

02-08-16a Revelation

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study this evening to clear our minds and prepare our hearts. Set aside the burdens and distractions of the week. That's one of the reasons I really like having a study on Friday night.

It's very easy to just take everything from the week and tuck it away for Monday and enjoy spending time looking at the wonderful truths of the Word of God. Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is for us to gather with believers of like mind and refresh our souls in the springs of living water that are found in your Word. We thank you for the precious gift of salvation that came to us through the love and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that even now, as I speak, he is seated at your right hand, interceding on our behalf, representing us before your throne, and he will do so until the day that you tell him that it is time to return and bring us home to spend the remainder of eternity with him and with you. We thank you that in this interim time we have the opportunity to learn and to grow in an environment that will never exist again. We, although we live in a fallen world and we're subject to our fallen nature, you have found such a unique way of converting that curse into a blessing.

As we see your mercies renewed every morning, we see your faithfulness and your love and your patience with us expressed over and over again, and we exercise our faith, we develop our strength, and we seek to grow and mature in this hostile environment. We pray tonight as we spend time studying your Word that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding, will compensate for our weaknesses and our besetting sins, our distractibility and our tendency to lay aside what we learn and resume business as usual. Father, we pray that we will be transformed by the renewing of our minds and we'll be ever more closely conformed to the image and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray it in his name. Amen. We resume our study this evening in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 where we are looking at the last words that the Lord Jesus Christ communicated specifically to the church in the form of these seven letters.

We have essentially completed our study of the first of those churches, which is the church in Ephesus, and you'll remember, I hope you'll remember, I hope I remember, that in the letter to the Ephesians, the emphasis of the Lord Jesus Christ is on his presence among the lampstands, his holding of the seven stars in his hand, which represents his watch care and his immediate concern and involvement in the local church. And even as that church is commended for its faithfulness and its labor and its perseverance, its patience, doubly commended on the way in and on the way out in a wonderful chiasmatic fashion, we find that right in the center of that chiasm where the heartwood is in the tree, that heartwood being love, it has started to deteriorate and to decay. The outward wood is still there to the outward appearance to the naked eye.

It looks as though the tree is still strong and flourishing and producing fruit, but that first love that was to be and in the beginning was the impetus and the result of that motivating hope and that enduring faith that they possessed has somehow gotten lost in the shuffle. And the exhortation of the Lord Jesus Christ is, Remember from where you have fallen. Now a tree that's had its center rot away can look great until a good wind comes up and suddenly what looked solid and what looked enduring falls.

Well, the Ephesian church still looks like that great fruitful tree, but Jesus says you don't have to wait for a big wind. You have already fallen. Your heartwood has gone dry and lifeless.

Remember from where you have fallen and do the first works. Well, he just got through commending them for their works. They're still doing the works, but they're no longer the first works because the love that is the qualifying feature of having those works really count and be acceptable in God's sight has just gotten lost.

They've just gotten busy. It's so easy to do. We've covered that in detail.

We ended up by looking at the reward that Jesus promises the overcomer. We talked a little bit about the overcomer, the conqueror, the victor, the one who runs the race well and crosses the finish line. It says to the one who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

Paradesos is the garden. Of course, it's a widely held belief that all of these rewards that Jesus mentions in these seven letters are the inheritance and the future possession of all believers. In case you don't know or in case you talk to somebody later, you will find that a lot of people say, well, we're all going to be eating from that tree.

We're all going to walk in white and have a white stone and a new name and eat manna and sit with him on his throne. Everyone is an overcomer. You can go to the epistles of John.

This is a victory that overcomes the world, even our faith, and that's saving faith, and therefore all of us get this. Well, we're going to see, particularly as we have already seen in studying the Ephesian letter, what does it mean to have the right to the tree of life that is in the midst of the garden of God, to be able to reach out and pick fruit from it? I ran out of time, even though I ran onto a second tape last time, and I don't want to leave that without giving you at least the passages to look at. We don't have time to do a detailed study, but turn with me to Revelation 21.

This is where the future kingdom of the Father comes into John's view. He says in Revelation 21, Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth. You'll remember that when we looked at Ezekiel, back in chapter 46 and 47, it talked about a new heaven and a new earth.

But that was a Hebrew word, and we looked at the origin of that Hebrew word, and it means renewed. It means something that has been refurbished, repaired. This word in Greek is kainos.

