***The Special Blessing of the Revelation

RV02-02***

Please open your Bibles to the first of the Revelation, as we continue to consider the prologue to this book, which is in the first 3 verses. The book of the Revelation is a divine unveiling of the future consummation of the history of mankind here on earth. Chapters 1 through 3 of this book deal with the church before the rapture, and during the present dispensation. We are living in this particular dispensation of the church age. We are living down toward the latter part of it, very near the end. The church is going to be taken up to meet Jesus Christ in the air before the next segment (the period of tribulation) begins, so that the church, during this time, will be up in heaven – the Lord having come down to meet us in the air and thus taking us to be with Him, during this time of the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth. The church will return from heaven with the Lord after the tribulation period is over, and we will accompany Him on His Second Coming, which will be down to the earth, and will be in preparation to set up His Messianic earthly millennial kingdom here on the earth. So the church will escape the horrors of the tribulation.

Between the rapture and the Second Coming is the spread of seven years. As we showed you last time, this is absolutely essential. It cannot be any other way. If you are going to have people on the earth, in mortal bodies (bodies which have not been glorified, and have not been transformed to the image of Christ). People who are in their natural bodies, who can propagate children, and who can live all of the facets of life as we normally live are today, but minus the presence of the temptations of Satan himself, and minus considerable temptation from society itself, because Jesus Christ, the King of Kings ruling here, will have refined all of the areas of communication; the media of the printed page; and, the electronic areas. It will just be a considerably refined society all over the world that we will be living in. So things are going to be different. Things are going to be very wonderful. But the critical thing is to have people in mortal bodies. Unless you have the seven-year period between the rapture and the Second Coming, you cannot have that Scripture pattern fulfilled. And that clearly is the pattern of Scripture. That's how we get those children here who rebel against Christ at the end of the millennial era.

If you are wrong on that, you will then open the door to the first step toward spirtualizing Scripture – toward taking the Bible in ways that the words themselves do not speak. So I hope you have that strength, because that is going to determine where we are going to apply most of the book of Revelation. We are excluded from that application. The main body of this book deals with this seven-year tribulation period, from chapters 4 all the way through 19. The last few chapters of the book of the Revelation deal with these final years, the final phase – the 1,000-year millennial period, and then entering into eternity.

Revelation 1:1 gives us the chain of communications whereby the information in this book has been received by us. It came from God the Father; who gave it to God the Son; who communicated it to an elected angel; who, in turn, brought it to the apostle John; and, who, in written form, has communicated it to the believers of the church age. This communication (this revelation, and this unveiling) of the future is in language which can be interpreted. Some of it is in symbolical language, but it can all be interpreted. The whole first chapter of Revelation deals with what is passed. We're going to see that there is an outline given just a little later in this chapter that divides the whole book into what is past, what is present, and what is future. Chapter 1 deals with what is past, related to this church age that we live in today.

Now we're going to pick up the book at Revelation 1:2, as we conclude the prologue of verses 1 through 3. Verse 2 reads: "Who bore witness of the Word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw." "Who," of course, refers to John, the human author, who has been identified as such in verse 1. The word "bore witness" is the Greek word "martureo." "Martureo" means "to testify." This is a word, again, that the Greeks used in terms of a legal court setting. It means a solemn and official testimony which is taken, as it were, under oath, and is declared to be absolutely true. This is in the aorist sense, which means that it's at the point when John wrote this book of Revelation. It is active. It is John himself who gives this testimony. It is indicative. It's a statement of fact. John, the apostle, is the person who has given us this particular solemn testimony.

The testimony that he has given us is described as the Word of God. "Word" is "logos." This word in the Greek language ("logos") is a word which is used to identify something external which reflects an internal idea. In other words, your thoughts are described in these things called "logos" (words). This is particularly here to be the Word of God. That means that it is God who is expressing these thoughts. So it is referring to information which God the Father gave to God the Son. Then it is recorded here in Revelation. This is actually God Himself who has communicated His thinking in this written form. The infinite God has indeed communicated His mind to finite mentalities. The human authors did not invent the book of the Revelation.

