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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 1:1-3

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] If you have your Bible or New Testament with you I'd like for you to turn with me to chapter 1. We'll read verse 1 through verse 3 as our Scripture reading. The message today will be devoted largely to an introduction to the book, but we will seek to expound these three opening verses as well. This book is entitled "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." I mention that because in some of the editions of the King James Version, in fact most of the editions for many years contained the heading "The Revelation of St. John," but as you can see from reading it is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

Yesterday I opened a copy of the *Textus Receptus*, and I have a copy in my library. And in this edition in which is found for the first time the expression, "The Received Text." And opening up to the opening page of the book of Revelation it reads in its title, "The Revelation of John the Theologian." That's a very interesting heading. "The Revelation of John the Theologian," but the title is really, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," if we're looking for a title. The author of the book writes,

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His

angel unto His servant John who bare record of the Word of God." (Incidentally, that expression, "The Word of God" here probably means what we would say by the expression, "The purpose of God." Word in its Hebraic foundations, and also in its New Testament statements often has the sense, usually has the sense of an active word when it's followed by, "Of God" because, of course, God's words become events, become actions. If God says something it comes into being. So we should understand it, I think, that way.) "Who bear record of the Word of God," (or the Word of God expressing his intention, thus his purpose.) "And of the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw," (that is that John saw.) "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is near," (or as our text has, "at hand.")

Incidentally some of you, of course, know I'm reading from the Authorized Version. But the book of Revelation has, if you read through it you will sense it, it has many expressions that have the cadences and then many sections which are really poetic in force, and as some of our most contemporary scholars have pointed out. For that reason the translation of the book of Revelation in the Authorized Version has certain qualities that modern versions do not have, and therefore it is especially suitable for reading and study. Providing, of course, we do note the places where the fundamental text used in the translation may not be an accurate text.

The subject for today as we turn to the exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." There are two attitudes to the nature of the book of Revelation. There are some who regard this book as simply a puzzle. For example, A.M. Hunter, who was for many years a professor in Great Britain, has written, "When we pass from the other books of the New Testament to The Revelation of St. John the Devine our feeling is that of men who cross from some familiar terrain into an alien and uncanny land. Revelation is to our modern mind a very weird and fantastic book full of angels,

and trumpets, and earthquakes, of beasts, and dragons, and demons of the pit." The great Jerome, the Roman Catholic scholar, wrote to one of the Bishops of his day, "The apocalypse of John has as many secrets as words. I'm saying less than the book deserves. It is beyond all praise for multiple meanings lie hidden in each single word." That's quite a testimony. On the other hand, others of equal eminence, someone has said, have considered it beyond the possibility of praise. And it might surprise you to know that Martin Luther was one of those who considered it beyond the possibility of praise. "My spirit," Luther wrote in the preface to the fifteen hundred and twenty two edition, that's the year 1522, edition of his New Testament, "My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. There is one sufficient reason for the small esteem in which I hold it, that Christ is neither taught in it nor recognized."

Now, that is a remarkable statement from the Reformer. One would normally think if someone said something like this that he had really never read the book because if there is one thing that this book does set forth is a magnificent Christology or doctrine of Christ. As a matter of fact even modern scholars who do not have the same attitude to the Word of God that Luther had claim that the highest Christology of the whole of the New Testament is found in the book of Revelation. In other words, the most exalted picture that we have of the Lord Jesus is found in this book. Well, it's a puzzle to Luther. He never wrote a commentary on it. As a matter of fact Calvin didn't write a commentary on it, and Zwingli said it's not a book of the Bible.

On the other hand, there are those who think of it as a masterpiece. One of the editors of, and commentators on the book, and one of the well-known series of commentaries referred to the author as a creative genius. Philip Carrington has tendered the book the ultimate compliment. He writes, "In the case of the Revelation we're dealing with an artist greater than Stevenson, or Coleridge, or Bach. St. John has a better sense of the right word than Stevenson. He has a greater command of unearthly supernatural loveliness than Coleridge. He has a richer sense of melody, and rhythm, and composition

than Bach. It is the only masterpiece of pure art in the New Testament. Its fullness, and richness, and harmonic variety place it far above Greek Tragedy." That is a tremendous expression of appreciation for The Revelation.

