

Lesson 12

The Beatitudes of Revelation

Introduction

There are rich rewards for those who take God at His word and follow Him. The Beatitudes serve as a description of what a life with God looks like. When we choose to follow Him, He gives us happiness, peace, and contentment, even though the surrounding physical circumstances we face may be extremely difficult.

It should not be that surprising to see seven beatitudes packed within the Revelation, the book that assures God's followers, who are undergoing extreme difficulty and death, to hold out and not give up. In essence, the beatitudes of Revelation exhort believers to stay faithful, even though it can often be difficult to live out the Christian life.

In these seven beatitudes, we find things that will challenge and remind us of our responsibility. But they are presented in a way that encourages us to keep moving toward completion as we look forward to the day He returns. They are a call to action . . . to be faithful even if it takes you all the way to your death.

Revelation 1.3

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near.

Note the action words of this verse: *reads, hear, and keep*. They are all written in present tense. These are to be ongoing activities in the life of the believer. Some have suggested that John is describing the first century worship service. The public reading of Scripture was very much a part of the worship service and this was done for the purpose of comprehension and application. Scripture is to become life's compass, which can only happen when we embed the Word into our heart.

A great Old Testament passage to consider alongside this is Psalm 119:9-11:

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping your word. I have sought you with all my heart; don't let me wander from your commands. I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.

As you read this passage, see the devotion to God's word and how hiding it into our heart helps us stay true to God. How committed are you to taking in the Word of God?

Revelation 14.13

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "so they will rest from their labors, since their works follow them."

In the immediate context of Revelation, we think of all the martyrs mentioned heretofore. There is Antipas, mentioned in Revelation 2.13, who was put to death for his faithful commitment to the Lord. There are the martyrs seen under the altar in 6.9-11. There are also those mentioned in 7.9, 14 who endured the great tribulation . . . killed for their relationship with God. But the beatitude here is not only

for these martyrs ... but also for every Christian ... those who die *from now on* are blessed. The Psalmist said, *The death of his faithful ones is valuable in the Lord's sight*, Psalm 116.15.

It is the believer who will one day stand alongside Paul and repeat:

Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Corinthians 15.55-57)

It was Jesus who paved the way for us. He is *the resurrection and the life*, John 11.25. When we give ourselves to Him, He promises to remember that and give us something far more richer and more meaningful than anything we could have in this life.

Revelation 16.15

"Look, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who is alert and remains clothed so that he may not go around naked and people see his shame."

The imagery here is on the need to be alert and ready at any time, like a soldier who is ready for whatever the enemy may bring. The Lord will return. When He will return is unknown, Matthew 24.36. Our charge is to be ready. Those caught unprepared will be full of shame. This parallels John's writing in 1 John 2.28:

So now, little children, remain in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

As a soldier of the Lord, don't be caught deficient in your duty. As a son or daughter of God you have been wrapped in robes of righteousness, Isaiah 61.10 and have put on the Lord Jesus, Romans 13.14. As you remain in Him, you will be prepared for His return and the judgment to come. If we are prepared when Jesus returns, this beatitude tells us we will be blessed.

Revelation 19.9

Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!" He also said to me, "These words of God are true."

The imagery of a great wedding banquet is frequently employed by Jesus and the early Christian writers to describe the great joy and togetherness in the kingdom. In ancient times, the wedding supper was the high point of village life. It was a highly anticipated, diligently prepared event. Every detail was important so that the feast could be enjoyed to the max.

But our presence at this great feast is coupled with our own commitment to righteousness and faithfulness. The aim is for us to be presented in purity when Christ returns. When He comes, our entrance into the eternal realm will be an incredible time of joy and celebration.

Revelation 20.6

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Participants in the *first resurrection*, i.e., those who are born again from sin, are blessed because *the second death has no power over them*. The second death is defined later in this chapter:

Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire, Revelation 20.14.

The great comfort to the child of God is that he or she will never have to face the wrath of God.

How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life, Romans 5.9-10.

The Christian has been rescued from the wrath to come:

and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath, 1 Thessalonians 1.10.

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5.9.

Revelation 22.7

“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

This is no longer the angel who was speaking in v. 6, but Jesus himself! *Keeps* means to heed, “to hold fast,” or “to guard.” God’s word must be protected against detractors and critics who deny its authority.

Paul told Timothy:

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding irreverent and empty speech and contradictions from what is falsely called knowledge, 1 Timothy 6.20.

But we must also follow the exhortations of Scripture. The theme of obedience is seen throughout John’s writing:

- John 14.15 – If you love me you will keep my commandments.
- John 15.10 – If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.
- 1 John 2.3-4 – This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. The one who says, “I have come to know him,” and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
- 1 John 5.2-3 – This is how we know that we love God’s children: when we love God and obey his commands. For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden,

What are the commands and principles we are called to keep from Revelation? Basically, we are called to desire heaven, holiness, and see the triumphant Christ over His enemies so much that we will walk away from the world and pursue eternal things. God has called us to live godly and obedient lives considering His coming return.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ MacArthur, John F., Jr. *Revelation 12–22*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 2000, p. 295.

Revelation 22.14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

Again, Jesus breaks into the narrative to warn of His impending return and final judgment. He also pronounces a blessing on those who *wash their robes*. Those who have washed their robes exhibit righteousness, i.e., behavior consistent with a new life with God. These are the ones who have the *right to the tree of life* which is a symbol of eternal life with God in the heavenly city.

It is notable that here at the end of God's Word, we return to the beginning ... at the Garden of Eden with the Tree of life. It is the true treasure for which we must aim, rather than counterfeit treasures in this life that follow us only as far as the grave and come to an end.