It means new in kind, new in nature. This is something that did not exist before. And so there has been confusion.

People say it's like what they do with salvation and a lot of other things. They see it once, they think it means the same thing every place. The new heaven and new earth of Ezekiel are the millennial kingdom, and you can demonstrate that a hundred different ways.

There is still a sea, the river that flows out from under the temple and goes around through the Arabah. There's still a desert that flows into the sea and makes it fresh. The salt water of the Mediterranean is going to go fresh.

But there will still be salt marshes. Well, in the new heaven and new earth, look what it says. For the first time, the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

Also, there was no more sea. Now, either there's a big contradiction in the Bible, or we need to be sure we're clear on our terms. The new heaven and new earth of Ezekiel, it's all millennial.

Remember, Ezekiel, Old Testament prophet, talking to Israelites about their hope. He doesn't see the church. He doesn't see a lot of the mysteries that have been revealed, things into which angels have longed to look.

We see that. John sees that. And here's the kingdom of the Father that follows.

Just to rehearse your chronology again, at the end of the church age, we have the rapture. After the rapture, hard on the heels, you have the final seven years of the Old Testament age of Israel, the 70th week of Daniel that has not yet been fulfilled. Everyone who comes to faith in that age is an Old Testament saint, heirs of the Old Testament covenant promises.

They are not body of Christ. They are not bride of Christ. They do not have new and better things founded on a new and better covenant.

It's great to be saved, and it's not like there's some sort of inferior subspecies, but it's different. It was wonderful to be an Israelite, and it was wonderful to be a Levite. It doesn't mean if you weren't a Levite you were substandard, you just weren't a Levite.

Well, we are a kingdom of priests. We are in a unique way a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. We have many unique things because we are in Christ.

Remember what it says, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. None of the Old Testament saints were in Christ. Look through your Bible and find me a verse that says, Abraham, David, Daniel, Joseph, any of the Old Testament greats were in Christ.

They weren't because that didn't exist. So, church age ends. Rapture takes place.

Seventieth week of Daniel. Everybody saved, martyred, or what have you. They are Old Testament saints.

They will gain their inheritance. They will be numbered with. That's why if you go on through Revelation, you get to 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe, and the tribes of Israel are listed.

How can that be? Well, I'll tell you one way that can be. Obviously, God can just say, guess what? Oh, man of Botswana that just came to faith, you are now a member of the tribe of Judah. You are now a member of the tribe of Reuben.

He can say any of them except you are now a member of the tribe of Dan because there will be no tribe of Dan in the 70th week. Dan has been nipped in the bud because of their gross problems in the Old Testament. But, there is also science.

I've got sort of a back burner interest in genealogy and whatnot. A lot of people have given me family things. As you probably know, I have this whole website up and different cousins from around the state of Texas mostly correspond with me.

Well, I try to put something on that website from time to time to kind of keep it alive and keep people from getting mad at me for not doing anything. So, I was digging around the web and I thought, well, I'll look and just see what's going on in the world of Hulls. And I put in a thing and I found a website by some distant relative of mine named Jim Hull.

Well, Jim also got into genealogy. Some people, it just becomes a passion. They really go for it.

And he ran into one of the same problems that I have which is at a certain point as you're tracing your ancestry back, you come to kind of a weak link. You're not real sure if this guy was this previous guy's son or not. Well, Jim thought, you know, there's got to be a way around this and he went and dug around and now there is DNA testing.

And what Jim has done in a nutshell is go all the way back to the first guy, the family of Hulls in England and Reverend Joseph Hull that came over and all these other, there's two or three main Hull branches. And essentially through DNA testing, you can figure out which of those branches you belong to because it's a Y chromosome passed from father to son, father to son. So if you are a male with the Hull surname, and a lot of other families have done this, you can check and see if your name is up there, anybody that cares.

But you can get this DNA test and for \$99, they'll tell you you're a member of the such and such branch of your family. Well, if it matters, you can do this. Well, what interested me about this is I, these people are all dead dust.

I'll ask them when we get to glory. Most of them were believers. I'll say, hey, who was your son? But think about the 70th week when you've got a lot of people, and if they're largely Jewish,

largely Israelite, and they say, well, I have no earthly idea.

It's been 2,000 years since anybody in my family knew what tribe we were from. All they've got to do is a Y chromosome test, and they can tell them what tribe they're from. Science can do it.