Well, whether we think of it as a puzzle or whether we think of it as a masterpiece, we surely will agree that it's an unusual work. The author calls it an apocalypse. Now, the apocalyptic was a class of writing. There were other apocalypses written by ancient authors. Apocalypses, generally speaking, were attempts to unfold some aspect of the divine purpose in history. So an apocalypse has as its fundamental character an explanation of the divine purpose in history. This book begins the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. So we should think of the divine purpose in history as we open the pages of this book. But in a moment, in the third verse, the author calls this book a prophecy.

Now, when we think of prophecy we think of the revelation of truth from God, the unfolding of divine truth. It's something that is revealed that is from God. So the apocalypse has to do with the unveiling of truth that pertains to the divine purpose. The prophecy underlines the fact that it is the unfolding of new truth from God. That's why, incidentally, we do not have any prophets today. The word is bandied about among church people. If a man preaches with a lot of fervor and power individuals may call him a prophet. What they mean by that, however, fundamentally if they want to be biblical is, he preaches with some power because the prophets proclaimed their message with some power. But if they're seeking to suggest to us that prophets exist today we are justified in asking them, "What is the new revelation that they are giving us?"

And the Christian church has historically believed that Revelation came to its conclusion with the writing of Holy Scripture, and the completion of the Canon, and that early age in which prophets did, for a time, exist in the early church. So it's an apocalypse, it's a prophecy, and then in the fourth verse, John, as he begins something of the content of it writes in epistolary style, "John to the seven churches which are in Asia."

So right here in the opening of the book he tells us this is an apocalypse, it's a prophecy, but at the same time it contains messages like letters to existing churches in his day. So we have to grant, I think, that it is an unusual work. It's a masterpiece in the sense that it's a fitting conclusion to the gospels in which the story of the gospel in its completed form reaches its climax in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. In the Book of Acts the story is told of how that gospel moves from Jerusalem to the four corners of the earth, and then the book of Revelation is a kind of Hallelujah chorus of the redeemed to the Lamb of God who has made it all possible.

One might ask, "What is the importance of this book?" Some people go through their whole ministry never expounding the book of Revelation, never even studying the book of Revelation in some detail. I would imagine if you went into many professing Christian churches today and were to ask, "When was the Book of Revelation expounded in systematic fashion in the congregation," you would be astonished at how many could say honestly and truly, "Never since I have been in this congregation."

Occasionally, little series are given on the Book of Revelation. In fact I can remember when I was at the University of Edinburgh I enrolled for a course on the book of Revelation. The professor was a very evangelical man and so we spent the whole time on the first three chapters. We never got anything of the section in which I was really most interested, his own viewpoints concerning the prophetic portions of the word. That's characteristic of today. So messages on the letters to the churches, is about where such expositions end.

Why is it important? What is the importance of it? Well, first of all it provides the necessary capstone and climax to the word of God. If you read through the Bible and you came to its end with the Epistle of Jude you would sense that something was missing. For as remarkable as the story is, and as wonderful as it is, the New Testament Epistles end on the note of apostasy in the church. 2 Peter, 2 Timothy, Jude, the note that we are warned about, and properly so, is that the church shall enter into a

period of apostasy. And so it's so fitting that we should have the book of Revelation after this to remind us that apostasy is not the last word concerning the people of God.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to speak of the book of Revelation as the "Grand Central Depot" of the prophetic word. And of course, you that are sitting out in the audience, you're too young to appreciate "Grand Central Depot". If I were to say the "Kennedy Airport of Prophecy" it might have a little more sense or application to us. But when I grew up people traveled largely by train and the whole rail system of the United States in one sense had its termination in New York City and its termination specifically in Grand Central Depot. So to affirm that the Book of Revelation is the "Grand Central Depot of Prophecy", Dr. Chafer was trying to say that all of the Bible ultimately finds its conclusions in the Book of Revelation. We'll say more about that in just a moment, but it is the capstone and climax of the word of God.

Secondly, it presents a divine estimate of history. "No human empire," Revelation tells us, "can endure." Fascism may have its day. Communism may have its day. Fascism has all ready passed from the scene, largely. Communism is breaking up. The fabric of its garment is falling apart as one can see. Democracy will have its day as well and its fabric shall also come to ruins as well. "No human empire can endure." That's plainly taught in this book, as well as in other places of the word of God, incidentally. It also teaches that the Second Advent of Jesus Christ is God's panacea. It's the disinfectant of a sovereign God for this universe.

