

The Blessings of Revelation

sermonaudio.com

Revelation

By Don Green

Bible Verse: Revelation 1:1-3
Preached on: Sunday, March 3, 2024

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, I ask you to turn reverently in your Bibles to the book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible for our message today. We're going to look at the first three verses of chapter 1. Before I do that, let me just remind you where we have already been as we've begun this exposition. We saw that, and we have seen repeatedly already, that the book of Revelation is a spiritual book calling for a spiritual response. This is not a book that we study for the sake of satisfying, you know, carnal curiosity about obscure details about the future. There are far more fundamental things at stake in the book of Revelation. We see that it promotes spiritual virtues of seeking the glory of Christ, fear of God, worship of God, repentance from sin, and those spiritual characteristics, those spiritual virtues are fundamental, they are foundational to studying this book and entering into it with any hope of profit whatsoever. You must be a Christian, as we will see, to profit from this book. It's written to the servants of Christ, the slaves of Christ. It's not a book that is just willy-nilly thrown out to the world to handle with its rough, blood-stained, sinful hands. We surveyed some of the key facts of Revelation. We saw that the author is John the Apostle. We saw the audience, the seven churches there in Western Asia Minor as we know it today. We saw something of the times, times of persecution, something of the content of the book. We saw that this is a book that was given as John was in the Spirit and his mind was supernaturally opened by the Spirit to see the spiritual realm and to look into the future and then to record it for our benefit; when I say "our," the church over the subsequent 2,000 years. We also saw, importantly, how Revelation corresponds to the book of Genesis. We looked at the first three chapters of Genesis and compared them with the last two chapters of Revelation and we saw no less than 14 different points of correspondence between the opening three chapters of the Bible and the last two chapters of the Bible. We saw that, therefore, Revelation is teaching us that God had a plan from the beginning. He saw the end from the beginning and the way that the Bible ends shows us that it was always the design of God to bring into perfect harmony the things that he set in motion in Genesis chapter 3.

We've already seen enough in just those opening few messages to come with wonder, with a sense of the majesty of this book before even entering into the verse-by-verse exposition of it; just the themes are enough to cause us to bow down. And now today we have the privilege of beginning our exposition proper of the book of Revelation. We're going to look at the first three verses here this morning, and I invite you to look at those

with me as I read them, Revelation chapter 1, verses 1 through 3. And if you are taking notes here today, the title of today's message is "The Blessings of Revelation." The blessings of Revelation, and that is a more technical title than you might first suspect, as you will see as we go along. Revelation chapter 1, beginning in verse 1.

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3 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.

We're struck there in verse 3 of the promise of blessing upon those who read and those who hear the book of Revelation. So there should be a sense of anticipation in your heart that there is something that God has for us, has for you in this book as we study it together, and I want to answer three questions in today's message, actually two questions and then the key to it all. The first question that we're going to look at and answer is, what is Revelation? What is Revelation will be our first question. The second question is, what is the blessing of which John speaks here? And then importantly, the third point will be the key to the blessing. The key to the blessing, and just to kind of jump ahead to the end of the message and we'll circle back around here. Beloved, it's just so important for you to understand that there are certain spiritual commitments, certain spiritual characteristics that are necessary to enter into the blessing of this book. It's no wonder that that Revelation so often causes conflict and arguments and social media discussions and things like that when it's handled with carnal hands, with carnal minds, with carnal curiosity, it's no wonder that the Spirit of God steps back and withholds any spiritual blessing and just leaves it to conflict to those who have not considered what the book says about the key to the blessings of Revelation. Hopefully by the help of the Spirit of God here today, we will avoid that danger and prepare our hearts for the blessings that God would have for us going forward. It is an honor and it is a privilege for us to read and to study this book and so we come with a sense of expectation, but also with a sense of fear and a sense of responsibility that we have to respond to this book spiritually, to respond to this book from our hearts, and not simply to make it another matter of intellectual acquisition, to inform debates in the future with people who disagree with the way that we see this book. I just so much want you to avoid that spiritual danger and to enter into what God would have for you in this book, which is different than, I would venture to say for most of you, is different than the expectations that you had when we first began a few weeks ago.

