

02-09-18a Revelation

We resume our study of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 this evening. We want to take a moment here at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and ensure that we are susceptible to the ministry of God's spirit as we fellowship together in God's word. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the privilege we have of gathering and spending time looking at your word.

It is a visit to the wells of living water. It refreshes and restores our souls. It enables us to walk in the paths of righteousness.

It reminds us of our true nature and our higher calling and our opportunities through what the Lord Jesus has done for us. We pray tonight as we spend time looking at your word that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our souls. We will not only understand the academic truth that is contained there, but it will be meaningful to us.

It will illuminate our path as we walk through the remaining days of our lives. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are currently in the latter portion of Revelation chapter 2 looking at the fourth and central letter from the Lord Jesus to the seven churches that were under the Apostle John's ministry in Asia. If you were to plot these on a map, you would find a roughly circular arrangement with Ephesus somewhere in the vicinity of 9 o'clock. Then moving around to each of the other churches, you find Smyrna near the top of that circle.

Then you find the Pergamon or Pergamos church followed by the church at Thyatira. You go clockwise around. As we get to Thyatira, we find ourselves almost around the one that is going to be at about 3 o'clock.

It is going to be Sardis. So they are in a roughly circular. We know that the Apostle John ministered to these churches and was in essence a circuit riding preacher as we had in the earlier days of our country.

Thyatira was not a very important city. When you look at the ancient historians, in fact one historian says Thyatira and other unimportant communities. It was really a very small and not well thought of town.

And yet it finds a central place in these letters. When you think about the tendency of scripture to work in a chiastic fashion and to have important things at the center, you have three letters preceding this, you have three letters following this. It is the longest and most detailed of the four letters and yet it is to the least significant by human standards city and church.

Just to refresh our memory in verse 18, to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, the son of

God who has eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like burnished bronze, says this. And hopefully you will never again look at the eyes of fire and feet of burnished bronze in quite the same way. It is a reminder.

Anytime you see brass, it is not really bronze here, it is fine brass. And even in the Old Testament, God said if you turn away from my precepts, if you forsake my law, I will turn your sky to brass. Whenever you find brass, it is often associated with judgment.

It is a reflective surface and we talked about those who might want to fall at the feet of Jesus for mercy and yet what they are going to find there is the reflection of the eyes of fire. The time for grace and judgment is past. The judgment has been rendered.

He says in verse 19, I know your works, your love, your service, your faith and your patience. And as for your works, the last are more than the first. The eschatas are more than the protas.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. We saw when we studied the previous church at Pergamos that there are basically two ways you can diverge. If you are on the narrow road and you see the straight gate afar off and you are trying to head for it, you can either veer off to the left or to the right.

You can go to one or another area of imbalance, either into a hyper-religion, a religion of man's devising. Paul talked about the Israelites doing this in Romans chapter 10, I think it is, where he said that Israel, not latching on to the righteousness of God, began to pursue a righteousness of their own, a righteousness that was not of faith. And of course we know that whatever is not of faith is sin.

So if you develop a system, a standard of measure that says, well, you are a good church-going Christian because you tithe or because you witness or because you attend or because you serve on a board or because you engage in some form of overt Christian ministry, this gets you over the bar. You are doing well. And we know that that is not the case.

Well, that is the area of Nicolaitanism. That is where you lord it over the people. You set up a standard and you say, I am the standard.

Your example in the modern day of this is the Catholic Church. Nikos, meaning to conquer, and laos, meaning people, the Nicolaitans are the ones who control the people, who set up a standard and they are the judge and jury. They decide who is going to heaven.

They decide who is going to hell. They decide who is getting out of purgatory. They decide whether or not your sins are forgiven.

They interpose themselves between a believer and God. And you have more than one. I don't mean to pick on the Catholics because you have a lot of other highly structured churches that

seek to do the same thing.

And even modern ministries, even charismatic ministries, and even some that are from widely diverse origins wind up as a personality cult where the pastor himself or some other leader in that church or that denomination winds up being the go-to guy. And people begin to idolize and worship and follow the man or the woman rather than the lord himself. And you see people that are really big fans of someone who is in an area of spiritual leadership.

Well, that is Nicolaitanism. That is one extreme. And we saw that in Pergamos, they basically had both problems.

They had some people going one way and some going the other. Here in Thyatira, we have Jezebel who is teaching and seducing God's servants to commit sexual immorality and eating sacrifice to idols. So this is going the other direction.

