

01. You've Got Mail

Letters from Jesus

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Bible Text: Revelation 1:1-7
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That part of the course that says I need no other argument, I need no other plea. It is enough for me that Jesus died and that he died for me. Beautiful, beautiful words. By the way, I wanted to thank Brother Karl's daughter for bringing him. I appreciate that. It's good to see Victoria back with us this Sunday and I appreciate her presence here as well.

I want to ask you to turn in your Bibles to Revelation 1. We're going to begin looking at the first seven verses. Let me kind of tell you where we're going. I asked the pastor recently if we could do a study on the seven letters to the churches in the book of Revelation simply because upon reflecting on the state of our own church, I found some things in there that I think it would be good to remind us of because they point to our spiritual needs and they are convicting passages that I think are worth reviewing from time to time. He said it would be fine for me to teach that. We might get interrupted by homecoming and a few other things and that's fine. I will tell you though I always deal with the book of Revelation...there are two parts of the Bible that I approach with great fear and trepidation: one is Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians and the other is the letters to the seven churches because historically over the past 30 years, whenever I preached one of these two things, I leave the church later. I'm either forced to leave, I've had tar and feathers and that kind of thing before or, you know, I just don't know. So I'm hoping to break my streak here and stay. So if you have tar and feathers in the back of your pickup, please bring a different vehicle next week.

Anyway, I think it would be good for us to look at these passages and I appreciate the men who prayed for me before the service. I'm just a little harried and any day you've got to get up and pack your bags to go out of town and take care of the bulletin and make sure all your slides are formatted correctly all in one morning is kind of a busy, busy morning for me. So let's look at Revelation 1:1-7. Why don't we stand in honor of God's word as we read these verses together. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." By the way, this is from the Lexham English Bible, so I'm going to pause and let you read these verses in your own version as well so you'll hear me read this kind of slowly because I think nothing is as important, nothing I say about the word will be as important as what the word says so just take a moment here.

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his slaves the things which must take place in a short time, and communicated it by sending it through his angel to his slave John, 2 who testified about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all that he saw. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who hear the words of the prophecy and observe the things written in it, because the time is near!

4 John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father, remove from our minds the distractions to help us focus on a part of the Bible that you not only said is as inspired as the rest of our Bible but a book that brings with it a special promised blessing. May we not miss it. Help us to focus our attention and our minds on what you have to say to us today. In Christ's name it. Amen.

Thank you. You may be seated.

By the way, I want to run back to the start of that passage and I just want you to note a few things here. First of all, this is called "the revelation." The Greek work there is "apokalypsis." If we were to come back this afternoon and sit in service with our Hispanic church that meets at 5 o'clock and if they were to preach from the same part of the Bible, you would open up in the Spanish Bible to the book of Apocalypsis is how they say it in Spanish. So it's still called in Spanish basically what it's called in the Greek language and it means "an unveiling or a disclosure." It means to make understandable or open up what was previously hidden. I'll talk more about that in just a minute. Of course, we get the English word "apocalypse" from that. This revelation, by the way, just a little thing here, some of you young men here who may stand up and give a devotional or maybe stand up and give a sermon if God calls you into the ministry, don't call this the book of Revelations, it's the book of Revelation, singular not plural. We always need to handle the word of God correctly.

This is a revelation given by Jesus Christ to the apostle John who wrote these things down for our benefit. It says that it prophesies what must soon take place. In other words, it's not another history like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is. It is saying what must happen soon. In fact, you'll notice the translation here and for those of you who are not aware of what the Lexham English Bible is, it's probably the best modern translation of Scripture because it's done by the linguistic scholars who created the Logos Bible software and they are more in tune with Greek and Hebrew than probably anybody else

is. It's not a paraphrase. It's a translation. Your King James may say "the things that must happen soon" but the word here actually means, it doesn't mean soon in the fact that it might happen tomorrow, what it means is that whatever events it's going to unveil here are going to take place in a very short span of time and that's the meaning of the Greek words here.

"And communicated it by sending it through his angel to his slave John." Okay, this message was so important that God sent an angel to make sure it got delivered properly to John. He didn't just let John kind of come about these things by himself. He wanted to very clearly send it out. We're not told who the angel is. I think it's probably Gabriel because he has a prominent role as a messenger throughout the Bible.

But he sent this message and so these things that are going to happen soon and then it says, "the time is near." When it says the time is near, the Greek word for "time" there is not the word "chronos" that you would use for a chronometer or a calendar or something that's going to happen soon but here he says, when "the time is near," it means a certain period of history. In other words, there is a certain period of history that is close at hand and so this is the meaning of that.

So let's go forward now and let me just look at verses 7 and 8 with it as well. We're really not going to get into these verses this morning but I think it would be appropriate to read these. It says,

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even every one who pierced him,
and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.
Yes, amen.

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the one who is and
the one who was and the one who is coming, the All-Powerful.

Now, let me explain something about this book. There are a lot of reasons that people think that Revelation was written and a whole lot of different interpretations of it but I think most of the books on Revelation, most of the studies on Revelation, miss out on one very important point in that is that this book was penned right before the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ were about to undergo some of the most severe persecution that they have ever had up until the modern time. Now, we'll say that in the last 100 years more Christians have been martyred for their faith than in all of the rest of recorded history together since there have been some people called Christians. If you are not aware of that, you need to go and get out to the voiceofthemartyrs.org. You need to do some research out there. More Christians have died for their faith in the last 100 years than in all the centuries prior to that. Now, that's shocking, isn't it? We don't think about that.

But up until this time when John writes, there has been persecution of Christians but not like what is about to happen in history. Nero is soon going to have Christians captured. He burns down a part of Rome. He plays his fiddle while it's happening and then he

blames it on the Christians. He brings Christians in and he has their bodies rolled in tar and he has them impaled on a spike. He has the spike stuck down in the ground in his backyard and he lights them up for torches at night so that he can go out and enjoy his garden in the dark. That's what Nero did with Christians. Then, Nero was nice compared to Diocletian who really sought to wipe out every Christian and he's the one who instituted this practice of throwing them to the lions in the Coliseum and making a public sport of it. You didn't have football or soccer or baseball, you bought tickets to go to the Coliseum to watch the lions eat the Christians because that was the biggest fun in town when Diocletian was the Emperor and Christianity is basically outlawed.