So let's enter into it with that sense of hope and anticipation. Our first question for this morning is, what is revelation? It's the first word that you encounter in the book, verse 1, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." And so that very title of the book, that very first word of the book calls for a brief comment as we seek to understand what is going on here. The English word revelation comes from the Greek word apokalypsis, from which we get the word apocalypse, and that term has the sense of something that is being disclosed,

something that is being revealed, something that is being made known. A revelation makes known something that was previously hidden; something that had not been seen before, is now brought forth and put on display for us to see and to understand. Another way to put it, it uncovers things that had not been seen before. And so as we read through and as we study in the coming months these subsequent 22 chapters of the book of Revelation, we are going to be entering into things and seeing things that God had not made known in the prior course of revelation. And it's really, you know, even knowing that, knowing that this is a concluding book, helps us understand that this was the last book of the Bible that was written, written at the end of the first century, not prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. I'll just leave it there for those of you acquainted with issues, you'll know something of why I say that.

But God is wrapping things up, and so having done everything in the process of revelation that he had to say up until this point, now he gives the crowning and the final disclosure of what is his plan, what it is that God is going to do in the future, and what the book of Revelation does is it makes known the Lord Jesus Christ in his person and in his work. We'll see more about that next week probably. And the book of Revelation, watch this, the book of Revelation discloses the program of God in ways which could otherwise not be known. Revelation sets forth for us what the future holds, how God will wrap up human history and bring this world and this earth to a conclusion and introduce a new state, the eternal state in his plan, and there is no way that any of us could know anything about that except for the fact that God graciously made it known in this book. And so we're seeing God disclose things to his people about what is to come, things that we otherwise would not know, things which will help us understand, grow in faith, and stand firm in the midst of trials and difficulties and future upheavals to come.

Now with that said, this book comes from the Triune God, and it is about Jesus Christ. The subject matter of this book is Jesus Christ himself. Look at verses 1 and 2 with me here. "The revelation of Jesus Christ." This is disclosing and making things known about Jesus Christ and we see where this book came from, "which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw." Now notice this, those of you that are in law enforcement or the legal field will appreciate this term, there was a chain of custody in this content that was followed and is disclosed to us. God gave this revelation about Jesus Christ. God the Father gave it to God the Son. He gave it to Christ. We see that in verse 1. God gave him with the purpose that Christ would show it to his servants, show them the things that would soon take place and Christ made it known to us by sending his angel to his servant John. So it goes from God the Father, to God the Son, to an angel who delivered it to John the apostle. Quite fascinating to contemplate that chain of custody and how it was delivered faithfully from one to another and you could even add a fifth, I suppose, when you realize that John is giving it to the servants of Christ, giving it to the church, giving it to the people of God who now have, we now have in our custody, we now have in our sense of responsibility, we have this great revelation that found its source in the Triune God himself.

And so there is this deliverance of it, it reminds us that elsewhere in Scripture, that Scripture tells us that the law was mediated, the Old Testament law was mediated through an angel, and so we see this supernatural message, this supernatural revelation given in supernatural means, recorded by the supernatural process of inspiration from the Spirit upon the Apostle John. We see that the Father has given us a great message and a great privilege to be on the receiving end of this revelation. This finds its source in the mind of God. This book has as its subject the Lord Jesus Christ. It's been supernaturally communicated through angels and through the Spirit working on the mind and opening the eyes of the Apostle John, and now here we are receiving it. No wonder the book of Revelation communicates and instructs us in the fear of God. We realize the great eternal value of what is in front of us. We tremble, we approach this with trembling fingers and trembling hands to handle such a valuable revelation, such a staggering disclosure of what God's plan is to wrap up human history and to introduce an entirely new state, how he is going to judge the devil and the wicked and those that have rejected the gospel of Christ and bring his servants into a place of eternal blessing. I'm staggered at the privilege that we have to do this together and to contemplate the message that Revelation brings to us.

