

# Blessed by the Word

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*Revelation 1:3*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. In September 1864, the Loyal Colored People of Baltimore presented President Abraham Lincoln with a Bible.
  - 1. President Lincoln accepted the Bible and wrote that association a letter.
  - 2. That letter reads, in part, “In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man’s welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my sincere thanks for the very elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present.”
  - 3. President Lincoln understood that great & wonderful blessings are to be found in “the great Book of God.”
- B. The Apostle John, too, understood—with the help of divine inspiration—that wonderful blessings can be found in “the great Book of God.”
  - 1. John writes, “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” (Rev 1:3).
    - a. The Book of Revelation contains 7 Beatitudes, and this first one concerns the blessings one receives from the Word.
    - b. Tonight, we want to explore this Beatitude in order that we, too, might be “*Blessed by the Word.*”
  - 2. Who are the ones “*Blessed by the Word*”? They are the ones who DELIVER THE WORD, DISCOVER THE WORD, & DISCHARGE THE WORD.

## THEY ARE BLESSED WHO DELIVER THE WORD

- A. “***Blessed is the one who reads aloud*** the words of this prophecy.”
- B. The English Standard has supplied the word “aloud” in this verse, but they have done so with good reason.
  - 1. It’s obvious in the context that reading “aloud” is intended, for John also pronounces a blessing upon the one who hears.
  - 2. In the early church, reading the Scripture aloud in the assembly was a major part of the assembly.
    - a. Paul tells the Colossian church, “When this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea” (Col 4:16).
    - b. “I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers” (1 Thess 5:27).
    - c. To Timothy, Paul writes, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tm 4:13).
    - d. Justin Martyr, writing his *First Apology*, in the middle of the second century says, “On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.”
  - 3. In the early days of the church, the public reading of Scripture was quite important.
    - a. Literacy grew quite rapidly among the working classes in the first century.
      - 1) Of course, Peter & John—two fishermen—wrote part of the New Testament.
      - 2) But, there were still many illiterate people in the first century. Without someone reading the Scriptures to them, they would have not known the will of God.
    - b. The printing press had not yet been invented, thus scribes copied the Scriptures by hand. This created three reasons for needing Scripture read aloud:
      - 1) First, the inspired epistle sent to a congregation would be the only one in existence.
        - a) When Paul wrote an epistle, he couldn’t print extra copies & send those to Corinth or Thessalonica.
        - b) I would surmise that it’s quite possible that there was only one copy of Revelation to go among the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. It could be that the church at Ephesus received the letter, read it, & then sent it to Smyrna, Smyrna then sent it to Pergammum, and so forth.
        - c) If the congregation was to know what God had said to them in these epistles, it was imperative that someone read them to the congregation.
      - 2) Second, books were very, very expensive.
        - a) Only the wealthy could afford books; it was quite common for a congregation only to have one copy of Scripture for all their members.

- b) Therefore, when the church came together, the Scriptures were read so that brethren would know the will of God.
- 3) Third, because of the expense of books, copyist tried to save money by cramming words together.
  - a) The entire New Testament was written without a single space between words.
  - b) Thus, people read aloud in the first century – even if they were by themselves – in order to be able to sound out the words & provide the spaces.
- C. How does the public reading of Scripture affect us when it's not as necessary as it was two millennia ago?
  - 1. This points to the importance of Scripture.
    - a. Scripture is so important that when the church came together, the Word was read – the church didn't assemble to hear a “feel-good” message; they came together to hear the Word of God.
    - b. Scripture is important for it is the very word of God.
      - 1) “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tm 3:16).
      - 2) Paul was thankful that the Thessalonians accepted the word he preached “not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess 2:13).
  - 2. This also points to the importance of sharing Scripture.
    - a. Those who could read did not keep the Word of God from those who couldn't; those who had a copy of the Scriptures did not keep the Word of God from those who did not.
    - b. We need to be more than willing to share the Word of God, too.
      - 1) When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he says that the gospel “has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven” (Col 1:23).
      - 2) Could we honestly say that the gospel “has been proclaimed in all creation” in our day? Are there some who have heard the gospel but are confused because they have been taught error?

