

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, August 7, 2022

***“[he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:] Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he 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 at hand.”***  
**(Revelation 1:2-3)**

The bracketed language is to say in context that the contents of this book of Revelation was signified to the servant of God, John the Beloved, by the angel of God. That specific language out of Revelation 1:1 was previously vetted in a sermon I delivered many months ago. Today, I want to move to the second and third verses of this opening portion of the Revelation ... or the Apocalypse. It is at first very irritating, and then quite comforting, when I hear the rebels of this generation use terms like “apocalyptic” or “post-apocalyptic” in their dramatization of some earth judgment God has executed ... or to make merchandise of horrors in movies and such. You look up the word apocalypse in this generation, and you get stuff like “*any universal or widespread destruction or disaster*”. It’s irritating, because the actual word “*apocalypse*”, from the Greek dictionary, means “*disclosure – appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation*”. Nothing about destruction or disaster. But then it’s comforting because God, in providence, has worked into the psyche of this world’s population that when Christ is revealed, there’s going to be some very real and horrifying consequences for their endless rebellions. They can pretend that “***the promise of his coming***” (2 Peter 3:4) is a myth, but they very well know better. So much so, that they changed the definition of this gentle and beautiful word about Christ’s second advent, so it expresses the horrors they feel about that coming time.

Today, we’re going to tease out what is intended by these three descriptors of this “servant John” who received this signification from the angel. Then we’re going to give a good run at verse three, which declares the unique nature of those who will get to enjoy the fruits of John’s work in declaring what he saw. Considering that these verses are what introduce the greatest subject of all the providence from Adam to the conclusion of this time of “the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19), we should be particularly attentive to those foundational lessons to be seized in these elliptical (i.e., “words expressed with extreme or excessive economy”) opening passages.

\*\*\*\*\*

Verse two says that this servant John “***bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw***”. For most of my mature years, I’ve been impressed with the notion that this second verse, with its three clauses, was a statement of the obvious in the context of the book of Revelation. That is, that after the angel signified things to the writer, he went forth and wrote the record of the words he heard, presented the express testimony he received by the actors that he witnessed, and described the things that he was given to see in this vision on Patmos. Then, that record was shared throughout the early churches and was granted its place in the inspired canon that makes up our “***more sure word of prophecy***” (2 Peter 1:19). It makes sense, of course. It would be logical that after this human was given the content of the prophecy, he would then be energized to articulate it – much like the dozens of prophets that went before in the drafting of the inspired Word.

I now believe my understanding was incomplete at best. There is much more to be learned from these words. The words serve as a baseline of credentialing for the writer of this uniquely relevant book. He plainly calls himself “***John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ***” (Revelation 1:9). And the behaviors he exhibits at times in the book demonstrates that he is just that: a man who experiences all the same fear and quaking at the presence of God and His Word as any who

have been blessed with any proper understanding of God's nature and attributes. So I'm not suggesting that he's anything more than a servant, as we all are. But this second verse is establishing the unique relationship that this author has to this business. Consider these words from Seiss:

*"The text describes him as that 'John, who attested the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.' And who is it that the Churches from the beginning have known as the attestor of the Logos, or Word of God, and of the testimony which Christ gave, but John the Apostle the beloved disciple? Turn to the Gospel by John, and see whether it be not wholly taken up with exactly these things. The first chapter gives the only full account which the Scriptures contain respecting the pre-existence of the Logos, or Word, in the Godhead, and the sameness of that Word with him who was born of Mary, tabernacled in the flesh, and was called Jesus of Nazareth. Was not this bearing 'record of the Word of God?' Do we not find another summary of the same testimony in the first chapter of his first epistle? What else does he mean by the account which he gives of his testimony, when he says, '**That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, declare we unto you?**' [1 John 1:1] Are not both his first and second epistles but arguments, against various evil spirits which were gone abroad, that Jesus is the Word of God, the only Christ, the Son of God, and that all who deny this are liars and Antichrist? And in reference to the great body of his Gospel, does he not himself say, '**These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name?**' [John 20:31] Does not all this make out for John a particular distinction as the apostle 'who attested the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ?'"*