This is the doctrines of Balaam that we saw mentioned earlier. And this is the Achilles' heel because these teachings hook into an area of need or an area of desire in the soul. Really, the legalistic and the ritualistic and the almost mystical, liturgical, ritualistic types of religion appeal to people who have sort of a guilt complex and they feel like they used to have the flagellum which was like a whip.

You see in old medieval movies, somebody walking down the road or whacking themselves on the back with something with the flagellum, self-flagellation is what they call it where you feel like if you suffer enough, then God will say, well, okay, you're okay now. And that's really the ritualistic things where you suffer through the rituals and you go through all the motions. It's a combination of suffering and mysticism.

And people wouldn't say it's suffering. They'd say, oh, I love that. I love sitting through all the endless repetitions and the mindless lighting of things and so on.

Well, that's one area. And that appeals to people that have a certain kind of soul and people feel better after they've sort of gone in and been oppressed and suffered. Other people like a religion that really hooks in and gives them what they want, if they want prosperity, if they want an emotional experience, if they want great fellowship, they want a hail fellow well met, let's all get together and have sort of a party in the Lord and that sort of thing.

And some people really carry the party aspect of that to an extreme. In the ancient world, it went way into the extreme. It went into actual physical immorality and licentiousness that was a part of and a common part of worship in their society.

It wasn't a big deal. They didn't have the Puritan ethic and they didn't have the holdover like we have in our country where you can still find people who are shocked by immorality in our country. It's getting harder and harder to find them.

But there are still people who really frown on that and think it's not right. But in ancient Greece and in ancient Rome, people had a very carefree attitude. It's the direction our society is heading now where even 20, 30, 40 years ago when people would look around and say, well, those people are shackled up together.

Those people are living in sin. That's never said anymore. People freely change partners and two people will live together and nary an eye is blinked anymore except maybe in a conservative church.

Well, it had gone way beyond that in Greece and Rome. So you can imagine being a Christian, growing up in a culture like that where it was pretty much free love and your marriages were often business arrangements and your recreation was with anybody you could find or with a slave or with a temple prostitute or whatever and you'd wrap it all up in the guise of religion and say, well, this is all for the good. It's traditional.

Daddy did it this way. Granddaddy did it this way. All my friends do it this way.

All my business associates do it this way. There was no stigma attached. So becoming a Christian and suddenly having the biblical standard imposed, man will forsake his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they too shall be one flesh.

Well, this was the abnormal and this was the unusual. So if somebody came in and began to teach and said, you don't have to give all of this up. You can still be one of the boys.

You don't have to abandon your society and your culture. You can blend the two. You can amalgamate the two.

You can have a happy coexistence of the two. This is what Jezebel did. This is what the original Jezebel did in Israel.

She brought in the idol worship of the pagan nations that God had forbidden and that God had said you need to drive them out, you need to stamp them out, you need to wipe them out. And they had largely done that. King David had driven the enemies out of the land.

They had peace in Solomon's day and then following the division of the kingdom, not too many generations down, here comes King Ahab. He marries Jezebel. She is an Ammonitess and she brings all of the perverse worship in with her.

So they teach and seduce my servants and the indictment of this church is tolerating her, suffering her, forgiving her. We saw that this is from Ophiemi last time. This was wrapped up in Christian love or something.

Well, who are we to judge? Oh, each unto his own and let everybody walk by his own light. They thought they were being spiritual, being holy by doing this. But the Lord Jesus passes judgment

here on the angel of the church and he says I have this against you.

You allow that woman to seduce my servants and to teach. And we talked last time about the fact that this was accomplished through teaching. It's not just every man for himself.

It's organized. It's rationalized. It has a foundation where they would take certain scriptures and take certain other ideas and amalgamate them together.

And that happens today with Christian psychology and with Christian counseling. Not to say all Christian counseling is bad, but you have to watch because there is an awful lot of world view and an awful lot of secular science that gets trotted in under the banner of Christian counseling that has no spiritual dynamic whatsoever. You might as well just go to Sigmund Freud and leave off anything having to do with God.

I will cast her into a sickbed, those who commit adultery with her, into great philipsis, into great tribulation, unless they change their mind. She already had a chance to change her mind and now her time is over. She's going to be thrown into the bed.

It's not a sickbed. You need to scrub out the word sick there. It's clinae.

It's a plain old bed. It's a bed where people fornicate. That's the kind of bed it is.

