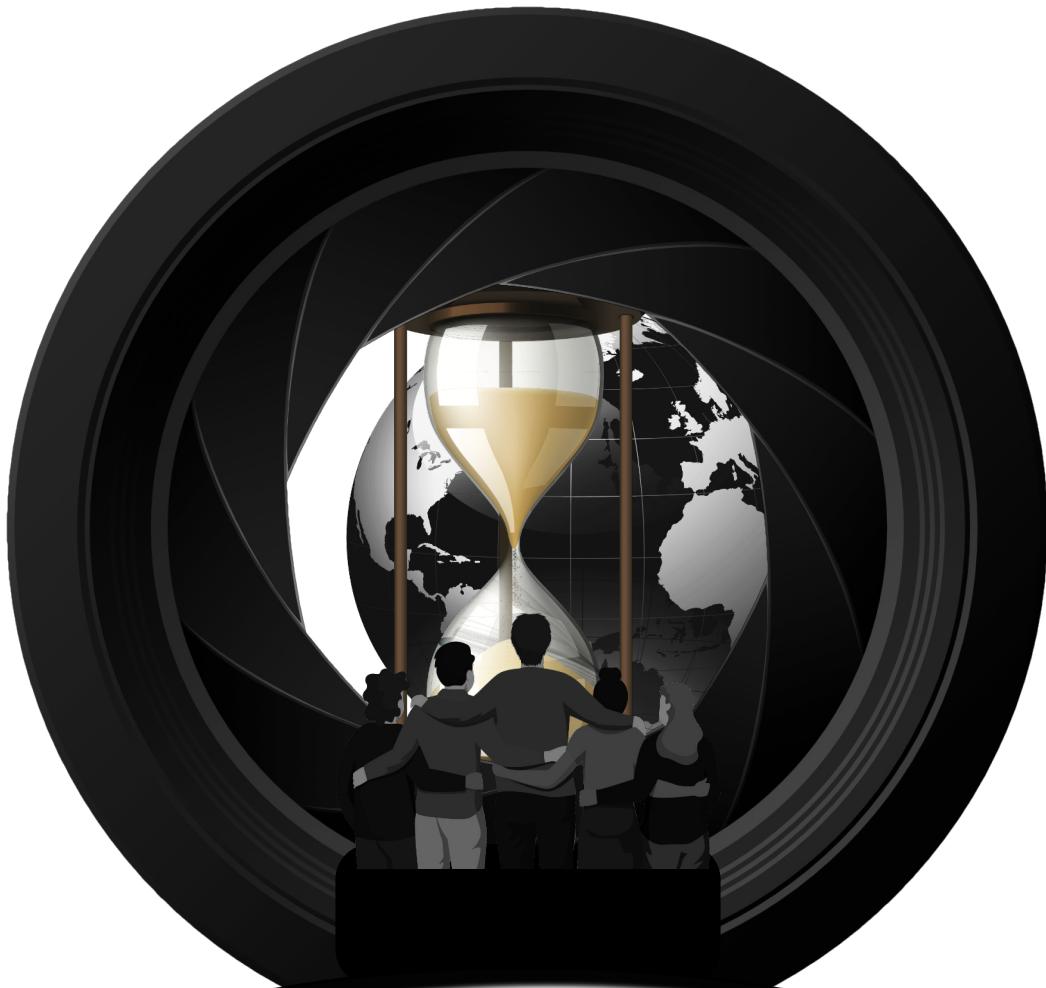


UNDERSTANDING REVELATION

THROUGH THE LENS OF GOD'S BLESSING



God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, **and he blesses** all who listen to its message and obey what it says, **for the time is near.**

(Revelation 1:3 NLT)

A "HISTORY" OF GOD'S PLAN TO BLESS HIS HUMAN CREATION
A NECESSARY PERSPECTIVE FOR UNDERSTANDING "THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY" ...

1. God's plan to bless his human creation with his presence and his joy and his glory began even before he created this earth-what Scripture refers to as "before the foundation of the world."
 - (Ephesians 1:3–6 ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
2. God blessed the living creatures at creation.
 - (Genesis 1:22 ESV) And God blessed them [*the living creatures*], saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”
3. And he blessed those he made in his image-his human creation- at the very beginning.
 - (Genesis 1:28 ESV) And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
4. Move on through Scripture and find Moses setting the choice of blessing and cursing before the children of Israel.
 - (Deuteronomy 30:20 ESV) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live.
5. Later in the history of God's chosen people we see that God has not changed his approach.
 - (Jeremiah 21:8 ESV) And to this people

you shall say: “Thus says the LORD: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.”