This is a point that I think needs to have some settling in our hearts and souls – particularly when we undertake to unpack the rapid-fire events and visions and disruptions and conclusions that are uniquely brought forth in the book of Revelation. Jesus the Christ is both man and God. When Ben began his series of sermons from Christ's "Farewell Discourse" (July 5, 2020), he said something that caught my attention as uniquely true about this author: "It appears to me that the book of John focuses more on the divinity of Christ, where the other three Gospels focus more on the humanity of Christ. No doubt, John speaks to the humanity of Christ and the Synoptics speak to the divinity of Christ, but I believe that John has a greater focus on the divine side." Yes. John does seem, in his writings, to have a particular issue with anyone who would call into question the divinity of Christ. It is John, in his later epistle, that says quite frankly and boldly that "**He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son**" (1 John 2:22), that is, that they are both one. They are Father and Son, equal in the godhead. This passage is emphasizing that "**Jesus is the Christ**", not an interloper or poser or somehow less than God and therefore unable to fulfill the office He undertook. If you deny that eternal truth, by definition you are anti-Christ; or one who denies that the very Redeemer has plenary power to address the matter of payment for the sins of those who were given Him in the Covenant of Grace.

John says these words, demonstrating how clearly he understands the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and when the eyes of his fleshly mind see (in a Revelation vision) that the power of redemption is under question, look at what we see him write?

***"And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon."* (Revelation 5:3-4)**

One might be inclined to be a little perplexed by these words, and with John the Beloved having so much distress in seeming to find that nothing -- no power or entity of any origin -- can open the Book of Redemption so that it can be known who are "**they which are written in the Lamb's book of life**" (Revelation 21:27). Here is human who has been given such a grasp on the divinity of the Christ -- Jesus of Nazareth -- that he was appointed the

vessel through which the world would receive the fullest display of the truth of Christ's second advent and the events bringing forth that wondrous work in transition to Christ's earthly kingdom. Yet when the scene depicting the point of resolution on the most critical question that underpins our hope of eternity – the official book listing those who were ***“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2)*** – this human reaches a point of despair. Where is the Christ? What will become of this doomed and irretrievably lost race if in fact it is untrue when, as the patriarch Job articulates it: ***“Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom” (Job 33:24)***? If there is no effectual ransom, there is no hope of redemption.

The Greek word in the text of Revelation 5, that is translated ***“no man”***, does not intend any distinction between beings – that is, it does not mean literally there was no human being. Some clever wordsmith might slip the analytical noose if that were the specific meaning. They might make some clever argument that Christ is essentially God, and therefore not properly known to be a man, so nothing for John to be concerned with. They would be grotesquely wrong, of course, but that seldom stops deceivers. The Greek word here is ***“oudeis”*** (***“oo-dice”***), which is literally a combination of two Greek words that include the idea of “not even” or “neither” ... combined with the idea of “one”. So together it says “not even one” – without the specific reference to what type of being that “one” would be. Not one single entity or being was able to step up to the plate and take the Book of Redemption ... the Lamb's Book of Life ... out of the hand of God and open it up to reveal who is named there. The document that shows who will ***“inherit the kingdom of God”*** cannot be opened so the world – and in particular the recipients of that blessing – can know the outcome of this great mystery of God. That makes one think of Paul's words when he was explaining the critical importance of the resurrection of the body from the grave ... into a permanent glorified state:

***“¶ Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)***

Indeed we would be most miserable ... and that's very distressing. John could see that point with the greatest clarity; if at the time when that matter was being resolved in front of all the relevant occupants of heaven and earth, there was no Christ! No Redeemer! No ransom! So he wept. Much! Of course, the matter was resolved in the vision. The delay ... the distress ... the cause for John's weeping, was resolved:

***“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. ¶ And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.” (Revelation 5:5-7)***

It is interesting to see how the description given to this blessed Christ made reference to His having taken our flesh to effectuate the covenanted promises; ***“the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David”***. No need to turn further aside to this passage, because we are discussing the author of the book of Revelation, and there is more to consider.

***“This is the disciple [i.e., John] which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:24)***

This passage from John's first epistle both demonstrates how appropriate it is to say that John has borne "**record ... of the testimony of Jesus Christ**", and raises an interesting thing about the character of this author. In the book of John, the word "**John**" is used 19 times ... but is not once used to identify himself. All these times, he references John the Baptist and the work appointed to that servant in proclaiming the coming of the Son of Man. Instead, he uses descriptors of himself that give only those attributes that are relevant to his work in service to God. See here, he says "**this is the disciple**". A few verses previous, he identifies himself as "**the disciple whom Jesus loved**" (John 21:20), and then "**that disciple**" (John 21:23). There are some identifiers that bring humbling thoughts to our hearts. Disciple. Witness. Loved of God. That's enough. Here are some words that do better in articulating the beauty of these things.

