

# Revelation 1:3-4 - Blessed are those Who Keep this Prophecy

© 2003-2004 Tony Garland - [contact@SpiritAndTruth.org](mailto:contact@SpiritAndTruth.org)

COURSE COMMENTARY



## 1:3 - Blessed is he

- [The Blessing requires Understanding](#)

"Even if it were a blessed thing to believe what is contained in it, no man knows what that is." -- Martin Luther. The frustration of Luther is an indication of the importance of a consistent, defensible approach to interpreting the text. See the lesson on [Systems of Interpretation](#).

- [One of 7 Blessings](#)

There are seven blessings listed in these promises. No other book of the Bible makes this promise.

- 1) He who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy ([Rev. 1:3](#)).
- 2) For the dead who die in the Lord during part of the Tribulation ([Rev. 14:13](#)).
- 3) For he who watches and keeps his garments ([Rev. 16:15](#)).
- 4) For those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb ([Rev. 19:9](#)).
- 5) For he who has part in the first resurrection ([Rev. 20:6](#)).
- 6) For he who keeps the words of this prophecy ([Rev. 22:7](#)).
- 7) For those who do His commandments ([Rev. 22:14](#)).

## 1:3 - he who reads and those who hear

- [Read in a Congregation](#)

At the time John wrote, writing materials were expensive and duplication was a time-consuming process. Like Jewish synagogues, Christian assemblies had a reader and the congregation would listen.

## 1:3 - the words

### The Importance of Words

The message of God is not conveyed by existential encounter with the believer. God caused Scripture to be recorded and carefully preserved using **words**. Not **ideas**, not **concepts**, but **words**. Scripture itself emphasizes the reliability and importance of the individual words in the text. ([Jos. 8:34-35](#); [Mat. 5:18](#)).

dalet      resh      yod



“tiddle”

## 1:3 - the words

- **Scripture Demonstrates the Reliability of the Details**  
Jesus based an important argument on the present tense of the verb "I am" ([Mat. 22:32](#)). Jesus relied on a single word in the Old Testament in another argument and said "scripture cannot be broken" ([John 10:35](#)). Paul relied on the singular number (person/gender/number) of a word as the basis of an important teaching concerning the promised "seed" (singular, [Gal. 3:16](#); [Gen. 13:15](#)).
- **Extreme Care in Preservation**  
The Jews did an astounding job and went to extreme lengths to preserve the details of the text entrusted by God to them ([Rom. 3:2](#)). Therefore, we should care about the details of the text too!
- **Which Translations are best for Study?**  
All translations involves some interpretation and thus lose meaning. Italian proverb: "translators are traitors."  
  - 1) Minimize interpretation.
  - 2) Use *formal equivalence* (word-for-word) rather than *dynamic equivalence* (thought-for-thought) translation.
  - 3) Preserve ambiguity rather than deciding for you.
  - 4) Rule of thumb: if it doesn't contain *italicized words* then don't use it.

## 1:3 - this prophecy

- **Revelation contains Prophecy!**  
It is not an allegory, merely a devotional, or a veiled political document containing hyperbole and mystery. God identifies it as **prophecy** , prophecy includes **prediction** , prediction involves **future events**.

## 1:3 - keep those things

- **Hold Fast**  
"keep" is *terou'ntes* , a present tense participle meaning "while continually holding fast." This requires **focus** , **energy** , and **watchfulness** . Christians are not to be passive about the teachings in this book! "Pan-millennialism" is not honoring to God.
- **which are written**  
The contents of this book are to be:
  - 1) Studied.
  - 2) Correctly interpreted and understood.
  - 3) Defended and passed on to the next generation.
  - 4) Applied to our own lives ([Jas. 1:22](#); [Luke 11:27-28](#)).

## 1:3 - time is near

- **'time' - Kairos vs. Chronos**  
*Kairos* ("time") is an eschatological term concerning the time of coming crisis associated with the last times.
- **'near'**  
*Engus* is often used to indicate **imminency** as discussed in slide 12: " You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is **at hand** " ([Jas. 5:7](#)); " the end of all things is at hand " ([1Pe. 4:7](#)); " things which must **shortly** take place... Behold I am coming quickly " ([Rev. 22:6-7](#)).

(The context of these passages is not the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as preterists maintain, but the end of the eschatological age.)