God doesn't even have to come down and strike them with lightning. There are other chromosome tests that can be done, even if you have maternal links. It's just a more complicated test.

But they've got 25 genomes and this, that, and the other. Anyway, it's fascinating to me because when it says 12,000 from each tribe, 544,000, they are assigned to the nation of Israel because they're in the age of Israel. Old Testament promises, Old Testament economy.

So seven years go by, 3 1/2 fat years and 3 1/2 lean years. The last half is technically the tribulation, the last 3 1/2 years followed. At the end of that you have the Battle of Armageddon.

You have the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to distinguish is this a rapture passage or a second coming passage, well, if you're meeting him in the air, that's the rapture because Jesus is going to make a flyby for the rapture. He's going to come in the air.

We meet him in the air, so shall we ever be with the Lord. Does not touch down, does not land on earth. Second coming, he does.

Where is he going to touch down? He's going to plant his feet on the Mount of Olives. This is pertinent to our study because science, again, has analyzed the geology and the topography of Mount Zion and the Kidron Valley and the Olivet Mountain. There is a huge geological fault that runs east-west under the Mount of Olives up through the Kidron Valley and up through the eastern part of Jerusalem.

When the Lord Jesus Christ comes and plants his feet on the Mount of Olives, it is going to split along that fault. This is going to do a couple of things. One, it is going to provide a way of escape for the armies of Israel which have been pinned by this whole conflagration of armies, the King of the North and all these other kings that come down.

They are going to provide a way of escape. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to slay these foes with the breath of his mouth and blood will run as high as the horse's bridles, etc. But secondly, remember what we said from Ezekiel? What do we know about the river that flows out from under the temple? It flows out through the eastern gate.

Ezekiel says, I went out a thousand cubits and it was as deep as my ankles. I went out another thousand and it was as deep as my knees. Remember that? It gets deeper and deeper until pretty soon it is something no man can wade across.

It goes on down through the Arabah and curves around. Instead of water coming in from the

Atlantic and filling the Med through the Straits of Gibraltar, water is going to come out from under the temple and flow through that river along that fault and go down into the Arabah and come out somewhere in the vicinity of the Nile Delta, I would guess, and is going to freshen the Mediterranean Sea. Fresh water is going to run out of that sea into the rest of the Earth's oceans.

So, chronologically, you have the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom there. There is a tree, Ezekiel says, that will grow along the banks of that river. It is going to bear fruit and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

That is a wonderful thing. That is a river of life, if you will, and a tree of life, if you will, but it is a foreshadowing of the eternal tree of life and the eternal river of life that are pictured here. Look at Revelation 21, because after the thousand-year reign of Christ, remember, you have the Magog Rebellion.

Satan, who has been cast and bound for a thousand years, is loosed because all of these people have accumulated during the Millennium who are mortal, there will still be death, there will still be children. How can you have a little child leading the lamb and putting his hand in the snake's den unless you have children? Where do the children come from? You have people who are not in resurrection bodies. Where do they come from? Most people would say they are survivors of the Tribulation, but they are not.

At the Second Coming, there is going to be a rapture type of twinkling of an eye transformation for the Tribulational survivors. What a terrible thing. You would wish that you had died in the Tribulation so that you could come back in a resurrection body for the Millennium.

You survive and go limping in, minus arms and legs, and you have got torture scars and eyes poked out and everything from your Tribulational anguishes. Not at all. They will be raptured.

There is another set of people who are going to be mortal, and I would suggest to you that many of these are the children who have died before the Age of Accountability. That is why you start the Millennium with so many children. Rachel, you are weeping for your children, and you cannot find them anywhere, but they are going to be restored.

Isaiah says the Lord is going to return, and His sheep are with Him, and the lambs are in His arms. What are those lambs? It is all of the promise to Israel. It is the children of Rachel.

It is the children that were lost, slaughtered, and died in all manner of fashion. They are going to get their chance to come to God's consciousness, to come to the knowledge of the Gospel, to believe or reject the Lord Jesus Christ. But if they reject, they are in a practically perfect environment.

They are going to be like terrors among the wheat. They are going to get along just fine. But when God says, I know that there are a lot of people that do not genuinely want to have a

relationship with Me, do not want to trust My Son, and so on.

