

Text: Rev. 22:6-13

Title: "Blessed is he who keeps these words"

Time: 1/6/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Have you been a student of the Bible in 2018? I saw a statistical study that concluded that in 2017, the average American spent 721 minutes each day absorbing media messages. That is 12 hours on average per day. Two of those hours were time spent on a desktop or laptop, which I do a lot of especially for my work, and the other 10 hours of the day are divided among watching TV (about 4 hours), data use of a phone (3.5 hours), listening to the radio (1.5 hours), print media (0.5 hour), and other (1 hour).

I mention that because I believe that one of the challenges for us in modern times when it comes to becoming a Bible student is how technology has introduced many other distractions that compete for the time we need to do so.

Now a second question: what percentage of the messages we obtain from these distracting media sources is faithful and true? Or better, how much of what they say about God and religion is true? Another study titled, "Americans and the News Media" surveyed journalists with the question, "Thinking about news coverage in general, how accurately do you think news organizations portray issues around religion?" The study concluded: "Eighteen percent of those with a religious affiliation and 17 percent of those with no religion consider the media's coverage accurate on this topic, and over a third of each group (37 percent with religious affiliation, 35 percent with no affiliation) think it is slightly or not at all accurate."

[<https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/fairness-accuracy-of-press/>].

It is in this world, with that volume of messages and that level of message-accuracy when it comes to religious topics in news coverage (certainly movies and other forms of media messaging would be far worse), that we must ask ourselves the question, "Am I a student of the Bible?"

Our enemy has always sought to create an environment that prevents people from reading the Scripture. For centuries that strategy was to use the Roman Church to keep it in Latin so that the common people could not read it in their own language. Around the world, tyrannical atheism and tyrannical Islam outlaw Bible-reading.

But in our experience, common-people translations proliferate, and we are free to read, but the enemy has used modernist attacks on the trustworthiness of Scripture and modern distractions to keep us from reading. In other words, he has used our own sinful hearts.

Why should we want to become students of the Bible? The angel tells us why: God's Word is uniquely faithful and true (v. 6). This last chapter of Revelation tells us why and how this faithfulness and truthfulness is a blessing to the student of the Bible. The section before us this morning promises that the man who keeps these faithful and true sayings shall be blessed (v. 7). I want us to see four ways in which that is so this morning.

I. These words bless us because they come from God (vv. 6-7).

Illustration: We have learned in our day of media messages that we need to consider the source of the message we hear to assess its faithfulness and truthfulness. The first study I mentioned about hours spent with media messages each

day came from a website that showed me the statistic and then gave me a link to click on to see the source of the statistical study. When I clicked on that link, an ad came up telling me that learning the source was a premium service, and I had to pay \$49.99 to get that information too. I saved about \$50 right then and there.

Application: When it comes to the Word of God, we do not have to pay extra to find out Who the source of these faithful and true words is. We are told up front (v. 6). The source of these words is the Lord, the God of the holy prophets.

Some of your translations have *the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets*. That is a difference in the underlying Greek text being used, but what the phrase teaches us is very clear. It says that the Bible was written by men who were prophets under the direction and influence of God's Spirit. This is the Bible doctrine of inspiration - that the very words of every part of Scripture were both authored by men and spoken by God. That makes this book an extraordinary book in some important ways. Our passage mentions three:

1. It is a book that reveals things to God's servants (v. 6). In other words, it is a book from a Master and Lord designed to help servants obey this Master and Lord. If we read the Bible but fail to obey the Bible, we are missing the purpose of the Bible. It is designed to make us adequately equipped servants of our Lord (2 Tim. 3:17).
2. It is a book that makes real historical events necessary (v. 6). Why must we say that these things must happen? Because the Bible promises that they will happen. It is not as though there are two kinds of truths - real truths that hap-

pen and Bible truths that may not. There is only one kind of truth – real truth, things that really exist and really happen. The Bible is faithful and true in its revelation of these real things, this true truth.

3. It is a book that promises the return of Jesus Christ (v. 7). The same Bible that told us where, when, and how He would come the first time promises that He is coming quickly the second time, and that we have to be ready.

Make no mistake – these sayings are faithful and true. They bless us because they come from God. So we must respond to them faithfully and truthfully. Failure to read them does not measure up to this response.