Trapp: *"Our evangelist delights not in any of these swelling titles [e.g., Master, Doctor, Father. He doth not so much as name himself in all this work of his, takes no other style than the beloved disciple, makes no more of himself than a witness to the truth, a recorder of what he had heard and seen. The proud person speaks "great swelling words of vanity," 2Pe 2:18; he loves uppermost rooms, and to be called Rabbi, Rabbi, to be cried up and pointed at for a nonesuch ... Ambition, like the crocodile, groweth while it liveth; like the ivy, which rising at the feet, will overtop the highest wall; or, like the marigold (a flower of no good smell), which opens and shuts with the sun. Humility, on the contrary, is like the lily, saith Bernard, or violet which grows low to the ground, hangs the head downward, and hides itself with its own leaves."*

Spurgeon: *"It is a name in which John hides himself. He is very weary of mentioning John. He speaks of 'another disciple,' and 'that other disciple,' and then of 'that disciple whom Jesus loved.' These are the names by which he would travel through his own gospel 'incognito.' We find him out, however, for the disguise is too thin, but still he intends to conceal himself behind his Saviour; he wears his Master's love as a veil, though it turns out to be a veil of light. He might have called himself if he had chosen, 'that disciple who beheld visions of God,' but he prefers to speak of love rather than of prophecy. In the early church we find writings concerning him, in which he is named, 'that disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom,' and this he mentions in our text. He might have been called "that disciple who wrote one of the gospels," or "that disciple who knew more about the very heart of Christ than any other"; but he gives the preference to love. He is not that disciple who did anything, but who received love from Jesus; and he is not that disciple who loved Jesus, but 'whom Jesus loved.' John is the man in the silver mask; but we know the man and his writings, and we hear him say, 'We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.'"*

We would do well to see ourselves only through the lens the scripture provides. We have all made a profession of faith that, as the lyricist Watts says, *"then am I dead to all the globe, and all the globe is dead to me"*. We have no interest in titles ... indeed we have no interest in anything of this earth except that we will serve our God here. What things we eat, drink, do, say, "enjoy" are meaningless to our hearts. We have no passionate desire to make any more of any one of those matters than is necessary for our journey in this wilderness. The graceless who are among the disciples in every generation, will say like those graceless Jews fresh from the captivity of Egypt:

***"We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:"*** (Numbers 11:5)

Beware, my friends, any unnecessary attachment to the pleasures of this life. They will turn from being second thoughts to being dominant in your lives, and before you know you've slipped, they will be ***"the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things [that] choke the word"*** (Mark 4:19) and make you unfruitful to the work unto which the disciples of Christ are appointed. There is a sobriety required

in the role of the faithful servant, and even more so when we see such clear evidences that ***“the end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7)***. I believe our fellow laborer, John the Beloved, saw the need to know and to love and to embrace the contentment of his blessed lot and was thereby prepared to ***“prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Revelation 10:11)*** and serve as the scribe to the book of Revelation. He has indeed borne record of Christ’s divinity as the Word of God, he’s borne record of that Christ’s testimony while He was in the earth in His first advent, and he has borne record of all the things that he saw of Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. So in this sense, it is a true saying that is contained in the second verse of the book of Revelation chapter one.

One small thing more, I believe, begs attention before I leave off this second verse. It is to consider one other spiritual component of understanding this language ***“testimony of Jesus Christ”***. In the literal sense, we understand that John was witness to, and therefore bore record of, Christ’s words during his first advent. But four other times in the book of Revelation, we find this same expression – which tends to suggest that there might be some bit more to grasp about that turn of expression. John says he was imprisoned on Patmos because of it (Revelation 1:9), the remnant of the seed of the woman in the twelfth chapter are uniquely targeted by Satan for having it (Revelation 12:17), and then this interesting exchange in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter:

***“And I fell at his [i.e., the angel’s] feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10)***

This angel has just declared the execution of sentence upon the great whore Babylon, and directed John to write of the blessings of those who are to be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. When John shows an intention to worship him, the angel intercepts that error with these powerful words – including that ***“the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*** What does that mean? Does this mean to reference the literal words of Jesus Christ – otherwise called His testimony about this or that thing? Does this mean to reference words *regarding* Jesus Christ ... so that the word “of” means “about”? Yes. Both. And how then would those things that are either spoken by Jesus Christ or spoken about Jesus Christ be called ***“the spirit of prophecy”***? The context of these words from the angel was in explaining to John why he need not give worship to him, because they are on equal footing with regard to their mutual duty to speak of Jesus Christ, including those words that Christ Himself spoke while in the flesh. How is doing so ***“the spirit of prophecy”***? More importantly, what does it have to do with our analysis of Revelation 1:2?