The liberal mentality (the liberal theologian) likes to say that the Bible is not the Word of God, and that the Bible only contains the Word of God here and there. He says that the Bible contains portions that may become the Word of God to you, but they may not be the Word of God to somebody else. If, somehow, you read a portion of the Bible and it communicates a message, then God is talking to you. Then that part becomes the Word of God. But it does not mean that that is inerrant absolute truth from God.

Please remember that truth is associated with a person. Jesus Christ said, "I am the truth." That means that truth is what is related to God. He is the anchor point of all the universe. It is the Triune God: Father; Son; and, Holy Spirit that is the anchor point of all of the universe. This is the great thing that happened in the Protestant Reformation in the 15th and 16th centuries. Previous to the Protestant Reformation came the revival of learning of the Renaissance. After the Roman Empire fell in the fifth century A.D., a vacuum was created – a vacuum of authority; of control; and, of national direction. Into that vacuum moved the Roman Catholic Church.

**The Dark Ages**

We look back at history, and when we study ancient history in school, we discover that that period following the fall of the Roman Empire, and where the Roman Catholic Church was dominant in human society all over the world, is described as the Dark Ages, because for 1,000 years, a blanket of darkness descended upon humanity. There was absolutely no learning. There was nothing but superstition. There was the grossest kind of idolatry and of falsehood, even in religious grounds. There was no advancement in science, and no advancement in learning. All of humanity had come on a dead center, and it sat there for a whole millennium – for 1,000 years.

**The Renaissance**

Along came a revival of learning that burst out in the 15th century, and it was called the Renaissance, which means a revival of learning. Out of that came the great explorations. In 1492, Columbus discovered the new world. The scientific world was beginning to move forward again. Men were beginning to explore, and ask why things are the way they are now. A very critical point was reached in human experience as men of the Renaissance began to find they had brains, and that's what they did. They found that they could reason things out, and that wonderful things could be discovered as the result of the human mind sitting down and thinking things through, and exploring.

There was also a terrible thing that then entered along with that, and that was the idea that man was autonomous – that man was an entity in himself, and that man was swinging out here in the universe, unattached to any base, and accountable to no one. The result was humanism. We have it with us still to this day. The basic concept of humanism is that all man needs is his reasoning ability to solve every human problem, and through agencies of societies such as government, man could solve human problems. Man needs no one beside himself. As a matter of fact, man said, "There isn't anybody out there." They suppressed the truth of creation and of conscience. And humanism was the result. Out of the renaissance, that wonderful revival of learning that put the Dark Ages behind us, with all of its gross superstitions of Roman Catholicism, there came the side effect of humanism.

**The Protestant Reformation**

However, as the Renaissance was beginning to level off, there exploded in Germany the Protestant Reformation. This had been preceded by John Wycliffe, and by Hus in Bohemia, and the ground had been set. A very wonderful thing happened by a Greek scholar named Erasmus, who sat down and put together, from ancient Greek manuscripts, the Greek Bible. Again, after centuries of darkness and of backwardness in learning, we had a marvel of marvels and a wonder of wonders: a Greek New Testament.

The next year, after Erasmus published his Greek testament, Martin Luther walked up to the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, and nailed his 95 propositions for discussions for the reformation of the Roman Catholic Church. And the Reformation was off and running.

The thing that Luther and the other reformers did was to say, "Hey, what the Renaissance is doing is moving us off to the idea that man is independent; that he operates on himself; and, that he has no one to be accounted to beside himself." The reformer said, "What's that going to do to morality? That means that if man doesn't have to counter any standard, whatever man says is right, is right; and, whatever man says is wrong, is wrong. What is this going to do to freedom? If freedom is not recognized as something that comes from God, then that means that any despot that comes along will be viewed as the dispenser of human freedom. What will happen to freedom? It will be squelched.