So this group of Christians that is about to go through immense suffering, God sends a message to John and has him record it for these Christians primarily because they are about to go through some tremendous times of tribulation and suffering and he wants to encourage them by it. Now, that is not to say that that's the only reason he wrote it because the book of Revelation is clearly prophetic about the end times. But see, what I find is that people go to one of two extremes: they either go to the extreme that they're just going to study prophecy in this book to such an extent that they are going to figure out on a calendar the day Jesus is going to come back. We had that happen here a few years ago with a gentleman by the name of Harold Camp that otherwise had a lot of wonderful things in his ministry, blessed a lot of families, but he has three times now predicted the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and he's missed it all three times. Okay, and he's not the only one. You know, we've had a number of people. Hal Lindsay was one that predicted the return of Christ by a certain date and then a certain date came and went and Christ hadn't come back by that time. There are numerous of these people. I have a whole slide presentation of people who have made this prophecy. Just rest assured that if somebody says that Jesus is coming back on a certain date, that's not the date he's coming. You can relax that day. Okay? It might be the next day, it might be one minute after midnight the next day but he's not coming back that day because he says that no man knows the day nor the hour. So we need to just focus in on that for a minute.

But some people get so caught up in the prophecy they miss the fact that there was a present-day application when John wrote the book and I believe there is a present-day application for Christians in 2014 that we need to listen to the words that are here because I think we're approaching a period of history in which we are going to need encouragement. Regardless of whether you believe the rapture is pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib, you don't believe in a rapture, I can promise you this, there is going to come a time when Christians will undergo persecution and will need encouragement and why do I say that? Because the Bible says, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We aren't given a ticket to get out of it. Now, is there going to be a rapture? We'll leave that for another sermon but I want to just focus in on the fact that there is a present-day application to this book of revelation and we need to look at the encouragement.

Now, something else that is interesting in this book is that this book has a promise associated with it. You know, what if I could give you a promise and say that you're going to be blessed and I back that promise in writing and then I tell you, well, even if I

write a promise down it's only as good as I am, but what if I told you that that promise in writing was backed by the King of kings and Lord of lords? That's a pretty good promise, isn't it? You can take that one to the bank with you. That's exactly what we have here because in verse 3 of chapter 1, it says there is a special blessing to people who meet these qualifications. Now listen closely: they "read aloud" the words of this book. Now, that's probably a little bit of a shocker to us. When is the last time that you sat down at home and you opened your Bible to the book of Revelation and you read it out loud? In fact, when was the last time you read any book of the Bible out loud unless you are the dad and you're doing family devotions and good for you if you're doing it? But when's the last time you did that? Do you know that there's a power that comes when you read the word of God out loud? Why? Because faith cometh by what? Hearing and hearing by the word of God. We need to hear the word of God out loud. Take some time, especially if you're having husband and wife devotionals or you've got the kids around you. Take time to just read the Bible out loud because you will find that it strengthens your faith.

Then he says "the one who reads aloud it's words and hears the words of the book." To hear it means to pay attention to it. I don't know about you but sometimes when people are reading I just kind of tune out because I've often got 20 to-do things in my head at one time. But what we need to do, he says, is read the words out loud and listen carefully. By the way, have any of you ever spoken to children and they didn't hear a word you said or they quickly forgot it? No, that's James back there going, "That never happened to me." No, it happens, doesn't it? It happens to all of us.

Then the third thing he says, "observe the things written in it." To observe it means to do it. We talked a lot about the fact that the Bible is inspired. 2 Timothy 3:16, that every word of Scripture basically, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We know that it's inspired. In other words, when the Bible writers wrote the words of the Bible down, they weren't writing down their own thoughts, they were moved about, 1 Peter 2:21 says, "by the Holy Spirit of God." The writers were carried along by the Spirit and they wrote down a word that Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16 is literally God breathed. God breathed life into this book. There are a lot of great books and, you know, more power to you if you can read books on English literature. You could read the works of Cicero and the works of other philosophers and historians and Suetonius and all those things but there is no other book that has a power in it like the word of God. In fact, it is so powerful that God says that not a single word of his will go out and fail to accomplish what he has for it. It will always, just like the water that falls down from heaven and nourishes the earth and brings up the flowers and the green grass, his word always accomplishes the purpose that he sends it to. That's power. If I did nothing more but get up behind a pulpit and please don't actually wish for this because I can't do it, but if I only got up here and read a passage of Scripture and said, "You're dismissed." You would have gotten something worth hearing and, again, I'm not doing that today but great idea.

So this blessing, we could say this blessing really applies to the whole Bible but the context of this passage suggests that while the whole Bible can technically be a blessing

to us, there is something special about the book of Revelation that we need to especially, by the way, it's Christ's last words to the church before he comes again. This book closed the Canon on Scripture. Now, if you don't know what a Canon is, I'm not talking about the kind that goes boom. I'm talking about the books that were considered to be a part of holy Scripture. This is the last one that made it in and it closes out the Canon and after Revelation is complete, we have our New Testament and nothing else need be added to it and we don't need Mary Baker Eddy with her "Key to Science" and "Health and the Scriptures," and we don't need the book of Mormon and we don't need the doctrine and covenants. We've got everything we need when revelation had the last jot in the last tittle put in that book and it closes out the Canon.

Now, I'm going to tell you something. I don't do this to magnify me in any way but I'm about to share something that is, I think, one of the most important things I've ever told you. How many of you know what the devil hates most in a church other than prayer? Anybody? Taking notes. Where do you put your money? Hopefully, you put it in a bank. Hopefully it's a good bank. Hopefully it's backed by the FDIC. Maybe it's in a safe. You know, we take care to put our material possessions somewhere they'll be safe and yet we hear the word of God and we let it go in one ear and out the other. So I'm going to ask you to do something for the next few minutes: take notes. There is a blank spot on the back of your bulletin where you can write down the next few points that I'm going to say because I'm going to teach you the most important things in interpreting the Bible and making the Bible real to your life and you need to write this down. We have a lot of note-takers in this church but if you're not normally a note-taker, now is your chance. I do want to ask as a courtesy to those around you that you do not take notes in the modern fashion which is to stand up and take pictures of the screen with your cell phone. Use a pen and paper, okay? But take notes. By the way, I'm going to be teaching in class this week and many times when I teach class, this exact thing happens. This is not just funny people do it all the time. They see something on the board that I've drawn a picture of and they say, "Oh wait, don't erase it yet," and they've got to take a picture with their cell phone.