As we frequently find, it all goes back to the beginning. Before the world began, the Trinity resolved a matter. To the Trinity, it is a fixed truth that the human race would fall into sickness and death through the sin of Adam and the curse that followed. To the Trinity, it is a fixed truth that the majority of mankind would be eternally damned as a just and fair consequence to that sin of Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22). To the Trinity, it is a fixed truth that a remnant of the human race would be redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ during His first advent. To the Trinity, it is a fixed truth that Christ would come at the appointed hour and redeem that ***“purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14)***. To humankind, it is all prophecy. All of the prophets testified of these things, in various ways – whether expressly or by type or by metaphor. As time has marched on ... through nearly six thousand years of the human experiment ... some of the prophecies were fulfilled and then became history. But all of them were pointing forward to this final event. You simply cannot speak of Jesus Christ, with any precision or relevance, without necessarily speaking about that coming time when He will fulfill the Covenant of Grace – prophecy. The gospel is prophecy, because it will only be more than prophecy once its promises are realized, and no more prophecy is required. So, John’s words about Christ’s first advent – as well as his recording of the events of that Christ’s Revelation – are the very spirit of, or essence of, or expression of ... prophecy.

\*\*\*\*\*

***“¶ 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.” (Revelation 1:3)***

Turning our attention to the third verse of this majestic work of prophecy, I would like to examine it in three parts: the context, the blessing, and the appointed event about which we have this work prepared.

First, the fact that there is a specific reference to ***“this prophecy”*** and the ***“things which are written therein”***, I believe, means we cannot simply lump in all of the 65 books of the canon that precede this book of Revelation. That is to say, this is restrictive language and has application onto those who have relevant proximity to these words and are therefore capable of keeping to (or obeying) them. The dispensation of the patriarchs had requirements for those saints of God who dwelled in that time. The dispensation of the Mosaic law and Levitical priesthood had requirements for those saints of God who dwelled in that time. The dispensation of the New Testament Church has requirements for those saints of God who dwelled (and dwell) in that time. I submit to you loved ones here that only some of that applies to these words. The book of the Revelation is a prophecy. The things which are written in that prophecy are specifically related to the time of that prophecy’s fulfillment. Just as we would reject the notion that we are to follow the Bible’s instructions regarding how properly to serve God in the patriarchal and Mosaic periods, we should not be sloppy in examining what is required under this book of the Revelation. There is nothing inconsistent in this writing, vis-à-vis those other dispensations – in essence. There is still one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God (Ephesians 4:3-6), but there are unique events unfolding and there are duties associated with it. This passage declares that there are blessed souls who will read, hear, and obey those requirements at the appointed time.

So, for example, when we read of the promises of Christ’s coming with His angels and executing judgment on those who disobey (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), we would not expect that judgment during the New Testament dispensation, or that of the patriarchal period or the Mosaic period. We would only heed those blessed words that we should rest in that certain judgment when we are so very troubled and vexed by the wicked in this dispensation (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7). In fact, Paul expressly warned against the conclusion that it was yet time for these things to occur:

***“That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. ¶ Let no man deceive you by any means:” (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3)***

As I expect you all know, I could draw forth many passages that are forward-looking in this regard, and clearly are only prophetic in their bearing as Peter plainly articulates is built into Paul’s writings:

***“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things [i.e., in the future], be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” (2 Peter 3:14-17)***

So let us resolve that there is the plainest distinction in the Bible between our present dispensation of the New Testament Church, and that coming time when things will be transitioned, Christ will return, and the millennial reign of our Redeemer will be initiated. That period is the subject matter of the book of Revelation, and that period is referenced expressly in the blessings declared in this third opening verse.

This trio of engagements ... reading, hearing, obeying ... make up a familiar pattern of behavior that always is written in a manner that identifies and distinguishes the elect of God from the reprobate. This Greek word **“readeth”** means not simply to read the words – as any who pick up this writing in their native language has the ability to do so. The word is *“anaginosko”* (*“an-ag-in-ocē’-ko”*) and includes the notion of obtaining a certain knowledge of a matter through the reading of it: *“to distinguish between, to recognize, to know accurately, to acknowledge”*. Similarly, the Greek for **“hear”** is more than just the capacity or faculty of hearing. The word is *“akouo”* (*“ak-oo’-o”*) and brings with it the notion of paying close attention to what is being received in the ears because it's so important to them: *“to attend to, consider what is or has been said”*. Finally, the Greek for **“keep”** in this passage is *“tereo”* (*“tay-reh’-o”*) and intends the notion of guarding against any loss or alteration of a thing that has come to your understanding: *“to attend to carefully, take care of”*.