II. These words bless us because they teach us how to worship God (vv. 8-9).

Illustration: It is the apostle John who records for us Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4 of his Gospel. One of the things they speak of there is worship. The woman brought it up, noting the differences between her people and the Jews when it came to worship. Jesus counseled her that God seeks worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. He meant God's Spirit and God's truth. Worship that has truth but no spirit is false worship, going through motions, a meaningless and heartless waste of time. Worship that has Spirit but no truth is also false worship, excitement and good feelings, but not true worship.

Application: John's worship in verse 8 is false worship. It is not the first time we see him have this problem in Revelation (see 19:10). What makes John's worship false worship – does he worship lacking Spirit or does he worship lacking truth? Well, clearly John's spirit is into what he is experienc-

ing here. I think we can safely say he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit even in an important sense. He is, after all, the inspired prophet of the passage. I am sure that no one could be more well-meaning or feel greater intensity about falling down, almost uncontrollably, before this angel to worship. What he lacked was truth. The lack of truth made John's worship false worship, in spite of the role of God's Spirit in his life at that time.

Our Bible, especially the book of Revelation, teaches us truth about how and Whom to worship in both Spirit and truth. The how of worship is determined by the Whom of worship. We learn from this passage that worship in Spirit and truth causes us to fall down before our God. The question is not whether we were entertained; it is whether we were sufficiently humbled.

We also learn that we are to worship God, not angels, and certainly not ourselves. I heard it said that the only seeker we should be concerned about when it comes to the worship assembly of the local church is the Lord, who seeks worshippers in Spirit and in truth. We should be concerned about whether He is pleased, not angels, not ourselves, not people that we want to reach. Are we worshipping this morning in Spirit and in truth?

III. These words bless us because they define the difference between right and wrong (vv. 10-11).

Illustration: I am coaching a  $\frac{3}{4}$  grade basketball team that can be very foul-mouthed at times, so I have taken some time in practice to talk about this with them. I told them that God made their tongue and expects them to use it to be a blessing to other people. One young player explained to me that my coaching was not going to work for him because his family did not believe in God.

Application: Well, that is a sad predicament. How will that little boy find a reason to use his tongue differently? Kids understand that calling your teammate certain thing is wrong, and that speaking in a way that encourages them is right. They know that because they were made in the image of God, whether or not they are being taught to believe in Him. But to lose sight of God is to lose sight of the difference between right and wrong. Man cannot survive that loss.

Our passage reads as a condemnation of those who are unable to discern this difference. The “He” at the beginning of verse 10 is not the angel, but the God the angel told John to worship. God wants the words of the Bible to get to people before the season described by Revelation, which is a great blessing of His mercy and grace (v. 10).

Are we guilty of keeping God’s word sealed up on our shelf collecting dust somewhere? Do we seal it up from those who need to hear about the difference between right and wrong from us with our disobedient silence? The next verse teaches us the unrighteousness of the unrighteous and the pollution of the polluters cannot stop what is coming – God’s judgment, so in the meantime righteous ones, still do right, and holy ones, still continue to be sanctified. Still grow in grace.

Isaiah pronounces a woe on disobedience to the commands of verse 11, which help us better understand them, I believe: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”

Illustration: The Nashua public library has advertised recently a special teen-activity called “Teen Night with a

Drag Queen.” The idea is to give teens the opportunity to investigate for themselves first-hand the life of a drag queen.

That is where the loss of the difference between right and wrong we find in the Bible leads us. Even libraries decay into moral perversion. We must be salt and light in a world like this, and the only way to do so is to maintain this difference by studying the precious Word of God and refusing to allow its truth to be sealed up. Is the Bible a closed book for you?

IV. These words bless us because they tell us Who is coming quickly (v. 12-13).

Application: This book says Jesus is coming quickly, and His reward is with Him. He is the Alpha who began everything, and He is the Omega who shall bring it to the end He desires. We can respond to this reality in one of two ways:

1. Most respond the way Peter describes in 2 Pet. 3:3-4.

Note that it is not seeking faithful truth that causes this response, but sinful desires (v. 3).

2. We must respond the way John himself does in 1 John 3:1-3. Though an old man by the time of this writing, John looked forward to Jesus appearing more than to his own death. He learned to live as though it could be today that Jesus comes quickly with His reward, and the events of Revelation begin to unfold. That truth caused him to live a pure obedient life, and he says it will do the same for us. It is a truth that we find in our Bibles.

Conclusion: We began with an important question this morning: Were you a student of the Bible in 2018? Let's end

this morning with a more important one: Are you planning to be a better student of the Bible in 2019? These sayings are faithful and true. We must treat them so.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*