So what I want to do is look at this question first of all: what do you need in order to understand this book? How do you understand the book of Revelation? And just in case you didn't get the notice a moment ago, I really do want you to take notes. Okay? So pay attention to these next few things. So there are three things really we kind of need to understand this book well. One is that we need a proper view toward the book because there is a lot of wrong views about the book of Revelation. The other is that we need some proper methods of interpretation. Then we need an open heart to really hear what God has to say to us. Now there are two as I mentioned before, a couple of extreme views about Revelation. One of those views is that it's just a jumbled collection of baseless fantasies. Some people say that a whole bunch of Jewish fables, as it were, about the end of the world were kind of put together by some Christian and he tried to make it look Christian and so he added some stuff in and then he made a book and the scholars that believe this view would tell you that, "Now, you don't really need to pay attention to anything in there because it's just fables anyway. It's just too fantastic for us to believe." Now, obviously we can't take that view because it is in the Canon of Scripture and once

again, all Scripture is inspired by God so we have to hold onto this book. That's obvious about it.

The other view, the other extreme is the one that they would believe that it's the only book out of the 66 books in the Bible that we're studying so let's not waste our time on that whole 39 books of the Old Testament. Let's not waste our time on the other 26 books of the New Testament. Let's zero in on Revelation. Let's study it. Prophecy is our life. If we study it and we make all the numbers work out and we get out the Jewish calendars and we look at the cycles of the moon for the last umpteen centuries, we can eventually nail it down when Jesus is coming again in spite of the fact that Jesus himself said, "No man knoweth the day nor the hour." You'd think that would give some people a clue, right? But they don't get it.

Now, let me give you some keys to proper interpretation. John, that thing is not working there again. See if you can put that thing up? Hold on just one minute. There we go.

So let me give you some keys to proper interpretation. Number 1: when you read the book of Revelation or for that matter any book of the Bible, you need to divest yourself of all your preconceived notions about that book. Okay? I want to say this in love but some people when they read their Bibles already have their minds so made up about the way they believe things are that they only interpret the Bible in light of the way they think things are and they only look for things to support their view; they are not open to things in the Bible that might challenge their view. Now, years ago I had a personal experience with this. When I was going to seminary one of the hot topics and still one of the hot topics today is the whole issue of divine election or we'd call it, you know, the doctrine of Calvinism and the doctrine of free will which some people would call Arminianism. So there is this big controversy going on. So I was a young 18 year old seminary student, I know that sounds young to be in seminary but that's how old I was, and so I'm a young seminary student and I'm going to seminary and so I made up my mind, I thought, I need to figure out how this works. I read a little bit of the New Testament and a little bit of Romans and I thought, "I've got it. I've got it. I understand it now." And the truth is that God chooses who will be saved based on his foreknowledge of those who are going to receive Christ and I thought I had the perfect harmony between everything: God chose those who he knew would ask. But then I was in Greek class one day and I'm translating Romans chapter 9 and there is a passage in there talking about how God chose Jacob over Esau before they were even born and then it says this, it says, "It's not of him that willeth nor of a him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy." In other words, it's not based on a decision that someone made that God chose Jacob over Esau. It's not of him that runs. It wasn't based on Jacob's actions versus Esau's actions because, listen, Jacob was no sterling character if you've read the book. So I had my theology destroyed by reading the Bible.

Now, I'll save for another sermon the conclusion that God finally led me to after studying it for 30 years but I want to just tell you this: beware of people that say they have that issue figured out because Paul after he discusses election in Romans 9 and he discusses the free will of man in chapter 10 and then he talks in chapter 11 about God's sovereign

handling of the affairs of nations, Paul concludes it by saying this, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." In other words, Paul said, "Wow, God's dealings with man are way beyond my understanding." I've got to confess publicly that I'm not as much on the ball theologically as the Apostle Paul was and so if he can't figure it out, there's a whole lot I still don't understand about it.

Now, I will tell you some things some day that I have figured out about that subject but the point I want to make is this: when you read a book, particularly the book of Revelation, you can't go into it with all your preconceived notions. For example, if you believe in a pre-trib rapture, you'll only find the verses that support that. If you believe in a post-trib rapture, you'll find the verses that support that. If you believe in a mid-trib rapture, you'll find the verses that support that. Your perception will be colored by what you have already decided to believe so I want to encourage you to do, I'm not asking you to toss out your faith on its ear, but I'm saying, open your mind to allowing God to change your theology when you read his word. Divest yourself of your preconceptions. Here is the only conceptions you really need: God exists and he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Why do I need those? Because God is only pleased with those that believe he exists and he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And I need to believe that every word of God is true. Okay?

If I start with that, those are the only real preconceptions I need to begin so I need to ask God for an open mind. By the way, I'm not talking about so open that your brain falls out and bounces down the curb. There are people like that, but what I'm saying is that you subject everything that you hear, everything that you read, to the rest of the things that the word of God says and you reconcile Scriptures and you let the Scripture be the ultimate commentary on Scripture. Now, I want to say that I've got all library full of commentaries and I've got them in electronic form but there is no commentary on the word of God that is as good as the word of God itself and we need to focus on that particular thing.

Then I want to just tell you the next thing you need to do is you just need to diligently hunt for truth. Now, listen to this and here's where the writing comes in. Get ready on the next slide, but God promises an understanding of his word to those who meet certain specific conditions that are outlined in Proverbs 2:1-5. So let's look at them. Here are the verses. "My child, if you will receive my sayings, and hide my commands with you, in order to incline your ear toward wisdom, then you shall apply your heart to understanding. For if you cry out for understanding, if you lift your voice for insight, if you seek her like silver and search her out like treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord or the fear of Yahweh and the knowledge of God you will find."

Let me break this down into some quick easy points that all start with the letter "R" so that will help you. The first thing is: you have to receive. In other words, he says, if you receive my sayings, accept what God says to you, the whole thing. One of the things that

bothers me often about my own life and certainly about Christianity in general, is we have developed what are called cafeteria Christians. A cafeteria Christian is somebody and like I went to Luby's this last week. My wife was out of town and sometimes Faith and I were both busy doing stuff and it was just easier to eat out and we went to Luby's and we went down the line and I love going to Luby's because I can point at something and pick it and it's easier than reading a menu. I don't need my glasses to see what a carrot salad is but if I'm looking at a menu, I'm like, "Ah, I've got to find my glasses." So we went and pointed at stuff and put it on our tray and took it to the table and sat and ate. It was a great experience. The problem is that too many of us have a Christianity like that. We want our Christianity to, we want to know how to get to heaven but we're not really comfortable with God telling us that the borrower is servant to the lender because we like our credit cards. We don't want it to go that way. Or we don't like the fact that, you know, if we really paid attention to, "I'll set no evil thing before my eyes," that there are some things we'd have to quit watching. Or if we really took at heart what Paul tells Timothy about a godly woman should dress modestly, we would probably have to change our wardrobe. You see, we want to pick the parts of our lives that God affects and yet if we're really going to see God's blessing in our life and if we're really going to gain understanding, we need to think that the word of God applies to every area of our life: how you raise your children; how you discipline them; how you teach them; how you serve your employer; how you manage your finances; how you dress; how you take care of your car; and how you treat the dog. The word of God should affect all of those things.