Why do you think God chains up Satan and then turns him loose? Because birds of a feather flock together. If you drop something metallic on the ground, and you cannot see it in the gravel, what do you do? You go get a magnet, because a magnet will draw that metal and separate it, because it has a unique property different from the gravel. How many times do you drop a sharp screw down there in your driveway, and you think, I cannot leave that down here, I will have a flat tire.

You get a magnet and drag it around until you find that sharp thing. Well, God is going to use Satan like a magnet. He is going to release him at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

And God made God rebellious. Satan, like a magnet, draws all of these seemingly happy, productive people right out of the midst of believers. And you are going to have what Jesus pictured in the sheep and goats judgment.

And all of you goats, He already knows who they are. He puts the sheep on His right and the goats on His left, doesn't He? Before He asks them any questions. They have already been separated, and He knows who they are.

All of the goats are already in a pile on the left. And what does He say to the sheep that are on His right? Enter into the kingdom prepared by the Father. They go into the Father's kingdom.

That is how we know that is not a Millennial parable. They will shine like stars in the kingdom of the Father. These others depart into fire.

It is not their works, it is not their portion, it is not their meros or their inheritance. The goats themselves depart into fire. That is a parable that speaks of the Millennial growth of wheat and tares together and the separation at the end of that age.

And that judgment is unique. It is not the judgment seat of Christ, and it is not the great white throne. It is a separate judgment.

Which reminds me, I need to send my sister an email, because she asked me that very question. At any rate, Gog Magog Rebellion, Sheep and Goats Judgment. You have the judgment and the dissemination of the people from there.

Then you have all the rest of the dead that lived not until the thousand years were complete. They are resurrected. You have the great white throne judgment.

All of those people are dead because they did not qualify for any resurrection. They are by default all unbelievers. They did not get raised with the church age saints.

They did not get raised with the Old Testament saints. There is an argument that some could

make that if you were a Millennial believer in a mortal body and died, that you might be raised at that resurrection. But I think that takes place for the sheep and goats judgment.

Somebody could argue that the sheep and goats is the great white throne, perhaps, but I think not. But I would not die for it one way or the other. At any rate, you have the end of the Millennial kingdom, you have the judgment, and then you have the kingdom of the Father.

That is where we are here in Revelation 21. It took me a long time to get there, didn't it? It took me a thousand years to get there. Chapter 21.

Now, after all of these things have taken place, so you know where we are. No more trumpets and seals, no more Millennial kingdom, no more Gog Magog. Everybody has been judged, everybody has been sorted out.

All the bad people are where they are supposed to be. You have all the saints in glory. Now, I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

Also, there was no more sea. We are not in Ezekiel 46 and 47. There is no more sea.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. We had a discussion a little earlier about genitives of source. Kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, and kingdom of heaven in particular, I think is a genitive of source.

It is the kingdom from heaven. It is something that was designed in heaven. It is designed to reflect heavenly glory, but it comes from heaven to earth.

That is the particular emphasis of that phrase. Here you have the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. Same idea.

It is not the old Jerusalem with a facelift. It is not an urban renewal project. It is a new place.

The new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. People immediately see bride and they think church. We are so knee-jerk sometimes.

We see saved and we think eternal salvation from the lake of fire. We see eternal life and we think that is my eternal salvation because I believed in Christ. We do not allow terms to have any kind of flexibility based on context.

Look at the context. This is a city coming down adorned like a bride is adorned for her husband. It does not mean the city is the bride of God.

The city is a dwelling place, but it is like a bride. It means that this is majestic. This is a peak moment.

This is the culmination. You think about what everything that a wedding symbolizes. It is the end

of old relationships and old standings.

It is the beginning of a new relationship that is supposed to be forever. Until death do us part, you promise. So when it says the city comes down like a bride, it is saying this is a new thing.

This is the start of a new relationship between God and man. Never before has God dwelt with man the way that he is going to in the kingdom of the Father. Now the Lord Jesus Christ came.

He was Emmanuel, God with us. He was here for 33 something years. We will have the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth on the throne of his father David for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom.

But this is a new thing. There has never been in all of recorded history a presence of God dwelling with man as is going to be represented in the New Jerusalem. Look at what it says.

I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle, the dwelling tent of God is with men. This is not just one member of the Trinity. You know the Holy Spirit dwells with us all the time.

You could say, well God is with us. The Holy Spirit is no less God than the Lord Jesus Christ. But here you have the fullness of God.

You have God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit right there among men. The tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.

