

02-08-30a Revelation

Let's take a moment, as is our custom, before we begin our study in the Word of God to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you for this day, for the many provisions you have made for us, the unending faithfulness and grace that you express toward us, and we thank you for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for his historic work on our behalf and his ongoing work of intercession and of representation before your throne. We thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

We thank you for the gift of your Word and for the privilege of being called by your name and having the opportunity to redeem the time that we are assigned in this earth and to bear fruit that reflects your glory. We pray as we study together this evening that we will find insight and understanding, that we will correctly perceive the truth in the passages we examine, and having seen it and understood it, that it will motivate us and condition us and transform us so that we live in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, we resume our study tonight, and I'm going to make another valiant attempt to finish up the church at Smyrna and move into the church at Pergamos or Pergamum. The more I look at these letters, the more things I see, the more questions I have, and the more I look around and learn, and I get more excited about studying, looking other things up. So I do want to try to move forward and finish Smyrna tonight and get into the third of our letters.

Just a quick breeze through verses 8-11, the church of Smyrna is addressed by Christ who names Himself as the First and the Last, and if we don't remember anything else about Smyrna, we remember that the name means Myrrh, and it is a recognition, even at the birth of Christ when He received that as one of those gifts from the wise men, that His life had a purpose, and that purpose would only be fulfilled at the point of His death. If you think about it, the work of Jesus Christ on this earth had many aspects, and there were many things God wanted to do through Him in His first advent, in His incarnation, but that work was not complete until His final day, until the day that He was crucified, and it culminated at the crucifixion, and then you have the glorious resurrection, you have His appearances to the disciples, His ascension, and then you have the inception of the church age at the feast of Pentecost, but there is a reminder of all of those things when you think about Smyrna, and you think about Christ being the First and the Last. He was the King of Glory, He was co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father, but He emptied Himself, He took on the form of a servant, and humbled Himself and became in all points like as we are, tested, yet without sin, and He was faithful unto death, even in the garden when He said, Father if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done.

All of those are evoked in this introduction. We notice that the words, your works, need to be lined out, those were added by someone who wanted all the letters to kind of look the same, but He says, I know your calypsos, I know your tribulation, I know your poverty, but you are rich. It depends on what you are looking at, are you looking at the present, are you looking at the visible,

or are you looking at the future and the invisible, and the beauty of the church age is our future blessings, our millennial spiritual horn of plenty is available to us now.

We can do a sort of time travel in that we have a foretaste, we have a reaching into the future and bringing into the present the blessings that are ours in Christ in the eternal future. And it is a spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, but we don't have to wait until we get to heavenly places or future places to enjoy them. We can enjoy them now.

I have used the example before, but I think it affects all of us. You know that something great is coming up for little children, it is Christmas or their birthday. For us it may be a visit from someone that we love or a trip that we are going to take and go somewhere.

We can set aside all of our worries and cares, put the house and the pets in the charge of someone else and anticipate going off on an adventure, going someplace and just having a great time. And we don't always have to wait until we get in the car and drive out the driveway to have fun or we don't have to wait until the people arrive to start enjoying that. We can enjoy it in prospect.

We begin to get excited and enthusiastic and have a pleasant experience long before that day arrives because it is anticipation. It is a fun thing to think about. Your enjoyment of it can precede it much the way that in the opposite sense dread can precede something that we know is coming up that we don't look forward to.

So hope is recognizing the reality of future things in the present. It is the substance, faith is the substance of our hope. And when we see things in the Word of God and we believe that they are true, that ought to motivate us, that ought to encourage us.

So even though there is poverty and tribulation we are rich. We have reviewed all of those things. We have seen those who say they are Jews and they 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. The idea of the devil and testing is associated elsewhere in Scripture.

We have touched on that thinking back to Job and thinking back to Peter. It is a little bit of a stretch but I am going to point this out to you anyway. Turn with me back to Job.

We are going to look very quickly at chapters 1 and 2. The reason for this has to do with our ten days of testing. If you look at the mention of days in Job, beginning at Job chapter 1, there is a description of Job in the first several verses and then in verse 6 it says, Now there was a day when the sons of God came together. So if you are wanting to keep track in writing here you can either write down verse 6 and say there was a day or if you don't mind marking up your Bible like me then you can just circle you can say a day in verse 6. That is day number 1 or the mention of

a day number 1. There is this conversation we are all familiar with between the Lord and Satan.