So the reformers were wise enough to see that a great mistake had been made by those who had preceded them in the Renaissance. The revival of learning was welcome, but they had lost their anchor point because they had moved away from the Word of God – the "logos" of "theos" – the Word of God – the actual propositional statements that God Himself has made through the written Word. It is in the Word of God that we discover what is absolutely right, and what is absolutely wrong. So it's an anchor point from which we can never be moved. It is in the Word of God that we learn that freedom and liberty come to us from God, and that it is not something that governments may dispense to us.

You can immediately see why communism and socialism go for humanism, because humanism enables a despot to rule people, and to deny them freedom, whereas those who base themselves upon the Word of God expressed by the Triune Godhead are those who have an anchor point that is immovable. It can never change. There is always a basis for what humanity does.

The countries of Northern Europe responded overwhelmingly to the Reformation. We, as a nation, inherited that attitude; that viewpoint; and, that heritage from northern Europe. The countries of northern Europe produced the great centers of political and personal freedom, and they were stable.

Never in the history of the human race had it been possible for the individual to do as he pleased with his life; with his capacities; and, with his time, and the result not to be anarchy. Anytime people were permitted to do as they wished, the result was anarchy during the Dark Ages. So consequently, there was always a despotic hand over people, the highest of which was, of course, the papal hand which controlled not only religiously, but politically, the societies of the Middle Ages. There was no stability for personal freedom because there was no anchor point. But in the countries of northern Europe, which had inherited the Reformation's orientation to the Word of God as the basis of all human relationships and of all expressions of human institutions, such as schools; universities; works of mercy; orphanages; governments; political parties; craftsmen; arts; and, literature – the whole bit – those who had inherited that found that they could give the individual freedom without anarchy.

Throughout southern Europe, the Reformation did not take hold. Yet, in time, the effects of the Reformation spilled over to give countries in southern Europe the concept of freedom to the individual. However, because those countries were never really associated in their heritage with the concept that their anchor point was the living and powerful Word of God, their freedom was something that they just kind of looked over the fence and imitated, but they had no personal basis for it. So where do you see socialism and communism and human liberty being lost today on all fronts in the world? In those very countries. It is Eastern Europe that is going down the drain. It is the south of Europe that is going down the drain. Those of us whose political heritage comes from northern Europe are the countries which are stable, and which have been able to give people freedom without anarchy.

That is all directly attributable to this fact that God has spoken, and that the Word of God gives us absolutes that never change, so that we are not dependent upon the fluctuations of human beings. So when the liberals begin to badmouth the Word of God, and when people begin to make fun of (or be indifferent toward) the Bible, especially in this country, as, of course, is happening, they do not realize that what they are doing is taking the first step to ensure that every personal liberty that we have enjoyed as a nation is going to be destroyed. It is as the anchor point of the absolute authority of Scripture is dissipated in the American mentality that also our personal freedoms will go.

This thing is obvious even in Africa. In South Africa, there are nations that are white-dominated indeed, but by people who came from governments which colonized those countries (Rhodesia and South Africa), who had this anchor point of the Word of God. With this anchor point of the Word of God comes not only stability, but the accompanying factor of prosperity. The two go together. Where is poverty? Where are the dog-poor people of the world? Again, they're in these countries where the reformation never really took hold, and where Romans Catholicism was able to maintain its influence, and where Roman Catholicism then transferred its influence over here to the new world in South America. Where is poverty here? Look at the contrast between North and South America. South America has tremendous resources. It has tremendous capacities. But the fact that they do not have the Word of God as their anchor point has robbed them of all that personal prosperity as well as personal freedom.

In South Africa, you have a nation that has been based upon the Word of God. It is a nation which is given much freedom. And because it has the Word of God, it has given that freedom with stability and without anarchy. In South Africa, the literacy rate is 95% of the people of that nation – blacks and whites. Do you know how much it is in Africa as a whole, where the Idi Amins are in control? The literacy rate is 5%. That means 5% of the people of their countries can read. Yet we in the United States are bound and determined that we are going to tear apart South Africa and Rhodesia under some noble aspiration of black majority rule (the stable nations of Africa), in order to do what? To make them like the rest of Africa, where we have a brute like Idi Amin. You may have read what he did just the other day with the hundreds of people he had slaughtered in his latest escapade in Uganda.