So be open to conviction but don't be gullible. Just be careful about getting all your knowledge about God's word from reading what men say about it. Secondly, recite. He says here that we need to hide God's word in our heart. How do we do that? We memorize it and meditate on it. Isn't it fascinating that you really don't understand as well as you think you do until the word becomes a part of you. A number of years ago, I decided to memorize the book of 1 Timothy. Now I got over there in chapter 5 and there are some difficult passages in there. In fact, there is a passage there that addresses whether or not a woman is supposed to talk in church. It talks about her not usurping authority over the man. "Let not the woman usurp authority over the man but rather let her be quiet," and it goes on and I always had trouble with those passages and trouble figuring out exactly what Paul was saying and trouble knowing how to reconcile that with what I often saw in church and I was thinking, then, after I memorized the book and I studied some of the words behind it and I looked up two different Greek words to kind of get a grip on it, suddenly the whole thing made sense and particularly it was that passage that says, "For she shall be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith and holiness and sobriety." I thought, "How is a woman saved in childbearing?" I didn't know until after I memorized and meditated on that passage. I couldn't understand it until I had the whole book in my heart and then it became very, very clear what God meant. Again, that's for another sermon.

So but we need to meditate on his word. Next, we need to recite it to ourselves, say it out loud, review it. Then we need to request. He says, "If you cry out to God for understanding and if you pray for insight." It is folly to think that all you have to do to understand God's word is to get a couple of good Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, maybe

the Bible Knowledge Commentary and maybe a couple of different translations of the Bible and sit down and because you're a reasonably educated, well read person you can figure out the word of God. If you want to understand the word of God every time you approach the book, you need to ask the author of the book to come and explain it to you and who is that? God. Ask the author to come and explain it to you.

Request his assistance and then resolve. Resolve is a word that we don't use as much anymore but it means, to have resolve means that you are committed to a course of action and that nothing will take you away from that course of action. What is the course of action that you need to resolve to? You need to be committed to diligently seeking out the word of God.

So there are four. I hope you have those four written down. To receive. To recite. To request. To resolve. A person needs to have such a desire for righteousness and truth and justice that they are hunting for it all the time. Now, one other passage to add two more components to this so keep taking notes, don't give up yet. Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Now, there are a few more tips there.

First of all, he says you need to repent. He says, "be not conformed to the world." How many of you believe there is such a thing as a worldly Christian? Okay, I'll give you the answer: yes, there is one. You can raise your hand. That's okay. Now, don't raise your hand this time. How many think you might be one of those? There are times when I'm kind of a worldly Christian. I get caught up in things of the world and I get caught up in the trappings of success. I get caught up in the day-to-day management of the here and now and I forget about eternity. Maybe I'm the only one like that but when I get that way, I need to repent because when I start being conformed to the world, when my talk matches the world's talk, when my dress matches the world's dress, when maybe my music matches the world's music, when I spend finances in the same way the world does and they don't give any thought to God, I am becoming conformed to the world and he says, "be not." He's literally saying, "Stop being conformed to the world." Don't do something just because other people are doing it. Don't do it just because other Christians are doing it. You may find that some Christians are free to worship the Lord in a whole different way than you do but if you have the conviction to the contrary, don't follow them and violate your own convictions. Compromises start with little things but they lead to big problems.

I have to tell you, I love space ships and I love astronomy. I have a natural love for this. When I was, I think it was a junior in high school, that year I went down and stayed that summer at Clear Lake, a little community outside of Houston, Texas and I went to work with my brother every day who was the first test pilot for the space shuttle at NASA. I got to fly the simulator. I actually got it on the runway. The day before I was there, Jules Bergman who used to be the science editor for CBS news landed the simulator 300 feet

underground so I was real proud that some science editor from CBS news buried the space shuttle and I actually got on the runway. I will have to tell you that I took three attempts to get to the runway. It was great. It was like a \$20 million videogame and, of course, now I can go down to the local office supply store and buy a videogame that blows that one away.

There are two amazing things about the space program. I took my kids down to NASA last year and we went into Mission Control. That's where the original Apollo space launches were and I got a chance to ask a question that had been bugging me for a long time. I asked them, "How much memory did the computer that got the first spacecraft to land on the moon, how much memory did that computer have?" The reason I asked is because I know in 1968 which was a year before the first Apollo mission made it to the moon, the university mainframe computer at Texas A&M University, we all know Texas A&M leads the world in technology, if you don't know that, you need to learn it now. But the mainframe computer had 17kb of memory. Wow. So I asked them, "How much memory did mission control's computer have when they sent the first manned mission to the moon?" And he said, "If you take one picture with your cell phone, it uses ten times more memory than the first computer that sent man to the moon had. Just that one picture." Wow, that's a mind-boggling thing, isn't it? It kind of ranks right up there with boneless chicken, doesn't it? So that's amazing.

But think about it, they had this guidance system that had very little computer power, very little memory and if that guidance system had been off by just a fraction, they would have never made it to the moon. You see, it starts off that maybe you're just a 16th of an inch off here when you leave planet earth but by the time you get to the moon, you'd be 1,000 miles off target. So we need to understand that a little compromise leads to a big error and that's true in our lives as well. We need to repent.

By the way, I went and saw a movie, I don't do this a lot because there aren't many I could see. But I was really intrigued about this new "God is Not Dead" movie. I wanted to go and see it. There were a lot of commendable things in the movie. You know, I love the fact that it's a story of a university student who stands up against a philosophy professor and he is willing to say that this philosophy, he basically, the philosophy professor says, "You have to prove God exists or you fail the class." And through this young man's efforts, several people come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior so that was awesome. But I also noticed some things in the movie that they really should have addressed. There was a woman who was a Christian in the movie that was living with the philosophy professor and he's not a Christian so A. she was unequally yoked and secondly it wasn't a marriage and yet they never addressed her sin in living in that situation. So there is still a problem with the movie. Then there were some other things, some other little compromises and you watch the movie and you felt good about the overall plot but it bothered you that you had to swallow some little doses of compromise in order to watch the movie.

