

Title: Revelation, Part 2: The Blessed Life

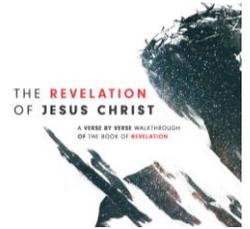
Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 1.1-3

Big idea: A blessed life in Jesus involves three phases.

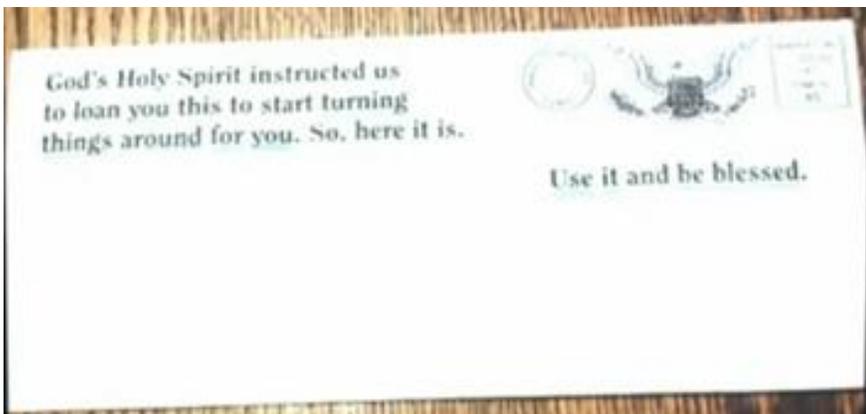
Memory verse of the month: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

(Rev. 1.3)



I've titled my message today what may seem to sound self-serving. [The Blessed Life](#). I've always shied away from the message you sometimes hear from tv preachers that seem to focus their message on getting blessed by God. It feels very transactional. God I do this and you are obligated to do that. And of course the blessing they talk about is primarily materially blessings. It's called the prosperity gospel.

I read of a guy who got an interesting letter in the mail.



Catchy huh. The promise of blessings. He carefully opened it and found all kinds of things in it. There was this letter "Holy, blessed, powerful, prosperous, biblical handkerchief." I didn't know handkerchiefs were biblical. Well, that biblical handkerchief was in the envelope. Here it is.



Here's what you were supposed to do with it.

1. Write your name and your most pressing problem in the center of the handkerchief
 2. Underneath write the name of someone you really love that needs God's help.
 3. Then open your Bible to the book of Acts, Chapter 19 verses 11-12. (This is the one time miracle in the bible when the Apostle Paul was healing people and some were even healed through touching some piece of clothing that touched Paul.) Well, things got really interesting as this guy followed the letter's next instruction.
 4. Lay the Faith Prosperity Handkerchief on the scripture and leave it there for seven minutes. ("7 is God's perfect number.")
 5. As soon as the timer rings, fold up the hanky, put it in the postage paid envelope and mail it.
- That really happened. I am not making this up.

Well, as you can imagine, that's not the approach I'm taking because it's not biblical at all. But the bible does say a lot about blessings. The word blessing and related words appears over 375 times in the bible. So it's pretty important to understand it. So today as we continue part 2 in our deep dive into the book of Revelation. We're going to get some insight into what it takes to have a truly blessed life because it's ok to want and strive for a truly blessed life in Christ. In fact, the Apostle John mentions seven blessings in the book of Revelation.

Here's the [Big idea: A blessed life in Jesus involves three phases.](#)



Each week I will review the prior week because repetition is essentially how we learn. When you repeatedly engage the same brain circuits with the same material, you strengthen those memory circuits. And as we retain biblical truth, the Holy Spirit can then drive that truth deeper into our belief system and behaviors. That’s really what this simple process is all about.

Last week’s Big idea: To understand Revelation, first step back for the big picture.

