

## Revelation Three:

1. We ended last week with a lot of scriptures from Revelation that remind us that God is God. This week, I want us to begin with a lot of scriptures that show us that God blesses us in very specific ways – GOD does, not our allegiance to the state. This is important because States from Rome till now promise us blessings...but “every good and perfect gift comes down from heaven.”
2. Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14. (Seven – the total package of blessing)
3. Where are all these blessings found? What is the wellspring that would send this river of blessing over us? Revelation is going to show us where it is, where it isn't, and why that means you and I are going to have to live our lives alert, eyes open, head on a swivel, and pointed in the right direction.
4. This is going to be an uncomfortable book for us at this time. Political conservatives and political liberals and even political anarchists and libertarians are going to be shaken by the message of this book. In fact, its message is so powerful and so anti everything this culture demands from us, we tend to ignore and act like this book is about the end of time .
5. The end of time is dealt with here, but no date, no era, no millennium is given: it is just a preview, a trailer of coming attractions, to keep us facing the right direction.
6. The message: do not assimilate with our culture – any culture. We are to be assimilated INTO the culture of Jesus and the community of faith and we are stand apart from the immoral, idolatrous, empire driven, death culture around us. (abortion, killings, calls for killing)
7. To make sure the early Christians understood what God required of them, this book was written in a language many of them understood because they were Jews, rooted in OT scripture. It is impossible to understand the NT if you don't know the OT and it is impossible to get the message of Revelation if you don't know its source, its symbols, and its language all spring from the Jews.

8. There are seven – and get used to that number – theological themes in Revelation.

- a. **The Throne**: God is God and Jesus is the Redeemer. The all powerful God is also the slaughtered lamb. Our focus needs to be on the throne.
- b. **The Reality of Evil and Empire**: evil is real and governments make unholy alliance with evil to gain and consolidate power.
- c. **The Temptation to Idolatry and Immorality**: empires, governments, and cultures acquire power and become civil religions. They declare that the only way for you to have meaning and worth is to join them.
- d. **The Call to Faithfulness**: Scripture calls us to be good citizens and to understand that governments are necessary. We have no example of a Christian leading a riot or a march, but we DO have examples aplenty of believers bringing prophetic messages against the evil inside the empire. We live in that middle land between those who call for the sword and those who remain silent; when we see evil, we get to work.
- e. **Worship Driven By Our Vision**: because we see what the world does not, we worship what they do not and that causes tension between us until and unless our vision is shared. We are willing to live and to die for Lord because of our vision.
- f. **Witness**: door knocking and street preaching may not be effective ways of witnessing, but living a Christlike life IS. We are not passive; we are active in love, grace, and sacrifice.
- g. **Judgment and Salvation**: we believe that God will judge each individual and that salvation is found in Christ.

9. As we read Revelation, it is crucial that we take our eyes off of ourselves and off of our surroundings, off of our culture, and off of our politics and then put them where they belong: on Jesus, our Lord, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Lion of Judah, the Slaughtered Lamb.

10. Remember that Revelation was written by a first century Christian for first century Christians and used literary devices and images they would have understood. Like plays of the time, it begins with a peek behind the scenes at the real power, the real puller of the

strings of the world. This opening passage reminds us of Daniel 7:9-14. (Please place the text **of Revelation 1:20-30** up with citation and “compare with Daniel 7:9-14” on screen, please)

11. Every message that will be delivered will be delivered in the style of an imperial edict. This is usually lost on us but it would not have been lost on them. These 7 cities were in the beating heart of the Roman Empire and they are about to hear from a real God and their real King.
12. Ephesus: **Revelation 2:1-7**. This was a port city of 250,000 souls. Temples were all over the city, most of them dedicated to Artemis (also known as Diana. The goddess of the hunt, fertility, childbirth and more) and the emperor Rome. Her main temple was there. So far, the Ephesian church had not bowed down to Artemis nor had they compromised their faith but something deadly WAS going on...they were losing the love that is our greatest power and our energy for movement. Remember love should be on our T shirts and tattooed on our hearts.
13. The Nicolaitans are a bit of a mystery. There are some sources that say they believed this or that but they are not contemporaneous so... It is likely that the short book of Jude was written about them. Our best guess is that they were antinomian, meaning, not bound by laws and rules. Some early Christians groups thought that the laws of the OT regarding sex and other pleasures did not apply to them. Ephesus was a sex-saturated society that blended sex and religion and, perhaps, the Nicolaitans were a part of that.
14. God has never asked us to divide from each other over doctrine, but there are matters that are so important to God that they need a special calling out: persistent, non-repentant sexual sin, denying the Lordship of Christ, and being divisive as a person are the three things we see driving a call to separate in scripture. The flock must remain secure...
15. That does not give anyone license to declare every bit of their favorite doctrine to be the be all and end all. God is very particular in what He says and what He does not say. Sexual sin can absolutely be forgiven (and thank God for that), but when we live as if there

were no law, we have become outlaws and that threatens the rule of God to live with Jesus as the focus and love as our driver.

16. For, if I love you, I will not take your stuff, harm you, break up your marriage, lie about you, slander you, treat you as a non-person or as an enemy... You get the idea. Ephesus needed to return to love and, in some cases, rare, to be sure, that love requires us to separate from those who would harm our ability to be the community of God and cause harm to the reputation of Jesus in our neighborhoods.
17. As a reminder and a cautionary note, let's hear from the end of both First and Second Thessalonians. (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 12-24; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 3:6, 11-16)