Now, there in verse 1, God presents this revelation to his Son, and Jesus Christ alone, we'll see this later in the book when the seals are opened, we'll see that Jesus Christ alone is worthy to receive this. It is part of his exaltation to receive this book about his own glory and then distribute it so that it will be available to his church. Now, as I've already alluded to, and I don't think this is emphasized quite enough in some of the exposition that you will see, and it would clarify a whole lot of reasons why people have difficulty understanding the book of Revelation. I could do a whole message on why the book of Revelation is found difficult by men to understand but here we'll just start with the fact that Revelation is a book that the ultimate final target audience was the disciples of Jesus Christ. Look at this again in verse 1 where we see God gave him, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants." To his servants. How can we miss that? This is to his servants and, "He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John." Now, that word for servant is a word that has been made familiar in more recent years. It's the word *doulos*. It's the Greek word that means slave. It's the word for slave, and it reminds us that Jesus Christ owns his people like a Master in days gone by would own a slave and he would have ownership over them to direct them to do whatever the will of the Master was. That is the true relationship that a true Christian has to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Master and we are the slave. We are bound to follow his will and to obey it without dissension, without disobedience, without disputing the matter.

It is those loyal followers of Jesus Christ to whom the book of Revelation has been given and so we see, and as we consider the themes that we discussed about the glory of Christ, the fear of God, the worship of God, repentance from sin, we see that central to the book is that it is given to those who are committed to the glory of Christ, who seek to obey him, who want to honor him in their lives. And so already we see that the audience that can understand the book of Revelation is a much smaller subset of the whole human population than what is sometimes understood and recognized. This is for the obedient servants of Jesus Christ to hear, to understand. It is to them that Christ is speaking, and it

has an overflow message to the rebellious world, but the spiritual nectar of it all is for his people.

Now, along with that, what is Revelation? Revelation, the book of Revelation, it is a prophetic book. It unveils the future to those who read, and I want you to see this in three different passages. Just here in the first chapter, we'll get to a lot of prophecy down the road but in Revelation chapter 1, notice verse 1, notice that it says "that God gave him to show to his servants," what? "The things that must soon take place." When the Revelation is given to John, it's looking to things that have not yet happened. There are things that are going to happen that is the subject matter of the book of Revelation.

Going further down in verse 8 of chapter 1, we read this self-disclosure from God who says, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'" And so we see in verse 1 "things that must soon take place." Verse 8, "the one who is to come." And then you can look ahead to verse 19, Revelation chapter 1 verse 19, which many, including myself, take as a rough outline of the entire book of Revelation, where John is instructed as follows, "Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this." Things that must soon take place, the one who is to come, the things that are to take place, and so on its own terms, the book of Revelation is a book that is looking into the future and saying in advance what will happen so that we can know, so that we can respond, so that we can prepare our hearts for what is to be. That's the sense of Revelation. It's a book making known things that were previously hidden. It is a book written to the servants of Jesus Christ, the slaves of Christ. It is a book of prophecy.

And just a word about there in the middle of verse 1, Revelation chapter 1, verse 1. "to show to his servants the things that must soon take place," and the fact that it says there at the end of verse 3, "the time is near," what are those phrases saying? And here we are reading them 2,000 years after the fact. Is that really an idea that these things are soon to take place? The time is near? Well, what those phrases are, in theological language, what those phrases are indicating is the doctrine of imminence. Imminence. And let me just spell that for you for your notes because that's a homonym with other words. Imminence, I-M-M-I-N-E-N-C-E. Imminence, I-M-M-I-M-E-N-C-E. There will be a spelling test at the door before you're allowed to leave. the room here this morning. So imminence, you'll want to practice that along the way. The theological doctrine of imminence means that something could happen at any time. It could happen at any time, but it does not necessarily mean that it will happen right away in the days of John. So it could happen any time. The return of Christ could happen, it could happen before I finish this sentence. Okay, it didn't, but it could.

It could happen at any time, but it's not necessarily indicating that it will happen right away and so there's nothing left to take place to trigger the return of Christ, but that return of Christ will happen in a time that is known only to God, not to man. The timing of the return of Christ has not been revealed to us. Jesus made that known plainly and clearly during his earthly ministry, that that day is known to the Father but not to others. And so, beloved, we see that we should not be drawn in by those who try to set dates. The history

of the Jehovah's Witnesses should be an embarrassment that causes that whole false religion to just utterly disband because they spent so many times, they had so many false dates predicting the return of Christ and when that didn't happen they'd change the date and stretch it out and stretch it out just long enough so that people would, you know, go along with it. We don't want to be a part of that. We don't want to be a part of those that speculate on dates and how soon Christ might return or anything like that. People, authors have embarrassed themselves repeatedly since 1948 in the reestablishment of the nation of Israel, setting dates with that. Scripture makes it plain that that's not our realm for speculation but the sobering reality that is communicated in the book of Revelation is this: when the judgments of Revelation begin, there will be no stopping them. They will accelerate and they will culminate in a worldwide global catastrophe upon those who do not believe and there will be no stopping the judgment. People will cry out for rocks to fall on them. The greatest commanders of the greatest armies in the earth will quiver in their boots at the revelation of the wrath of God crying out for any display of something to hide them in direct contradiction to the prior boasting and self-proclaimed courage that they showed. Their spiritual emptiness and vulnerability will be displayed when the wrath of God begins and it won't stop once the seals begin to be opened.