Do you realize that in South Africa, there are more automobiles which are owned by the people (black and white) than in all of Russia? How do you like them bananas? Yet, we are joining Russia and the United Nations to put the screws on South Africa to move the base of their governments from the Word of God, and from these who understand it and who have established these nations freedom with stability. We're going to move them away from it. Why does Russia want to do that? Because Russia knows that if they can tear these nations away from the Word of God, and move them to the no-anchor point of humanism, those countries will be able to go socialist and communist, as have so many others in Africa. And when South Africa eventually does go communist (and Rhodesia), then we will have the interesting site that the critical waterway around the bottom of Africa will be totally in communist hands.

It is hard to believe that madmen do not rule our nation. The Bible itself makes it very clear that madmen will rule nations. The Bible makes it clear that the rulers of this world suffer from the darkness of a human viewpoint mentality. Therefore, everything comes out backwards, like looking through the lens of a camera. Everything comes out backwards for them. What they think is the thing to do to help meet a problem is the very thing you shouldn't do to help meet the problem. So it seems quite reasonable that we should set the nations of South Africa on a destructive course – the best nations in all of Africa.

Our present administration is bound and determined that we're no longer going to buy chrome from Rhodesia, because black rule does not dominate that country, in spite of the fact that black leaders are well represented in their legislature. But Russia doesn't mind buying it. The United Nations says nobody buys chrome from Rhodesia. Russia buys it from them. Again, I remind you that you know where we're going to buy our chrome, just as we did before the Byrd amendment was passed. We're going to be buying it from Russia at a fantastically higher price. This administration is bound and determined, under some guise of the liberal mentality of justice, that we are going to bring sanctions against a nation like Rhodesia.

Whatever else is wrong with those countries, and there are no doubt things that are, I just wish that the liberal mentality of our country and its leaders would come down just as hard on Russia and the denial of human freedom and liberty that Russia does. No greater beast roams this world than countries like Russia and China who have slaughtered people in the millions in order to impose their will.

When you do not have an anchor point (humanism has no anchor point), then the only way you can control people is by repression, because there is nothing for anybody to say, "This is what I should be. This is the course of honor. This is what is right. This is what is wrong." Consequently, the only way you can control people is by putting up a Berlin Wall, and then shooting them if they dare to try to cross it to escape your oppressive dominating hand.

**Revelation 1:2**

So we read in Revelation 1:2, "John who bore witness gave a testimony as a legal witness in a court of law, sworn to tell the truth, of the Word of God (of the thinking of God)." This information was from an infinite God who is capable of conveying to the finite means of an author like John, who could record it in writing for our understanding. Please appreciate that what you have in the Word of God, as represented by revelation, is what you have all the way through the Bible. It is not just hardly the Word of God. It is the Word of God. That is our anchor point. All of your blessings; all of your freedom; and, all of your prosperity are directly based upon that fact. John gives us this testimony to the Word of God. Of course, he is specifically referring to everything that's in Revelation.

Then, the next phrase is, "And of the testimony of Jesus." Here we have a related word in a Greek: "marturia." "Marturia" means "evidence." Again, this is evidence as given in a court of law. Here it is the evidence of Jesus Christ. This is evidence which comes from Jesus Christ. It is a testimony that He has received from God the Father about the future. John 14:6 tells us that Jesus Christ is the truth. As such, He gives us a testimony (a "marturia") in a court of law which we may depend upon as the actual absolute truth. What John has written for us has come directly from the Almighty God the Father of all the universe.

All truth is always related to a person. Truth is not related to simply with 51% of the people of some group think. Truth is not majority rule. Truth, again, is what God thinks, and what God has said. That's what John 14:6 means when Jesus says, "I am the truth." Truth is a person. Thus those who are not related to Jesus Christ can never come to the truth in any realm of life. Those who are not able to relate themselves to the Word of God, which comes through the living Word, Jesus Christ, and who do not understand the doctrines of the written Word which have been given to us through the living word, Jesus Christ, can never come to the truth. They're are always hanging out there in limbo, swinging loose, never attached to anything.