You can see that John under the ministry of the Holy Spirit repeats this because you just need to stop and think about it. God will be with men. He will be their God.

We will be his people. He is not off in heaven. He is not separated by all the things that separate us from him now.

He is not reflected in the fullness of deity in bodily form. He is not the influence of an invisible spirit in our soul. God more or less in his entirety is going to be right there among men.

No man can see God and live was the Old Testament truth. No man has seen God at any time it says in the New Testament. But the Holy Spirit reveals him.

Christ reveals him. It is a translated truth. It is a mediated presence that we have always experienced.

There is no mediation. There is no translation. This is real and immediate and eternal amongst us.

It is just an incredible state of things. God himself will be with them and be their God. God will

wipe away every tear from their eyes.

A lot of people think this is the first thing that is going to happen in the millennium. But that is not when people say, well my memory of my sins will be erased, my failures, my sorrows, and everything is going to go away. I will just not have any memory at all.

Even in the eternal future, how do you appreciate wonderful things except by their contrast with what is not so wonderful? You know the old adage, you don't know what you've got until it's gone. Well you don't know what you have without remembering when you didn't have it. How could we possibly continue to appreciate and sing the praises of God's wonderful grace if the memory of our fallen condition was erased from our mind? It is ridiculous.

That is one of the things that is going to cause us to praise God and cause us to be so thankful as we knew what it was like to not have that. It is a great part of our capacity to know from whence we were rescued. But God will wipe away every tear.

It won't be a source of sorrow. It won't be a source of chagrin. It is going to be a source of praise and thanksgiving and appreciation.

There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. This does not pertain in the millennial kingdom. There will be death in the millennium.

It says over and over, a man that dies at the age of 100 will be said to have died in his youth. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then he who sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

And he said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And I don't mean to gloss over this, but we can't study the whole chapter. He said to me, It is done on the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Now look closely. Verse 6. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to all. Is that what it says? I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

What did Jesus declare when he stood on the steps of the temple at the great feast and said, Ho, let him who is thirsty come to the waters and drink. Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. He doesn't say, If you hear the sound of my voice, stand by.

Rivers of water are coming. Him who is thirsty. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.

Jesus said in the Beatitudes, I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. Now people would say, Oh, but everyone will be thirsty for the water of life. That's like saying, Well, all believers are thirsty for the righteousness of God.

No, I'm sorry. We're not. Some of us are just not thirsty.

Some of us are not hungry. Some of us don't care that much. He who overcomes.

Same phrase we have in chapter 2 and chapter 3 at the end of each letter. He who overcomes shall inherit all things. And I will be his God and he shall be my son.

But the cowardly, the faithless. Unbelieving sounds like, Well, they're unbelievers. They were never saved.

That isn't what it says. This is apisteia. This is faithless.

The abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part. Notice, they are not in the lake of fire. They are not consigned to the lake of fire.

They do not live in the lake of fire. They have their meros, their portion. What is the contrast here? Look at verse 7 again.

He who overcomes does what? Inherits. Those who had a pattern of life that didn't reflect acknowledging their sins, that didn't depart from evil and do good, have their part. This is a contrast of inheritances, not a contrast of dwelling places.

This is a contrast of what you will possess and where you will be as a believer in the eternal future. He who overcomes shall inherit all things. He who thirsts I will give from the fountain of the water of life freely.

But, by way of contrast, those who are not thirsty, those who are not overcomers, how are they characterized? If there is no more death, how can there be murderers? If it is a perfect environment in the eternal future, how can there be sexually immoral sorcerers and idolaters? The traditional understanding of this is these are the unbelievers in the lake of fire. They did not claim Christ as their Savior. Their sin remains.

They now are paying for their sins for all eternity in the lake of fire. This is the load of their sins that they are paying for on and on. That is a faulty and unfortunate understanding that many believers share.

Why? Because Christ paid for all sin on the cross. It is not a limited atonement. It is unlimited.

John says, He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. You say, if everybody's sins are paid for, then everybody is saved. No, they are not.

Because you do not go to hell to pay for your sins. Christ paid for sins. Think about it logically.

Even logic tells you this. Christ suffered for three hours during a period of darkness. Many people have been beaten up.

Many people have been tortured. You think about prisoners of war in Hanoi and some of the things those people went through. Talk to John McCain.