## THEY ARE BLESSED WHO DISCOVER THE WORD

- A. “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and ***blessed are those who hear.***”
- B. John pronounces a blessing on those who hear the Word.
  - 1. The people of God have long wanted to hear the Word of God.
    - a. When the people came back from the Babylonian Captivity, Ezra “read from [the Law] facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law” (Neh 8:3).
    - b. As the people confess their sins after the Captivity, we read, that “they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God” (Neh 9:3).
    - c. After the Babylonian Captivity, the people of Israel desperately wanted to hear the Word of God.
  - 2. Why is hearing the Word so important?
    - a. It is by hearing the word that we learn of God.
      - 1) Moses gave the Law he had written to the priests & the elders of Israel.
        - a) He commanded them to read the Law before the people -- even little ones -- every seven years.
        - b) Why? “That they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess” (Deut 31:12-13).
      - 2) As Nehemiah was carrying out his reforms after the Captivity, the Book of Moses was read in the people's hearing (Neh 13:1).
        - a) As the people heard the Law, they “found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God” (Neh 13:1). The people put the foreigners out of the assembly (Neh 13:3).
        - b) The people did not know that Ammonites & Moabites were prohibited from the assembly because they had not heard the Law.
    - b. It is by hearing the word of God that faith is produced.
      - 1) “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17).
      - 2) Faith isn't produced by the great illustrations I might find. Faith doesn't come from flashy PowerPoint slides. Faith is produced by hearing the Word of God.
    - c. Not only does faith come by hearing the Word of God, but obedience is produced by hearing the Word of God.
      - 1) After God had revealed the Law to Moses, Moses “took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be

- obedient” (Ex 24:7).
- 2) During the reign of Josiah, the Law was found as workmen were repairing the Temple.
    - a) Shaphan, the king’s secretary, read the Law to the king who greatly mourned.
    - b) The king then read the Book to the people, and we read, “The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant” (2 Ki 23:3).
  - d. The word of God has great power to change men’s lives.
    - 1) Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, “for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).
    - 2) “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).
    - 3) A man who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century had lived a quite reprobate life in spite of his mother’s efforts.
      - a) However, this gentleman soon began to be interested in spiritual things, but he still wasn’t sure of obeying the Lord.
      - b) He writes that he was weeping over his sins with a copy of the Scriptures under his arm.
        - i. A voice came from a nearby house and urged this man to pick up the Book & read.
        - ii. He did so, and he writes these words about that experience, “Instantly, as the sentence ended—by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart—all the gloom of doubt vanished away.”
        - iii. “The gloom of doubt vanished away” in the words of Scripture.

## THEY ARE BLESSED WHO DISCHARGE THE WORD

- A. “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.”
- B. John pronounces a blessing on the one who discharges the Word -- i.e, one who obeys the Word.
- C. You understand why: It does little good to hear the Scriptures but fail to obey them.
  1. You recall what James has to say about people like that: Js 1:22-25.
  2. A friend of mine was on a door-knocking campaign in the South.
    - a. After they knocked on the door, to get the conversation going, the group asked, “Do you believe the world would be better off if everyone read the Bible every day?”
    - b. Everyone, of course, answered in the affirmative.
      - 1) But, the group came to one house & asked that very same question. The man quickly said, “No, I don’t think the world would be a bit better off if everyone read the Bible every day.”
      - 2) The campaigners standing in his front yard were flabbergasted & said, “Sir, what do you mean?”
      - 3) He said, “The world would be better off if everyone **obeyed** the Bible every day!”
    - c. Is that not exactly the case? Knowledge of Scripture by itself does no more good than a blind airline pilot.
  3. Knowledge of Scripture must be combined with obedience.
    - a. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21) -- In other words, it doesn’t do any good to know Scripture well enough to know that Jesus is Lord but not obey his teaching.
    - b. When Jesus was teaching in a full house, someone came to tell him that his family was outside waiting on him. Jesus then says, “Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother” (Mk 3:35).
  4. What about you tonight? Are you one who has read every page of Scripture but still hasn’t obeyed? Do you need to come tonight, obey the Lord, & become his “brother and sister and mother”?