

Tuesday Night Bible Study

REVELATION

SESSION NINE

The Seven Beatitudes

Seven Blessings from God In John's Vision As Told In Revelation



Joseph Pennell, The Lake of Fire, Charleroi, 1911 Vintage Wall Art

The Beast and False Prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Zürich Bible, 1531)



NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION – UPDATED EDITION

1. Blessed is the one who reads the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. (1:3)
2. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them." (14:13)
3. ("See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame.") (16:15)
4. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (19:9)
5. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years. (20:6)
6. "See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (22:7)
7. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. (22:14)

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COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

1. How blessed the reader! How blessed the hearers and keepers of these oracle words, all the words written in this book! Time is just about up. (1:3)
2. And I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Favored are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "so they can rest from their labors, because their deeds follow them." (14:13)
3. (Look! I'm coming like a thief! Favored are those who stay awake and clothed so that they don't go around naked and exposed to shame.) (16:15)
4. Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Favored are those who have been invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb." He said to me, "These are the true words of God." (19:9)
5. Favored and holy are those who have a share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will rule with him for one thousand years. (20:6)
6. "Look! I'm coming soon. Favored is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy contained in this scroll." (22:7)
7. Favored are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right of access to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. (22:14)

JB PHILLIPS VERSION

1. and pay attention to its message; for the time is near. (1:3)
2. Then I heard a voice from Heaven, saying, "Write this! From henceforth happy are the dead who die in the Lord!" "Happy indeed," says the Spirit, "for they rest from their labours and their deeds go with them!" (14:13)
3. "See, I am coming like a thief! Happy is the man who stays awake and keeps his clothes at his side, so that he will not have to walk naked and men see his shame." (16:15)
4. Then he said to me, "Write this down: Happy are those who are invited to the wedding-feast of the Lamb!" Then he added, "These are true words of God." (19:9)
5. Happy and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death cannot touch such men; they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him for the thousand years. (20:6)

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JB PHILLIPS VERSION (CONT.)

6. "See, I come quickly! Happy is the man who pays heed to the words of the prophecy in this book." (22:7)
7. Happy are those who wash their robes, for they have the right to the tree of life and the freedom of the gates of the city. (22:14)

PETERSON'S THE MESSAGE

1. How blessed the reader! How blessed the hearers and keepers of these oracle words, all the words written in this book! Time is just about up. (1:3)
2. I heard a voice out of Heaven, "Write this: Blessed are those who die in the Master from now on; how blessed to die that way!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "and blessed rest from their hard, hard work. None of what they've done is wasted; God blesses them for it all in the end." (14:13)
3. "Keep watch! I come unannounced, like a thief. You're blessed if, awake and dressed, you're ready for me. Too bad if you're found running through the streets, naked and ashamed." (16:15)
4. The Angel said to me, "Write this: 'Blessed are those invited to the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.'" He added, "These are the true words of God!" (19:9)
5. This is the first resurrection—and those involved most blessed, most holy. No second death for them! They're priests of God and Christ; they'll reign with him a thousand years. (20:6)
6. And tell them, 'Yes, I'm on my way!' Blessed be the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (22:7)
7. "How blessed are those who wash their robes! The Tree of Life is theirs for good, and they'll walk through the gates to the City. (22:14)

