

Hearers and Doers

Text: Revelation 1.3

Theme: God's children live a life of remarkable change

Introduction – (sing a few bars of Beethoven's 5th, Star Wars, Jaws)

- you know those few bars of well-known songs
- the last, from Jaws, 1975, still evokes feelings of dread
- but what if you saw part of that film without the music?
- it's just a fin in the water, far less dreadful

In any of these songs, themes get repeated throughout the song

- even though the next portion of the song changes, theme still there
- Revelation is like this
- main melody: song of Revelation is...
- a Sovereign God's glorious justice and steadfast mercy strengthens His children to live lives of worship and patient endurance by faith in Jesus Christ
- but sub-themes occur throughout the book as well
- at times, they almost seem dominant, but main melody is still there
- over next several Sundays, going to listen to those sub-themes
- then, when we begin walking through the texts, from 1.1–22.21, we'll hear them
- as we hear them, we'll recognize them quickly
- and they will keep helping to sing the song of Revelation

This morning's harmony begins to be heard right away

- it helps set the strength of the melody out for us
- when you hear it scattered through this letter, you'll know it for what it is
- it is the sound of God's children living a life of remarkable change
- this change begins with life in Christ Jesus; this is the foundation of this book
- then it carries us each through the rest of our days

So, let's hear to tune of...

I. Promised Blessing

- how are God's children to respond to the cosmic conflict they see going on around them?
- how are they to live in the battle in which they are engaged?
- we're told right at the outset: we must hear and heed the Word delivered to us
- the underlying foundation for *how* we are to live comes from *who* we are in Christ Jesus
- and what we hear in this harmony line, right from the opening bars of this song is this:
- those who hear and heed the revealed message of Jesus Christ will be blessed

1. Seven blessings

- the number seven is special to Revelation
- in biblical numerology, seven is the number of completion, of fullness
- so, when we see seven things or something repeated seven times, sit up & pay attention
- here we have it in seven blessings scattered throughout Revelation
- and these seven blessings point us to the grand blessing to come at the consummation
- here are the seven blessing passages:

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

(Revelation 1:3 ESV)

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

(Revelation 14:13 ESV)

("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!")

(Revelation 16:15 ESV)

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 the true words of God."

(Revelation 19:9 ESV)

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

(Revelation 20:6 ESV)

"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

(Revelation 22:7 ESV)

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

(Revelation 22:14 ESV)

- no accident or random chance that these lend importance to this letter to the churches
- because there are seven, they point to the full and complete blessing God gives
- God's favor will not be partial to His children; it will overflow and satisfy
- this favor is more than just being happy, which is usually circumstantial
- it is the well-being that comes as a child of God
- it is the flourishing that derives from living for and in Christ Jesus
- let's consider each one briefly so when we come to them later, we'll easily recognize them

2. Blessing #1—Revelation 1.3

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

(Revelation 1:3 ESV)

- if you take this word of God about His Son, you'll flourish—be blessed
- but pay careful attention here: it is not just hearing it read out loud: it is obeying it as well
- hearing must lead to doing
- warned of this in James 1:22–25

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

(James 1:22–25 ESV)

3. Blessing #2—Revelation 14.13

- it takes a bit before we see the next blessing promised
- context: believers are warned of the unending torment that comes to those who side with the beast
- God calls Christians to endurance in 14.12, then gives the blessing promised in v. 13
And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

(Revelation 14:13 ESV)

- granted, this seems to go against our natural bent
- dying hardly seems like flourishing or getting blessed
- still, God affirms this blessing upon those who die rather than cave to the evils of sin
- and is it not a blessing, perhaps in disguise to our humanity, to die in the Lord?

4. Blessing #3—Revelation 16.15

- here, the bowl judgments are being revealed; these come at the end of history
- in the midst of this, we hear:
("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!")

(Revelation 16:15 ESV)

- what a blessing! To be reminded that Jesus is, indeed, coming again
- just when it may seem darkest, the light shines brightly upon God's children

5. Blessings #4–7

- these final four are clustered closely near the final consummation of all things
- there is almost a sense of urgency to what is happening and what is coming
- in Revelation 19, the judgment that comes upon Babylon occurs
- Jesus' revelation here includes these words:
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 the true words of God."

