

Study 47: Revelation 22:8-13

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me.

- John told on himself. He was so moved by the experience he saw that he fell down to worship the angel who showed it to him. He made a mistake and the angel corrected him. Imagine that: in the midst of a heavenly revelation, John made a mistake and God still used him. What's more, John felt secure enough to share his mistake (the second time this happened) for everyone to see!
- Have you ever made a mistake? I know you have. Do you celebrate your mistakes, or hide them? John certainly exposed his for all to see. I have been thinking of launching a "Celebrate a Failure Day" the world over. This would urge people everywhere to be less uptight about their failures and to celebrate the goodness of God in the midst of our human weakness and foolishness! When we face our failures, we can learn the lessons that they came to impart. When we hide them or from them, we have too many shadows and dark places to be truly effective for God.
- The revelation was so overwhelming to John that he fell down to worship, perhaps not knowing what else to do. An encounter with heaven doesn't come to fill our minds with knowledge, but to lead us to worship the God of the encounter!
- He fell at the feet of the angel. Does this mean that angels have feet? Angels are not the chubby little cherubs pictured in so many artist's renditions. They are powerful, awesome beings. Even the spiritual man John fell down to worship this angel because the angel and the experience were so physically overwhelming.
- As Revelation comes to an end, it is almost like John is putting his personal signature to this revelation. I have been to the island of Patmos on two occasions. Tradition has it that John received this Revelation in a cave over a period of days, which began on the Lord's Day. You can actually visit the cave, where there is an indentation in the cave wall where John supposedly propped his arm at the elbow while dictating the vision to an assistant. If Revelation's John is the apostle John, then he would have indeed been an old man when he received this.
- We are created to hear and see the things of God. I think of a verse in Proverbs that states:

Ears that hear and eyes that see-- the LORD has made them both (Proverbs 20:12).

- The Lord wants us to see and hear things from His perspective, but that takes some work on our part. We cannot control what we see; God determines that. But we can train ourselves to recognize that it is God who is speaking.

But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:14).

- So while discerning good and evil can be a special gift, it is within the grasp of **every** spiritual person to develop discernment of spiritual things:

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ (Philippians 1:9-10).

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).

- Are you happy with your level of spiritual discernment? Do you chase every new whim of what some say is the Spirit? Or have you learned to wait on the Lord and to use the Spirit to help you discern spiritual things?
- If you are discerning, are you now a bit cynical and critical? Do you not trust anything new that is beyond your ability to initially recognize God moving in a new way? There is a balance in being mature and having wisdom to judge each situation on its own merits. I want to be mature, but I also want to be like a little child in the Kingdom, too. Help me, Lord, to have this balance!

9 But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

- What does it mean to keep the words of this book? It means to carry them out, not just to give them mental assent.

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-- he will be blessed in what he does (James 1:23-25)

- This is such a silly, basic analogy. Who could look in the mirror and then forget what he or she looks like? But that is what you and I do when we read and don't keep the words of this book, the word of God. We are not just to know, but to know and do.

And that requires work and constant decisions to do what God commands, trusting in His help to fulfill our commitments.

- The Bible uses the phrase “make every effort” on eight separate occasions. Let’s look at these. Study them and then decide if you are indeed making every effort to keep the words of this book:

“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to” (Luke 13:24).

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:19).

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:11).

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-8).

And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things (2 Peter 1:15).

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him (2 Peter 3:14).

10 Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

- John was warned not to keep the words of this prophecy to himself. He wrote them down and sent them out. John was to have an urgency surrounding what he had received. I think the same is true for today. Are you writing down and publishing or broadcasting what the Lord is doing and saying? Why not?
- I am not equating what you are seeing today with what John saw. John saw and wrote the inspired word of God, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t honor what you

are seeing and hearing by writing and sending. That is why I developed a website: to write and send what God was showing me. If you haven't seen my website, go to www.purposequest.com. Then develop your own if you haven't already.

- The angel said that the time was near. I don't think "near" meant 2,000 years later for the churches that have read this prophecy down through history. As we have seen time and again in this study, the key to understanding Revelation is to understand what it meant to the early churches that first received it. They were being encouraged that nothing and no one could resist God and His kingdom for very long.
- The time of the Lord is "near" for you. Your death or your salvation from a difficult situation could be very close. You don't really know. We always say, "Time goes so fast!" That is because the Lord is near!

11 Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

- The angel urged everyone to continue and excel in their state of holiness or unholiness. Since the end is "near" for all of us, we should be actively and aggressively furthering what is important to the kingdom of God. For the sinner, they should pursue what is important to them. For the saint, they should pursue what is important to God.
- Are you aggressively pursuing your holiness and its practical expression to the world around you? If you are convinced that the Lord is near, has that realization impacted your finances, relationships and missions work?

So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).

But just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us-- see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more (1Thessalonians 4:1).

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more (1Thessalonians 4:9-10).

- By God's grace, I want to do more and be more godly than ever before. What about you? If that's true, what plan do you have to do that? Stop now and spend two

minutes writing down some thoughts about how you could do more and develop more deeply in the power of the Spirit.

12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

- Soon doesn't mean in 2,000 years! Soon means the time is at hand. Now this is Jesus talking, perhaps through the mouth of the messenger angel. After all, this isn't the message of the angel. It is the message of Jesus! And it is for the here and now!
- Either Jesus will intervene soon or you will die soon. Either way, you win because of what Jesus has done in your life. And you will receive your reward from Jesus, as everyone will. So be encouraged. God is watching your situation. If it is a difficult one and doesn't seem to be changing, be encouraged. God is in control and it will change soon!

13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

- This is the third time that Jesus referred to Himself as the Alpha and Omega. Why does Jesus say this three times? Did He think we would forget? Did He forget He said it? Was Jesus into repeating things to hear His own words?
- Of course, the answer is "no" to all three silly questions. The answer is that this is the main message of the book. It's all about Jesus! Worship Him! Listen to Him! Exalt Him! He is the ruler of the universe. He is the start and finish of all good works in our lives and around our lives. His life, death and resurrection are the central themes of history. Everything else is irrelevant in the end.
- What Jesus starts He finishes. What He initiates, He culminates. That is certainly the good news of the Bible and the final message that we are left with as we read this last book.