

27.1 The Book of Revelation

Cautionary note

There is a lack of consensus about many aspects of the book. There is no consensus on how to interpret the book as a whole (4 distinct ways), on how to follow the progress of things through the book (two different conceptions), and on how to view the 1000 years of chapter 20 (three competing views).

Lesson

We need to concentrate on the large themes on which there is general agreement to profit in our reading of this portion of Scripture. Blessing is promised to those who read: **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, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³ 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 (1.1-3; cf. Lk. 11.28).**

Discussion Qs

- 1) How are the contents of the book described in 1.1-3?
- 2) How does the description of the contents of the book guide our reading?
- 3) From 1.3, what other important truth do we learn about the book of Revelation and what does this add as guidance for our reading (not...but)?
- 4) How is this reading guidance enhanced by the repetition of beatitude throughout the book (with 1.3, cf. 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7; 22.14)?
These verses make for some profitable reflection.
- 5) In this connection, consider the purpose of parables that brings blessing to those who see and hear (Mat. 13.11-16). Accordingly, how does the purpose of parables fill out our approach to and attitude toward the difficulties we confront in the book of Revelation?

Literary Outline (*Revelation*, Robert Mounce, 1977, 47-49)

- Prologue, 1.1-20
- Letters to the seven churches, 2.1-3.22
- Adoration in the court of heaven, 4.1-5.14
- The seven seals, 6.1-8.1
- The seven trumpets, 8.2-11.19
- Conflict between the church and the powers of evil, 12.1-14.20
 - [A woman clothed with the sun, a red dragon, angelic conflict, beasts, 144,000, and harvest]
- The seven last plagues, 15.1-16.21
- The fall of Babylon, 17.1-19.5
- The final victory, 19.6-20.15
- The new heaven and the new earth, 21.1-22.5
- Epilogue, 22.6-21