Let that be a warning to those of you in the room today, that Revelation is a book that reveals, makes known the judgment of God, and it is a grace, it is a mercy from God to present the gospel to you now, to call you to Christ and call you to safety in Christ now while you can. Listen, I lose sleep over things like what I'm about to describe. I lose sleep over the fact knowing that so many, even under the sound of my voice, in a room of this size with this many people, knowing that there are people in this room hearing me in this moment or over the live stream, that will hear these things, God will have graciously brought a warning to you about coming judgment, graciously made known to you your sin, graciously offered Christ to you, lovingly called you to blessing, to repentance, to safety in him, and in your pride and intellectual and spiritual arrogance and in your love for sin, oh, it's just so awful to contemplate. It's so awful to contemplate that you harden your heart, you walk out, you're harder at the end of a message like this than you were at the beginning. And knowing, knowing that the day will come when you'll be on the receiving end of this wrath, not having the opportunity that you have now to respond. By then the opportunity is closed and nothing is left but the full fury of God against your sin, your rebellion, your arrogance, your rejection of Christ. Yeah, I lose sleep over that. I lose sleep over that, beloved. For people to harden their hearts against the preaching of the word of God, which is designed for the eternal good of their souls, in which as ambassadors of Christ we plead with you, we beg you to be reconciled to God and in light of all of the judgment and the wrath that Revelation reveals and you stupidly walk away and harden your heart against it in total disregard of what it will mean for your eternal destiny.

Beloved, I plead with you one more time. Don't be in that group. That's a bad group to be a part of. That is a group that you want to self-consciously say, "I've got to step out from that. I need to step away from all of that intellectual arrogance and that pride and that rebellion and that hard-heartedness. I have to step out of that. I have to reject the world. I have to reject my sin. I have to deny myself and flee to Christ while I have time. I

recognize that God has presented me with a day of mercy before the day of judgment comes and I'm going to avail myself of mercy and cry out to Christ while I can." And if you don't, the consequences are on your head, not on mine. I've told you. I've pointed it out to you. Now the responsibility belongs to you. Come to Christ while there's time. Find safety while you can.

Now, with that said, and coming back to give attention to the earnest, repentant believers that are in our midst here today, I thank God for you. You make it a little easier for me to put my head on my pillow at night seeing your earnest desire for Christ and your desire to grow and your desire to serve him and seeing the fruit of the Spirit coming out of your lives. What we're about to see, all of this abounds to your good. To Christians, this all abounds to good. To Christians, to the servants of Christ, Revelation has remarkable, staggering, eternally valuable blessings that are promised to us and that's what we're going to move into here with our second question. What is the blessing? What is the blessing? Or you could say, what are the blessings? What are the blessings that are embedded in Revelation for the true church of Jesus Christ? What are the blessings? And I am just so privileged. The longer I go, the more I'm just staggered by the privilege to be able to teach the word of God, teach it to receptive, supportive people. I'm blessed to do that.

The Lord intends this book to go to the true church, the true servants of Christ and it's even for those of us in modern times. Look at verse 3 with me. In verse 2, John bore witness, John was faithful to do what was given to him, to convey it to us, everything that he saw he delivered. Now in verse 3, we start to enter into the fact that Revelation starts with a declaration and a pronouncement of blessing upon the servants of Christ who receive this word, who, as it were, thinking of the parables in Matthew 13, who have good soil in their hearts for this seed to fall upon to take root and to bring forth fruit; those that are not deceived by the devil, those whose hearts are not hardened against it, those who are willing to look past and step beyond the worries of this world and the anxieties of this life and a love for the riches of this world, those who say there are more important things for me, the eternal spiritual matters are more important to me, and so I come with an eager heart to hear this. There's a promise of blessing if that describes your heart. Read it here in verse 3 with me, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear." That's where you're at now. You are hearing this word, a promise set forth for you from God himself through Christ, through the angel, through John, now committed to us. "Blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it for the time is near."

