

02-08-16b Revelation

Let's resume our study of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation. We're here on the 16th day of August in the year 2002. We're striving, although I wonder if I'm going to be able to stick to my hoped-for schedule in getting through these letters.

They're just so much... Every time I come to another phrase or another thing that the Lord says in one of these, you say, well, I'll put a note down on that, and the next thing you know you're off in Ezekiel and back and looking here and there and learning all kinds of great things. But I wanted to proceed here in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 8, where... Let me get there, I'm still in Revelation 20. But in Revelation chapter 2, verse 8, we have the second of the seven letters.

And the text of this reads as follows. To the angel of the church in Smyrna write, These things says the first and the last who was dead and came to life. I know your works, tribulation and poverty, but you are rich.

And I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

Hence our dwelling a little bit here on the tree of life, the river of life, as opposed to the second death. These are polar opposites in terms of where we will enjoy the blessing and reward of God or fail to do so in the eternal future. Let's begin by noting, we spent some time when we looked at the Ephesian letter, in looking at the city of Ephesus.

And there is a fruitful study to be made in Acts, because Paul spent time in Ephesus, taught in Ephesus, incited a riot in Ephesus, and later on came to a nearby town on his way to Rome and called the Ephesian elders and delivered his famous farewell sermon and appeal to them, reminding them that he had faithfully taught and set a faithful apostolic example. We will return to that passage in the not too distant future when we look at the distinctives of apostleship. That will be when we get back into our Luke study.

But there are things that we don't always segregate as belonging more or less exclusively to the gift and office of apostle. But the setting of that kind of an example, I will tell you now, is an apostolic function. We do not mentor one another.

We don't say, well, watch me and live the way I live, unless we are a parent and we have successfully done a fan dance in front of our children and we only show them the right things to follow and do. And we say, well, not only do as I say, but also do as I do. But apostles, part of the apostolic function and gift was to set an example.

And when Paul says, follow my manner of life, he can say that because he is an apostle. We are not all to run around telling each other, follow my manner of life. Meet with me at 6.30 in the morning and I will disciple you, I will mentor you.

Unless you have the delusion that you too are an apostle, you cannot claim that function that belongs to Peter, Paul, James, John, and so on. Well, here we are, having given ourselves some background, we noted how that shed light on what Jesus says and the portions of the vision. Remember John saw Jesus and described what he saw, the lampstands and the stars.

And in each of the letters, Jesus reviews some portion of that initial vision, some portion of the initial statements that were made in the introductory section we studied in chapter 1. So here, what does he pull from that initial vision? First of all, we know that he has chosen the second city and it is the city of Smyrna. More about them in a moment. Then he chooses out of what he said in chapter 1, these things says the first and the last, who was dead and came to life.

Well, we would expect, based on our Ephesian experience, that there is probably some relationship to what Jesus emphasizes out of the vision to the church at Smyrna and the city and the environment of Smyrna itself. And sure enough, that is the case. Smyrna is mentioned exactly once in scripture and this is it.

So enjoy it while you can. There is no riot in Smyrna, there is no letter to the Smyrnians, there is no other reference to Smyrna anywhere in the New Testament. This is it.

So, how are we supposed to proceed? Well, let me first of all say that the name Smyrna is an unembellished, unvarnished, unmodified use of the Greek word for a substance. And that substance is myrrh, M-Y-R-R-H. I always get halfway through that word and have to try to figure out if it is two R's or two H's.

But it is M-Y-R-R-H, myrrh, as in the wise men, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Smyrna is the word. If you go over to the account of the visit of the wise men to Jesus, you will find the word Smyrna listing one of the gifts that was given.

So, that is interesting. And this is indeed where we are going to find much of the illumination for the words of Christ that we find here. The first use in the New Testament of this word is, as I mentioned in Matthew, this is Matthew chapter 2 verse 11, where the wise men see the star, they rejoice with exceedingly great joy.

When they had come into the house, they saw the young child, again this is Matthew 2 verse 11, they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down and worshipped him. And when they had opened their treasure, they presented gifts to him. And those gifts are cruzon, which is gold, and libanon, which is frankincense, and smyrnan, which is myrrh.