(Revelation 19:9 ESV)

- we who are saints will rejoice not only in God's judgments, but in His reward to us
- this will be the best happiness, well-being and flourishing we could ever imagine
- then, in the text regarding the millennium we hear:
Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

(Revelation 20:6 ESV)

- we'll spend time on this when we arrive there
- this first resurrection represents the life of the age to come
- and those of us who know this resurrection will never know or experience the second death
- this is the final blow to all sinners and the wicked in the lake of fire
- blessing #6 is closely linked to the very first blessing of Revelation 1.3
"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

(Revelation 22:7 ESV)

- Jesus is coming soon—patiently endure to the end & you will know the greatest blessings of all

- then, finally, in 22.14 we read:
Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.
(Revelation 22:14 ESV)
- I barely need say anything here, do I?
- this is part of our final reward, the ultimate blessing of all blessings: right to tree of life
- we'll enter the celestial city, live in God's glorious presence, have Jesus with us always
- and this is the beautiful harmony of these seven blessings
- they all point us toward that final blessing of "God with us" forever and ever

Connected to this musical theme comes the next...

II. To the One who Conquers

- blessings come to those who heard AND obey
- if you don't obey God's word, then you haven't genuinely heard God's message
- a complimentary way of seeing this in Revelation now comes seven times
- "to the one who conquers" — those getting the true blessing are overcomers
- time won't permit us to explore these this morning, but we'll be getting to them soon
- each of the exhortations toward this occur, one each, to the seven churches in ch. 2–3

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

(Revelation 2:7 ESV)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

(Revelation 2:11 ESV)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

(Revelation 2:17 ESV)

"The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

(Revelation 2:26, 29 ESV)

"The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(Revelation 3:5, 6 ESV)

"The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(Revelation 3:12, 13 ESV)

"The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(Revelation 3:21, 22 ESV)

- what these words tell us who trust Jesus is this:
- the call to listen sits right next to the admonition to overcome
- joyful hearing means that we listen to the words of the Spirit of God
- in order to emerge victorious, we must conquer & overcome

- conquer what? Sin in our life as well as sin in the church
- overcome what? The pull to be of this world, not in Christ
- the good news is we don't do this in our own strength
And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

(Revelation 12:11 ESV)

- and even better, comes the promised blessing as we do conquer & overcome
The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.
- through John, God impresses upon us heavily the need to conquer
- we must not close our ears to the truth from God, from the risen Christ, from the Holy Spirit
- when you're tempted to compromise, tempted to give up, hear these words
- then know this will indeed happen because of Christ in you

(Revelation 21:7 ESV)

*Just as conquering builds upon hearing, so does the third connected harmony here...***III. Suffering & Perseverance**

- it doesn't take much reading to know John is addressing churches & their believers who suffer
- these are perilous times: then and now
- hear the prayers of those *"who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne."* (Revelation 6:9 ESV)
- these cry out "How long?"
- they live in great tribulation; so will we
- Revelation isn't just describing events from the past
- nor is it only to be relegated to those in some future apart from us
- all believers are addressed here: then, now—you and me—and those to come
Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

(2 Timothy 3:12 ESV)

- so what are we to do when suffering like this comes upon us?
- we must patiently endure—persevere, keep on, not give up
- believers are not perfect; at times, we stray, yes; but ultimately we are to be known as obey-ers
- we give ourselves to God and to Jesus Christ wholeheartedly
- ch 13 deals with this quite clearly
- when the beast comes hard after Christians & many are slain, what are we to do?

*If anyone has an ear, let him hear:**If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*

(Revelation 13:9–10 ESV)

- more could be said about suffering and enduring, and it will get said
- but let's bring this harmonic theme to a close

Conclusion – Ultimate Blessing Yet to Come

- but before that can ever become a reality for you & me, we must see the foundation
- Revelation teaches that the basis of salvation, both now & for eternity, is the redeeming work of Christ on the cross
- but the Apostle John also emphasizes the moral change, the life change each believer has
- perfection is not the goal here on earth; faith, enduring obedience is
- each person who comes to trust Jesus as their Lord & Savior is given a new direction
- there is a new orientation: from things here on earth to things in heaven
- all this comes from becoming a new creation in Jesus Christ

- those who are the Lord's will be blessed
- you will be blessed as they conquer and overcome
- you will persevere in faith until the end
- your names will be in the book of life...not because of any good work you do
- but because your works testify that God is on throne & the Lamb who was slain is your Lord
- you saints here this morning: hear & heed, listen & obey
- you are blessed and will be even more greatly blessed
- conquer and overcome
- patiently endure suffering until our Lord takes us to our final reward