Talk to Admiral Stockdale and some of the others who spent time in Hanoi. Not to minimize or diminish the sufferings of Christ at the hands of the Romans and at the hands of the Jews, but such torture has happened to a lot of people. That was not what secured our salvation.

What secured our salvation was what took place during the three hours of darkness when God turned His back on the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever spiritual death means and whatever it took to pay for the sins of the entire world, that is what Christ went through for those three hours. It was awful beyond any description, beyond any imagining.

The most awful part of it was the separation. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? This is the most anguished cry in all of history. We cannot comprehend.

I think you have to be with God before you can comprehend what it is like to have lost being with God. That is what Christ went through for that period of time. Having said that and having confessed the inadequacy of even trying to describe what Christ went through on the cross, it is not equivalent to eternity in the lake of fire.

They do not equate. They are not the same things. Your sin can be paid for by one of two equal coins.

You can either pay for it with what Christ did in three hours on the cross or in eternity in the lake of fire. They are not the same. I would submit to you that if anything, the bad part about both of those is separation from God.

But there are people who are already separated from God and it does not really bother them. But people go to the lake of fire for rejecting Christ and what He went through on their behalf. It is not paying for sin for which people go to the lake of fire.

It is rejection of the Son of God. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

The wrath of God abideth on him because he does not have the Son. It is that simple. There are no hot spots in hell for sin.

It is like saying Jesus paid for the lightweight sins and the superficial sins but the really deep, ugly, manifestly bad sins He did not quite pay for so people are going to fry a little bit hotter for those. All sins shrink into insignificance next to spitting in the face of the Son of God when He comes in love and sacrifices Himself on our behalf and we say that is just not important to me. I do not need that relationship with your father or you or anybody else.

Just leave me alone and let me go my own way. That is what the lake of fire is for. So having said

that, when this passage says outside are unbelieving, cowardly, unbelieving being, faithless, apostasia, abominable murderers, sexually immoral sorcerers, idolaters, what is that? What is that identity? What is the fruit of your life as a believer? This is talking about believers.

Unbelievers were taken care of in Revelation chapter 20 at the Great White Throne. That is over and done with. They are out of sight now.

We are looking at outcomes. This is a contrast between overcomers and those who exercise faith, those who are thirsty for the water that God provides and those who are not. There are two descriptions for believers and it is not based on what you do in the future.

It is not based on what you hope to be when you get to heaven or when you get to the kingdom. It is what we do now that defines us. There is not going to be murder in the eternal kingdom of the Father.

There is no more death. There is no more grave. What resurrection could there be for some hapless victim of a murder? These are things that took place in this life.

Well, my gracious, how could we get all the way to the kingdom of the Father and still bear this label? These words are not delivered to us when we walk through or near or around the New Jerusalem, are they? These words are delivered to us now. Those of us now who are still cowardly, abominable, sexually immoral, murderers, either overtly or through mental attitude sins of hatred and jealousy and vindictiveness and spitefulness and unforgiving attitudes. These descriptions are those of us now.

You are thirsty now. We won't be thirsty in the kingdom of the Father because those who are thirsty now and have sought for that water are going to be given freely of that water of life. These descriptions that say overcomers and thirsty talk about our condition now.

These adjectives that talk about being abominable and pharisees and idolaters. What is idolatry? Covetousness, fascination, preoccupation, slavery to things. Possessions, holdings, turf, territory, authority, influence, the good opinion of people.

We see things and that becomes our God. We serve it. We seek to please it.

We seek to make it happen and make it shine. These are descriptions of what we are doing now. If we are an idolater now, guess what? You are going to be outside the gates of the New Jerusalem even as you will be outside the borders of the millennial Israel and certainly the millennial Jerusalem.

You will see Jesus on television from Nigeria instead of walking Jerusalem and talking with him. People say, Oh, I can't wait to see the face of Jesus. We need to start taking action to ensure that we qualify to see the face of Jesus on something more than a long distance satellite link.

Now, this is a contrast of inheritance. Do you want your part in the New Jerusalem or do you want your part in the Lake of Fire? All of the potential, every opportunity that God brought our way that we didn't seize and lay hold of, every opportunity we had to acknowledge our sins, to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us and run with patience the race that is set before us. Every time we ignore that and go our own way and get self-important and have our own plan instead of the plan of God, you can just watch another chunk of your eternal inheritance drop into the Lake of Fire.

