

The First Beatitude In Revelation

Many are familiar with Jesus' use of blessed in the beatitudes listed in Mathew 5:3-12. Few are familiar with the seven beatitudes in Revelation. The word is used to describe the happy or joyful character or emotion of an individual who is found pleasing to God. It describes both the current spiritual condition and the future eternal condition. The poor widow in Luke 21:2-4 had no money left, but she had the blessing of the Christ.

Referring to God, this word indicates "praise," as in Luke 2:28 and 1 Timothy 1:11 but referring to man, it most often means "happy" or "favored."

Examples:

- To Mary in Luke 1:28, "And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'" Here rejoice and blessed complement each other.
- Three times, Mary is called blessed; by the angel, Elizabeth, and herself.
- Later, as Jesus was teaching and casting out demons, a woman said: "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" (Luke 11:27). But look at what Jesus said to her in Luke 11:28, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

The greater blessing is the subject of the beatitudes in Revelation.

The first occurrence is in Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."

- This type of reading is like that used in the assembly and described in Luke 4:16, where Jesus read from the scriptures in the synagogue.
- The hearers are like the assembly Jesus read to and the church as Paul mentions in Colossians 4:16 "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

The words imply a public, official reading, in the presence of those assembled for worship.

As Jesus the Christ begins His final Revelation, He says seven times: "To the angel of the church at ..., write," intending that His message would be sent to, read to, and heard by the assembly in each community. The extension of this continues the reading and hearing of scripture in our assembly today.

The wisdom of God in the Old Testament contains a similar message.

- It was the duty of the priests to read the law to the people during their three-times-yearly assemblies (Deuteronomy 31:11). As the priests became slack in reading and the people became lazy in listening, they drifted into idolatry and were punished.
- In later days as the Law was forgotten, the books of law were eventually found. They were opened and read, the people heard and obeyed, as in 2 Kings 22. Returning from captivity in Babylon, Ezra read the Law and all the people heard and obeyed (Nehemiah 8:1).

- The words of God through Solomon not only apply to the kings of Israel but to all of God's children throughout time. "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from the LORD..." (Proverbs 8:32-35).

Jesus referred to scripture to teach and to answer questions.

- His response to some that asked questions trying to trip-him-up was "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29).
- In John 5:39, Jesus scolds them for their lack of reading and understanding; "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."
- Saddened by the rejection He asked, "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone'" (Mark 12:10).
- And in Luke 10:25-26 when a certain lawyer tested Him, Jesus responded by asking him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

The continual plea throughout scripture has been to read, hear, believe and obey the words of God. Our prayer and the desire of God is that everyone will see the way of salvation through reading or listening to the gospel of Christ and obey it.

And therefore, the words of our text. "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3).

Are you happy, and feeling blessed, to assemble with God's children to hear the scriptures read and taught? Are you in the assembly each time the Book is opened, and it is possible to get here?