You don't go down to the hospital and look for somebody to have a time with. I will cast her into a bed and those who commit adultery with her I will cast into great tribulation unless they change their mind about their deeds. They are going to have the same period of grace that Jezebel herself had.

I will kill her children with death and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. He's not going to search out the teaching. He's not going to waste his time sifting through the Jezebel cult and saying this is good and this is bad.

He says you're going to know from the results that it is what goes on in your mind and what goes on in your heart. The people who submit and who go along and who are caught up in this are people who weren't looking for the truth and weren't interested in pleasing God. They should never have been deceived.

They should have never... It's the same thing if someone gets into... The picture here is adultery. If someone gets into adultery we don't say oh well that might have been something in their background. Maybe they had a bad example when they were a child.

It's a conscious decision someone makes to violate their promise to betray the trust of another person and go against their word. It's the same thing as here. These people are betraying their faith in Christ.

They're betraying their calling. I am He who searches the minds and hearts and if you don't remember anything else about Thyatira, the Lord Jesus Christ with the eyes of flaming fire and the feet of fine brass is the one who searches the minds and hearts. You cannot fool Jesus.

We can fool each other. We can fool ourselves. We cannot fool the Lord Jesus.

He is not subject to our petty deceptions and our foibles and our little rationalizations. He knows exactly why we do what we do. He knows what we're really after and there is nothing that is hidden from His sight.

He says, I will give to each one of you according to your works. Now there are people who think that all believers are going to get all of these overcomer rewards. Have they not read this verse? If your works are jumping into bed with Jezebel, Jesus says, I'm going to give to you according to your works and what you're going to get is great Philippians.

It just doesn't get any plainer than this. Why would He even say this? Why would He need to jump into the overcomer section except that there is judgment for those of us as believers who are faithless? Then He says here in verse 24, and this is where we pick up tonight, Now to you I say and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan as they say. Now the reason He says the depths of Satan as they say is that Jezebel, this nickname for whoever this actual, you can't believe the wild theories people come up with.

There are people, you know Lydia, the seller of purple was from Thyatira. It has actually been suggested that Lydia came back to Thyatira and became Jezebel. That she just fell off the wagon and got spiritually corrupt.

Because there are people who have such blinders on they think, well the only people that could have existed in Thyatira are people mentioned in the Bible. So if there is a woman in Thyatira, it must have been Lydia. I mean there is not a shred of evidence for that.

But whoever this is, she did not say, let me lead you into error. Let me show you a way you can fornicate and justify it. What she said is, let me initiate you into the deep things of God.

Let me, and the word for deep here is bathos. We have a bathosphere, the little round thing they drop down for deep sea exploration. Bathos, the deep things of God.

Now there are some things that are called the deep things of God. But Jezebel is not teaching them. And so Jesus says, these are in reality the depths or deep things of Satan.

They are deep things alright, but they are of Satan. It is twisted truth. You look at the history of Satan in Genesis and in Job and in the temptations of Christ.

What does he do? He twists truth. He will quote scripture, hath God not said? He will give his

angels charge over thee and they will bear thee up lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone. Hath God not said? You may eat of every tree that is in the garden.

He takes the truth. He says, well of course Job is faithful. He acknowledges the faithfulness of Job, but then he twists it.

He says he is faithful because you are bribing him with blessing. Truth twisted. That is Satan's forte.

So these deep things sound like truth to people who are not listening closely, who are not seeking intently and who allow themselves to be deceived because it hooks into the lust pattern. It hooks into the desires. It satisfies a perversity in our soul and it substitutes for the deep things of God.

It is the deep things of Satan. They believe the lie is what it amounts to. But he says, listen, to you pastor, to you angel, leader in the church, and to the rest in Thyatira who have not fallen for this false way, I will put on you no other burden.

Why? I know your works. I know your love. I know your service.

I know your faith. I know your hupomene, your endurance, your patience. Your last works are more than your first.

They are doing everything right and they have passed this test. This was a difficult test. Some of them have not passed it.

They are going to be thrown into tribulation. Others have passed it and said, you know what, I am not testing you any further. You have passed the test that is important.

You have done a good job. So I lay on you no other burden except to hold fast to what you have until I come. Just maintain.

And we encounter times like this in our lives. There are times when we learn. There are times when we face challenges and we pass a big test.

And then we almost wonder, well, is the other shoe going to fall? Is some bigger test coming along? It seems like we have not really been stretched to the limit. We have not been put under great pressure and we are just in sort of a maintenance mode. Well, the Word of God tells us that that is normal.