Anyone who reads, anyone who hears this book and heeds it, as we'll see later, is promised blessing from God himself. It's remarkable to contemplate that in a book that is staggering in its scope of looking at the full complex, the full matrix of Revelation from God from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, his whole program for the history of the world, his plans for the eternal state, to realize that he would single someone like you out to receive blessing in the midst of that, speaks to the transcendence and a different kind of imminence of God, that he is near, that he knows us, that he loves his people, that he

designs to bless us. Anyone who reads and hears with a receptive heart can find blessing. So Revelation here in verse 3 opens with a promise of blessing on those who would hear.

Now, what I want you to see, we want to peek ahead to Revelation chapter 22 verse 7, 22 verse 7, and we read this at the conclusion of the book of Revelation. Notice this, beloved. Revelation ends on the same notes and theme that with which it began. Revelation 22 verse 7, "behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Now, we've said many times, Scripture, sometimes texts will function like bookends, so that it opens with one theme or one kind of particular phrasing of a clause and it closes on a theme. Well, what Scripture is teaching us in that is that those bookends function to help us understand that everything in between is designed to promote whatever stands on the outside, whatever those bookends are. And what we see here in Revelation is it opens with a promise of blessing to those who read and heed. Let that settle into your mind. Read and heed. Read and heed. Those two things go together. It opens with that and it closes with that and so we need to see the big picture that God intends to communicate blessing to his people.

It's the same word in both verses, "blessed," makarios is the Greek term. He intends to communicate blessing to us and you know, that's one of the things that persuaded me to enter into a study and ultimately an exposition of this book, because there's a tendency among expositors to kind of avoid Revelation. Even John Calvin did not write a commentary on Revelation. He avoided it and you can get a 22-volume set of his commentaries and see that it ends at the book of Jude. Well, you know, that's okay. He's served the church so greatly in so many other ways but people avoid it. Now how foolish, how foolish can the church be, the church broadly speaking, how foolish can the church be to look at a promise of blessing and turn away? And that question convicted me. I said, "Well, no, then I can't. I want that blessing for myself. I would have that blessing for Truth Community Church and any others who might listen. Why would I not seek out the blessing?" Well, you know, I get it. There's a lot of controversy and all kinds of difficult interpretations to sort yourself through and, you know, no matter what you say about the book of Revelation, there are going to be ten people or more that are gathered around to dispute everything that you say if they have bothered to listen. And so it's a lot of work. It's a promise of a lot of conflict and criticism. But, you know, I just thought, "Well, why would I care about that? If the promise of the God that I believe and serve is that he'll bless us if we pursue that together, I want that blessing. I want to know what that blessing is. I want to own it. I want to see God honor his word to us." One older writer said this, some of you may know the name Harry Ironside, he's from a prior century now, but he said this 100 years ago, 105 years ago. He said, "It is clearly evident that this portion of Holy Scripture was given for our instruction and edification, but thousands of the Lord's people permit themselves to be robbed of blessing by ignoring it."

So let's contemplate what this word "blessing" means, what the word "blessed" means, and it's the exact same word that's used in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." This word "blessing" and what it is that God is promising to us is this, to be blessed by God means to enjoy a special advantage as compared to others. Those who

read and those who heed, those two things are joined together, they are Siamese twins that cannot be separated without killing the other, those who read and those who heed Revelation are in a special condition of receiving privilege from God, a privilege that brings joy, contentment, strengthened faith, confidence in affliction and adversity and looking at the deathbed and looking beyond, special condition of joy and contentment that's brought. You could say, as I've said far more frequently, that those who are blessed are, watch this, those who are blessed are the privileged recipients of divine favor. They are the privileged recipients of divine favor.