Now he is called in this book the Almighty, and this book lays great stress on that. In the eighth verse we read, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End", saith the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'"

A third thing that we should mention is the Christ's redemption is seen as the foundation of the deliverance of the elect. So in once sense then this book is important because it gives us a right view of history. "It points us to the one far off divine event toward which the whole creation moves," as Alfred Lord Tennyson put it. There's one

other point that we may overlook. I don't know whether you noticed this or not, but you could notice it if you read the newspapers, if you read anything that has to do with spiritual information in our day, and that is that in our society there has been in one sense the death of the doctrine of the devil and the doctrine of antichrist in theology. Modern theology pays little attention to a personal devil. Modern theology pays practically no attention to the doctrine of the antichrist in theology. Well that doctrine serves a very significant place in our human thinking.

For example, the teaching that there is an antichrist and that his coming precedes the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom highlights a significant teaching, that is that there is an evil beyond the central wills of men and women and it is at work in the processes of history. In other words, not all of the evil of this universe is found in the sinful wills of us but there is another power, a demonic power in our human society. Many have noticed this, many of the finest minds philosophically, and spiritually, and even politically they've noticed this.

Now, it's ironical that in the age in which the death of the devil and the death of antichrist is recognized in theology we should experience the most appalling manifestations of demonic statecraft. Think only of what happened in Germany in the late twenties and thirties and forties, early forties until World War II came to its end. Not only that, the most terrible desolations of war itself and the most widespread oppression the Christian faith has taken place in our sanctuary. So in the same age in which we say theologically, "There is no devil, there is no antichrist," society is falling apart in that way. To think as some do that eschatology means that with the coming of our Lord in 30 AD and his ministry, everything of divine activity has come to an end is the fail to understand the world of which we are apart.

One of the most famous of the German theologians, Paul Althaus, set his face against the dogmatic and cheap applications of the doctrine of the antichrist. We do have lots of them, you go around in our evangelical churches and the kinds of things that they

tells us about the antichrist and about our Lord and about the events of the future are largely cheap applications of the truth of the word of God. We'll try to stay away from a great deal of that. And he set himself against that but he went on to say that, "the concept of the antichrist is a loud no to all speculative chiliasm" that is all speculative ideas that we're advancing as a secular society to something like a kingdom of God over the whole of the earth. It's a loud "no" to the optimistic faith in the progressive coming of the kingdom of God upon the earth. I would agree. I think that is true.

One other thing I think we can say with reference to the importance of this book is that it predicts, therefore, a final one world totalitarian urban system of incredible scope and power with criminal violence and satanic delusion prominent. What we are moving toward is a totalitarian worldwide empire, urban empire with incredible scope and power. That's what this book sets forth. How close how far we may be from that, I'll leave the speculators to tell us but I do know that that is true. In the ninth chapter, the twentieth and twenty-first verses, the author of the book writes,

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

So we're looking, anticipating, that kind of a society in the future. It's not a happy anticipation.

Now a few words about this book and its authorship. We're taking the position that the author of the Book of Revelation was the Apostle John. We do know he was a person named John. We read in the fourth verse, "John to the seven churches." We read in the ninth verse, "I John, who also am your brother," and chapter 22 he also is called that so we'll take him to be not simply John, but John the Apostle.

The early fathers and all parts of the church hailed the authorship of the Revelation by the Apostle John, not until later times did doubt arise over the authorship, some thinking of another John, not the apostle, and still others of some unknown person. The place in which the apostle found himself was the rocky Aegean Island of Patmos off the coast of Asia minor, not too far from the city of Ephesus, about 18 miles in circumference around that island. A small island, it was the place of banishment of people who had sinned against the empire. The Christians particularly, when they were put on the island, were put to work in the quarries at hard labor. You're not surprised then to find as you read through the Book of Revelation that you have the sights and the sounds of the sea because, of course, the author was right there on that little island as God gave him the visions that are described in this book. The sea plays a great part in it and we are not surprised, therefore.

Irenaeus who wrote in the second century said that, "John wrote a revelation the 14th year of the Roman Emperor Domitian who ruled from 81 to 96 A.D.," and so therefore we're going to say this was right about 95 A.D. Domitian was the emperor who liked to have himself called publicly "*Dominus et Deus noster*", "Our Lord and God." Over and over again he would have himself proclaimed, "*Dominus et Deus noster*", "Our Lord and God."