God calls Job's name. Satan says his faith in you is superficial. God says go ahead and put him to the test.

Then in verse 13, Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and that is the second mention of day in Job because messengers begin to arrive and deliver the bad tidings of everything that Satan has been allowed to do in Job's life. Culminating in verse 18, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. A great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house and it fell on the young people and they died and I alone have escaped to tell you.

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and what did he do? He fell down on the ground and worshipped. He said naked came I from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. Now chapter 2 verse 1, Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves.

So this is the third day mention and Satan says in a nutshell, skin for skin, put forth your hand, touch his bone and his flesh. Verse 5, He will curse you to your face. The Lord said to Satan, Behold he is in your power, only spare his life.

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job evidently that same day with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. He took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. He had the conversation with his wife.

Verse 11, When Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Nehemiathite. They made an appointment together to come sympathize with him and comfort him. When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept.

Each one of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. This is another movie clip I hope to see in the days that lie before us. The experience of Job, the messengers coming and even as the last and worst possible news comes that his entire offspring, all of his future hope is wiped out, he falls to the ground and worships God and maintains his faith and his respect for the will of God.

It's just the most amazing thing. Then to see the three friends coming flinging dirt in the air, not exactly looking like those who could cheer one up. They sat down on the days.

There is no specificity as to the actual amount of time that passed between the first convocation

in heaven and the striking of Job's possessions and family or the second convocation in heaven and the striking of Job's person or the length of time it took for that news to travel to Job's friends and their appearance. But it is interesting and I think it goes beyond coincidence that in the story there are a total of ten days mentioned. There are the three days, the first day of convocation, the day of the feast when all of these terrible calamities strike and then the second day where God and Satan have a second conversation and then the seven days where nothing is said.

Each of the preceding three days that are mentioned there is conversation that determines Job's fate. It is interesting because if you choose to view this as his ten days of testing, on the first day he doesn't see what is coming. It is determined.

It is fated. But it is not seen. It is not visible to Job until the second day when everything strikes at once.

One messenger after another. One has barely finished his speech before the other arrives with another tale of woeful news culminating. I can't even imagine to have ten children and find out that they have all perished in the same day.

Your oldest son, your three daughters, your other six sons. I just can't even conceive of a day like that. It is much more inconceivable to me that the day of the first day of that Job was able to hang on to his face.

He fell down on his face and worshiped God. It is just a measure of the greatness of his walk with the Lord. But you have, I think interestingly, symbolically, ten days of testing for Job and after that in verse three he opens his mouth.

We have reviewed the course of the dialogue there. I hope to do that again soon. I have learned some new things in looking through the book of Job and I hope to have the chance to review those here in the near future.

But getting back to Smyrna in Revelation chapter 2, all through the Bible, how many different places have we seen the concept of testing? The idea of the fact that this life is a time of testing. 1 Peter 1, 6 and 7 is a good passage in this regard. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, you love.

This is really the test for us is to love without sight. Though now you do not see him, yet trusting, this is Pistuo, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, the deliverance of your souls. 1 Peter you can hardly find a good stopping place, it is such a great letter.

We have seen many times Romans 5 verses 1-5, verses 3 and 4 in particular. Suffering produces

endurance, endurance produces dokime, and dokime produces hope. That character is something that we can't develop in perfection, we can only develop it under pressure, under testing.

Well, the last thing I want to look at with regard to Smyrna has to do with the second death, because this is a much misunderstood idea, and I think as we closed last time, I had mentioned the different resurrections, the first resurrection and the second resurrection and so on, and also the idea that I hold, which is that our testing, although it may appear different from one individual to the next, you see people who have a severe physical handicap or affliction of some sort, you see people who have to care for a handicapped child or have to go through their spouse wasting away with a terrible disease and finally dying after months or years of care, and you think, oh, that's a test beyond anything I have ever faced. And it's easy to look at that and say, well, there must be levels. Some people have a pretty easy time and other people have these horrible, wrenching sorts of tests.

But the Bible teaches that we are all tested and we will be tested to the limits of what we are able to bear. And let me just give you a quick analogy on that. Think about the weight room.

Most of us have at least walked by or looked into a weight room or seen one on TV, even if we never actually used the equipment. And you know that there are people that are naturally physically strong. They are just big-boned, heavy-muscled genetically.

And there are others of us that are kind of wispy and left to ourselves, we would be Casper Milk Toast. And so this is a natural state of things. So let's think about the bench press.