Jesus says, I let this Jezebel woman come in and spout this false teaching. You spotted it. You eschewed it.

You did not fall for it. And I am not going to lay any other burden on you. Just keep doing what you are doing.

There is a great merit in steadiness, in faithfulness, in once you have figured out what is right, just keep doing it. If you learn to balance your intake of the Word of God and your prayer life and your times for meditation, your exercise of faith, your maintaining of hope for the future, ever looking for that day when the Lord returns. You always have one eye on the kingdom and one eye on the future.

You watch for and seize opportunities to manifest love, love in the vertical realm, love in the horizontal realm. Sometimes we actually reach a place where we are sort of functioning. We actually arrived at the place where we are a good servant.

We do what it is the Master asks of us. We go out and work in the field. We come in and gird ourselves and serve the meal.

We say, I am still an unprofitable servant, but I am going to get up tomorrow and I am going to work in the field and I am going to come in and prepare the Master's meal. I will get up the next day and I will go in the field. I will come in and prepare the Master's meal.

I still think I am an unprofitable servant, but blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His mercies are renewed every morning and we just maintain. We shouldn't start looking over our shoulder thinking, I must be missing something.

Something must be wrong. The shoe is about to drop. The hammer is about to fall.

Something terrible is over the horizon. Jesus says, if you have finally gotten things figured out and you are doing what you are doing, just keep doing that. Hold fast to the things that you have learned and the things that you are practicing.

Just hold fast until I come. Be faithful. Just keep doing what you are doing.

And that is a wonderful place to attain to. It is a wonderful place to be in God's plan. And it is encouraging to me because it says it is possible.

We are not always necessarily going to be in a big learning curve. We are not constantly going to be falling on our face. Jesus says here, some of you people in Thyatira have grown to the point where you are right where you need to be.

Just stay there. Don't slip away. Don't fall off.

Don't get slack. Don't be apathetic. Don't get too comfortable.

But just keep doing what you are doing. Hold fast what you have until I come. The word here for hold fast in verse 25 is *kratesate*.

It is from *krateo*. And *krateo* is one of the words for power. It is one of the five power words that

you find over in Ephesians chapter 1 where you have all five Greek words.

But in contrast with *dunamis* and *iskus*, it has the idea of might or strength. *Dunamis* is where we get dynamite. The powers, principalities and powers, you have *panto-krator*.

And the *krator* part of that is from *krateo*. And it means the strength that you have gained. Through the exercise of faith, you have got some strength.

Just maintain that. People who get into a running program, when you first start out, you go half a block and you are panting for breath and your heart is beating 150 beats a minute. But over time you get past that and you start to get some condition and you can run a half mile and then you can run a mile and then maybe two miles or three miles.

But pretty soon, unless you are going to be some kind of a marathon runner, you reach a level and you say, I think three or four miles a day is about what I want to run or three or four miles every other day. And once you work up to that level, then you are in kind of a maintenance mode. And you run enough to be sure that you can always run that distance at about the same speed and you maintain a level of conditioning that is good.

People that do weight training, don't just keep adding 10 pounds every week until they are bench pressing 700. There is a point at which you level off and now you are in a maintenance mode. And this is where these faithful Thyatiran believers have arrived.

They have done their building up. They have developed their spiritual stamina. And Jesus says, just maintain your conditioning.

Hold on to what you have. Don't get lazy and say, well now that I can run four miles, I guess I won't run for a few weeks. It is really one of the more overlooked principles.

We always feel like we are failing in some area and we haven't grown enough. And a lot of times we think, well I haven't learned anything really new and exciting lately. I haven't just been dazzled.

Especially when we are first learning from the Word of God, we see things that just are surpassingly great. We have an emotional experience when we learn and we just think, oh my goodness, it's like somebody just pulled the curtain back and revealed the great splendor and glory of God's plan. And as we continue on, it seems like maybe that happens less and less.

And so then we say, well, is something the matter with me? Have I lost my first love? We have reached the point where we know a lot of what we need to know to be functional. And Jesus says, just hang on. Just keep plugging away.

Hold fast what you have until I come. You know what I find interesting about this is, in the previous letter, what did he say? Be faithful until you die. Here he says, hold fast until I come.

And they are sort of in parallel, aren't they? Like, well, be faithful unto death, hold fast until I come. Be faithful unto death, hold fast until I come. Really, the coming of Christ and our death are pretty much the same thing.