***“¶ And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”***  
**(Isaiah 6:9-10)**

Now we’re getting somewhere. Isaiah, in this beautiful prophecy of chapter six, is talking about the same essential message in the same essential context. Gill says, *“Make the heart of this people fat] gross and heavy, stupid and unteachable, hard and obdurate; ... and make their ears heavy] that they cannot hear the word, so as to understand it; they having stopped the ear, and plucked away the shoulder, ... and shut their eyes] they having wilfully shut their own eyes against all evidence of the Messiah, and the truth of his doctrines, they are given up to a judicial blindness; which still continues upon them....”* This is a good synopsis of the intent of Isaiah’s words, and aligns perfectly with the underlying language of our passage in Revelation.

There’s a distinguishing series of descriptors at play here. There’s a discriminatory engagement with the race of humanity. Not every living soul has an “equal chance” to lay hold of and be blessed by the words of the prophecy contained in the Revelation. There’s no philosophy of equity and inclusion here. It’s literally the opposite. Specifically with the passage out of Isaiah, the focus of the attention is on the Jewish nation. They will have a great falling away due to the selection of who will and who will not be able to see, hear, and understand the warnings thundering from his preaching. But there will be a great falling away with respect to the warnings of the Revelation – as well as the consequences – as Paul articulates for us when speaking with the church at Thessalonica.

***“¶ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ... And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*** (2 Thessalonians 2:1,11-12)

So, we should not miss in our Revelation 1:3 passage the point that the distinguishing factor to determine who will read, hear, and obey is that they are **“blessed”**, as in those who were called to grace **“before the world began”** (2 Timothy 1:9). Those who were (instead) judicially blinded will not read, hear, and keep those things that are written in this blessed book. They have absolutely no spiritual interest in them, and consequently every time they touch them in any manner whatever, they only twist and pervert the glories of the words and events. These prophetic warnings are for us, my friends. As an integral part of this glorious love note – called the Bible – the elect of God are the only who get to enjoy the beauties of it.

Finally, we should consider what can be gleaned from these last six words of the verse ... assigned their place eternally on the back side of the colon: ***“for the time is at hand”***.

***“[The people:] ¶ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? [the LORD:] Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”*** (Isaiah 51:9-16)

Let us set the context here, with this beautiful piece of eschatological preaching by our friend and fellow laborer Isaiah. He begins the oracle with ***“awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD”***. Trapp says: *“God had promised what his holy arm should do for his people, {Isa 51:5 } now they beg of him to use it, and bestir himself for their relief and rescue; and this they do, heartily wishing the coming of Christ”*. That’s our context ... the coming of Christ in a prophecy. More specifically, from this prophecy, we learn that the whole of creation was for the purpose of the eternal God to fully and finally say ***“unto Zion [whether the spiritual or natural elect of that seed], Thou are my people”***. All of creation was prepared so that those redeemed by Christ’s effectual blood will be declared, as He said unto the Father:

***“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.”*** (Isaiah 8:18)

And though it is quite wonderful to bask in the repeated prophecies of Isaiah about the coming day, I am focusing that passage today on the language that closes Revelation 1:3, ***“for the time is at hand”***. Several times today, and so very many times over the last several years, I have sought to drive home this point. When we toil every day with the drudgery of living, our focus leans down and frets over the minutiae of survival – ***“What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*** (Matthew 6:31). We’re told by Christ Himself that these are the things the unwashed reprobate seek after and tells us to ***“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”*** (Matthew 6:33) It’s a horrible trap to fall into. Where does our legitimate pursuit of temporal needs stop, and we turn to fretting and consuming our waking hours with ***“the weak and beggarly elements”*** (Galatians 4:9) of this miserable existence? Our lives are not made up of these things. We have to look forward. We have to look up! We have to consider that the literal days are counting down to the point when all of the generations of man that are appointed to this dispensation come to an end and we land on that moment to which every last second, minute, hour, day, week, month, year, decade, century, millennia has pointed. When ***“the time is at hand”***. This theme receives a great deal of attention in the Bible, but there is one passage that sweetly sounds the alarm:

***“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come,***

***and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” (Song 2:10-13)***

We're in the dark and the rain. We deal daily with the oppressors and the mockers and the scoffers who have blackened our skin and roughened our countenances with words and deeds. Their hope is that we will accept the proposition that the ***“promise of his coming” (2 Peter 3:4)*** is a fable, because we grow weary in our work and our love for our Savior waxes cold and inert. But soon ... VERY soon by any fair and attentive examination of accurate human history ... we will see in providence our Beloved telling us that ***“the time is at hand”*** and that we will begin the final days before we will be taken away with Him to our long home. Hold fast, sweet friends.

***“¶ I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ... But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2, 5)***

I love you all. Amen.