

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS

"Part LXII: Revelation, Section 1 - ('The Things Which Thou Hast Seen') Getting Positioned To Enjoy God's Blessing In Our Difficult Era"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The Christian community is finding it increasingly fearful and discouraging to live victoriously for Christ. Consider the following:

(1) Don Feder, a syndicated columnist in the April 6, 1996 Waterbury Republican-American, wrote an article on "War against Christians waged by stunted souls" in which he revealed Christian-bashing by the secular left. In a single week, Easter week of last year, all three major newsmagazines (Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report and Time) ran stories "seeking to debunk Christianity."

According to Feder, none of these magazines would have had the "chutzpah to run a cover story questioning the authenticity of Moses' message (as a leader of Judaism) . . . or dissing Islam's founder."

In view of such secular media bias against Christianity, how is the believer to function in God's blessing?

(2) Larry Burkett's February 1997 periodical, Money Matters, p. 3 reports a case where a Christian wife had to work three jobs to make ends meet as her gay husband ran up bills and dressed like a woman, requiring their mutual daughter to call him "mom."

When the husband moved in with his boyfriend, the marriage went on the rocks and ended up in court. The court required the woman to call her husband by his preferred female name and refer to him in the female tense. Also, no child support was to be given to the mother, and the father was given joint physical and legal custody of the child despite known reports that he planned for sex change surgery!

In view of such secular legal bias against the Biblical model of the basic family structure, how can we enjoy God's blessing?

(3) Sometimes the challenge is **within the Church**: (a) Bob Salstrom, former Alumni Secretary of Dallas Seminary reports that a Louisiana Bible church hurriedly ran seven seminary grads as pastors through the mill, so discouraging each one that all have permanently left the ministry. When the church asked for **another** fresh grad as a pastoral candidate, Bob **refused** to send them more resumes! (b) We can add reports of abuses in marital relationships, the workplace, family and government by reports we get from Nepaug believers all the time! **In view of disheartenments and insecurities where we LIVE today, how can we function victoriously in Christ?!**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "As the Bible predicted, these final days of Church History are getting more ominous! I wish I could get on the phone with the Lord and ask Him how to enjoy His blessings NOW! Any ideas?!"

- I. **As the Bible's predicted world apostasy is coming true, its arrival is making things harder for Christians to experience God's blessings!**
 - A. Though God created the world and set man up as His earthly deputy, sin deposed him and Satan became earth's ruler, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. God renewed history by the Noahic Flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
 - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-11; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
 - D. God used Abraham to father Israel to check Nimrod's sin, Gen. 12:1-3.
 - E. However, Biblical history reveals the failure first of organized Israel and then of organized Christendom to offset Nimrodian apostasy.
 - F. This apostasy's arrival has magnified the trials of godly Christians as signaled even in the closing days of the **Early Church**:
 1. Rome's Emperor Domitian tormented the Church and banished the Apostle John to the Isle of Patmos, Ryr. St. Bib., KJV, p. 1785.
 2. Due to this trial along with growing world apostasy, the Church then as now experienced "complacency and defection", Ibid.
- II. **Jesus thus gave John the Apocalypse to record insight into God's pathway of blessing for believers living in the latter days of time.**
 - A. The Book of Revelation exposes the role of the **glorified** Christ Who will **overcome** world apostasy in **uplifting** His faithful **SERVANTS**.
 1. Christ gave the Revelation as insight into the **future** to **bless** His **SERVANTS** like the Apostle John, Revelation 1:9 with 1:1, 3.
 2. Revelation **aids** God's godly **SERVANTS** by its **insight** that Christ **sovereignly controls ALL of HISTORY**, and equips **them** to be victorious in **their** lives in the final days of that History, 1:1, 4-8!
 - B. As such, Jesus **outlined** this book in **three** sections to reveal the **way** His control can help His **SERVANTS** in **ALL future** eras, 1:19,1,3:
 1. Jesus gave input to encourage John and all of His **servants** in Rev. 1:10-18, namely "the things which **thou hast seen**", Rev. 1:19a.

2. He spoke of "things that *are* (better, "*exist*" (*exist*))": since John's Revelation is **predictive** (1:1) and the things which "*exist*" **differ** from what John **had** seen in 1:9-18 **AND** from things "*hereafter*" in 19c, and since **each** Rv. 2-3 single **message** is to **Churches**, the "things that *exist*" are **Church ERA** matters **after** John's day, 19b .
3. Christ thus also gave input to His **SERVANTS** on events **after** the Church is raptured, what "shall be *hereafter*" in 4:1-22:21; 19c.
4. (This lesson expounds the *first* section, the things "thou hast seen" to be *followed* by *two* lessons on the other sections *respectively*!)