As long as you're alive on planet earth in this dispensation, be faithful, hold on. Then we have the great promise in verse 26. He who overcomes, we have ha-nikon again, just as we have seen in the previous letters.

But we have the Greek conjunctive chi, the one overcoming, ha-nikon, and ha-teron, akri-telus, ta-erga-mu. And what that means in English is, he who overcomes, and he who keeps my works until the end. Well, now we have a third synonym.

At first it said, unto death, and then he said, until I come, and now he says, until the end. And they're really all synonyms for the same thing, because when we die, that is when the Lord comes, as far as we're concerned. And when the Lord comes, this earthly life is over, and we enter a new phase, and that is the end.

That's the end of this phase of God's plan for us. He who overcomes, and keeps my works until the end. To him I will give power over the nations.

And this is another word for strength. This is exousia, and this is authority. This is different than dunamis, or iskus, or krateo, or any of that word group.

Exousia means authority. It was translated power sometimes. You remember in John chapter 1, where he says, but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.

Well, it's exousia. It's authority to be called the sons of God. The right to be called the sons of God.

Now that I've said that, I'm going to go check and make sure I didn't lead you astray, because I said that off the top of my head. John 1, 12 says, I'm right. That's always gratifying.

My memory holds up. It seems to happen less and less frequently. Well, it's the same word here.

This exousia means a right, or an authority. You are assigned this privilege. To the one who overcomes and the one who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power, authority, the right to rule over the nations.

Now, here's a question for you. Where are these nations? Who are these nations over whom these faithful believers are going to rule? Is that in this life? Am I going to go get to be the mayor of Timbuktu somewhere? Or am I going to get to be the satrap governor over in some precinct of Asia Minor? Obviously, this is talking about the kingdom, right? All of these blessings. I'm not sure we've actually specifically stated this, but all of the overcomer blessings are operable and active in the millennial kingdom.

That's where they refer. The right to the tree of life, the various rewards we've seen up to this point are millennial kingdoms. So, this tells us there's going to be nations in the millennial kingdom.

Nations other than Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of his father David in Jerusalem, in historic boundaries of Israel. Then there are going to be the nations.

We know from other passages that the kings of the nations are going to bring their glory into Israel. They're going to pay tribute. They're going to make pilgrimages from the far off lands of the world to Jerusalem.

There is going to be a world governed by the Lord Jesus Christ, but he is the king of Israel. He sits on the throne of his father David. Then there will be governors and sub-rulers of the nations all around the world.

It's not going to be one big Israel planet wide. The model might be the Roman Empire. You have Caesar in Rome.

He governs over Rome proper, but then he's got different ones ruling different precincts and provinces and conquered nations all around the world. Those nations are autonomous and they send tribute and taxes to Caesar. They acknowledge Caesar, but they are not Rome proper.

They are vassal states. That's the rough structure of the Millennial Kingdom. Somebody has got to be the faithful governing officials of all of these places.

Who's it going to be? It's going to be those who have learned to discern. You remember here in Thyatira, how was this described? There was a temptation to licentiousness. There was a temptation to self-indulgence.

There was a temptation to self-satisfaction that these people resisted and overcame. What is the fundamental requirement of someone who is entrusted with authority? Whether it's a pastor, whether it's a congressman, whether it's a president, what is the one thing that that person that is entrusted with authority and entrusted with leadership cannot afford to do? Self-indulgence. We've had recent presidents who besmirched their office and besmirched their reputation through self-indulgence.

We have had pastors who have besmirched their office and besmirched their reputation through self-indulgence, holding their own personal gratification ahead of the responsibilities to which they have been assigned. These people have proven in this life through the testing that they have undergone that they are not going to prioritize their personal gratification above their responsibility to the Lord. This is what happened to the angels that fell back in Genesis 6. The sons of God came down to get the early human civilization off to the right start and they were judging.

God says, My spirit will not judge man forever. It's the Hebrew verb din, where we get Dan. They were judging.

They were ruling. They had an office of oversight in the human race and they fell into self-indulgence. They intermarried with the daughters of men.

Those angels were collected up by God and locked in Tartarus. That's a side issue. What this really tells us is this.

If you look at each of these and we can apply this test to each, go back up to Ephesus. To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life. They have tested the ones who say they are apostles and are not and have found them to be liars.

They have persevered and had patience. They labored for Christ's namesake and have not become weary. They had a problem with leaving their first love, but he says if you overcome, I will give you to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

There is a relationship of the reward and the privilege that is given to the test that is passed. There was false food being put out. What does an apostle do? He communicates the truths of the church age.