That's how it happens. You need to know something about Jesus: he never went along with the crowd. He was relevant to the world because he was different from it and so we

need to repent. The next thing that Paul tells us is that we need to renew. He says, "Be ye transformed by the word of God." You are transformed by filling our minds and meditating on the word of God and then he says, revive. He says, "yield your will to God's will as revealed in that word." He says, "Don't be conformed to the world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may," want? Not so that you can go out and lecture on it but he says, "so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We need to show the world there's a better way of life and how do we do that? By living it out in our own lives. The only way you'll all ever be a credible messenger for Jesus Christ is if your life shows Jesus Christ if somebody looked and didn't even hear you. The loudest message you will ever say as a Christian, you will not even use words for. Let me say that again: the loudest message you will ever say as a Christian, you will not even use words for.

Now, so those are some rules on how to begin to understand God's word. Now, let me give you one other important thing worth writing down. I'll have to leave this up here for a minute. There is a science called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of properly interpreting Scripture and I remember having classes on this in seminary and it was a great class and then years later I went to another seminary to start some postgraduate work and I sat in an hermeneutics class and instead of telling me to diagram the book and then study the Greek and the Hebrew and doing contextual word studies and looking at the environment around the time that the author wrote and trying to figure out what the author said, this seminary class, a different seminary, not our seminary in Jacksonville but a different seminary, they said that the way you interpret Scripture is read five commentaries and then summarize. Well folks, if you read five idiots and then summarize, guess what you're going to get? You're going to get lunacy. You're going to get error. So that's not the way to do it. But here's a rule of interpretation and this is particularly important when you get to the book of Revelation: when the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Let me say that again: when the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Sometimes you just read a verse and it means what it means, okay? You should take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context studied in the light of related passages and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.

Now, we have to be kind of careful here because Revelation is a book about the end times and John was allowed to see some things that were going to happen that he had no vocabulary for. He could not possibly describe some of the things that he was seeing in the battle of Armageddon and so he came up with descriptive language. And to be quite frank, I don't know until it happens exactly what is going to be there and I plan on not being here when that battle takes place. But until it actually happens and maybe I get to see it from a distance, I don't exactly know what all those things are either. When you read John talking about these grasshoppers that fly but they have heads like dragons and teeth and they sting in a certain way, could that be a natural pestilence? Could God send stinging locusts upon the earth? God's God and he can do what he wants to. Could that describe a Black Hawk helicopter that sprays poison out of its tail and missiles out the front? Absolutely, he could do that too. John may have been describing something with the best language he could come up with not knowing how to talk about it.

So there are times we're going to have to look for that symbolic language but by and large when we read this book, we need to try to go with the basic common interpretation. Now, very quickly: what has God given us in this book? There are two main things I want you to see that he gave us: one is he gives us a rewarded Savior. Now, this sounds a little weird. Does it sound a little strange to you that God rewards himself? You know, we have a Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, right? But God the Father rewarded God the Son for his faithfulness. They are all three God and yet there are three distinct persons to the Godhead and don't let that trip you up. You've got a Trinity at home in your kitchen. Yes you do. I know you do. You go home and you open up the faucet and water comes out the faucet. That's called H₂O. You stick that H₂O in the freezer and it comes out as ice cubes but it's still called H₂O. You put the ice cubes in a pot on your stove and start to heat it and the ice cubes turn back into liquid and if you leave it there long enough the liquid turns into steam which, by the way, is still called H₂O. H₂O is a Trinity. It's a solid, it's a liquid, it's a gas. It's a Trinity. Everything in creation reflects the Trinity. There are only three kinds of time: past, present and future. There are only three areas in science: there's space, there's time and there's matter. Those are the three things that are in the universe. So everything is a Trinity.

So Christ at the start of Revelation chapter 1, you are seeing him in his resurrected glorified state and we ought to stop and pay attention to that a little bit because it's pretty awesome and we'll do that in another lesson. All the saints and the 24 elders are casting down rewards before his feet. Why? Because he has been faithful. After the resurrection, Jesus was received up into glory but that was only the start. John was given a glimpse into this glory. So the first thing we have is we have a rewarded Savior. Now, let me tell you a little secret: one of the cool things about having a rewarded Savior is that we get to be rewarded with him. I'll explain that more in a minute.

Here's the second thing we have in Revelation: we have an unsealed book. Now, this is pretty cool. Sometimes God doesn't want you to quite understand something for a while so he seals it up. We have a case of this in the book of Daniel, Daniel chapter 12. God revealed something to Daniel that Daniel never wrote down for us. He never told us what it was because apparently if we had known this or if centuries of men since Daniel had known this, it might have altered history forever, it was so profound to know what was coming. But here's what he says, listen what the angel tells Daniel, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book," by being sealed it means nobody gets to read it like one of the books I have on amazon.com. Nobody's read that book. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," and then in verse 9 he says, "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." So understandably, Daniel and his immediate readers couldn't have comprehended everything that God had told him that day because more things needed to happen in history. You can't understand Daniel until you understand the cross. Once you get to the cross, Daniel makes sense because Daniel chapter 9, he talks about how Messiah will be cut off but you can't understand Daniel until you get to the cross and you know the Savior. Now we go back and Daniel kind of makes sense to us. In the time of the end

here in verse 9, the end of days in verse 13, the words of the book have been sealed, they have been kept intact. People haven't understood it but there is coming a day when people will know that book and even better.

Now look at the contrast between Daniel where stuff was sealed up and Revelation. Revelation 22:10, God tells John this, "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." So God reveals himself to Daniel and he was not allowed to revealed it at the time but what he didn't reveal in Daniel, he reveals in Revelation. It's not sealed. In other words, the book of Revelation is meant to be studied, it's meant to be understood and it can be understood. That's an amazing thing.

Now, so what was sealed in Daniel was unsealed in Revelation and what was not made known in Daniel was made known in Revelation and some of these passages are particularly pertinent for the seven churches in Asia, some particularly for us, some for Christians in the future but all of Revelation from end to end is pertinent and profitable to Christians of all ages. God did not cloak Revelation in a mystery, he gave us an open, unveiled the book.

So what has God said in this little passage of Revelation 1 that we've read? First of all, I want you to notice that there is a revelation of the Trinity. Look at verses 4 and 5. You've got to look at it carefully. He says, "John, to the seven churches in Asia: Grace to you and peace," and then here comes the first phrase which represents the first person of the Trinity, "the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming." This is actually a pretty rare occurrence in the New Testament. This is a reference to God the Father. Usually God the Father is not referred to this way. We see this same description used of Jesus in other passages but here it's a reference to God the Father. He says, "This message of grace and peace comes to you from God the Father." Normally when we have passages too, by the way, we mentioned Father, what's the next one we usually mention? The sSn, the Holy Spirit. They actually change this one around and we mention the Father, the Spirit and now the Son. Why is this one different? Because sometimes you mention the most important thing for somebody to understand last so it sticks on their brain. Then he says, "from the seven spirits who are before his throne." I'll talk more about that in just a second. Then, here is the last person of the Trinity, "from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth." He's the first one to be resurrected. He's the first one in supremacy.