You know, on a bench press, you lay on your back, you get the bar, you've got weight on it, and you push it straight up from your chest, you let it back down, and you try to press. If you do one set of ten repetitions, there is a certain amount of weight that you can press and still do the tenth repetition and get it up and down without killing yourself. So you take a big, beefy guy.

Neither of our subjects here have ever lifted before, but somebody is just naturally, inherently going to be able to do maybe 250, 260 pounds the very first time they try. He's just a great, big, corn-fed Nebraska farm boy, and he says, well, yeah, sure. And he gets down there and he bench presses 260 pounds ten times and isn't even breathing hard.

Well, you might take someone else, and in order to do ten repetitions, the most weight you can put on the bar might only be 60 pounds instead of 260. Now, for each of these individuals, they might be straining equally hard when they get to the tenth repetition. I might need to add a hundred pounds for the Nebraska guy, and maybe he's benching 360.

But by the tenth repetition, that's the last one they can do. If they tried to do an eleventh one, they could not do it. Well, somebody walks in and says, well, this bar over here has got 360 pounds, and this one has 60 pounds, so this person was obviously tested to a much greater degree.

It depends on what you are able to bear. For somebody, 60 pounds is, that's to the limit of what they can do. To this other person, it's 360.

And the milk toast can look over at the Nebraska guy and say, well, he's been tested far, I can't even conceive of 360 pounds. But you see what I'm saying. It depends on our makeup, our spiritual build.

And some of us have great strength in perseverance, and others of us, it's our area of weakness. Some of us don't have a problem with sins of the tongue, and for others of us, it is our besetting sin and our stumbling block. We can hardly get through the day without being tested in that area and perhaps often failing.

For some of us, it's not that hard to trust God for provision. For other people, it is like stepping out on a two-by-four across a 30-story building from one building to another. I've got to walk, you know, you lay a two-by-four on the ground, could you walk across an eight-foot span of two-by-four, just balance it if it's on the floor? Not a problem.

Put that across two 30-story buildings and walk across it and see if it changes your level of stress. Well, this is my point in talking about that we are all tested. And don't think that you haven't been tested or that you won't be tested.

Don't think that someone else has been tested far more than you will ever be. The nature of the justice of God and the nature of the knowledge of God is intimate knowledge of the way we're built. Everything evens out.

Your testing is no greater and no less than anyone else's. Do not think, the biggest problem with this is not thinking that we haven't been, well, I guess people think, well, I haven't yet been tested and I'm afraid I will be. I'm scared to death that my loved one is going to die, my child will come down with a fatal affliction, you know.

People wake up in the middle of the night sweating thinking, what if God decides to test me and it will be some horrible, awful thing. There has never been a believer who was walking with the Lord and was tested that didn't get to the other side praising God. Look at Job.

He had his dark hours. David had his dark hours. Daniel, Joseph, name your saint, has had their dark hours.

But nobody has reached the end of their life and said, you know, I wish God had just never tested me. It just wasn't worth it. Sure, it's difficult.

It's designed to be difficult. But our bigger problem is not dreading future testing because we think we have not been tested. Our problem is that we think that we have been tested beyond others.

We think that we ought to have the copyright on the song Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen.

People just don't understand. They don't realize what I'm going through or what I've been through.

You just don't understand. There is some sort of special dispensation due to me. The rules should not apply.

The standards should be modified for me because my test is so severe that it's just abnormal. This is an unbiblical concept. You can see how these ideas logically flow from what Scripture teaches.

If we are all tested, Jesus said, in this world you will have tribulation. You will be tested. Just get over it.

That's why you're here. But there is with every test the way of escape. There is the solution.

There is always an answer. It is not an unsolvable puzzle. There are places you can go, boot camp type scenarios, where their goal is to test you until you break.

They have the acronym for the testing to prepare you in case you become a POW. There are special forces training areas in some elite branches of the military, and I think UDT and SEALs are some of them, where they want to find your breaking point. They will keep pushing and pushing because they want to find your breaking point.

That is not God's agenda, and I don't think it's a legitimate agenda anywhere, just for my two cents worth. But in God's plan, He says you will not be tested beyond what you are able to bear. Never.

You will never be tested beyond what you are able to bear. And you know what that does? It completely eliminates any excuse. You can never say, God was just testing to find my breaking point.