S-M-U-R-N-A-N, and the N just comes in because of the case that is necessary in this particular

sentence. Smyrnan. Now, Jesus, out of all of the different aspects presented in John's vision of him in chapter 1, and out of all of the things that he says, and his self-identification, and his statement of mission and purpose there, what does Jesus choose to communicate to the church at Smyrna? He says, I am the first and the last, who was dead and came to life.

Well, the city of Smyrna had such a history. It was a city known in ancient times. It was founded and was a thriving community until about 600 B.C. And at that time, it put up a brave and extended resistance.

I won't go into all the details of the battle and who was fighting who, but they fought. And you know how you can literally fight until you're just in a wreckage, or you can capitulate and your city can more or less remain intact. Well, the people at Smyrna fought and resisted and did everything they could.

And by the time they were finally conquered, there was nothing left of their city. It was leveled. It was demolished.

And Smyrna disappears from history as a city. There were people living in the area in sort of low village status. But Smyrna as a city disappeared in 600 B.C. It was refounded in the Greek or Hellenistic age in 290 B.C. So for almost exactly 300 years, Smyrna, which had been alive, was dead.

And then it came to life again. And this was a part of the city's history that was sort of part of their claim to fame. And their city was associated and came to be associated with the Phoenix.

The Phoenix, you know, we had that movie, *The Flight of the Phoenix*, an airplane that crashed and out of the ashes, the model maker builds a smaller airplane to help them fly out of the desert in Africa. Sort of a World War II story, a long time ago. Well, the Phoenix, the legend of the Phoenix originated in Egypt.

And this was a bird that is immolated, is burned up, and then arises from its own ashes. And that's the story of the Phoenix. And in Egyptian mythology, myrrh is associated with the cremation and resurrection of the Phoenix.

Myrrh, of course, was used in Egyptian embalming processes. It was one of the main ingredients for preparing mummies. And so naturally, with the death of the Phoenix, there would be myrrh and all of these other things spoken of before it is burned.

And then, you know, that would give off a sweet scent as it burns, and then it rises up out of its ashes. So you have this idea of life and death in the city's history. You have its name, which means myrrh, and myrrh was one of the embalming spices.

And this was a well-known and celebrated feature of the city. Aristides, who was a Greek historian in the first century A.D., has a long piece of literature that he produced all about Smyrna,

singing its praises, because it was hit by an earthquake in 129 A.D., and the city was shaken to pieces and rebuilt itself after the earthquake. And Aristides is singing the praises of the city, much as people did about New York after the Twin Towers were demolished, and people, you know, rebuilding and getting on with their lives and coming back.

You know, there's a great sense of pride and community spirit and so on. The same thing happened in Smyrna, and this is after the time of John, but when Aristides writes his ode to Smyrna and is talking about what a great city it is, he compares it to the Phoenix, and he says, you know, this is not the first time we have had to arise out of our own ashes. As everyone knows, we were the city that died and was gone for 300 years and came back to life in 290 B.C. when we were refounded, and here we are at yet another refounding, and like the Phoenix, we are continually and successively arising out of our own ashes.

So that's one very well-known attribute of the city of Smyrna. Secondly, Smyrna was a very renowned city for its beauty. It was very proud of its beauty.

In fact, it was called the city that is proud of its own beauty in that sense. The site today, if you wanted to look for Smyrna on the map today, there is a town in Turkey, and you have probably heard of it, it is called Izmir, I-Z-M-I-R. Think about that name, Izmir, Smyrna.

Izmir is right on the site of the ancient Greek and Roman city of Smyrna. Izmir is Smyrna today, and it is the third city of Turkey. It is the largest city in Asia Minor, or was until Ankara in recent decades grew and surpassed it, but it is still a major city even today.

But the old original site of Smyrna is about two miles north, I mean the old one from 600 B.C. is about two miles north from the current site, which is where the 290 B.C. and all following iterations of the city have been. Clement, you may have heard of Clement of Rome, also used the imagery of the phoenix in writing his letter to, his first century letters have been preserved, and he talked about the phoenix in connection with Christ. And he reminded people of the myth of the phoenix from Egypt, and how Myrrh was associated with it, and he made the connection to Christ, and said in the same way that Christ died and rose again, and was buried, and remember Joseph of Arimathea donated all of that Myrrh with which his body was prepared.