Now, again, I ask you the question, why would any Christian, knowing that God promises to make us the privileged recipient of divine favor, neglect and avoid this book? Why would pastors neglect and avoid this book? I had close friends, at least one, say, "You're going to teach Revelation? Why would you do that? That really surprises me." Well, I want to be blessed. That's why. It's not that complicated. The privileged recipient of divine favor, that's what the blessing is. Those who read and heed the book of Revelation will receive things that are not given to others who avoid it so that builds my sense of anticipation. I don't know what it does for yours but here's the thing. including the verses that we've already looked at, chapter 1 verse 3, Revelation 22 verse 7, Revelation uses this term "blessed" seven times. Seven times. We've already seen two of the verses where it is used and what I want to do now over the next few minutes is just peek ahead through the book of Revelation to see the context in which the promised blessing is given and for us to have a sense of what this gift from God, this special privilege is that's given to us in what we have in front of us.

So I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 14 verse 13. Revelation chapter 14 verse 13, and I'm not going to go into all of the context. We'll see these verses in days to come. Just want you to see the theme of blessing that's woven throughout, given to us seven times, seven being the number of completion or perfection in biblical literature and so the fullness of blessing is given to us in the book of Revelation and we read this in verse 13, "I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" Yes, indeed, it would be better translated, the word "blessed" isn't repeated there in the original. "'Yes indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors for their deeds follow them.'" In other words, there is blessing even in the act of death because when we die in the Lord, we enter into a realm of rest and the reward for our service to God on earth follows us into that new realm. So that we lay aside the problems and the sorrows of this life and enter into rest where God cares for us and rewards us and gives us an everlasting blessing, so that immediately you want to talk about blessing, talk about the way that people walk in fear of death and the process of dying and what happens to me afterwards, the slaves of Christ find in the book of Revelation a promise and an explanation of what is soon to take place in their lives, and it takes away all the fear to know that God promises and reserves blessing and heaven itself, the eternal state for those who belong to Christ. That's a blessing. To know that means that, and just thinking of some of the irrational ways that people in the church of Christ respond to fears of sickness for themselves, fears of sickness for their loved ones, and just are controlled by fear of what's going to happen, and "I've got to stay back so that nothing bad happens to me," not out of a desire to glorify God, but out of fear. Well,

this takes that away. It says, no, there's blessing. Even if you get sick and die, you're blessed. You're the privileged recipient of divine favor if you're a Christian because you enter into rest as a result. That's a blessing. That's a privilege not given to others.

Now, chapter 16, verse 15. Let's start in verse 14 just to set the stage a little bit as it helps us see the coming conflict, the global conflict that ultimately will engulf the earth. Verse 14, "For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty." Then there's this parenthetical statement, ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") In the midst of the coming great judgment of God, the great global cataclysm that will engulf all the nations of the world, those who know Christ, those who walk with him, those who maintain a watchful spirit and live a sober life in anticipation of the return of Christ and of seeing him, they're blessed. They are a privileged recipient of divine favor because they will be protected in the midst of that coming conflict. They will be preserved in and from that conflict. And they have a promise of heaven which is better than the treasures of this world. And so we walk through life with not much in our bank account, we walk through with conflict and difficulty and isolation because of our love and devotion to Christ, as you do go through that with an eye toward heaven, an eye toward the return of Christ, keeping yourself free from sin, unstained from sin, walking in a circumspect, holy way, you're blessed because when that day falls upon the earth, the judgment of all of that will not fall upon you. You have the promise of heaven. That's a place of blessing that not many, comparatively speaking, will enjoy.

So you're on the receiving end of divine blessing in that way. Chapter 19, verse 9, and as you're turning there, I just ask you again, thinking of the appeal that I made to the hard, unregenerate hearts in the room, why, why, why someone explain to me why someone in their right mind would look at the reality of death and global cataclysm and judgment and hell and demons and the eternal pit, why would anyone hear those things and reject and walk away from the word of God, walk away from Christ, and seal their own doom? Someone explain that to me, how there's anything righteous or godly or justifiable in that, in light of all of these promises. To see God earnestly lay out promises before us like this, and to judge ourselves unworthy of them, not wanting them, I shudder at it. Yeah, that's why I lose sleep at night.