Because He already knows our breaking point, and He will never test us beyond it. He may test us up to it, but not beyond it. So it's an arrogant thing.

People don't realize when they're feeling miserable and talking about how miserable they are. By the way, there is nobody in present company, and I'm thinking historically about some situations I've been a part of in the past. And without realizing it, in the course of being miserable and thinking about their problems, it develops into a form of arrogance.

There are people who it's sort of a badge of honor. Oh, my problem is so strange and so severe, and you just haven't seen anything like it. And because of that, God has to do special things with me.

I sort of have an out. There are some things that don't apply to me because my situation is so unique. Well, you would be tempted to think in Smyrna, when God says ahead of time, you're

going to be tested.

And not just any testing. The devil himself is going to be your tester. I took a course at Navy in steam.

I can't even remember the right name of that course. What was it? Principles of Naval Thermodynamics. I don't even remember the right name of it.

Everybody just called it steam. But my professor was Professor Bok. I went in there.

I had no earthly idea. I was in a daze half the time anyway. I went into the first day of that class, and I looked down at my textbook, and I looked up at the board, and I realized that my textbook was written by Johnston, Brockett, and Bok.

And I looked up on the board, and the man's name was Bok. This was the man that wrote the book on thermodynamics. He was the steam meister.

And typical of people who sometimes write books, he could not imagine anybody not understanding thermodynamics from the cradle. That it would just be a natural thing. And so he talked completely over our heads for the whole semester.

I never understood a thing that that gentleman said. And he was also very nearsighted and couldn't really see the looks of confusion on people's faces. And it was just an act of God that I passed that course.

But the idea is, my tester in that course was, if I had known he was the last person, I would have done anything to stay out of his section. The man that wrote the book, are you kidding? He had no patience. He had no comprehension that somebody didn't know as much as he did.

Just after he would say it once. And he would come in and say, well I assume you've read the chapter, so now we're going to go ahead and move on. He wouldn't explain what was in the chapter anyway.

Satan being your tester, it reminds me of Professor Bach. You know, it's just like, he's the man that wrote the book on testing. The devil is the angel that wrote the book on testing.

He's the individual that figured out Job's test. He's the individual that tested the Apostle Peter. Now how would you like a little angelic message to come down to you saying, oh by the way, I just got the word from God, Satan is stopping by day after tomorrow to test you for ten days.

Satan himself, son of darkness, the one that got Eve, the one that's been walking up and down and to and fro on the earth for these thousands of years, is paying a personal, your name in this blank, call day after tomorrow to you. And it's going to last ten days, so cheer up and get ready. Well that's exactly what Jesus told the people in Smyrna.

The devil is going to test you for ten days. Well, I find it significant you have those ten days in the story of Job, instigated by the devil. He speaks on the first day, his mouth is closed by God at the end.

Well, I say all of that to say that we should have a more philosophical view of testing. We should commit ourselves into the hands of our faithful creator, of our loving Heavenly Father, and whatever we see, whatever we experience by way of testing, we should be able to take comfort in the fact that God has set limits. God set limits on what Satan could do to Job.

God set limits on what Satan could do to Peter. It says he can sift you like wheat. It didn't say he's going to grind you like wheat.

He's not going to turn you to powder, he's going to sift. Now there's a difference in sifting and grinding, isn't there? Sifting removes your chaff. Grinding changes your nature.

You go from being grain to being flour. God allowed Satan to sift Peter. God allowed Satan to test Job because it revealed things in the soul.

Not always the best, not always the brightest. It revealed a weakness in Peter's soul, but it was something that once he recognized it, the Lord Jesus was able to heal and use him to strengthen others. So, that's one point.

Secondly, I mentioned last time that talking about the first resurrection and the second resurrection and what all is involved in those. That came out of our discussion of the second death. So, let me quickly review the three mentions of the second death in Revelation and that will take us to the various resurrections.

I'll try to clarify that just a little bit. We have the second death mentioned here as a promise for those in Smyrna who are overcomers. We have a promise for those who are in the cross.

The idea here being that not only will they receive the crown of life, but if they overcome they will not be hurt by the second death. We looked at that word hurt. Do you remember what that was? It is wronged.

It is violated that you suffer a loss. A loss that makes you feel violated. A loss that would cause you to weep and wail and gnash your teeth.

You will not be hurt. This is the promise that you have in inheritance. To document that we looked at the other references to the second death.