III. **Now, in the "things which thou hast seen" section, Jesus revealed HOW His infinite CONTROL of all forces affecting believers on earth throughout History could be used to BLESS them!**

- A. John heard Christ speaking from **behind** him, Rev. 1:10. This event reminded the **Hebrew**, John of Isaiah 30:20-21: there God predicted to a **repentant** Israel His **gracious TEACHING** given from **behind** as would a shepherd call to his **wayward** sheep for it to **return** from **straying**! (J. A. Alexander, *Isaiah*, p. 481) When John turned **around**, he saw Christ, his **graciously correcting Shepherd**, the **Eternal** God of Dan 7:9, his **Priest** and **Judge**, 1:11-16, 20; *Ibid.*, fn. to Rev. 1:13.
- B. By touching John with the **right** hand of power and honor to fortify John, the **very** hand Jesus used to hold the "stars" or "messengers" to His churches in history (*Ibid.*, *Ryrie*, fn. to 1:16), Christ signaled that He wanted to use His powers of life-and-death, eternal destiny of all men and His rescuing resurrection victory to help John and ALL His SERVANTS conquer their ministry defeats for blessing, 1:17-19, 11!
- C. Thus, Christ blesses **US** living in **today's** era as He did John if we like him **apply Christ's SERVICE** decrees prophetically given to **US** in Rev. 2-3, 1:19a, 11. (Those words for our era are in the *next* lesson!)

IV. **Revelation 1:1-18 adds to the "thread of redemption" by showing that since all of history is under Christ's rule, any believer TODAY WILL be blessed if he submits to Christ's will as HIS SERVANT!**

Application: To be fulfilled and directed by Christ in OUR difficult, uncertain era, (1) believe on Christ as personal Savior from sin to become one of His true flock, Jn. 3:16. (2) Then, (a) fellowship with God by confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and depend upon the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23) to be able to obey God's Word (1 Jn. 2:3-6). (3) Then, make a commitment to SERVE CHRIST as our LIFE'S GOAL. If we DO this, we will NOW come under Christ's "blessing coverage," and we need only obey His edicts for our era taught in Revelation for His current blessing! (We will expound on these eras in the next lesson!)

Lesson: Christ knows what HIS SERVANTS face in history, and He intends to help THEM if they but OBEY His edicts that address THEIR times in the Revelation so that THEY might be blessed in THEIR days!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

In the fall of 1981, while driving from North Platte, Nebraska towards Dallas, Texas, our family stopped for the night at Wichita, Kansas. I had recently resigned from a difficult pastorate under duress after only 7 months in the pastorate there. As Wichita's airport is busy since the city hosts the headquarters of the Cessna Corporation, after supper, I drove the family out to the airport to view its air traffic activity. I thought the drive would help get our minds off of the past.

While watching the planes, Greg, who was just 4 years old the day before, pointed to a large airliner at the terminal and asked, "Dad, can we ride on that jet?!" I told him we needed plane tickets. He responded by asking me to **buy** the tickets so we could ride the plane!

Knowing that we had no job and not having any sure leads to another one, I responded rather bleakly, saying, "Son, it will be a long time if **ever** before **we** can ride on an airplane like **that**!"

While in Dallas during a depressing 6 months, I decided to do continue doing God's will that I knew was continuing in the ministry. At the time I didn't know how I could pick up the pieces and go on, but I decided to try it a day at a time and see what would happen!

Well, **before** earning a penny at my next job at Nepaug, my brother bought airline tickets for our family to fly **round trip** from Dallas to his California home for Christmas! I had also flown round trip to candidate here, and **Nadine** and the **children** had flown from Dallas by way of Chicago into **Bradley Field**! Since then, we have flown round trip to California from Bradley **three** times as a family, and once round trip as a family to **Chicago** for a family reunion. **All** but **one** of those flights were financed out of money **given** to us as **gifts**!

Finally, on our last plane trip, I found myself hoping that we wouldn't have to fly again soon as I was getting **tired** of it! Then it hit me: to think that 13 years before I had told Greg that we might **never** fly as a family only to become **tired** of our family's flying so **much**, and that due mainly to **gifts** from **others** -- it was quite **overwhelming**!

I learned a big lesson: when we choose God's will as life's top priority, CHRIST underwrites all we are and have so that we can continue to DO His will, no matter what it takes. Our need is merely to submit to HIS will as HIS SERVANTS, and we will enjoy HIS provisions and blessing at ALL necessary levels of life.