The overall theme:

1. The victory of Christ and His church.
2. Things are not always as they seem.

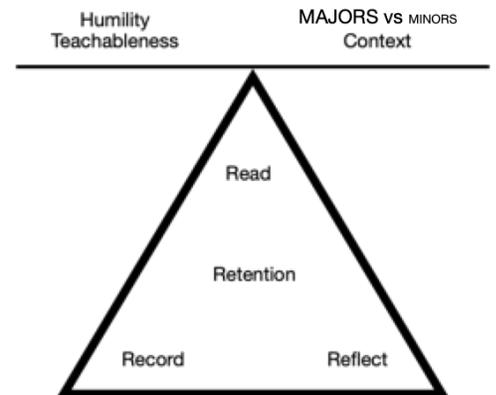
4 Interpretation Approaches

- Revelation is only a chronological map of church history from Jesus’ first to His second coming (Historicist).
- Revelation relates only to what happened to the Christians in the first century (Preterist).
- Revelation primarily gives the chronological events immediately preceding the end of (Futurist, dispensationalism, premillennialism).
- Revelation deals only with spiritual truths (good vs evil) with no reference to time or events (Idealist).

The approach I’m taking is a fifth one that incorporates the strengths of the other 4 views. I gave you a little formula.

Interpreting revelation = 1st century context + insight about the ongoing struggle between good and evil + future events yet to come

This is a diagram that I will often show as a reminder about how to get the most out of our deep dive into this amazing book. It builds on what I call the **retention triangle**.



Read means to read from the beginning of Revelation up through the upcoming passage each week. Take 5-10 minutes a day.

Record by taking notes. The research tells us that when you take notes learning gets imbedded more deeply. For those of you who don’t take notes, why not try it during this series?

Reflect as you read the scriptures, review notes, discussion questions, further study/buy book (*Revelation Verse by Verse* by Grant R. Osborne; *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* by G. K. Beale), and get in a group.

Humility: Nobody has a corner on everything Revelation has to say. There are many valid views held by Godly Christians and biblical scholars that may differ from yours.

Teachableness: This is a cousin to humility. Teachableness means that you approach Revelation with a heart to learn, and even be open to being challenged about your current interpretation.

Majors vs minors: Keep the big picture in mind and don’t fixate on minor details that could be interpreted in various ways. We can all agree on this: Jesus is coming, sooner than later. We don’t know when so we better be ready.

Context: Context means two things. The bible helps us understand other parts of the bible. In Revelation John alludes to the Old Testament over 500 times. Context also means that we must remember that this book was written in a specific historical context to the early church that was facing persecution. If our interpretation would not make sense to the early Christians, it’s probably not a very accurate interpretation.

Over the course of this multi-month series, with some breaks, I will show you clips of The Bible Project video summary of the book. The bible Project is a great source of biblical material presented via video. www.bibleproject.com

- through 2.11, stop after he says “Johns time, place and audience”. <https://bibleproject.com/learn/revelation/>

Our passage today is Rev. 1.1-3 I you want to follow along in your bibles you can or you can just listen as I read.

Rev. 1 ¹The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Verses 1-11 sets the theological foundation for the rest of the book. The themes he lays out are worked out in the rest of the book.

Rev. 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ,

If you want to get technical, this is the actual name of the book, The Revelation of or from Jesus Christ. It's called this because it is a direct communication from God unveiling God's plan for the history of the world, in particular, the history of the Church. It is not John's revelation but the revelation of Jesus.

Word revelation is the word for apocalypse. It's taken from two words put together, away from and veiling. So it means an unveiling. Originally in that culture it was not a religious word. It meant disclosing any fact. But it became an important word for God's revealing his will to us, revealing truth to us, and in this case revealing God's power and holiness in the last days.

Of Jesus Christ means that the revelation was given by Jesus. It was from him.

which God gave him

Scholars tell us that probably it's best to approach the events or judgements in book not as successive events (a strict chronologically order), but rather seeing them as cyclical, describing a progressively intense spiritual struggle, an ascending climactic order.

to show his servants

John uses servants twice, as a designation of himself and as a designation of the recipients of this letter. A servant was how designated absolute surrender to another. In this case, that surrender is to Jesus. Throughout the bible great characters are called servants of God: Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, the prophets, the apostles. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are his servant, but not in the sense that Jesus is a taskmaster. He loves us and wants the best for us and the best for us comes through being a good and faithful servant.