Chapter 19, verse 9, "the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.'" Oh, beloved, can't wait. Can't wait. I don't know what that marriage supper is going to be like, I can only picture it in what have to be faint, unworthy, earthly comparisons. You know, you go to the finest of a banquet hall here with the finest of linens and gold table service in front of you and the bests of feast laid out before you, and a time of peace and celebration at a time of joy, maybe great music in the background, just speaking in an earthly sense, you know, the finest of banquets on an earthly sense. And then you multiply that by eternity in the presence of Christ, not gathered with sinners, but gathered with glorified saints at that supper and Christ takes of the fruit of the vine for the first time since he last had it at the Last Supper with his disciples because he

said, "I won't drink the fruit of this vine until I drink it with you anew in the kingdom." Oh my. Oh my. To be a part of that? Yeah, that's blessing. Those who will sit at the table of the marriage supper of the Lamb will enjoy a privileged status of blessing that is far beyond anything of all that it can be compared to, surpassing joy, surpassing worship, being perfected in the presence of Christ, gazing on his glory, sharing in it with the saints throughout the ages, and knowing that we're home and that nothing can threaten us, no more sin, no more temptation, no more sorrow, no more tears, no more conflict. Just the ultimate reward of sitting at that table, yeah, that's blessing. You bet. I'd be happy to be a waiter at that event, wouldn't you, let alone to sit at the table. You know, I picture, I mean, this is not reality, Scripture doesn't describe it this way. It does say we have a place reserved for us. It's as though that in that great event, whatever it's like, it's as though, I'm speaking metaphors here, it's as though there's a gold-plated label, there's a plate at your seat reserved for "enter your name." You belong there. This is your place. No one can take it away. No one else can fill it. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, yeah, I want to be there. I'll admit it. I can't wait to be there safe in his presence, joy in his presence, all the conflict, all the work of this world left behind, blessed in the presence of Christ at a supper that celebrates him. Who wouldn't want to be there?

Well, go on. Revelation chapter 20 verse 6. This comes at the end of the description of Satan being thrown into the pit, immediately following context is the great white throne judgment where people are sent away to be with the devil, destroyed for their sins forever and ever where the worm will not die, the fire will not be quenched. In the midst of that, in the midst of judgment, we see part of the blessing that God has for us is that that's not going to affect us. The fires of hell, for those of us that belong to Christ, that are his slaves, his servants, the fires of hell won't singe the first hair on our head. There won't be a whiff of smoke anywhere on our glorified bodies or on our souls.

Revelation chapter 20 verse 6, "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." Those in the first resurrection are blessed. They will escape the devil's condemnation. They will share in the glory that is Christ when he reigns on earth for a thousand years. And we share on that. We're servants. We're slaves of the King, and yet somehow he shares the reign with us. Oh, the glory that lies ahead is not worthy to be compared to the minor afflictions that we suffer through in this life. This glory dwarfs, it overwhelms, it swallows up everything that makes this life difficult when we realize that it's temporary, it's light, it's momentary in comparison to the far surpassing eternal weight of glory that God has stored up for those that will be in heaven and in his reign. That's a blessing. Revelation teaches us that, and we enter into a personal possession of that by faith as we read and heed these words. Who wouldn't want that?

Final one in Revelation 22 verse 14, remembering that we've already seen two verses, Romans 1:3, Revelation 22 verse 7, and for as great as all of the others has been, this is a capstone that covers them all and surpasses them all, like the top point of the great pyramids in Egypt, the capstone being the high point of everything that's underneath it. Here in Revelation 22:14, we see the capstone, the high point of everything that's

underneath it. Verse 14, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." The city of the New Jerusalem. The pearly gates, the streets of gold, to enter there and to walk those streets and know that there is no security guard that's going to come and say, "Why are you here? You need to get out. This place is closed to people like you." That's not going to happen. We will enter into the eternal state in contrast to the wicked who have been excluded in Revelation 20, who have been sent away into condemnation, into the pit with the devil where the smoke of their burning rises up forever and ever. In contrast to that outcome, in contrast to that state, in contrast to that destiny, you and I who belong to Christ, we will be in the eternal city forever and ever without end, amen, amen, amen, clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

I ask you, do you think it will be a privilege to be a part of that? Do you realize the gift of grace that is given in salvation? So much more than the tawdry way that it's marketed to most today about Jesus helping you with your problems in this life and a self-centered approach about how Jesus can help you and then leave you alone. Out with the whole of it! Out with the whole of it in light of the blessings that are the real blessings that God has reserved for those that he's chosen and brought to Christ. The privilege of being there covered in the theme of Revelation 22 verse 14 and to be a part of that, I don't have a tongue that's capable or worthy of describing that.