One of these is in Revelation 20 verse 6 and this is where it talks about the first resurrection. It is talking about the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God who had not worshipped the beast or his image. This tells us that these individuals are tribulational saints.

What does that mean? We review quickly and we remember that there are seven years of the Old Testament age that have not happened yet. We will leave and those seven years will happen. Loosely speaking that seven year period is called the tribulation.

Technically it is the last half. The last three and a half years is the great tribulation. That entire seven year period I prefer to call the 70th week of Daniel.

That is one of the reasons we know its length. Daniel predicted it and of course John talks about it extensively in this book of the Revelation. But these souls who did not worship the beast or his image and did not receive his mark on their foreheads or on their hands, that tells us that these souls that were beheaded were martyred in that 70th week.

Now they are in the last seven years of the Old Testament age. Because of that they are like the other Old Testament saints in terms of what their status is, what the program is for them. There is a different program for Israel than there is for the church.

That distinction has come under a lot of fire in recent days. People think that is politically incorrect. They think it is anti-Semitic.

They think it is all kinds of things. If you read anything about progressive dispensationalism and a lot of other isms that have cropped up in the last 20 or 25 years, it tends to follow the political and social winds that blow in the country. So when people started saying shame on people for discrimination and shame on people for making distinctions between people, this came out.

There is a difference. The church is the body and bride of Christ. Old Testament saints are not.

Moses is not, has not ever been, and will never be body and bride of Christ. Nor will any other Old Testament saint you can name, up to and including John the Baptist, who was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He is an Old Testament saint.

He gets the Old Testament covenants, the Old Testament promises fulfilled. He has the Old Testament faithful saint retirement plan. The faithful saints of the Old Testament were promised a number of very wonderful things.

They are no less wonderful than the things that are promised to us, but they are different. You can buy a Ford truck and you can buy a Chevy truck of the same class and approximately the same price. They are both wonderful trucks.

They perform essentially the same, but there will be slight differences in features. One of them, the seat, will move a little further forward and back. You know what I'm getting at.

You can have things that are of equal quality but are different. They just have slightly different features and a slightly different purpose. I have a car and a truck and I like them both for different reasons.

I value them both. I take care of them both. I need them both, but they don't do the same thing.

I can't throw ten foot lengths of conduit into my car. I can't take a long trip with my family comfortably in my truck. They serve different purposes, but they are both needful and equally valuable to me.

The same thing with God. God has the Old Testament saints. He has the church that he has given to his son, Jesus Christ, as his peculiar possession, as his special reward.

That's our function. That's our role in history as church age believers is to be God the Father's gift to God the Son. But God also has a people that he reserves unto himself.

That's the nation of Israel. They are his bride. They are his spouse in the Old Testament imagery, in the Old Testament symbolism.

Would you say that the spouse of God the Father is somehow qualitatively less valuable than the spouse of God the Son? I'm not saying literal terms here. This is figurative, but it is biblical imagery. The Bible calls Israel the wife of God in the Old Testament.

The Bible calls the church the bride of Christ in the New Testament. So people that say, well, your theology is bigoted or anti-Semitic because you are denigrating the Jews. You are saying, well, they are the earthly people and the church is the heavenly people.

Those people are mistaken. So, these individuals are Old Testament saints. That doesn't put them down.

That just identifies them. They had not worshipped Jesus or his image, had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

What a neat thing. Guess what? Not only are individuals in the church promised the reward of reigning with Christ and sitting with him on his throne, but so are Old Testament saints who are faithful unto death. These who were beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, guess what? They fulfilled the criteria that Jesus mentions to the church at Smyrna.

They were faithful unto death, weren't they? They did not recant. They did not give in. They didn't compromise and accept the mark and say, well, it's just a mark.

It doesn't really mean anything. But can't we all just get along? You all give me the mark and I'll say the words you want to hear and then you go away and then I'll try to go back to being a Christian again. They were faithful unto death.

Or actually not a Christian per se, but a faithful believer again. So, had not received his mark or on their hands, they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Now, I find it interesting as always to note the language, the individual words that are used in the inspired record here.

They ruled and reigned with who? With Christ. Christ is our English word for Christos in the Greek. Christos is the Greek version of what word in Hebrew? Mashiach.

And what does Mashiach mean? It is the anointed one. Who is the anointed one? He is David's greater son. He is the promised king of Israel.

And it is not an accident. It doesn't say they will rule and reign with Jesus. It says they will rule and reign with the Messiah.

