

THE REVELATION

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

Chapter 1:3-5

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

We might think that the word “heed” means *to pay close attention*, but the proper definition is *to actively watch over and guard*. Do not let this book be cast aside as fable! It is not. Every word will be fulfilled, and Jesus made that point here. Why?

Jesus said, “For the time is near.” It could be said, *the season is at hand*, which is a good and proper translation. Did Jesus mean it was nearly time for the fulfillment of this prophecy? Hardly! Jesus meant that it was time for the fulfillment of this prophecy to begin! We often speak of the Revelation as dealing with the “last days,” and it does. We also speak of it dealing with the “end of times,” and that is true. But this book is a blessing because it reveals the culmination of all the prophecies and tells their end. Even when this Revelation was given, many of the Old and New Testament prophecies were still to be fulfilled. For instance, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue with the head of gold, breast of silver, belly of bronze, waist and legs of iron with toes of clay and iron was not fulfilled. John was living in the time of the “waist” of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the legs would not be formed for another two hundred years and the prophecy about the uniting of the toes still must take place before the Revelation can begin to be fulfilled. It is a major facet in the structure of the plan of God. But the absence of that fulfillment does not stop other prophecies that must be completed, some of which are necessary steps that will lead to the reformation of the toes in Nebuchadnezzar’s prophecy. How soon will the prophecies of this book begin? They will start to be fulfilled within fifty years of its writing, long enough for the Church to have this message in every hand of every believer. Every Christian will know the events of the future.

F. The Recipients of the Book (1:4a)

Rev 1:4a John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

John may have been the recorder of this unveiling but the message within its pages was to be delivered to “the seven churches that are in Asia.” These seven Churches, which will be listed in Revelation 1:11 were special to John. He had personally trained the pastor in each of those Churches. He knew them well! He knew their theology and methodology but more than that, he knew their hearts. But, regardless of what John knew about the pastors and the congregations of each town, Jesus knew them better, and, they all had a problem that would one day bring their existence as a local Church to an end. That does not mean that Jesus will not bless them, He will. But Jesus will also pronounce a curse on them – because each Church will cease to exist. As we will discover,

nothing within the pages of the Revelation starting in chapter 4 can begin until the demise of these seven Churches. How long will that take? We know! Here, let us just say, it will take a long time to fulfill the prophecies about these Churches and we will leave the details of that discussion for chapters 2 and 3.

We must not miss the reason for this sentence beginning with “John.” He may have been writing in Greek, but John was definitely Hebrew at heart. Among the Jewish writings, the author always signs his name at the beginning of a letter and then he concludes with the name of the recipients. In the western world, we do that in reverse. For instance, we say “Dear Church of Ephesus, ... Sincerely John.” But the eastern world of the Hebrew customs the proper way to say it is “Sincerely John, ... Dear Church of Ephesus.”

G. The Gift of the Book (1:4b)

Rev 1:4b Grace to you and peace,

John gave the seven Churches the customary Christian gift in the words “Grace to you and peace.” This apostolic blessing can be found somewhere in every letter of the New Testament penned by an Apostle. “Grace ... and peace!” Wonderful words! “Grace” means *kindness or favor*, “peace” means *welfare*. John wanted the seven Churches to experience the kindness and welfare that he knew, the kindness that comes only from God. John expected the seven Churches to experience those two qualities as they read the pages of this Revelation in their worship services. In other words, this Revelation was seen by John as a *gift* to each of them. What exactly would that *gift* be for each congregation? They would soon discover that the majority of this end times prophecy found in the Old and New Testaments was not directed at them but pointed directly at the Jews who rejected Jesus at His first coming. All the tribulation of the days still to come would fall on the Jews shoulders to force them to take a new look at Jesus and, in the end, finally accept Him as their Savior. The Church needs not worry; the Church will not experience any of the tragedies of this Revelation beginning in chapter 4.

H. The Givers of the Book (1:4c-5)

1. The Eternal One (1:4c)

Rev 1:4c from Him who is and who was and who is to come;

Where did this *gift* of this Revelation come from? John said, it came “from Him who is and who was and who is to come.” It could have been said this way, it came from the “I am, I was, and I will be in the future!” In other words, the Eternal One gave this book to the Churches. He created it. He has sustained it. He will rule it! He is coming! Never deny it, never forget it, but we had better accept it!