Do you see, beloved, how the consideration of the blessings of Revelation promotes the glory of Christ, worship of God, the fear of God, repentance from sin? Before anyone wants to argue millennial views with me, views of the rapture with me, details about the interpretations of different aspects of this great prophecy. We're not going to talk about those things. I'm speaking mostly to people outside the walls here. I'm not being confrontational or difficult with people inside the room here. We're not going to talk about any of those things until we've first worked through and cycled through together these themes of the glory of Christ, the worship of God, the fear of God, repentance from sin. All of these blessings. When we've earnestly talked about that, then yes, we can talk about those things. But not before. Not before, because these are the transcendent themes and you have to deal with the transcendent themes before you can rightly deal with the individual issues.

So we've seen, what is Revelation, we've answered that question. What are the blessings, we've answered that question. Now point three, just very quickly, the key to the blessings. The key to the blessings and now we circle all the way back around. Come back to Revelation chapter 1, verse 3 with me. We saw that God gave this book to the slaves of Christ, the disciples of Christ, the followers of Christ. We know from much prior teaching that Christ secured us and bought us with his own blood and purchased the church of Christ with his own blood. Well, beloved, the keys to the blessing are for those who read it, Revelation, read it, hear it. Mark this, God did not stop with reading and hearing. Read verse 3 with me, "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." The blessing is for those who read it, who hear it, and who keep it. That's what we saw in chapter 22 verse 7 also. You know, "Blessed are those who keep the words of

this prophecy. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of this prophecy," Revelation 22 verse 7.

And so we just come back again to the fact that God does not give the blessing of this book to pagans who reject Christ. He does not give it to nominal believers. Scripture just makes that plain over and over again. "Faith without works is dead. Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?" On and on we could go. It's for those who keep it. There is an actual volitional life submission and life obedience that is given to the things that are revealed in this book. The Greek verb is tereo, and I like saying that Greek word tereo. I like how that rolls off the tongue. The word "keep," the Greek word "tereo," it signifies watching closely or guarding something. It's a word that's used for a prison warden keeping the prisoners, watching over prisoners. And so the idea here in a spiritual sense is that you keep this word of prophecy, you keep the book of Revelation, and in this context, beloved, stay with me because I'm almost done, sad as it is to contemplate that, in this context, it means to comply in response to the teaching of Revelation. You hear it. You believe it. You act upon it. You observe it. You pay attention to it. Look, and this shows us that the blessing of this book is not given to people who just come maybe week by week to hear it and then just forget everything when you walk out the door and you just disregard it in life because you're content to have your ears tickled in the room for an hour on Sunday. That's not keeping it. And in love, beloved, in earnest concern, I plead with so many of you, this is about keeping the book, adjusting life, adjusting priorities to what is said here. You see, the book of Revelation requires a moral response from your heart. It requires a volitional commitment to obedience, to change where that is needed so that you repent of self-satisfied self-righteousness. You commit to love and obedience to the glory of Christ. You give thanks and worship for being in the kingdom. These are the themes that animate and percolate through your heart from day to day, from week to week.

And so we're brought back to the moral aspect of studying this book, repentance from sin. Five of the seven churches in Revelation 2 to 3 are called to repent. It would be wise for us to realize that perhaps that applies directly to us as well, as we'll see in weeks to come. And so, beloved, where do you start? Where could you start to start entering into this blessing? Well, I'm glad you're here. I hope that you'll keep coming in weeks to come. Easy starting point. You're serious about entering into these blessings, I encourage you to start reading the book of Revelation privately, on your own, in your home, throughout the week, and reading Revelation repeatedly as we go through it. That would be a place to start to read it, and as you do, asking the Lord to show you how to heed it, because he calls you to heed Revelation, to keep it as we go.

Let's pray together.

Father, we've run out of words, and so I simply ask you by your Spirit to seal the things that have been said this morning to the hearts of each one here. I pray, Lord, that you would shake and wake careless people who have not truly given their hearts to Christ, not earnestly responded to your word, who have been content with the projection of an image as opposed to the reality in their hearts and in day-to-day life. Father, for those

that love you and serve you and seek you, Father, I pray that you would pour out these blessings without measure upon them. Grant a greater sense of assurance as we go through. Grant us growth individually and as a congregation. Sanctify us, O God, in this truth for your word and the book of Revelation in particular is truth. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.