

# The Book With A Blessing

To the best of my knowledge there's only one book in the Bible whose introduction includes a specific blessing for anyone who reads the book. Ironically, this blessing is found in a book that many Christians avoid! That book is Revelation:

**Revelation 1:3:** “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

God promised to bless those who read Revelation or have it read to them. There's also a blessing for those who “keep those things which are written therein.” That word “keep” is the Greek word *tereo*, which means “to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard.” In other words, God promised to bless those who read the book of Revelation and pay careful attention to what it says.

There's something else unique about this book. While the Bible is full of verses that command people to not tamper with God's Word, this is the only book which includes a specific curse for anyone who dares to alter its contents. It can be found at the end of the book:

**Revelation 22:18-19:** “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Notice the tremendous severity of this curse! This curse isn't directed at those who misunderstand its text or have trouble figuring out what it all means. What it's saying is that if anyone tampers with the text itself and removes something from it, God will *remove their name from the Book of Life* and condemn them to the Lake of Fire for all eternity. Tampering with Revelation and altering its contents is as great a crime in God's eyes as taking the Mark of the Beast! It's a very serious matter to Him.

God promises to bless those who read Revelation and pay attention to it, and He also promises to curse anyone who dares to tamper with its text. That tells us there's something very special about this book. God clearly wants His people to be familiar with what it says – after all, that's the whole point of Revelation 1:3!

Yet there are many people today who don't care about prophecy. Some of them say they're “pan-millennial”: since it will all pan out in the end what difference does it make? Others say that end-times prophecy has no impact on their life so it's not worth studying. There are also those who are intimidated by Revelation and confused by the *many* different ways it's been interpreted. They see no reason to get mixed up in something so complex and controversial.

Why should we care about Bible prophecy? The answer is *because God wants us to care*. We can see that in Revelation 1:3, but that's not the only verse which teaches this. Jesus Himself had this to say when He was asked about matters relating to end-times:

**Matthew 24:3-4:** “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.”

Jesus didn't say “Don't worry about it! All that prophetic stuff is going to pan out in the end anyway and it doesn't have any

practical applications. Just focus on serving God and you'll be fine." That's what a lot of people believe but that's not what Jesus said! Instead what He actually said was "Take heed that no man deceive you" – and He then described in great detail the events that would take place before His Second Coming. He *wanted* His disciples to know what was going to happen *so that they wouldn't be deceived*, and He wanted them to be watching *because His disciples didn't know when He would return*:

**Mark 13:34-37:** "For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

We don't see any trace of Jesus saying "Don't worry about it. Life is too short to be focusing on things like that." He actually told His disciples *several times* that they needed to be watching! Saying that it doesn't matter is *not at all* the same thing as understanding end-times prophecy and being watchful for the return of Christ.

Some people say there's no reason to study prophecy because as long as you're ready you'll be fine. That sounds wise but it's actually foolish. After all, *what are you getting ready for?* According to Preterism the Lord Jesus came back two thousand years ago. According to Post-Tribulationism, the church is going to have to endure the seven year tribulation before Jesus returns. According to Dominionism the church is going to conquer the world with the gospel and usher in an age of peace. According to Pre-Tribulationism the Lord Jesus could return at any moment and remove the church from the world.

There's no such thing as “being ready” in a generic sense! Is Jesus going to come back soon or in the distant future? Has Jesus already returned or is He never going to return at all? Is the church going to conquer the world with the gospel or is the church going to be removed from the world? Will the church have to endure the worst period the world has ever seen? If you don't understand end-times prophecy and have no idea what's true and what's false then how could you possibly “be ready”?

Jesus said to be wary because many false Christs would come in His name. Do you know enough about the return of Christ to tell the genuine thing apart from a fraud? People like Harold Camping have destroyed the lives of many people with false end-times prophecies precisely because those people didn't understand what the Bible teaches. Others have murdered their own children because they thought the tribulation was starting and they wanted to save them. People's lives have been utterly destroyed because they didn't understand this subject and were led astray by false teachers. If you don't know the truth then you're open to being deceived by the next charlatan who comes along – and don't think that it can't happen to you. Just because you didn't believe one lie doesn't mean you won't find the next one convincing.