Now, we'll talk more about those three but let me just say: what is God wanting to say to us? In chapter 1 and verse 3, God makes it very plain: it is something that he wants to bless you. Let me just very quickly, if you're a parent, raise your hand? Okay, while you've still got your hand up, if you like your children to be blessed, keep your hand up. Okay, you can put your hand down now. All of you parents who wish you could just knock that kid across the room? No, okay, there's nobody there. And if you did raise your hand, I'm glad you put it down quickly. So we want to bless our children. God wants to bless his children. He wants to bless you. "Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who hear the words of the prophecy." Now, just take a little journey with me, in fact, if you still have your Bible open, follow these Scriptures and circle the

word "blessed" in each of these because the next time you're reading Revelation, you'll say, "Oh, it's one of those." By the way, when you say the word "blessed" over and over again, there is a particular name for that kind of Scripture passage. Does anybody know what it's called? In Matthew chapter 5 the Sermon on the Mount begins with the, what? The Beatitudes, the blessings.

Would anybody like to take a quick guess at how many times we are blessed in the book of Revelation? Let me just say it's the number of completion in Scripture. Seven times. Let's look at them real quick. You have the first one there, 1:3, the second one is 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" If you get to show up at my funeral which I haven't videotaped yet but I'm working on that because I want to make sure they say the right things about me, but if you get to show up at my funeral, don't cry for me. I'm blessed. It says so right here. No need to cry about me. Next one, 16:15, if you want to turn over there and circle that, "Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who is on the alert and who keeps his clothing so that he does not walk around naked and they see his shamefulness." In other words, blessed are you. When he's talking about clothing here, he's talking about the robe of righteousness. He's saying, "Blessed are you if you are living a righteous life so that you don't have to be ashamed when Jesus comes again." By the way, does that blessing apply to every single Christian? I don't think so. I think it only applies to those who are on the alert and who keep their righteousness about them. But sometimes I think there's going to be some Christians when Christ comes back, they are going to be ashamed. They won't have known he was coming. They won't be looking for him. Revelation 19:9, "And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" I think that one probably includes all of us. "These are the true words of God." Revelation 20:6, "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!" I think that one goes to all Christians, right? We're all going to share in the resurrection together. "Over such the second death has no power." Yup, if you know Jesus Christ, the old saying is if you are born twice, you die once. If you are born once, you die twice. I'm only going to die one time. Why? Because I'm going to rule and reign with Christ for 1,000 years. Revelation 22:7, "Behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." That means the book of Revelation. That's a pretty narrow promise. A lot of people aren't even paying attention to this book. You're missing a blessing. Revelation 22:14, "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." Now, I don't think that this verse in any way is teaching that I can do something to make myself holy enough to get into heaven. I think what he's saying here is, "Blessed are those who have washed themselves in the blood of the Lamb by receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior" because that's the only way any of us are going to see the tree of life. So seven times in that book, God gives a blessing but not all of the blessings apply to all Christians. So the question is, if we go back and study those passages and review them: how many of those blessings will we have a chance to receive?

I want you to notice something else in chapter 1:4 and it's a pretty common thing but we need to state it again: there is no peace without grace. My daughter Grace loves it when I teach and say things like this. But there is no peace without grace. Why? Because notice he says, "Grace to you and peace." Now, I want for a minute share that there are two perspectives that we need to have about this little phrase: one is the eternal perspective. I can't die in peace and I can't have peace for eternity if I haven't invited Jesus Christ as my Savior. So if you're here today and you've never made that decision, you've never said, "God, I'm a sinner. I need Jesus to be my Savior. I need you to forgive me of my sins." If you've never done that, you need to do it before you leave this place because I can't guarantee how much more time any of us have. We're all just one heartbeat away from eternity, aren't we? But I do want to say that we also need to have an everyday perspective and that is: how many of you as Christians will admit the fact publicly by raising your hand, I'm going to go ahead and raise mine because I know what the question is: how many of you will admit the fact that sometimes Christians don't have peaceful days? May I just share with you I think that the reason we don't experience peace in the day is because we failed to avail ourselves of God's grace for that day. We should start the day off by saying, "God, I need your grace today. It's going to be a rough day out there. I need your help."

Now, the second thing you notice, he talks about that God wants to bless us. God the Father is trying to bless us. God the Spirit is comforting us. You notice when he mentioned that seven spirits of God, he is referring to Isaiah chapter 11, verses 2 and 3 where he mentions the seven spirits of the word of God. There is the Spirit of the LORD, all caps in your Bible. It's the Spirit of Yahweh, Jehovah. That's the Old Testament name for Jesus Christ. It's God as he relates to man. Then there is the spirit of wisdom. There is the spirit of understanding. There is the spirit of counsel, give you wise advice. There is a spirit of might, that gives you the strength to get through the day. There is the spirit of knowledge. There is certain kinds of knowledge that bring comfort to us. There is the spirit of reverence. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Any of you that have ever lost a loved one that is now in the arms of Jesus, you know what I'm talking about when I say that the Holy Spirit gives comfort when he gives you the knowledge that those who are in Christ are with him eternally. But I want you to know that it's the Spirit that comforts you from day-to-day. You've got all kinds of stress facing you. You've got the fear of the unknown. You've got uncertainty. You've got a harried schedule. But the Holy Spirit can comfort you.

Then the last person of God who is mentioned here is Jesus. It's very unusual for him to be mentioned last in Scripture but he is in this passage. God wants to bless us. The Holy Spirit comforts us. But Jesus is the reason for our hope. He's the one that gives us hope. He is the all-inclusive hope of the churches because he's coming again, he's reigning on a throne now and he will reign on a throne for 1,000 years in Jerusalem and then he will reign for eternity at the right hand of God the Father.