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EXPANDED BIBLE

1. ·Blessed [Happy] is the one who reads the words of ·God's message [L the prophecy], and ·blessed [happy] are the people who hear this message and ·do [keep; obey] what is written in it [C the context envisioned is a leader reading to a congregation]. ·The time is near when all of this will happen [L For the time is near]. (1:3)
2. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: ·Blessed [or Happy] are the dead who die from now on in the Lord." The Spirit says, "Yes, they will rest from their hard work, ·and the reward of all they have done stays with them [L for their deeds will follow them]." (14:13)
3. "Listen [L Look; T Behold]! I will come as a thief comes [C that is, without warning]! ·Blessed [Happy] are those who stay ·awake [alert] and keep their clothes on [C a metaphor for staying faithful and pure] so that they will not walk around naked and have people see their shame." (16:15)
4. And the angel said to me, "Write this: ·Blessed [Happy] are those who have been invited to the wedding ·meal [supper; banquet] of the Lamb!" And the angel said [L to me], "These are the true words of God." (19:9)
5. ·Blessed [Happy] and holy are those who ·share [have a part] in this first ·raising of the dead [resurrection]. The second death [C being cast in the lake of fire] has no ·power [authority] over them. They will be priests for God and for Christ and will ·rule [reign] with him for a thousand years. (20:6)
6. "·Listen [L Look; T Behold]! I am coming ·soon [quickly]! ·Blessed [Happy] is the one who obeys the words of prophecy in this ·book [scroll]." (22:7)
7. "·Blessed [Happy] are those who wash their robes [C an image of spiritual cleansing] so that they will receive the ·right [power; authority] to eat the fruit from the tree of life and may ·go through [enter] the gates into the city. (22:14)

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ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO READ REVELATION

Literal reading

Recapitulation reading

(1) The sequence of Christ's return (Rev. 19.10–15), a preliminary judgment (Rev. 19.16–21), millennium (Rev. 20.1–6), final judgment (Rev. 20.7–15), and new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21.1–22.17), makes sense as a linear and literal reading. Such a reading is known as a 'chiliasm'.

(1) The defeat of God's enemies in Revelation 19.11–21 looks and sounds rather conclusive.

(2) The reference to a millennium belongs with other Jewish apocalypses that envision an earthly reign by a messianic figure in an interim kingdom ahead of a final consummation (1 En. 91.12–16; 93.12–17; 4 Ez. 7.26–44; 12.31–4; 2 Bar. 29.3–30.1; 40.1–4; 72.2–74.3; Sib. Or. 3.635–701).

(2) Revelation 20.1–10 is a *recapitulation* of an overall narrative featuring persecution and vindication and an *anticipation* of the new heavens and new earth. The proof is that (a) the narrative focuses exclusively on the martyrs and so rehearses earlier episodes where the martyrs enter into God's presence after a harrowing of opposition from Satan and the beast (see Rev. 7.14–17; 11.7–11; 12.1–17); and (b) the description of the heavenly city in Rev. 21.9–22.5 could easily describe something like this thousand years of reigning with Christ.

(3) It is problematic to take the first resurrection as spiritual (i.e. regeneration) and the second resurrection as literal (i.e. raised to immortal bodily life) since those who participate in this first resurrection, who reign in the millennium, do not participate in the resurrection of the rest at the end of the millennium.

(3) John's numbers are typically symbolic and we should expect the same here. We are cued to this by the mention of 'thrones', which echoes Daniel 7.9, and describes not a thousand-year reign on earth, but the heavenly reality where the martyred saints are already reigning with Christ. In other words, Revelation 21.4–6 is a narrativization of Ephesians 2.6/Colossians 3.1 about being seated with Christ as it applies to martyrs.

(4) Many of the early church Fathers, such as Papias, Melito of Sardis, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others, were chiliasmists. It was not really until after Constantine that amillennialism became popular; the church, now operating under the sponsorship of the empire, no longer looked forward to its overthrow.

(4) It is likely that John is adapting Jewish traditions pertaining to a temporary quarantining of evil and expectations of a messianic reign ahead of the final judgment and deploying them as a symbol for the vindication of the martyrs which Christ's return entails.

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Discussion Questions

What image/metaphor would you use to describe/convey separation from God's presence?

How do you read this Revelation 20:1-6? What type of Millennialist are you? How is your position important to your living as a faithful disciple?

We are told "we are saved by Jesus on the cross." "For God so loved the WORLD." How does John's vision in Revelation square with "Saved by Faith in God's grace"?