So here we have Jesus Christ vouching that the book of the Revelation is indeed the Word of God – the testimony of Jesus Christ. Then John gives us one other thing. It that says, "And of all things that he saw." "Of all things" here (as much as) is the Greek word "hosos." John didn't see everything, but that's a word that means as much as he did see (what was in his vision), he has recorded in this book. The word for "saw" is the Greek word "horao." "Horao" is a word that describes seeing in a panoramic view. It isn't that other Greek word "blepo," which means looking down closely at a thing. "Horao" means just taking an overall view. What John is reporting to us is the panorama of final events which was shown to him by an angel. This is what actually happened to John. He had a vision. In a vision, it was like a huge television screen operating before him. He saw the whole sweep of history of all these events taking place one after another. So the Greek uses this word to convey to us the understanding that John got a full general view of the course of human history. That is what he reported to us.

This word, "horao," is in aorist tense, which means the point of seeing these events when he was given the vision. It's active voice, which means John himself saw these things. It's in the indicative mood, which is a statement of fact. So what we're going to be studying is something that is given to us not on hearsay, but on the basis of an eyewitness who actually saw the future unveil before his very eyes, and then recorded it in Scripture.

So John has said to us, "God the Father has given us His thinking in human language, which we can understand. Jesus Christ has given us a formal confirming testimony that what I received from Him has come from God the Father. It is a true report. Furthermore, I am declaring, that I have seen the whole sweep of history from now to the end until eternity, and I am reporting to you specifically what I saw.

**Revelation 1:3**

Verse 3 is a tremendous verse in the book of the Revelation. Here is a unique verse not to be found any place else in the Bible, from one end to the other. It is a verse that informs us of something that God will do for you and me in connection with this book of the Bible. It is something of such tremendous benefit that any preacher who denies his people access to this unique blessing of all history is going to have something to answer to when he stands at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Preachers are faced with getting a unique Medal of Honor called a crown of righteousness that is only exclusive for pastor-teacher's, and they get it on the basis of their performance, the faithfulness of their shepherding care of letting people know what the Word of God has to say. I would think that denial of access to this book would be enough to lose any preacher this particular Medal of Honor. It's a serious thing. Let's see what it says.

It begins with the word "blessed," which is the Greek word "makarios." "Makarios" means "happy." What we have in verse 3 is what we generally call a beatitude. You know that in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5, we have a series of "blessed, blessed, blessed." We call those the beatitudes. That means the blessings. Here is a blessing that God pronounces. As a matter of fact, about seven times in this book, the Revelation stops, and it pronounces a blessing in a certain respect for a certain group of people. Here is a blessing that God has promised to you and me directly. What he means by blessing is happiness. There is a certain joy. You could actually translate the word "makarios" by the idea of happy. You could do that in the beatitudes in Matthew 5. Happy is the man ... Whatever it is, you can just take the word "blessed" and make it the word "happy." This pronouncement of happiness comes by the one who is the divine author of this book, which is God the Holy Spirit.

Blessed special divine blessing has no verb. You notice that "is" is in italics. There is no "is" in the Greek, because now he's speaking with emphatic declarations and clipped speech: "Blessed he that reads." The word "read" is "anaginosko." "Ana" means "again." "Ginosko" is our old word "to know." It means literally "to know again." The idea is to recognize a symbol. All of our youngsters in kindergarten and first grade at Berean Christian Academy are trained to "anaginosko" symbols on a page, and to be able to go home and to come back the next day and see the same symbol, and recognize that it says "cat," or "mouse," or "rat," or "cow," or whatever it is. That's how this word, "anaginosko" in the Greek, very literally describes what reading is. Reading is being able to look at a symbol, and you get a thought from that symbol. You look at a combination of letters (we call it a word), it communicates a thought or an idea to your mind.