Now, if you read the Book of Revelation at all you know that that's precisely the title that is attributed by John to our Lord Jesus Christ. And so there seems little doubt that John had in mind the political situation, or rather let's put it this way, God had in mind the political situation when he gave the revelation to the apostle. And we have our Lord called by names and terms that human beings like to arrogate to themselves. It's God's way of canceling out what they were hoping would be true, that a human being might be our Lord and God. No, no, the one who is our Lord and God is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When you think of the revelation, you also as you read through it, you cannot help but note how much of it suggests other parts of the Bible.

Now, if you were reading the Greek text, in which in some editions phrases and words from the Old Testament are given in heavy print, then you would see even more how closely this book relates to the Old Testament Scriptures and to some parts of the New Testament, such as our Lord's Olivet Discourse. Out of the four hundred and four verses of the Book of Revelation, one author has estimated that two hundred and seventy-eight of them come from the Old Testament, refer to the Old Testament in a clear way. That's almost seventy-five percent of the Book of Revelation is related to the Old Testament. You can understand, I think, why Dr. Chafer called this book the "Grand Central Depot of Prophecy." The great prophecies of the Old Testament find their completion in the Book of Revelation. And yet it's surprising that John never specifically quotes from the Old Testament with an introductory formula like, "as Isaiah says," or "Moses said" and then the verse from the Old Testament follows. It's all woven together in the revelation as a kind of mosaic, and thus we read it.

That should let us know that we should never pose as an expert on the Book of Revelation if we're not familiar with the whole of the Bible, and especially the Old Testament. In Genesis the earth is created, in Revelation it passes away. In Genesis there is the first rebellion, in Revelation the final rebellion. In Genesis sin enters the human race, in Revelation sin comes to its end. In Genesis the curse begins, here the curse is banished. In Genesis death begins, in Revelation death is banished. In Genesis man is banished from the garden, in Revelation man is brought back into the garden. In Genesis the dominion of man is removed over the earth, in Revelation man is restored to the divinely intended dominion over the earth.

We say that there is a relationship to the New Testament. Jesus in the upper room discourse, remember, said to the apostles that the Holy Spirit would be given to them and he would do two things. He would bring to their remembrance the things that he had said to them. And that we could say would be the Gospels as they were given to the apostles; that is, they had the remembrance of the things Jesus did and said brought to

their minds by the Holy Spirit, but also that they would be taught all things. And those apostles, and when we consider the Apostle Paul as one of them who came to the apostolic later, the apostles in the books of Acts through Jude or that period of time through the epistles particularly have taught us the significance of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ laying great stress upon the cross work that he accomplished in his death. And then in chapter sixteen of John the Lord said the Holy Spirit who comes will say to them, teach to them things to come. That is the things that he will teach them will be not simply the things of the past which he brings to their minds and gives them the true significance of now that they have the Holy Spirit, but they will be given information of the future not simply of this age but beyond this age to the climax of this age, things to come.

There's a great and close relationship to the book of Daniel. We passed that by for the moment. The chief characteristic of this book then is that it reveals not Messiah's earthly life in Palestine but his ascended life in heaven, and what he is doing in heaven as our great high priest, and advocate, and coming King. One is the continuation of the other. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. And so the person who walked the dusty paths of the land of Palestine is the same one who sits at the right hand of the throne of God in his glorified body. We think of this book, I think of this book I should say, as easily outlined by the nineteenth verse of this first chapter. John is told to, "Write the things which thou hast seen," just after he has seen the vision of our Lord. "Write the things which you have seen, and then the things which are," and he will give us seven Epistles to the churches of his day in chapters two and three. And finally, "the things which shall be hereafter." In chapter 4 and verse 1 he writes, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." So we'll define it, outline it very simply, the things which John has seen, the vision of chapter one. The things which are the messages to the seven churches

in chapters two and three and then the things which come to pass after these things from chapter four on in the book.

Let's turn now to a few moments to the prologue itself. This prologue incidentally gives us the vantage point for understanding the vision of history that follows in the book. So he writes, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to shew."

Incidentally, that would indicate that when he says the revelation of Jesus Christ it does not mean the revelation about Jesus Christ, but the revelation that Jesus Christ has because it has been given to him. For those of you who are students of the Greek text this would be a subject of genitive. So it's Jesus Christ's revelation, which God gave to him, that explains what it is, "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." It's a revelation of Jesus Christ. It belongs to him. And notice the process. God is where it begins.