6. Fast forward to a later time in the New Testament and find Christ sitting down on a mountainside teaching the way of blessing—the pathway of the LORD.
 - (Matthew 5:1–12 ESV) Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit ... Blessed are those who mourn ... Blessed are the meek ... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... Blessed are the merciful ... Blessed are the pure in heart ... Blessed are the peacemakers ... Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake ... Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”
7. God promised that through Abraham all the nations on earth would be blessed.
 - (Galatians 3:8 ESV) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

But not everyone will be blessed by God as many will choose their own way and refuse the path of the LORD.

Earl Palmer ... “Blessed” in Greek means simply “happy,” but the Hebrew word from the Old Testament which lies behind this word in John’s mind is probably the word *ashar* [*or esher*], and its meaning is very interesting. In Old Testament usage, the two words for “bless” are *bârak* which means kneel or bow down before, and the second is *ashar*, which means to find the right pathway in the face of false pathways. [Palmer, E. F., & Ogilvie, L.

J. (1982). 1, 2 & 3 John / Rev. (Vol. 35, pp. 108–109). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc.]

Those blessed by God have chosen the pathway of God, but many will refuse God's offer and choose the false pathways of humans.

- (Jeremiah 6:16 ESV) Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. **But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'**"
- (Jeremiah 23:12a ESV) **Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness.**

I) God calls our attention to Jesus Christ, 1:1-2.

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

- A) God reveals to us in his word **what is true and necessary.**
- B) The first thing he draws our attention to is **what is true and necessary concerning Jesus Christ.**

— Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ —

- C) We need to stay focused on what God reveals.

God in his infinite wisdom God chose the specific content of the words of this prophecy with his purpose in mind.

- D) We need to rely on the faithful witness we have been given.

II) God calls our attention to the blessing he offers, 1:3.

This early emphasis is significant. We are able to better understand Revelation when we "view it" through the lens God provides early on—focus on Jesus Christ and the blessing offered through Christ and the things that must soon take place.

- (Revelation 1:3 ESV) Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

- A) **God's intent in Revelation and throughout Scripture is to direct us to his blessing—the paths of the LORD.**

FYI ... Six more direct references to blessing in Revelation in 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7 and 22:14.

- B) **God offers his blessing to direct our lives to the paths of the LORD—the blessing of God.**

- (Isaiah 2:3a ESV) And many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."
- (Isaiah 26:8 ESV) In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.

If we are not reading and hearing the words of this prophecy with the intent of changed lives—keeping the words, then we will neither understand nor correctly interpret the book. **Revelation is for God-seekers, not curiosity seekers.**

*****Gregory Beale** ... John's witness to the heavenly commentary concerning what God has done in Christ is not intended as an apocalyptic curiosity to tantalize the intellect but to inform Christians about how God wants them to live in the light of recent redemptive history. [Beale, G. K. (1999). *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 184). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.]

- C) **Specific instructions as to how we receive this blessing.**

Within the perspective that "the time is near" we are to read the words of this prophecy to the church and those in the church are to listen to the words of this prophecy with the intention of conforming our lives to what we hear.

SIDE BAR

HOW DO WE KEEP THE WORDS OF THE PROPHECY?

As we study through Revelation we will find an abundance of ways in which we can "keep the words of this prophecy." Here are a few.

i) Live in view of the Christ who is revealed in Scripture.

- (Revelation 1:13–16 ESV) And in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

ii) Endure faithfully and do not bear with those who are evil—false apostles.

- (Revelation 2:2 ESV) I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

iii) Always love God first and foremost. Do not stray from this love.

- (Revelation 2:4 ESV) But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

iv) Repent for the sins of your church.

Do not for a moment think that this does not apply today. ***Five of the seven*** churches that Christ chose to evaluate in Revelation ***for our example*** are called to repent.

- The church at Ephesus ... (Revelation 2:5 ESV) Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent** ...
- The church at Pergamum ... (Revelation 2:16 NLT) **Repent** of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly ...
- The church at Thyatira ... (Revelation 2:22 NLT) ... those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they **repent** and turn away from her evil deeds.
- The church at Sardis ... (Revelation 3:3 NLT) Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. **repent** and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.
- The church at Laodicea ... (Revelation 3:19 ESV) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and **repent**.

v) Do not fear suffering and be faithful unto death.

- (Revelation 2:10 ESV) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

vi) Hold fast to the end.

- (Revelation 2:25 ESV) Only hold fast what you have until I come.

- **71%** of the churches were standing in judgment before Christ and were called to repent or else.