## 1:4 - John

- **The Simplicity of the Title**  
Evidence that the author is John the Apostle.  
See the lesson on the [Authorship](#) of Revelation.

## 1:4 - seven churches

### The Seven Churches of Asia



- **Why These Seven?**  
There were other churches in the same area: Troas ([Acts 20:5-12](#)), Colosse ([Col. 1:2](#)), Hierapolis ([Col. 4:3](#)). Perhaps also in Magnesia and Tralles since Ignatius wrote to them less than twenty years later.
- **Geographical Distribution and Relationship**  
Communication by letter along established trade routes. Patmos to Ephesus and on to the other churches. A great circular road which bound together the most populous, wealthy and influential part of the Province.

- **Symbolic Meaning of Seven**  
Seven churches were chosen to indicate their *representation* of all churches in all ages. Each letter to each church is for all churches and all saints of all ages ([Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29](#); [3:6, 13, 22](#)).
- **Historical Significance**  
Several of the Church Fathers who attest to the **Canonicity** and **Authorship** of the book lived in this region. Papius (ca. 30-130) was bishop of Hierapolis near **Laodicea**. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) lived at **Ephesus**.
- **Structure of the Letters**  
Although the letters, in Revelation **2** and **3**, are addressed to individual churches, each letter is for all saints and follows a similar structure.
  - 1) Sent from Christ using a title primarily taken from [Rev. 1:12-18](#).
  - 2) Commendation (except for Laodicea).
  - 3) Criticism (except for Smyrna and Philadelphia).
  - 4) Exhortation.
  - 5) Promises.
- **Churches include Believers and Unbelievers**  
*Ekklesi'a* is a compound word from *ek* (out of) and *kale'w* (I call). True believers are "called out" of the world and separated unto God. But individual churches contain both **true** Christians and **professing** Christians who are merely "church-goers" but are not born-again. The promises can be misinterpreted if this is not understood.
- **Represent Seven Stages of Church History?**  
The historical-prophetic view holds that these churches represent:
  - 1) Real historical churches at the time of John.
  - 2) Typify all churches in every age.
  - 3) Relate to specific sequential periods of church history.
- **Problems with the Historical-Prophetical View**
  - 1) Different interpreters identify different periods for the seven stages of church history.
  - 2) Church history is much more complex than seven simple sequential stages.
  - 3) The correlation is usually heavily slanted toward church history in the West and tends to ignore important events elsewhere.
  - 4) This view would have destroyed imminency if it had been understood by the early church.

## 1:4 - from Him who is...

- **Refers to God the Father**  
Part of a three-fold greeting (the Son and Spirit are mentioned in the next verse).
- **Unusual Grammar**  
Comprised of a present participle (*him who is*), an imperfect verb (*he was*), and another present participle (*he who is coming*). "The One who is and the He was and the One coming." An unusual construction -- a nominative ("Him who is") after a preposition ("from").

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- **Reasons for Unusual Grammar**  
1) *Iemi* ("I am") has no participial form to express continuing action in past time. 2) An indeclinable proper name - pointing to [Exodus 3:14: Ego eimi ho on](#) ("I AM WHO I AM," LXX).
- **The One Coming**  
The part of the phrase which looks to the future uses *ho ercho'menos*, "the one presently coming" (present tense), rather than the expected *ho eso'menos*, "the one who shall be" (future tense). He is **already on His way** and may arrive at any moment. His arrival is imminent!

## 1:4 - from the seven spirits

- **Refers to the Holy Spirit**  
Part of a three-fold greeting. May refer to the seven qualities of the Spirit said to rest on the Anointed One ([Isa. 11:1-2](#)). John mentions seven lamps of fire burning before God's throne which are "the seven Spirits of God" ([Rev. 4:5](#)). These seven Spirits are said to be "seven eyes... sent out into all the earth" ([Rev. 5:6](#)). The Holy Spirit is omniscient.
- **Worldwide Ministry of Holy Spirit**  
1) Provides the breath of life to all the world's creatures ([Gen. 2:7](#); [Job 34:14-15](#)).  
2) Strives with all men to restrain sin ([Gen. 6:3](#); [Gen. 20:6](#); [2Th. 2:6-7](#)).  
3) Convicts the world "of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" ([John 16:8](#)).

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).