It then is a revelation given to Christ. I won't for the moment speak about what that means when we say God because Jesus Christ is God, too, but the trinitarian God is the author of the revelation. The Lord Jesus Christ is the executor of it in the sense of the second person, the mediator. And then it is given to an angelic messenger who in turn gives it to the servants of God, specifically the Apostle John. So the triune God, the mediator, the angel, and the apostle, what an unheard of, someone has said, what an unheard of authority lies back of the prophecy of the revelation. The triune God, the mediator, the angelic being, and the apostle standing back of these words. Let us never look at this book as if it were simply a cheap book to satisfy our curiosity. That is not why the revelation was given. He says that this contains things that must come to pass shortly or quickly.

Now when he says, "must to pass," of course he is saying that this gathers up, in a sense, all of the Old Testament hope. All the threads of it are gathered up and they must come to pass in the near future. You can notice by way if you just underline that little word "must" that history is not haphazard. History is a reference to things that must

transpire, not may, not possibly will, not potentially, not provisionally, but which must come to pass. I won't say it, you know what I'm thinking, some of you at least. "Shortly come to pass," he says. That's a puzzle to some people. In fact, modern commentators on the Book of Revelation, some of them say simply, "It hasn't come to pass." That would indicate that this book is not to be understood as giving us some information concerning the future. It didn't come to pass. Well, if we're looking at it from the standpoint of men that is true, it did not come to pass quickly. But there are different ways of looking at events on the earth.

Let us look at them from the standpoint of God, for example. To God, human history is an eternal now. God knows succession. He planned history. But so far as God is concerned, he's like a man on the top of a ninety-five-story building looking at a parade for two or three blocks. He can see the end. He can see the beginning. So if we think of things from the divine standpoint, well then what he is saying is the fulfillment of these things is imminent. "One day as with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day," that particular passage of Scripture has some reference to this. He's speaking from God's standpoint. The little expression, quickly, reminds us of tachometer for that's the word derived from the word that is translated "quickly" here or "shortly". *E tache*, *tacheou* in Greek means quickly. Tachyon, John outraced Peter to the tomb, just like if I would outrace Mr. Prier because I'm so much younger. [Laughter] And John says that he arrived or he was more quickly arrived at the tomb. So when he says, "shortly," it means more quickly. Suggesting the tachometer, a measuring instrument for velocity.

Now nineteen hundred years have passed by, but again we're looking at things from the standpoint of God. And if we are wise and we look around us it's possible perhaps for us to see the furniture of Bible prophecy being moved gradually into place on the stage of world history. All of that is speculation, of course, and we should remember that it is.

He says that he "signified it by his angel unto his servant John." That's a word that means to give information in an obscure, a figurative, or a symbolic way. In fact, the root of that term or related word from the same root is the word used for assign in the Gospel of John. A miracle as a sign, that it's not simply a miracle, but it's designed to teach a spiritual truth. This is the verb built on the same root, "to signify". And it's not into my mind saying anything other than we are to realize that the Book of Revelation contains much symbolic material. It's a panoramic visual aid. John says he's going to tell us the things that he has seen. The Delphi Oracle used this term in its oracular utterances when, for example, Croesus the king of Tarsus or well known to us we call a man "as rich as Croesus". That's what Mr. Hunt used to be, "as rich as Croesus". But now he's not. But the metaphor has lived on.

Now we say Michael Milken is as rich as Croesus and he may not be so rich after a while either. But Croesus thought at one time he would take Cyrus' kingdom. And so being king of Tarsus, in fact their most famous king, he decided he would ask the Delphi Oracle what he should do. The river Halys had to be crossed for him to attack Cyrus and so he asked the Delphi Oracle. And so the spokes-lady who usually sat on a tripod kind of seat breathing some vapors that weren't different from those that Oklahoma football players may have been breathing recently, gave out her utterances in tones kind of speaking ecstatic type speech. But the message came out to Croesus, "Croesus, if you cross the river Halys a great empire will be destroyed." He crossed and discovered that the oracle was correct but it was his kingdom that was destroyed and not Cyrus'. And shortly afterward Cyrus, after waiting around a little while, took Tarsus. A remarkable way, we'll talk about it when we get to the message to Tarsus in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation.