The smoke from the Lake of Fire is going to be their portion. That word, meros, is a technical term for what gets divided to you at the settlement of a will. This is the second death.

We're going to see in one of our letters, aren't we, that one of the rewards is you will not be hurt by the second death. Well, gracious sakes, what an inane thing to say if you're a believer and your salvation is secure and eternal. What a non-statement that is.

You won't be hurt by the second death as a reward? Well, I'm already not hurt by the second death. I'm a believer. I'm not going to the Lake of Fire.

What is the second death? You die physically and leave everything you ever did and were and all. You leave that behind, right? Well, if you get to the next life and not only have you lost all of your past earthly mundane possessions, but you've lost everything that you were to possess and should have possessed and should have inherited in the eternal future, what happens when you die? They always say you take nothing with you. You lose all your stuff.

Well, guess what? There is a second death where you lose all your stuff again. Everything that God had for you, all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, it's like you died. You're saved yet so as by fire.

You look over your shoulder and there's your mansion in glory. There's all of your things that eye has not seen and ear has not heard and it hasn't entered into the heart of man. You say, oh, but... It's like these people on game shows.

They say, well, you picked door number two and here's a nanny goat. If you'd have picked door number three and they open it up and here's a house and a car and a swimming pool and a boat and all these other things, you say, oh... And then they close the curtain because you didn't get it. That is the second death.

The second death has nothing to do with the Lake of Fire. The Lake of Fire is never called the second death. It is loss of your inheritance.

That is the second death. What a wonderful promise. Jesus says, your manner of life, and we'll get to it when we get to that letter, has been such that you are not going to be hurt by the second death.

It's as though you've gotten advance notice. You're going to be in the well-done, good and faithful servant line. Don't even worry about it.

You're going to have your inheritance. You're going to have some stuff. You're going to be reflecting the glory of God.

You're going to have a place of service, an opportunity. I can already tell you that. It's like ahead of time.

Sometimes I tell people at an award ceremony, you need to be sitting close to the front because we're going to be calling your name. I can't tell you the details, but trust me, you're not going to go away empty-handed tonight. That's what that promise is.

You will not be hurt by the second death. You're not going to be outside the walls, empty-handed. It's a wonderful, wonderful promise.

You can see it makes so much sense. Just look at the contrast in this. Then, look, verse 9, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven lambs.

Boy, I wish we could talk about this, but he says, Come, I will show you the bride, the lamb's wife. Carry me the way in the Spirit to a great high mountain. Show me the great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Her light was like a precious stone. We could say all kinds of things about the gates and the stones and all of that. It talks about the walls with twelve foundations.

The city is laid out. You know, all the great gospel songs. The city that is built four square walls of jasper.

Jasper is diamond, basically. Go through all these things. Twelve gates are twelve pearls and so on.

Verse 22, I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The lamb is its light.

Where does the light shine? Who is it that doesn't need any other light? It's the city. You know, do you remember all the studies we've done in the past about the darkness which is outside? There is still going to be a relative darkness which is outside because the lamb is the light in the city. The people in the city have no need of any other light because the lamb is its light.

The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day. There shall be no night there.

They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie. But who? Only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

I have news for you. The Lamb's Book of Life is not a roster of all the saved. The Lamb's Book of Life is a roster of those who, as believers, had evidence of life, who produced fruit, who were abiding in the vine.

Life in the sense of fruitfulness. Life in the sense of production. And there will be those who have the right to enter those gates.

Why do you think there are nations outside? There is a city at the center and the Lamb is its light. And you have entire nations on the outside. There is a difference between dwelling in the nations and dwelling in the city.

If everybody is in the city, what do you have the nations for? If everybody is in the city, what is this glory that is going to be brought into it? And who are the kings? What are they ruling over if all of the citizenry are in the city? It is a city. And there are nations that surround it. Who are those kings? What is the promise to the overcomers? You will sit with me on my throne.

You will exercise ruling authority. There is going to be an economy. There is going to be a civilization in the eternal future.

So think about it. Ponder on it. Things in this life become so trivial when you realize just an inkling of what God promises us if we remember who we are and why we are here.

And we number ourselves with the thirsty. We number ourselves with the faithful. That you cannot believe what God has in store.

Things the apostle Paul was not allowed to speak of when he was caught up and saw them the way John did. We have to pause here and take our break. When we come back we will start our study of the church at Smyrna.