By the way, when you read chapter 1, that is where we get the clearest and quite frankly, about the only physical description we ever have of Jesus in the Bible. Now we know in

Isaiah it said that he had "no form nor comeliness that man should desire him." When Jesus was walking around on planet earth prior to his crucifixion, there wouldn't be a girl here that would look at him and say, "Wow, he's good-looking." You'd say, "Boy, that boy's going to have to tie a bone around his neck to get the dog to play with him." It said he had no comeliness, no handsomeness. That's the Scripture, not me. And yet when we see him in Revelation 1, wow. His hair is white like wool. His face looks as though it's on fire. His eyes are burning through you. He's got on a golden breastplate because he's not only the King but he's a King that's ready for war. He has a name written on his thigh which is King of kings and Lord of lords. The biggest muscle in his body says King of kings and Lord of lords. His feet are like burning brass, they are so bright and because they are ready to stamp out the judgment of God upon a wicked and unrepentant mankind. His voice is like the voice of many waters. You know, he commands your attention if you read that, Revelation, the book is about him. God says, "Do you know what? You need to meditate on his appearance." You need to think about who it is. Don't ever treat Jesus as just some carpenter from Nazareth again. Don't ever treat him as just the Big Guy upstairs, the cosmic policeman. He is something big.

Then you need to pay attention. Now, the study of all Scripture is important. All Scripture is inspired but this passage tells us that there is something special about this book. There is something especially dear and precious. Why? Well, first of all, God says it brings a special blessing. Secondly, it's the best picture we have of our risen, resurrected Savior. Thirdly, Christ is not glorified alone, we get to be glorified with him. Have you all ever thought about that? Look at what it says in Revelation 1:5 and 6, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood," now listen, "has made us to be a kingdom and priests," some Bibles would say, "made us to be kings and priests," but how many of you have every thought of yourself like that, that you're going to rule and reign together with Christ? That's kind of a mind-boggling thing, isn't it? "To serve his God and Father, to him be glory forever and ever." You see, the book is special because when we see the glorified Christ, we get to hear about what God has in store for us too. Then he says, "seek to understand." It is not written to mystify, we're to understand it. John 16:13 says this, "Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: and he will show you things to come." Man did not have this Spirit of God resting on every one that called on his name back in the book of Daniel but now everyone who is a Christian has the advantage of having the Holy Spirit of God. Seek.

Then I want to encourage you, there are two more things: look with expectancy. Acts chapter 1, listen to this, "When he had said these things as they were looking on," this is an angel talking to the disciples and they had just seen Christ go up into heaven and they are all just kind of going, "Wow," and they're standing there with their mouths agape. It says, "They were looking on and he was lifted up. A cloud took him out of their sight. While they were gazing into heaven and as he went, behold two men stood by them in white robes and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into heaven? This Jesus who was taken from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'" Revelation says it this way, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds. Every eye will see him and even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth will

wail on account of him, even so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Let me just close with these questions of application. Do you study your Bible regularly? I gave you some tips that begin with the letter "R" for how to understand Scripture and I gave you the Scriptures behind those things and if you, I would encourage you to write those "R's" on a bookmark in your Bible and every time you open up your Bible, you will know that you need to ask God to help you understand it. You'll know that you need to repent. You'll know that there might be something in that passage you need to memorize and meditate on so that you get a full understanding. You will know there are things you need to do and you can follow those steps that I gave you. But how much time have you spent because it's so easy to let the book be a Sunday only thing and yet I am convinced that we miss a great blessing when we don't give the first part of every day to God.

Secondly, do you feel stalled in your Bible study? You don't feel like you've gotten much out of it. I had a day like that this last week. I was up at 5:30 and I was reading my Bible and after I got through with the chapter I was reading, it was a chapter in Proverbs so I know there was some wisdom there but I got through reading that chapter that day and I went to my office and about 30 minutes later I thought, "What did I read?" I had gone through a whole chapter of Scripture and because my mind was so distracted and I hadn't really focused on it, I didn't really get anything from it. I got a lot of conviction this week so God made up for it later. But we need to look at that.

John 14:21, we need to see Jesus. When is the last time he revealed himself to you? Because he says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will reveal or manifest myself to him." That's how we get to know Jesus, by keeping his word. How much time did you spend in the book of Revelation lately? I want to encourage you this week if you don't do anything else, read Revelation chapter 1 again and again and again and pay particular attention to the vision of Jesus himself until you can kind of see it in your head.

Then this final question and that is: are you living with a sense of holy urgency? This book should teach us if anything else that Jesus is coming. Are you watching?

There was an old Negro spiritual years ago that said it better than I could and that song ends, he says, "When the Massa comes," in other words, when Christ comes, "will he find me picking cotton?" And it wasn't about cotton picking, the song was saying when Jesus comes back, will he find me working? Will he find me doing what he wants me to do? Or is he going to find me doing my own thing and living life for my own pleasure? May God grant to each of us a lifestyle this week that is lived in such a way in light of eternity that no matter what moment Jesus might come back, he would be pleased with what we're doing with the time he has given us and the money he has given us and the talents he has given us.

Let's stand and have a word of prayer.

This is just an introduction to the book and I want us to look at Jesus himself in a word to prepare us for the real message which is: what did Jesus say to each

1

2

Blessed is the reader...

Revelation 1:1-7

3 **Revelation 1:1-2**

- *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his slaves the things which must take place in a short time, and communicated it by sending it through his angel to his slave John,*
- *who testified about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all that he saw.*

4 **Revelation 1:3**

- *Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who hear the words of the prophecy and observe the things written in it, because the time is near!*

5 **Revelation 1:4-6**

- *John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*

6 **Revelation 1:7-8**

- *Behold, he is coming with the clouds,*
- *and every eye will see him,*
- *even every one who pierced him,*
- *and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.*
- *Yes, amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, the All-Powerful.*

7 **Encouragement: the reason**

- John penned the words of this epistle just prior to the greatest period of persecution of Christians to ever take place until the modern era.
 - Nero would soon light his gardens at night with the burning bodies of Christians rolled in tar.
 - Diocletian would use Christians to feed the palace lions in the coliseum for sport.
 - Christianity would be outlawed.

8 **Encouragement: the reason (2)**

- To this group of suffering and soon-to-be-suffering-more Christians, Jesus Christ gives a book to John that was ultimately meant to encourage them.
- While the book is definitely prophetic, the purpose of the prophecy is to encourage us as Christians. We need to know that we are on the winning side.

9 **Blessing: what's in it for you**

- This book promises a blessing to those who:

- Reads aloud its words
- Hear the words of this book
- Observe the things that are written in it
- In one sense, this blessing could apply to the whole Bible—especially since Revelation closes the canon.
- But these promises are especially for Revelation.

10 **Do you know what Satan hates?**

11 **Please refrain from this method**

12

What do you need to understand this book?