This word refers to the specific act of reading. That's what we would say. That's a good translation. Reading is the idea of what we're talking about. He says that here, where the Word of God is read, and this in a public reading, is the idea of the church service. Back in the context of the times of the New Testament, everybody did not come to church with a scroll under his hand that contained the Bible. Certainly, when Revelation was first written and sent to these seven churches, there were very few copies until somebody began copying the book. So how did they get it? Well, they got it by gathering together in the services, and the leader of the group (the pastor) would stand up, and he would read to them.

This may also apply to the concept of explaining it. Within the idea of reading it (to know again), is not only hearing Revelation read, but having it explained – the expository role of the pastor-teacher in each of these seven churches. So the idea here is he who reads it; who hears this book read to him; and, who hears this book explained. What are we talking about? We're talking about Sunday night at Berean Memorial church week after week after week. And I'm here to tell, on the authority of the Word of God, that everybody who walks into this auditorium on Sunday nights to listen to the explanation of this book is going to go out that week with a blessing upon his life, and happiness in his soul that is accessible to him that will not be found through any other book of the Bible.

Blessed is the person, first of all, who teaches. For the pastor-teacher, there will be a unique and distinct blessing which is attributed to him. That's what we have in this first section. It's present tense. It means it will always be the case for the pastor-teacher when he stands up to instruct. Active means that his reading will produce happiness for himself. Participle means a spiritual principle. Every time the pastor-teacher stands up and he instructs, there will be happiness for himself.

This same principle is told us in 1 Timothy 4:13, where Paul tells Timothy, "Until I come, give attendance to reading. What does he mean? He means reading the Bible to people, and telling them what it means. But it is not only for me as pastor-teacher. It has the word "and," and it adds another thing also for another group, which we have just anticipated, and that is the "akouo" group – those who hear. This refers to those of you who are sitting out there in the congregation, and you're listening to public reading. You're listening to the exposition of the book of the Revelation. "He who reads" in the Greek is singular – the person who is teaching. But "they who hear the words of this prophecy" is plural in the Greek, meaning the congregation – the individuals who are sitting there.

The idea of hearing here means "to comprehend." This is present tense. The continual hearing of this book will give you joy and happiness in the week which follows. It is active. You Christians yourself must be here to listen and to hear. It is a participle. A principle is stated.

So here is happiness for the one who reads and instructs in the Word of God. Here is happiness for the one who sits and listens and learns from the book of the Revelation. So it includes both he who teaches from the book of the Revelation, and he who hears. "Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear.

Now we're back to our word for "word" again: "logos." Again, it is the contents of the book of Revelation that is in view here. The comprehension of Revelation comes through the study of the words of this book – for those who hear the words of this prophecy.

It is important for you to understand that it is the words of God that give us what this book says. That is why we show you a Greek word. It's not because we're trying to be cute or smart-alec, or because we think that you'll recognize that word. We give you enough explanation so you will understand it. But you can go home and say, "I know what the Bible says. I saw the words from which it came. I saw how the line of thinking is tied to those words. I can see that it was not just the preacher who made it up. It was indeed the Word of God that I heard."

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1, has an opening paragraph in its preface that I'd like to read you, that I think is excellent on just this very point – the importance of the specific words of the Bible. It says, "Bury yourself in a dictionary, and come up in the presence of God. This improbable sounding piece of advice of the late Sir Edwin Hoskyns contains a wisdom born of experience. At first sight, the dictionary may appear to contain nothing but a mass of antiquarian information. But to those who know where and how to look, the forbidding mass of material is not a barrier between the individual and real life, but a bridge to a richer appreciation of it. We ask: What is the writer getting at? Why did he say this? Why did he put it like that? What lies behind that remark? Then we begin to see things in a new light?"

I like that. That's exactly the idea. We go from the words of the Bible to a Greek dictionary, and we find what God the Holy Spirit wanted to say to us through those words. So that's exactly what we have in verse 3: happiness for the one who stands up and reads and who explains Revelation. We have happiness for those who comprehend through sitting there and hearing the very words of this prophecy. It is not just the words, but the explained words, and the words that you can understand. You're not going to get happiness just from the words. You're going to go home, and you're going to record the book of the Revelation on tape, and then you're going to play it every night when you go to bed, to get an extra blessing from God. So you will just hear the words of the Revelation droned on, all day long as you do your work, and you hear Revelation droning in the background to have that extra blessing? No, it's comprehended words. The words are important, but only as we comprehend them.