Several times in Revelation John uses the word show to introduce a divine communication given through these symbols and images.

what must soon take place.

This word raises a question. And in verse three he writes that the time is near.

Was John wrong in what he said? Did he think Jesus was coming in the very near future in the first century and he just missed that date like some of these so called prophets today who predict exact days when Jesus is to return? Nope.

Last week I explained that this book combines parts of [three different kinds of writing](#)

1. [apocalyptic \(end times\)](#)
2. [prophecy \(future time\)](#) An apocalyptic writing would be an intensification of prophecy.
3. [letter/epistle \(day-to-day time\)](#) A letter in the bible helps believers understand the faith better and follow God better in day to day living.

So Revelation is both foretelling the future and forthtelling truth about Jesus to help His followers love Him better.

In this kind of literature (apocalyptic prophecy) the future is always viewed as imminent, viewed as right now without the necessity of intervening time. Soon does not preclude a time delay nor does it preclude intervening events before the end times. In every age the church has lived with this imminent expectancy of Jesus' return. He's coming really soon.

So, from a chronological perspective, we are living with that same urgency of 'soon' today as did the early believers, and the believers during the plagues in the 500's and the 1300's and the 1800's and during WW1 and during Hitler's reign, and even now as we face covid, increased persecution of Christians, and the rapidly changing morals and ethics of our culture.

So this always living in the 'soon' reminds us to not misuse Revelation as some mysterious timetable to predict exactly when the end of time will be. We are living in the end times and Christians before us have lived in them since Jesus' death and resurrection.

The idea is to draw us into a sense of **expectation AND responsibility** in order to recognize God's hand in the events of history. God has initiated the events leading to the end of history and we must always be at the ready. These events have already started and in God's own time, the end will come.

And, time is different from God's perspective.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (2 Pet 3.8-9)

He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

Jesus commissioned an actual angel to guide John through these visions about God's plan. He shows him heaven and earth and a new heaven and earth.

In fact angels are of prominent in Revelation that they are mentioned 67 times. They are real.

This is a famous painting by a famous artist who lived in the 1600's named Jacopo Vignali of how he pictured John received this vision from the angel. Made it known is sometimes translated as symbolize or communicate by symbols.



So, God revealed to John something yet to happen that he signified with symbols and images that refer symbolically to another reality or set of realities. In our deep dive we'll see a bunch of these symbols.

John records this progression of this revelation in these first 3 verses:

The revelation begins with God who gave it to Jesus. It is God's truth that Jesus brings. Jesus then sent the angel who revealed it to John. At this point in history people believed in a transcendent God, a God above and apart from creation. Because of that they believed that you couldn't directly communicate with God so intermediaries were needed. Thus, angels.

John then communicated it to God's servants the believers then and us.

² who testifies to everything he saw

Testifies is a legal term and was especially pertinent to many Christians for they were often betrayed in Roman courts. This witness, testifying, is the Christian proclamation about Jesus, giving evidence in the court of God's final judgment.

John had been exiled to the island of Patmos off the coast of Turkey and had received this vision from God that he wrote down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which became this book of the Bible.

—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The word of God does not refer to this book (bible) as we know it as it had not been fully compiled. But he's referring to John's visions recorded in this letter, as the word of God, emphasizing its continuity with the OT and the writings of the apostles. He's also reminding them that his visions are not the product of John's own mind. He wasn't a fiction writer and made them up. They came from God Himself to Jesus were absolutely true. God's word is equated with the testimony of Jesus and Jesus' testimony validates the revelation.

Here we get these clues about what it means to be blessed.

³ Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy,

In those days books were rare and expensive because they had to be copied by hand. And although Christians and Jews as a whole were more literate than the rest of society, many could not read. So, during Christian worship, someone was appointed to read the scriptures, the OT, the gospels, and these letters that would compose the NT.

In Jewish synagogues they also read the scripture but there would never be a special blessing upon that human reader. He's emphasizing that they would be hearing not only the word of John the prophet, but the inspired word of Christ which evokes such a blessing in the reading of the Word.