2. The Spiritual Ones (1:4d)

Rev 1:4d and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne;

The *gift* also was delivered to the seven Churches by “the seven Spirits who are before His throne,” those who reside in front of Jesus’ throne in heaven. They should not be misinterpreted as some symbol of the Holy Spirit; they are not. These are the seven spirits who have attended the throne of Jesus in heaven and who have had that responsibility since He created them. These seven spirits have

an important role in the message of this story. They will blow trumpets and pour bowls during its telling; therefore, they are part of the delivery system put in place to distribute this gift to John and the Churches. Lest we forget, angels do not have flesh and blood; they are spirits. The word for angel is *aggelos* and it means *messenger*. These angels are the messengers of the LORD and will help deliver this story by performing certain duties under the direction of the LORD in order that John might see their roles in the LORD's Second Coming. In the future, when the prophecy actually occurs, the angels will perform those same duties again exactly as they have practiced them here to show John what to write.

3. The Trusted One (1:5a-c)

a) His Loyalty (1:5a)

Rev 1:5a and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,

Finally, John identified the Eternal One as Jesus Christ. His name means *the Savior Anointed*. From the Hebrew it would be translated *Joshua Messiah*. But John wrote the Revelation in Greek; therefore, it is rendered *Jesus Christ*. John said the *gift* was from the Trusted One by saying, "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness." Jesus' words are always true. What He said, He will do. What He said will come to pass. He testified that He would die and rise from the grave and He did. No one else in this world has ever done that. Even His resurrection was not good enough for the Jews to throw away their man-made religion rules and return to Jesus as their Savior; rather, they would look for another. It is so strange that the Jews are still looking for the resurrected Messiah, the Christ. For example, on June 12, 1994, the beloved Menachem Medel Schneerson died. He was a Russian born American Orthodox Jewish rabbi. During his life, his followers thought that he was the one-person worthy of being the Messiah. His supporters held off burying him for a few days to see if he would rise from the dead. He did not. They buried him after there was no sign of a resurrected life. Even today, many of his supporters are still waiting for him to rise from the grave. In his life, he did many good things, but he never healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, raised anyone from the dead or returned from the grave. Yet, these Orthodox Jews still think he must be the Messiah. Why are they so stubborn in the rejection of Jesus Who was the Messiah? In fact, John told us about His resurrection!

b) His Lineage (1:5b)

Rev 1:5b the first-born of the dead,

Here are the words of John concerning the lineage of Jesus, He was "the first-born of the dead." He is the *proto-tokos*. *Proto* means *the chief, the best, the head, the principle and sometimes the first*. *Tokos* means *to bring forth*. In both English translations by Wycliffe of 1380 and Tyndale of 1525, the translators used the word *first-borne*. We should not misconstrue this word to mean the same as *born*. When we hear the word *first-born*, we immediately think of the first child born to a family. That definition for the word *born* came into being in the 17th century. When Wycliffe and Tyndale used the word *borne*, it meant *to carry on, to sustain, to endure*. It had nothing to do with the birth of a child. What John meant in this phrase was that Jesus was the *principle One to carry on from death*. Death had no sting; death had no victory over Him. He was the first, the chief, the head to sustain or rather withstand the doom of death and overcome. He was the original *overcomer*! And, as the first victor in that, He was the first in

a long lineage of people who would have victory over death because of their belief in Him as Christ. They are the subsequent *overcomers!* Therefore, it is this Jesus Who is the trusted One. He promised life after death, He obtained life after death, and He will give life after death to those who belong to Him.

c) His Leadership (1:5c)

Rev 1:5c and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Finally, as the Trusted One, Jesus will return one day as “the ruler of the kings of the earth.” This is not the first time that this message has been given; it is in the Old and New Testament. But what is unique about this reference is that in this book, the details of Jesus’ Second Coming as Ruler of the kings of the earth are given.

I. The First Benediction of the Book (1:5d-6d)

1. Our Present (1:5d-e)

a) His Love (1:5d)

Rev 1:5d To Him who loves us,

In a unique move, John gave two benedictions in the book. He told the seven Churches of Asia that Jesus loved them – that was the first part of His gift to them.

b) His Gift (1:5e)

Rev 1:5e and released us from our sins by His blood,

John told the Churches that it was Jesus who freed them from the guilt of sin by His personal sacrifice – that was the second part of His gift to them.