Clement, within 50 years of the writing of Revelation, is writing about the phoenix and about Christ, and of course it wasn't long before all of these things were connected in people's minds. But Smyrna, what I was looking for a minute ago when I was stumbling around there, is Smyrna being proud of its beauty and its history, it was the birthplace of Homer. Homer who wrote the Iliad, he was born in Smyrna.

And so they were very proud of this fact, and proud of their beauty, and they said that they were a paradise of municipal vanity. That's how the historians put it. This is a quote, a paradise of municipal vanity.

And the reason is, when you talk about beauty, there's lots of different things that you can be notorious for beauty for. This was not natural beauty, they weren't at the foothills of some golden mountains, they weren't in a lush valley. The beauty of Smyrna was in its buildings.

The layout, the architecture, what man had built in Smyrna, this was their glory. Aristides not only rehearsed all of this history, but he talked about the beauty of the city, and vaunted their wonderful architecture, and compared the city to a crown. And this was another historical feature of civic pride in Smyrna.

If you came up the trade route, came along the major highway that John traveled when he was doing his circuit preaching, and you came to Smyrna, you would come over a rise there, and you would see the city of Smyrna, and it looked like someone had set a wreath or a crown right there in the midst of the plain. They were some distance from the foothills, they were at the point of a gulf, this kind of flat area there, and the city was so beautifully designed and so symmetric that it looked as though someone had set a crown or a wreath on the ground there, and it was just a beauty to behold from afar. And this is a motif that's on their coinage, and all of their coins, sometimes they'll have three crowns, and they're talking about Smyrna, the crown city, the crown jewel of Asia, and this kind of thing.

So this is the background in Smyrna. So how do you think it's going to ring in the ears of the people in Smyrna when the Lord Jesus sends them a letter, and He says, I am the first and the last, the one who was dead and is alive. They say, well, that's like us.

That's like our city history. That's our claim to fame is having been dead and now we're alive, but we're the city that's famous for that. We're the Phoenix city.

He says, I am the first and the last. Paul says, you know, when people run a race, not everyone gets the crown. Who gets the crown? The guy that comes in first.

We're the crown city. Well, there are so many things that resonate in this. When you think about first and last, these are two words that you know even in English.

The word for first in Greek is protos. We talk about protons, the first smallest element of matter back when they named them. They thought that's what they were.

The prototype is the first of a type, and so on. It means first. It can mean first in time, first in number, or first in sequence.

And it's often found with its antithesis, first and last. The word for last is, oddly enough, eschatos. What is eschatology? It's the study of last things.

The prophetic future for us. Eschatos, last. Protos and eschatos.

Jesus says, I am the protos, I am the eschatos. Well, this could be a reference to rank. You

remember the disciples? Turn with me quickly to Matthew 20, verse 16.

Matthew 20, verse 16. This is another passage where we find first and last, protos and eschatos in the same context. Jesus finds his disciples complaining, and so he tells a parable about the people who worked for Daenerys.

Some of them came in the morning, some at midday, some toward the end of the day, and the master paid them all a Daenerys. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good? So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Well, Jesus had already taught the disciples about this. Go back a page to chapter 19, verse 30. Remember, we've already covered this in our Luke study.

Who can be saved? It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle. Who then can be saved? With man it's impossible. God, all things are possible.

Peter answers and says, Matthew 19, verse 27, See, we have left all and followed you. Therefore, what shall we have? Now, when he says, what shall we have, what's he talking about? He's talking about in the kingdom, the millennial kingdom. What is going to be a millennial blessing? Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, which kingdom are we in here? Is there any difficulty in discerning? Is this kingdom of the Son or kingdom of the Father? Who's sitting on the throne? This is the Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory.

At the end of his kingdom, he's going to turn all things over to the Father, and it will be the kingdom of the Father's glory. So this is the millennium. You who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging whom? The twelve tribes of Israel, Old Testament saints, Old Testament blessing package, Old Testament covenant arrangement, and everyone who has left, houses or brothers or sisters, father, mother, wife, children, lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life.

We've studied eternal life, right? We know this is not a reference to eternal salvation from the lake of fire. This is eternal in the sense of quality. This is a reference to blessing and reward and inheritance.