Public reading of the scripture then and now is important.

and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,

When you look at how Jesus taught, he commanded people's attention and would often arrest their attention with different phrases like "He who has ears to hear let him hear and, "Listen and understand." And the result was that people, 'hung on His words.'" To hear was not just the physical process that happens when sound waves are produced, they enter our ear, and the sound waves get converted into electrical impulses and brain turns them into understood words.

He means by hearing that we first pay attention and then we heed what the Word says, that we take it to heart.

The bible often puts these two together: hear and heed, listen and do.

Read, hear, take to heart means that that this book is meant to impact our day to day living out the Christian life. Revelation is not just a book for intellectuals to speculate about the future.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (Jm 1.22)

because the time is near.

In verse 1 remember he said these things are coming soon, meaning we must take them seriously and live with a sense of deep commitment, living in such a way that were Jesus to return 30 minutes from now, we would be ready. We must live decisively and fully for God 24/7.

Let's go back to our big idea.

Big idea: A blessed life in Jesus involves three phases.



So this blessed life is the good life that Jesus offers.

In verse three I think we can see three parts of the process of the blessed life.

Input is what we put in here (head). He writes about two kinds of input what were they?

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

The input comes through our eyes (what we **read** and other ways) and through our ears (**hear**)



In other words, the input we put in comes through sight and sound. This prompts these questions. What do you regularly put in here by what you read, watch on TV, by what music you listen to, the podcasts you listen to, the radio you listen to, the movies you watch? The input we put in profoundly shapes who we are, which is the second part of the process when he says the blessed are those who take it to heart.



Our heart is our seat of affection, what we value the most, our character, our morals, what we believe to be most important. And what we put in, influences and forms our heart.

The process begins with the input we put in. It continues with a shaping of our hearts, what we truly value.

And here's the third part. He ends verse 3 with this phrase.

because the time is near.



What kind of time essentially drives your life? Live in unhurried chronos time and live for Kairos heart/time. Prioritize

Time-Live with a sense of calm and controlled, non-hurried urgency. (vs *lassize faire*). Urgency can lead to an outer or inner rush. Or urgency can lead to making sure everything you do in life, our decisions, counts. Every day we choose what we spend time or money on. A sense of urgency that impacts our decisions will cause us to think about how we use our resources in ways that honor God and best prepare us for Jesus' return.

We can't strictly manage time, only manage ourselves and steward or use our time in ways that honor God.

The bible talks about two kinds of time (2 Greek words) that we live in- **Chronos** and **Kairos**. And we live in both of those times, not like the old movie The Matrix where there was reality and a simulated reality. We live in both those kinds of time.

Chronos is everyday clock time, linear time, measurable, Chronos is a succession of moments--quantity time. It's what you plan your day around (be at work at 8, dentist appointment at 11, take the kids to soccer practice at 5).

This is NOT the time I mean here, although it's wise to manage your calendars and the 24 hours in a day that we have. We must steward it well.

The other word, Kairos, is more of a decisive moment within chronos time. We might call these God “moments” in time, divine appointments, significant moments within the spaces of chronos time. Quality time. We can also see Kairos time as the perspective we take on time. Not seeing it as a commodity that we do stuff in but rather this precious stuff that requires an eternal perspective. Jesus is coming again. Am I living in chronos time in a kairos way so that “Jesus, if you came at any time in my life, I would be ready because I live in such a way that I would not be embarrassed if you came at certain times of my life.”

Kairos time is living day to day with the expectancy of his imminent return and godly character and awareness so that I am fully present for these opportune appointments of life that carry great weight to God and to others and have great implications for your life. These moments add richness, depth, and meaning to life.

We live **in** chronos time, but we must live **for** Kairos time.

Jesus lived in an unhurried chronos world, but he lived for the unseen, we might say, Kairos world.

Revelation opens up a behind the scenes look at this Kairos time.

Big idea: A blessed life in Jesus involves three phases.



The blessed life means that we are careful about what we put in here through our eyes and ears because what we put there profoundly impacts our heart (character, values) which in turn helps us live with a different perspective of time.

So, three questions to think about this week:

1. How well do I monitor what I put into my mind?
2. How much is my heart growing in godly character?
3. How consistently do I live with an eternal perspective of time?