So, there is a reward for the church, for faithful believers within the church, called sitting with Christ on his throne. There is also a reward for Old Testament saints who are faithful called sitting with Christ on his throne, ruling with Christ. There are individuals who will serve in the millennial government from the Old Testament age.

There are other individuals who will serve in that same government who are from the church age. It is a blessing that is promised to both. It is a blessing that is communicated as coming to individuals from both ages.

They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is a millennial government post, a service. But, the rest of the dead.

Now, who are the rest of the dead? Well, in this context, it says they did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Now, you would think it would be better if that phrase came before verse 5, wouldn't you? Why doesn't it say they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This is the first resurrection. But, the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. But, this is just the way Greek works and Hebrew works as well.

They will say something and go down a road and then they will back up to where they forked off the road and start again where they left off. When it says this is the first resurrection, it is talking about they who live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. This is a metonymy of the part for the whole where those who are the faithful represent everyone who is raised at the beginning of the millennium.

At the beginning of the millennium kingdom, and we know this from Ezekiel, we know this from other places in Revelation, the Old Testament saints are raised when Christ returns. All of them, all of the Old Testament believers, all of the Jews who came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb and then dropped in the wilderness are going to be raised. Everyone is going to be raised.

But, who is it that gets the mention? Who is it that stands in and represents that entire age and all of the believers of the Old Testament age? It is these who were faithful unto death. This implies

that those who are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11, time fails me to tell of those who were sawn in two and who lived in caves and holes in the ground and who died without ever seeing the fulfillment of the promise. Remember the roster of Old Testament heroes? They are included by implication in this statement.

These are the ones in most recent memory. These are the ones John has just been talking about in the previous context of the Revelation. But, all of the Old Testament faith heroes are in view here who are raised.

Indeed, all of the Old Testament saints are raised in the first resurrection. Now, if all of the Church Age saints have been raised and all of the Old Testament saints have been raised, then who is it that lives not until the thousand years are complete? Those are unbelievers. Unbelievers do not live again until the thousand years are finished.

The first resurrection is the resurrection of Old Testament saints. That is the first resurrection. You say, wait a minute, that happens at the beginning of the millennium.

What about the Church? Well, obviously, Revelation 4.1, come up here when he is talking to John, the heavenly view, and we don't have time to do the whole book of Revelation, but you have already seen the Church Age saints, an innumerable company of every tribe and race, singing the praises of the Lamb in heaven. They have already been raised. So, he is not saying, oh, they haven't been raised.

The first resurrection is a general term for believer's resurrection. All the believers, it subsumes within itself the resurrection of Church Age believers and also those Old Testament saints seven years later at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. That is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy, verse 6, is he who has a meros in the first resurrection. We have talked about this and I have alluded to it several times. We are going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, I am going to give you the passages. We are going to document the use of meros. What does it mean to have a part in the first resurrection? Does it mean that you got raised? If you are a believer, you are blessed and holy because you had a part in the first resurrection.

That is kind of what it sounds like in English. We are going to have to take a closer look at that. But, in view of what we have seen this evening thus far, remember, God knows every circumstance in our life.

He knows the limits to which we can be tested. He never tests us beyond them. We don't have an excuse, nor do we have a source of pride that our test is bigger than someone else's test, or our test is badder than someone else's test.

We are somehow in the ranks of the martyrs because our test is real visible and obvious where

someone else looks like they haven't really had any testing. For God to not test each of us would be to deny us the opportunity to exercise faith. For God to over test certain individuals would be to be unjust and unfair.

God is fair. God is just. We are all tested to our limits and you can't look at someone else, nor can someone look at you, and decide that there is some inequality or some unfairness with God.

We should concentrate on not what is the level of any particular individual's testing, but how am I doing on my test? Am I qualifying for blessing and reward from God? Not because I want a big pile of stuff in the future, but because that is the way to please God. That is the way to reflect God's glory. That is the way to fulfill God's calling.

We are called to pass the test. We are called to be blessed and holy. That is our job.

God has said, you are my servant, you are my children, this is your mission. Be blessed, be holy. And that means passing our tests by faith so that God can reward us and glorify himself in the process.

We don't have to look at anybody else. All we have to do is concentrate on finding that way of escape that God gives us in each and every test. Well, let's pause and take our break.

There are some fascinating things we are going to see about having a part in the first resurrection as soon as we come back.