Because your eternal salvation from the lake of fire is not based on leaving your sister and brother and father and mother, is it? This is reward. But, he says in verse 30, many who are first, many who are protos, will be eschatos, and the eschatos will be protos. Turn back a few pages forward, actually, in the Gospel of Mark, to Mark chapter 9 and verse 35.

I'm having another Perry Mason moment where you may not see yet what I'm driving at, but I do intend to link it all up, Your Honor. Remember that here in Mark chapter 9, the disciples are

disputing amongst themselves on the road. And in Mark 9 verse 34, Jesus asks them, What is it you're disputing about on the road? But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed amongst themselves about who would be the greatest.

Who would be the greatest? They're talking about the future, right? They're beginning to wrap their minds around the idea that Jesus is going to rule in his kingdom, and they're saying, well, who's going to be sitting at his right hand and at his left? He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, If anyone desires to be protos, he shall be eschatos of all, and doulos of all. Then he took a little child and set him in the midst, taking him in his arms. He said to them, Whoever receives one of these little children in my name receives me.

Whoever receives me receives not me but him who sent me. Right? And then he goes on to talk about giving a cup of water to drink in my name because you belong to Christ. I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

The first and last there, when you go on down to verse 41, we're talking about reward. This is your place, your area of opportunity and function in the kingdom in the future. Now, what is the fundamental lesson? We don't have time to go to all the passages.

I'm going to be lucky to make it to where we're trying to go here. But stop and think. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet in the upper room, what is the principle that he was teaching in all of these passages? If any of you desires to be great in the kingdom, let him become a servant.

Jesus was servant to all. He wrapped the towel around his waist and he washed the disciples' feet. If any one of you would be great, let him become a servant.

If you try to make yourself great now, you're going to be a servant in the future. If you make yourself eschatos now, you're going to be protos in the future. There is an inverse relationship.

The lesser we are here, the greater we are in the kingdom. The last shall be first, the first shall be last. So what an interesting title that the Lord Jesus describes himself with when he says, I am the first and I am the last.

How did Jesus become protos in God's future millennial kingdom? Why is it that all glory and honor are ascribed to him? Because he did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself and took on the form of what? A servant. He became the eschatos in this life. And Paul says, God has raised him up far above all principalities and powers in every name that can be named, and he is the protos.

So when he says, I am the first and the last, he's not just saying, I'm in eternity past and I'll be in eternity future. What are we talking about here? We're talking about this life and how it reflects on the next. I am the first and I am the last.

He is simultaneously the servant of God, the suffering servant, the servant to the disciples in the

upper room who humbled himself, and he is protos. And that is the example that he sets for us. If any man wants to follow me, if any man wants to arrive with me, Jesus says, let him take up his cross.

What was the cross? The humiliating death of the criminal. When you were crucified, all of your earthly goods were confiscated and given to the state. You were possession-less.

When you took up the cross, it meant that your stuff was gone and the only possession you had was that cross you had in your hands that you were going to be crucified on. It's so incredible to me that Jesus made that statement before he was crucified. Nobody had an inkling that he would be crucified and he said, if any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me.

Can you imagine the furrowed brows? People thought, what do you mean take up the cross? That's what the Romans used to kill people with. People get convicted and all of their goods are confiscated and they're humiliated. They are shamed.

I heard Dr. Criswell preaching on a video the other day and it was the last time he was ever on the platform at First Baptist in Dallas. He was 90 years old and he was having a little trouble keeping hold of his thoughts, but I'll tell you one thought that was in his mind all the way through that sermon. He said, the Lord Jesus Christ came and died for us and it was a shameful death.

He said, every picture I've ever seen of the crucifixion, they show Jesus with a loincloth. He said, that is not how he died. He died naked.

It was a shameful, it was a humiliating death. He became eschatos, the least. What does Paul say? We as apostles have become the off-scouring.

We are the least. We are the last. We are treated as criminals.

How many times did he get 40 minus 1? How many times was he in prison? How many times was he beaten as an apostle? And that doesn't even compare. He says, I'm just partaking of the sufferings of Christ. It doesn't even compare to what Christ went through on our behalf.

But, what does it mean to take up the cross? What does it mean to be eschatos, to be least? We have to rid ourselves of the idea that we have an agenda and that we have things that are our due. A servant, look at all of the servant parables. Jesus says, when the servants have been in the field and it's time to come in for dinner, they don't sit down and eat their food.