The apostle Paul is another person who didn't want us to be ignorant about end-times prophecy:

**I Thessalonians 4:13-18:** “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the

voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Paul didn't tell the Thessalonian church to disregard the subject of prophecy. Instead he told them that he didn't want them to be ignorant of the subject! He *wanted* them to understand the doctrines of Christ's return. Paul, like Jesus, was *against* being "pan-millennial". He wanted the church to know what God had to say about Christ's return and he wanted them to comfort one other with that teaching. In fact, in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians he repeated that idea:

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-5:** "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"

Paul didn't want the church to be deceived by false or erroneous teachings, and he expected the Thessalonians to remember what he had taught them about prophecy. Each time the

return of Jesus is mentioned we find God urging us to pay attention and hear what He has to say about it! I find it interesting that one of the very last things Jesus does in the Bible is bless those who “keep” (*tereo*) what He just revealed about end-times prophecy:

**Revelation 22:7:** “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

Jesus is pretty clear that Revelation is important and we should pay attention to it! The Lord wants us to care about prophecy, to pay attention to prophecy, and to *understand* prophecy. How can we avoid being deceived if we ignore the subject altogether? How can churches tell the truth apart from lies if they don't know anything about the subject?

It's true that Revelation has been interpreted in many different ways – and I don't think that's an accident. Since God wants His children to understand Revelation, is it really surprising that Satan has spread confusion, doubt, and distrust over this subject? If God wants us to pay attention to something then the devil is going to do his best to distract us from it.

It's true that prophecy isn't a simple subject. It can be difficult to understand prophecy and it may take a lot of study, but it's worth it. As the Bible says, “Seek, and ye shall find.” If we seek the truth we will find it. That doesn't mean it will be easy, but we need to remember that we do have help: God has promised to give wisdom to all those who ask for it (James 1:5), and we have the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth (John 16:13). We're not in this alone. If we apply ourselves then God will be there to help us<sup>1</sup>.

There's nothing Biblical or godly about what people call “pan-millennialism.” It's *not* God's will for us to adopt a “who

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1 One place to start is my study on the rapture: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Pre-Tribulation-Rapture.pdf>

cares?” attitude to this subject – or to *any* Biblical doctrine, for that matter! There are some people who teach that we should focus on the major doctrines of salvation and put everything else aside as “secondary”. The problem is God didn't give mankind a 3-page pamphlet which outlined the major truths and then leave it at that. Instead He spent thousands of years writing a 1000+ page book which is filled with all sorts of truths, and He then commanded us to know and believe *all of it*. This idea that we can ignore most of what the Bible says because it's not a “core truth” doesn't come from God! Do you really think that God is in Heaven hoping that His church ignores 90% of what He's revealed to us?

## ***The Ten Bridesmaids***

The study of eschatology is important for another reason as well: without a good working knowledge of the subject there are many Bible passages that won't make any sense. The book of Revelation is the key that unlocks passages all throughout the Bible.

For example, take this one:

**Matthew 25:1-12:** “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps

are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

This is a famous Bible story but people misinterpret it all the time. They approach this passage thinking they already know what it means, and in doing so they miss the important points and arrive at the wrong conclusion.

First of all, notice that these 10 virgins (or bridesmaids) are waiting on the bridegroom to come. Right away we have a problem because the church is represented in Scripture as the *Bride*, not as ten bridesmaids! The church also isn't in danger of being excluded from her own wedding – in fact, it's impossible for the wedding to happen without her! That means this passage isn't talking about the church. Instead it's addressing a very *different* group of people.

There's also the curious clue of the lamps. In ancient times lamps used oil as a fuel, and in the Bible oil symbolically represents the Holy Spirit. When these 10 bridesmaids started waiting all 10 of them had oil, but the groom tarried for so long that 5 of them ran out. This presents a problem because this story is saying is that half of these people *ran out of the Holy Spirit*. They originally had the Spirit but they eventually lost Him and were caught empty-handed when Jesus returned. Since they lacked the Spirit at the moment of Christ's return, Jesus left them behind and rejected them.