That is what an apostle was commissioned to do. Jesus Christ commissioned 12 apostles to promulgate and broadcast the spiritual truth for the church age. False apostles came and that is food for the soul.

That is the nourishment. We have to have that to function as church age believers. People who fell for the false food were not hungry enough for the true food.

They satisfied themselves with this bad food, these false apostles. The ones who stuck to the true and living word are going to get this true and living fruit from the tree of life. There is a relationship between the test that is passed.

Here is the principle. This is our principle for our first lesson tonight. When you look at the churches that we have seen, these first four, and Thyatira in particular, the test that is passed determines function in the future.

The tests that we pass in this life qualify us for functions in the future. There is a pattern of testing. Jesus says, you that have faced Jezebel and have not fallen for her lies, I don't need to give you any other burden.

I am not going to give you any other testing because you have already passed the test I needed you to pass. And when you overcome, and when you persevere, and you hold fast to my word, you are the group from whom I am going to draw the governors and the mayors and the various governmental officials that are going to run the world in the millennial kingdom. Because the

essential feature of a governmental official is loyalty in the face of opportunities for self-indulgence.

And what it tells us is, each of us, we wonder, why am I tested in the particular areas that I am tested in? And that person over there, their testing is a completely different test. It doesn't seem like we are facing the same sorts of challenges to our faith. We are built differently.

We come from different backgrounds. They have faced big challenges in one area. My challenges seem to be in another area.

When we face and pass our tests, it qualifies us for future function. And there are widely various functions that God has waiting in the eternal future in the millennial kingdom and beyond. And our testing and our experience and the particular path through life that we take is uniquely designed to prepare us for function, for service, for reflecting the glory of God in the carrying out of very specific positions and roles and tasks.

We have a hard time even conceiving of how full of activity the future is going to be. We tend to think of kind of a painting of the millennial kingdom where everybody is just like a snapshot, a Kodak moment. Everyone kind of has a smile on their face and Jesus is in the background and it is bright and streets of gold.

And we don't really think, what are we going to do? A thousand years is a long time. Are we just going to kind of all mill around and see who is here and hi Grandpa, missed you after you died and that kind of thing? You know, that might last a year or two, but what are we going to do for the other 999 years? You look at the angelic model, you look at the hints that are given in scripture, God has a vast program of activity that is going to be underway in the millennial kingdom. What will we do? What will we be qualified to do? If you wonder why the test, this is why.

Look at the letters to the churches. When you overcome these specific tests, I have these specific functions and these specific authorities, that I am going to grant to you. There is a reason for every test that we face.

There is a reason we are in the situations we are in. It may not make any sense to us now, but it will certainly make sense to us when we arrive in the millennial kingdom and the kingdom of the Father. So, a lot of times people say, well, I know that happened to me in the past because God was preparing me for this later test in my same life.

God let that happen last year, so I would be ready for this this year. And we are very short sighted. We don't even think about the fact that God is looking way beyond this life.

So, if things don't seem to really compute and maybe you have a test and you suffer and you don't really see the fruit and you don't see the benefit and the denouement, as they say in

literature. You have the big crisis and you face the big thing and then you don't really see the outworking of it. Well, the reason is we are only seeing the front end of things.

Eye has not seen and ear has not heard the things that are going to happen in the future. But one thing we do know, there is a direct relationship between our challenges and our testing in this life and our opportunities and our functions in the next. I will say that again.

There is a direct relationship between the challenges and the testing of this life and the opportunities and the functions in the next. Never doubt it. Just come look at these letters.

Look at the things these people faced and remember God is preparing us for great things. God is giving us the opportunity for great things. We can't afford to be discouraged.

We can't afford to be apathetic. We can't afford to be indifferent because this is our boot camp. This is our training ground.

This is our practice exercise. The things that we are doing now are going to seem like grade school exercises compared to the things that God has for us in the next life. And if it's real to us, if it's a part of our hope, if we hold fast to the things that we have in this life and we don't flag, we are faithful to the end, we are faithful unto death, we hold fast until He comes, we are going to be jaw-droppingly amazed at the opportunities and at the things that we are going to be able to do in the service of the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom.

There is just a glimpse at the end of these letters. But we want to see that in all seven letters there is this direct relationship between the test and the reward. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll finish up the letter to Thyatira and we might even get a chance to look a little bit at Sardis.