They gird themselves and serve their masters food. And after he has eaten, then they eat their own. And they still say, we are unprofitable servants.

We have done no more than it was our duty to do. They don't arrogate to themselves any rights or any, how dare they do that to me? How can you treat me this way? To arrive at a protos place.

And it's not for our benefit.

It's reflecting the glory of God. But we have to learn to follow the example of Christ in being eschatos. So when you see that phrase, the memorable thing out of our study tonight is when Jesus says, I am the first and the last, that is not a chronological reference.

That's a reminder of the inverse relationship between this life and the next. He who is great and respected and well thought of in this life is liable to be eschatos in the age to come. And there are so many unknown, unheralded, unsung, faithful believers in this life who look like they are eschatos now.

And they are going to be sitting on the throne with Christ in the coming kingdoms. We have to decide whether that truth is real to us. And if it is, we've got to let the air out of our pride and recognize that we don't have prerogatives and we don't have rights and standings and things to be getting upset if people do us a wrong.

How is it possible to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you? It's when you recognize that you are a servant of God Almighty and what's the best in His plan? What's in His interest? It's for those people to amend their ways. Not to get all huffy because you've been done wrong in some fashion. That's not the action of a servant.

That's somebody who thinks they've got a standing. But to recognize that here's a believer, perhaps, who's outside the plan of God and not reflecting His glory and not growing and seizing the potential that Christ died to give them. And they need prayer.

They need encouragement. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who spitefully use you.

Only a servant can do that. A servant of the Most High God. Doing what you do heartily is unto the Lord.

If we have difficulty doing it, it's because we've got an ego in the way. It's ego that keeps us from praying for God's plan to come to pass in the life of another believer. So that's just an inkling of what's going on here in this letter to the folks in Smyrna.

There's a lot more things we could talk about here, but let's move a little bit forward. Because think about Myrrh. When's the first mention of Myrrh in the New Testament? It's at the birth of Christ when He's a child.

One of the last references is at His death. It's first and last. Myrrh was there at His birth.

Myrrh is there at His death. The Egyptians, it was used for people who were first... Look at Psalm 45, verse 9. Song of Solomon. There's two or three passages in Song of Solomon.

You can check your concordance. I think it's chapter 3, verse 6 and chapter 4, verse 14. Myrrh was a very valuable perfume and spice that was used by the rich and the wealthy.

It was costly. And so the high and mighty would use it. But guess what? You know what it was? They mixed it with the wine that they stuck on the sponge and stuck in Jesus' face when He was dying a criminal's death.

You know what gall is? It's myrrh. They would mix myrrh with the wine as an anesthetic and as something to actually prolong the sufferings of the person on the cross. And gall, you compare your Gospels and look, and you'll find that the gall that was mixed with wine, it's Mark 15, verse 23, it's a verbal use of smyrna.

It's the verb form of smyrna. They smyrna-ized the wine and gave it to Christ. So you've got it used, and they didn't do it because He was Christ, did they? This was a common practice to do something for the criminals on crosses.

So you've got the high and mighty adorning themselves with myrrh, and you've got the lowest thief on the cross having it stuck in his face. So it spans first and last chronologically at birth and death. It spans it status-wise, the rich and the criminal.

It was an ingredient in Israel's worship. If you go back to Exodus chapter 30 and look at the anointing oil with which everything in the tabernacle was anointed, the priests, the altars, look at all the different places in Exodus 30. God gave Moses the recipe for that anointing oil.

And one of its main ingredients is myrrh. It was there at the inception of worship in Israel. It was there at the beginning.

And guess what? If you go to Psalm 45 verse 8, you have a picture of Israel perfected with the heart of flesh and not the heart of stone, so to speak, standing with the King in His glory adorned with myrrh. And it talks about the fulfillment and arriving at the object of that worship that began back in Exodus 30. It's a picture of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, Israel as a nation.

And it's symbolized with this myrrh with which they are anointed. So it's at the beginning and the end, if you will, of Israel's worship. It's at the beginning and end of the life of Christ.

It's at the height and the depth of social standing. So first and last encompasses every different area of life. It encompasses the history of the city.