However, Christians today *can't* run out of the Holy Spirit! The Spirit is sealed within us and can't be lost (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30). We can offend the Spirit and grieve Him, but we can't lose Him. Having the Spirit sealed



within us means that our salvation is assured and can't be lost. Christians don't have to worry about committing a terrible sin, losing the Spirit, and then having to get saved a second time. That's not how it works! All of these things are evidence that the story isn't talking about the church at all, but instead is aimed at a different group of people in a different period in history<sup>2</sup>. Once you understand prophecy this passage makes a lot of sense, but if you don't have that these verses are a mystery.

## ***The Sheep and the Goat Judgment***

Another passage that is impossible to understand without a knowledge of prophecy is this one:

**Matthew 25:** “31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,

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2 These verses are talking about people who will be saved during the seven-year tribulation. The only group who was ever given the Holy Spirit as a permanent gift is the church. In the Old Testament only a few people were ever given the Spirit, and it was possible for people to lose the Spirit (which Samson did after he cut his hair). When Jesus removes His church from this world at the rapture things will change. It's not possible for someone in the church to lose their salvation, but in the tribulation if someone takes the Mark of the Beast it's impossible to repent and be forgiven. All those who take the Mark will be cast into the Lake of Fire and tormented for eternity (Revelation 14:9-11). Those who are saved during that terrible time in history will need to hold on to their faith lest they give into temptation and take the Mark.

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: . . .

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? . . .

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: . . .

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

If you don't understand the events that surround the Second Coming then this whole event seems strangely redundant. Is Jesus really going to take all the righteous people out of Heaven and all the wicked people out of Hell and then judge them again? Why would people who were already in Heaven be shocked at what Jesus had to say, and why would people who were already in Hell be amazed that Jesus was angry with them? It seems strange to judge people who had already gone on to

everlasting life or everlasting punishment! Why would He gather everyone just to give a short speech and then send them right back where they came from?

The answer is that this isn't a judgment of people who already died, but instead of people who were living in this world when Jesus returns at the end of the seven-year tribulation. Only the righteous will be allowed to enter into the millennial kingdom. All of the wicked will be excluded. This judgment has nothing to do with the church. The only people who are judged at this time are those who survived the tribulation.

## ***The New Heaven and Earth***

Here's an example from the Old Testament:

**Isaiah 65:17-20:** “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

It's easy to think that this is talking about the New Heaven and Earth which God will create after the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 21:1-4). However, there's a problem with that interpretation. Verse 20 tells us that in this new heaven and earth there are still sinners and people will still die. It's true that people are living such a long time that someone who dies at the age of 100 is considered to be just a child, but the point is that

*people still die.* Yet the Bible tells us that at the Great White Throne judgment the Lord will put an end to sin and death, and the New Heaven and Earth of Revelation 21 is created *after* that! So what is this passage talking about?

The answer is that this is about life in the millennial kingdom – a period in history *after* the Second Coming but *before* the Great White Throne judgment, when things will be very different from the way they are today<sup>3</sup>.

## ***The Feast of Tabernacles***

Here is another passage which requires a knowledge of prophecy to understand:

**Zechariah 14:16-19:** “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

God said that one day all the nations of the world would

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3 Revelation 20:1-6 talks about the millennium. So does Isaiah 65:17-22, Micah 4:1-4, Habakkuk 2:14, Ezekiel 40-48, Daniel 12:1-3, Hosea 1:10, Joel 3, Amos 9:11-15, Obadiah 1:19-21, Nahum 1:15, Zephaniah 3:17-20, Haggai 2:21-23, Zechariah 14:8-11, and Malachi 4:1.

be required to go to Jerusalem every year to worship God and “to keep the feast of tabernacles.” If any nations refused to go then God would curse them by withholding rain. This is astounding! In all of history nothing like this has ever happened. When is this going to take place? How does it fit in with God's plan for history? Is there really going to come a day when the entire world will keep Jewish feasts?

The answer is yes, there is. That era of history is the millennium. It's going to be an amazing time – and the Bible has a *lot* to say about it.

Let me close by saying this: those who don't study prophecy will never find the answers. However, those who seek wisdom will find it – and they will learn many amazing truths they never knew existed. As Christ said:

**Matthew 7:7-8:** “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”