

Week of December 23-29

WANT A BLESSING?

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 1

Take a hundred people. Ask them this question: If you had a choice between receiving a blessing or suffering a curse, which would you choose? How do you think most of those surveyed (if not all of them) would answer? Of course, they would choose a blessing, wouldn't they? Most folks want to have blessed lives rather than cursed ones. Well, in the opening verses of today's chapter reading, the apostle John lays out for us a pathway for receiving a blessing. Read it for yourself: *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*"

In the context of 1st century worship, "those who hear it" would refer to the members of the congregation gathered together for the church service on the Lord's Day. "The one who reads aloud" would be the reader who read Holy Scripture during the service. Notice, the blessing came not just on those listening but on the reader too. In fact, Revelation is the only book of the Bible that specifically states there is a blessing to the one who reads its words.

So, why the double blessing in the opening verses of this book? It's to stress the importance of the message of Revelation. John wants us to know that what we are dealing with here are not just the words of a man, but God-breathed words of Scripture revealed through his servant. Indeed, at the end of Revelation (22:18-19), John pronounces a curse, so to speak, on anyone who would tamper with any of the contents of this book: *"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."*

The visions and their interpretations, the seven letters to the seven churches (Rev 2-3), and the songs are God's way of speaking to his church; warning her of the challenges ahead, calling her to holy perseverance, and reminding her of the ultimate triumph that awaits those who overcome through Christ. This was a message the church, facing persecution at the hands of Rome and the emperor, Domitian, needed to hear. It's also a message we need to hear today too as we see growing storm clouds on the horizon and the possibility of real persecution for our faith in the future.

The blessings of Revelation on those who read it, listen to it, and take it to heart are still available today. They're not just for Sunday mornings but are available seven days a week! So, do you want a blessing or a curse? If you read Revelation, listen to its words and take its message to heart, you receive a double blessing. If you tamper with it or reject it outright, you'll suffer a curse. Blessing or curse, the choice is yours.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read the book of Revelation aloud as you read through the chapter. Listen to its words. Meditate on the message and take it to heart. Pray for the Lord to take its message and use it to bring a blessing to your life.

Take-a-way: *Want a blessing? Read & take to heart the book of Revelation.*