife borrowed a cross-cut saw, and we went down to see about it. Sure enough, there was a great big tree two or three feet in diameter right across the road. We looked at it and saw it had a nice crop of buds, and wondered why it had blown down. Then we saw that the whole

heart of the tree was rotten. The outside looked nice. It was a beautiful oak, but it was rotten inside.

That is what God is talking about here. He says, Be careful. Be sure that you have something that is real, genuine, and not just pretence. And be sure you keep it.

We have got to have righteousness before we can keep it. Don't you think so? We have to have the righteousness of Jesus. We have got to give up our sins and take His beautiful life, then keep it day by day. Day by day give up our life and take His life. And if we will do that this blessing of Revelation 16:15 is for us. It is for those who go through the time of trouble and never fail once. What a wonderful blessing that will be.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God"
Revelation 19:9.

Did you ever get an invitation to a wedding? Here is an invitation. I was struck by the fact that of these seven blessings two of them are particularly spoken of as being written out. One is Revelation 14:13, Blessed are they which die in the Lord. Here it says, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. I thought that is true. People write epithets. They write wedding invitations.

Well, here is the wedding invitation. Have you received yours? If you have, you are blessed, you are happy. This is the wedding of Jesus, your best friend. Jesus is going to be married. He has invited you to His wedding. There has been an invitation engraved—hand written by Jesus Himself.

Some invitations have down in the corner the letters RSDP. It means they would like to know your answer. They would like to know if you are coming. Jesus would like to know. Are you coming? Are you going to be there? Blessed and happy are they who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Waymouth translates it: "Happy are those who receive an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb." I say they are happy. What do you say?

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" Revelation 20:6.

Who is blessed? Those who have part in the first resurrection. There is going to be a thousand years before anybody else gets raised. But the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are finished. This leads us into the millennium. There is a resurrection at the beginning of the thousand years, and another one at the end of the thousand years. Which one do you want to be in? You may not be in either one if you live until Jesus comes. And if you are in that special resurrection you will come up a little ahead. But all the blessed and holy of

the ages will have part in the first resurrection. On such the second death hath no power. When Jesus was here He said:

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" John 5:28-29.

There are two resurrections. The resurrection of life, and the resurrection of judgment and damnation. The wicked are coming up at the end of the thousand years. They are neither blessed nor holy. They were not happy when they went to sleep, and they won't be happy when they come up.

But the righteous went to sleep in Jesus with their eyes fixed on their Lord and Savior. They come up happy to greet the smiling face of the Son of God as He welcomes them into eternal bliss.

Think of it. The righteous and the wicked come up a thousand years apart. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power. That is a wonderful blessing. Paul says:

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

So let it be.

Now we come to the last two blessings.

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" Revelation 22:7.

Moffatt translates it: "He who lays to heart the saying of the prophecy of this book."

That thought is echoed again in the last blessing:

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" Revelation 22:14.

I was interested in the way one translation puts it. It says, "It will be their license." There are some things you have to have a license to do. If you go out in the mountains to hunt you need a license. If you go down town to conduct a business you need a license. Let me tell you, if you are going to go into that city you

need a license. Nobody is going to steal in after night. Nobody is going to jump over those walls. Anybody who is going in is going to go in through those wonderful gates of pearl. They are going to walk down those golden streets and have a perfect right to be there. They are going to eat of the tree of life.

Who are they? They are the blessed ones. How are they described? Those who do His commandments.

Who gets this blessing? Those who keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book. It means to take heed, pay attention to, and also carry it out.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"
John 13:17.

Do you think that God would emphasize this if He knew it was impossible for us to do it? No. It is true we can't do it without Him, for He says:

"Without Me ye can do nothing" John 15:5.

There is nothing strange about that. Without Him we can't do anything right or proper. But Paul says:

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" Philippians 4:13.

So through Christ, and only through Christ, His children can receive these blessings.

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