So we analyze what God has said. It is the words of this prophecy, and that is the Greek word "propheteia." "Propheteia" is a word which means to speak the mind of God beforehand on some matter. "Pro" means "before." The last part comes from a word which means to declare, so it means "to declare before." So Revelation is a prophecy. It is clearly telling us what is in the future. It is selling us something that lay ahead. Of course, there is a question as to how far ahead, after John wrote it on Patmos, but at least when he wrote it, it was clearly a prophecy. I think that from the anchor point in Daniel, we will see that indeed it is still ahead of us today in the tribulation. So prophecy foretells future events. It is the specific words of this prophecy that are the point of great blessing to us.

This goes with another thing: the one who teaches; the one who learns; and, then, "Those who keep the things which are written in it." The word "keep" is "tereo." The word "tereo" means "to guard as a treasure." This is done by giving heed to observing what we learn in this book. It connotes paying attention to the directives and the warnings of Revelation as they apply to each Christian. It means positive volition. "Tereo" is present tense – continual observing. It is active. You and I as believers have to guard these things. The prophecy of Revelation is going to be fulfilled whether we pay any attention to it or not. But the issue is that if we do pay attention to it, we will receive a distinct, unique blessing from God, which he does not give for any other reason.

What is it we are going to keep? Those things which are written. Here is our old word "grapho" again. We have already seen that this expression, "It is written," is an authoritative statement which declares that God has given us something that is absolutely true. These words that are written connote an authoritative statement of truth from God. It is in the perfect tense. That means that it was written in the past, when the writer wrote it, and its authority continues to this day. It is passive voice. It didn't write itself, and the author didn't invent it. It was given to him by God the Holy Spirit. He received it.

Those who obey (who guard, and who keep) the things which are written in the book of the Revelation, "For the time is at hand." These three promises are given to us because the time is at hand. It's inexcusable that we should not receive these blessings. This is the only book which promises this kind of happiness. This is the divine incentive which God gives us to counter Satan's program for this book. Satan's program for this book is to keep you out of it. Satan knows that you will discover that he is going to be roundly defeated in this book. He doesn't want you to know that. Satan knows that you will discover that Jesus Christ is going to come and rule over this whole earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Satan doesn't want you to know that.

That is the reason that this is a closed book in most churches. There are denominations which have a system of reading the Scriptures in their services. A certain portion of Scripture is systematically covered through the Bible. There is a denomination which includes all the rest of the Bible except the Revelation. It doesn't include one single word out of this book. Their ministers get up on Sunday and just read the Bible. It's just part of the service. They say, "We are now going to read this portion of Scripture." They never read a single word from Revelation – the only book that says, "I'll give you a unique, majestic, fantastic, special blessing if you hear this book taught, and then you guard, and act upon what you have heard." Why? Because, "The time ('kairos,' which means a segment of time) is near at hand, and near to fulfillment." What is that saying to us?

It is telling us, dear Christian, that one of these days, very soon, you may be engaged in one of the most routine, dull activities that you can imagine, and suddenly you're going to be snapped out of that and be in the face-to-face presence of Jesus Christ. That's the time that's near hand – our meeting him in the air. And because that time is near at hand, and because there are some trials between now and that time, the Lord, at the very beginning of this book says, "I'm going to give you a very unique and distinct blessing. I want to counter what Satan is going to do to you to keep you out of this book. I'm going to counter some way, with this special promise to you, the fact that Satan wants you to ignore this book. I want to do something to give you the motivation to dig into the book of the Revelation."

With the grace of God, we're going to do just exactly that for many, many months which lay before us. Every time I do it, I'm going to walk out of here uniquely blessed. Every time you sit and listen to it, you are going to be uniquely blessed. Every time we both keep what we have learned, it will be a third level of blessing for us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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