But at any rate, "to signify" then means "to speak" and in speak often in symbolic ways. Phrases from the Old Testament, pictures from the Old Testament, in fact many modern commentators say that, "The true parallel to all of this is the political cartoon." If

you see a man who has long bushy eyebrows you know that's Jim Wright. [Laughter] Or if you seen an eagle flying through the sky you know that's the USA. If you see a lion you know that's Great Britain. And sometimes the faces of the individuals will appear on the animals. And so we in the political cartoon, we use the symbol and it makes sense to us. We have to know the symbols, the meanings of them of course. And so in the Book of Revelation the meanings of our symbols are frequently derived from the Old Testament Scriptures.

I remember many years ago Dr. H.A. Ironside saying, "Perhaps if we read this statement 'he sent and sonified' as 'sent and sonified' not 'signified' then we would understand what John is saying." And modern commentators have followed that, have said that if we read this as 'sonified' then we would understand the meaning of the Greek term.

John goes on to say, "Who bare record of the word of God, and of" that the purpose of God, and "the testimony of Jesus Christ" to that purpose, "and of all things that he saw." So John's going to give us his visions.

Now then he adds, finally, a beatitude. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy," you can see from this that in those days reading was not something that everybody could do. But there was a reader in the church, singular "Blessed is he that readeth," and the others listen to him. In fact, when Paul told Timothy to give attention to reading he may have been referring to this kind of thing. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." So it's not simply enough my friends to hear the words of the prophecy, one must also keep them, obey them. Fundamentally, this is a book designed to influence our activity, our lives, not simply our minds, not simply that we might have some insight into the future. But all prophecy was ultimately morally directed. In fact, that's the suggestion of keep, hear it and keep it. And then he adds, "the time is at hand." Imminent, like a book balanced on the top of a door waiting

for someone to come through to knock it off. So in our society we are living in imminent times, the imminence of the completion of the revelation of God.

Why is it that men fail to read the Book of Revelation? I'm not going to embarrass you. I would surely like for you to answer me honestly and for me to ask you this question. How many of you have read the Book of Revelation through in the past year? That would tell a great deal about us, but it'll also tell you something about me too. John says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." Someone called me yesterday and asked me what I was going to be preaching on today and I said, "Well, the Book of Revelation." And he said, "Oh, that's the book that promises a blessing." It is. That's exactly what it is. Why is it that we don't read it? Satanic prevention perhaps that he does not wish us to see his end told forth so clearly in this book, that he does not want us to see God's glory as expressed in this book, that he wants us to remain blind to our opportunity for salvation and growth in the knowledge of God's word.

About twenty-five years ago I was driving along in the car and KIXL over the radio used to have about two minutes or less when they would give some little statement and then they would follow it with, "Think it over." And this was one that I thought enough to copy it down. "The world has forgotten in its preoccupation with the left and the right that there is an above and below. Think it over." Monday, August 17, 1964 at 4:05 P.M., in case you're interested in the documentation, that's when it was given.

Well, here is a book that promises a blessing, "Blessed is he that readeth." May God help us to do that. Henry Alford, a church of England dean and a great commentator on the Bible in the 19th century said once in the church of England in his day, this book, the Book of Revelation was rarely ever read in the church readings. In their literature, the Book of Revelation was practically omitted from the reading of the church. Dean Alford went on to say that, "not one word from the letters to the seven churches is found in the public liturgy of the church of England." and he has, "Surely, it's

high time that such an omission should be supplied." Well, of course, we hope that that's true but it should be supplied in our lives, too. One of the Evangelists of the 19th century and early 20th century L.W. Munhall said, "I have read the Book of Revelation every six weeks in my life as a Christian because I did not want to miss that blessing." That's a worthy goal and aim.

If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we remind you that the center of human history is the cross of Calvary where he purchased the people of God by the shedding of his blood. And if by God's grace your heart desires deliverance in the forgiveness of sins that is offered to you through out Lord Jesus Christ. Come to him. Believe in him. Trust in him. Bow your head before him. Acknowledge the fact that you need redemption, that you are a sinner and give him thanks for Jesus Christ who has made it possible for you to have life. Give yourself to him and receive the gift, the gift, the free gift apart from works of eternal life. May God help you to do that. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to thee for the provisions that thouest made for us. We confess our sins of neglecting the reading of the word of God and neglecting the reading of this book. Lord, as we study it together by they grace, let us read, and let us ponder, and let us be open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us, to our minds, and to our Christian lives. May we be fruitful servants in these days for Jesus sake. Amen.