13 **One more subtle reminder...**

14 **To study this book, you need:**

- A proper view toward it
- Proper methods of interpretation
- An open heart to hear what the Spirit of God is trying to say to you

15 **Extremist views**

1. Some look at Revelation as a jumbled collection of baseless fantasies. Some say that it was fragments of Jewish apocalyptic literature and that some unknown Christian tried to give it a Christian touch.
2. Others think it is the only Bible book worth studying and that you can determine the timing of future events by careful study.

16 **Keys to proper interpretation**

- Divest yourself of all preconceptions
 - People who already have their mind decided on an issue will only look for evidence that supports it
 - Preconceptions blind us from the truth
 - Ask God for an open mind
- Hunt diligently for truth
 - God promises understanding of His Word to those who meet the conditions in Proverbs 2:1-5

17 **Proverbs 2:1-5**

- *My child, if you will receive my sayings, and hide my commands within you, in order to incline your ear toward wisdom, then you shall apply your heart to understanding.*
- *For if you cry out for understanding, if you lift your voice for insight, if you seek her like silver and search her out [like treasure], then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and the knowledge of God you will find.*

18 **To understand God's Word**

- Receive: Accept what God says ("receive my sayings")
 - Be open to conviction, but not gullible
- Recite: Store God's Word in your heart through meditation

- Request: Cry out to God for understanding and pray for insight
- Resolve: Commit to seek diligently for spiritual truths like those who are mining for silver and gold

19 **Romans 12:1-2**

- *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable eservice. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

20 **To be blessed by God's Word**

- Repent: Quit being conformed to the world
 - Don't do something just because the world (or other Christians) do it
 - Compromises start with little things, but lead to big problems
 - Like a rocket ship with a guidance system that's only a "little bit" off course
 - Movie example
 - JESUS never went along with the crowd. He was relevant to the world because He was different from it.
 - "Conform" = have the same image, manner, bearing

21 **To be blessed by God's Word (2)**

- Renew: Be transformed by the Word
 - Renew your mind with the Word of God
- Revive: Be transformed by yielding your will to God's will as revealed in that Word
 - Then you can show the world that God's ways are the best
- If one does not put into the practice the truth he has learned, he will soon lose that truth.

22 **Golden rule of interpretation**

- When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.
- Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.

23

What has God given us in this book?

24 **A rewarded Savior**

- This book begins by giving us a glimpse of the glorified Christ who is being eternally rewarded as the 24 elders and the saints of God cast offerings of worship at His feet.
 - Does it sound weird for God to reward Himself?
 - After the resurrection, Jesus was received "into glory." This was only the beginning of His reward.

25 **A rewarded Savior (2)**

- Jesus gave John a glimpse into this rewarded glory.

26 **An unsealed book**

- God sometimes "seals" things.

- Makes it impossible to understand until it is unsealed.
 - Daniel 12:4,9 -- *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. ...And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*
- 27 **An unsealed book (2)**
- Revelation 22:10 -- *And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*
 - God revealed some things to Daniel that he was not allowed to reveal at the time.
- 28 **An unsealed book (3)**
- What was sealed in Daniel is unsealed in Revelation.
 - What was not made known in Daniel is made known in Revelation.
 - Some of those messages were especially pertinent for those seven churches in Asia; some were especially pertinent for us, in this day and hour. Some of the messages of the *Apokalupsis* are especially pertinent for a chosen time in the future.
- 29 **An unsealed book (4)**
- All of Revelation--from beginning to end--is pertinent and profitable to all of us in all ages and in all times in the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - God has not given to us here a cloaked and veiled mystery; he has given us an open book, an unveiled Revelation.
- 30
- What has God said here?
- 31 **The Trinity in Revelation 1:4-5**
- *John, to the seven churches in Asia: a grace to you and peace from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*
 - God the Father – who is, who was, who is to come
 - 7 spirits = 7-fold Spirit of God
 - Jesus Christ – 1st in resurrection, 1st in supremacy
- 32 **God wants to bless you**
- 1:3 -- *Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who hear the words of the prophecy and observe the things written in it, because the time is near!*
 - 14:13 -- *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*
- 33 **God wants to bless you (2)**
- 16:15 -- *Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who is on the alert and who keeps his clothing, so that he does not walk around naked and they see his shamefulness!*
 - 19:9 -- *And 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."*
- 34 **God wants to bless you (3)**

- 20:6 -- *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.*

35 **God wants to bless you (4)**

- 22:7 -- *"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*
- 22:14 -- *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.*
- So 7 times in this book, God gives a blessing to a group of people.
 - How many of these will you receive?

36 **No peace without grace**

- 1:4b *...grace to you and peace from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne*
- Experiencing God's grace is the prerequisite for peace
 - An eternal perspective
 - An everyday perspective
- God is eternal; nothing surprises Him

37 **The Holy Spirit comforts**

- Isaiah 11:2-3
 - Spirit of the Yahweh (Christ) – God as He relates to man
 - Wisdom
 - Understanding
 - Counsel
 - Might
 - Knowledge
 - Reverence (Fear of the Lord)

38 **Jesus is our hope**

- The great, all-inclusive hope of the churches of our Lord lies in the coming and reigning of Jesus Christ as our victorious King of kings.
- God said that to meditate upon that appearance and to look and to watch and to wait for that glorious triumph of the Lord's second coming (1:3).

39 **Revelation deserves attention**

- The study of any Scripture is profitable.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16 says, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*
 - All Scripture is profitable, but some Scriptures are more significantly meaningful than others, and some are more precious than others.
 - So it is with the Revelation: God says that these words are especially dear and precious and profitable.

40 **Why is Revelation special?**

1. God said it brings a special blessing

2. It is our best view of our glorified and sovereign Savior
3. Christ is not glorified alone; we are to be glorified with Him
 - This prophecy concerns us
 - 1:5b-6 -- ". *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father -- to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen*

41 **Seek to understand**

- These words of this prophecy are to mystify the churches, but they might understand them and be encouraged by them.
- John 16:13 -- the Holy Spirit stands ready to guide us and to help us in our study.
 - "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: . . . and he will show you things to come."

42 **Look with expectancy**

- Acts 1:9–11 -- *And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

43 **Look with expectancy (2)**

- Revelation 1:7–8
 - *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.*
 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

44 **Application**

- Do you study your Bible regularly?
 - Have you spent much time in Revelation recently?
 - Do you feel stalled in your Bible study the last few months? or in your relationship to the Lord?
 - John 14:21 -- *The one who has my commandments and keeps them—that one is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him.*
- Are you living with a sense of holy urgency?