They are about to undergo testing. Let me quickly move on to the testing. But I think you understand, hopefully a little bit here, why Jesus chooses that particular aspect of the vision to emphasize to those people.

What does it emphasize to us? What should we remember when we think about the letter to the people at Smyrna? Well, He tells them, I am the first in life. First and last, I am He who was dead

and is alive. All of us were dead in trespasses and sin.

We died with Christ. We are raised with Him. The death He died, He died to sin.

The life He lives, He lives to God. And we should do the same. He is our example.

And so what about the remainder of the letter? What does He say to them? He says, I know your works. I know your tribulation. Smyrna is all about testing, isn't it? It's all about, He says, you look impoverished, but you are rich.

You look like you are the last, but you are really the first. You look like you are slaves and servants, but you are really inheritors. I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

We've got more to say about the synagogue of Satan in the future when we get to chapter 3, but think about it. They say they are Jews and they are not. How many times have we seen this in the New Testament? Judaism took the law as a means of righteousness when it wasn't.

Righteousness comes by faith. They made it a righteousness of works. Read Romans chapter 10.

These are people who are trying to impose a standard. They say, we are the first. We are the righteous ones.

We will tell you what it means to be a believer. We will tell you what it means to be a worshiper of God. And instead of being first, who were the first worshippers of God? Who are supposed to be the people of God at the first? It's the Jews.

And what have they become? The last. They are a synagogue of Satan. Can you get any more laster than that? To be called a synagogue of Satan.

They are trying to impose this on you. They are a synagogue of Satan. There is a whole lot more I could say about that, but I am determined to move forward.

Do not fear any of these things which you are about to suffer. The devil is about to throw you... If they are a synagogue of Satan, who is going to be the instrument of this persecution? It's these Judaizers. When he says the devil, the instrument of the devil is the synagogue of Satan.

These Judaizers are going to actually persecute their brethren, fellow worshippers of God, into prison. You may be tested. You will have tribulation ten days.

Tribulation ten days. Dead seas have been spilled about. What does it mean tribulation ten days? Stop and think.

You know the answer to this question as you sit there right now. What does he mean when he

says you will have tribulation ten days? Stop and think. Who do you know that was carried off in captivity and ended up with a ten day test? I'll give you a hint.

It's in the first chapter of the book of Daniel. Remember the food test? What was the length of time for that test where they would eat only vegetables and not eat the king's food, Daniel and his three friends? Ten days. Read the chapter.

It says we'll have a test. We'll do a ten day test. You will be tested ten days.

And those who are captives, who are eating the crummy food, rose up and were first. Those who ate the king's food were last. So it's a wonderful way to figure out what's going on there.

You will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. Death seems to be the worst outcome for these people.

It is the best. Their death is the means of attaining the crown of life. And of course the crown, once again, when you think about Smyrna, the city of crowns, they took such great pride in their earthly beauty.

That city is going to be crumbling dust. But the believers who suffer tribulation and may in fact die sometime during these ten days are going to have an imperishable crown. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

You have this whole life and death theme all the way through. And what is the reward? He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. Myrrh was used as a preservative.

It was used as an embalming spice. But it was trying to preserve something that was going to decay anyway. If you've ever seen a mummy, that's no way to live.

But these people will not be hurt by the second death. If you persevere in your faith, don't worry about what these people who have a false standard say about you. Don't worry if they imprison you.

Don't worry if it results in your life ending here. I will tell you now. I will give you an advance warning.

Your reward is secure. You have an inheritance. So it's a wonderfully encouraging letter.

It's a reminder to us of what Christ has made possible for us through His death, through His life, through His intercession on our behalf at the right hand of the Father. And it's a great motivation to not be distracted, to not arrogate to ourselves something that is going to reduce our opportunities and reduce the reflected glory of God in the future, but to seek and serve in the servant role to content ourselves with being eschatos in this life because we know that we will share that protos life with Christ in the future. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer and we'll

resume and take a look at the church at Pergamos next week.

Father, we thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word. We thank You most of all for Your amazing grace and faithfulness toward us. And we thank You for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will remind us and convict us, correct and instruct us through these things, that He will wield Your Word in our souls as the sharp sword that will enable us to be transformed and to live the life to which we have been called. We pray that in all things our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified and we ask Him in His name. Amen.