

02-09-27a Revelation

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and cultivate the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. This past week in our fundamentals class we spent some time looking at the ministry of the Holy Spirit and it is such a wonderful gift from God that the Spirit is ever with us. He is the seal of our redemption.

He is the promise of our resurrection. It was by His power that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. This is probably an illustration that would only occur to me, but you know they have these new pistols with a laser sight and a little red dot goes where you're going to shoot and that red dot gets there just before the bullet does and it marks where the bullet is going to go.

And we have the mark of the Holy Spirit on us and He's there abiding with us and enhancing our spiritual life. But since He's already there it's like the crosshairs because that's where the resurrection power is going to hit at the point of our death or the rapture and we're going to be raised by the same power that raised Christ from the dead. He is the guarantee and He is always with us.

He never leaves us. It's comforting to me to know that even when we sin He doesn't leave. He just changes missions.

Instead of the communication ministry He goes into the convicting ministry and enables us to apply those portions of the Word of God that help us to identify where we have failed, either a sin of commission or a sin of omission and translates our prayer asking for God's forgiveness and cleansing up to God the Father in groanings that cannot be uttered. And He is the emissary. He is the comforter who stands in the place of the Lord Jesus Christ and makes it possible for us to enjoy the indwelling of the Father and the Son as we grow in grace.

So it's a great privilege and every time we look at the Word of God together we know that it is the ministry of God's Spirit that gives that any effect and any meaning at all. So let's pause for a moment and spend time with God in prayer. Father, thank you for the privilege we have of studying your Word together.

It is an endless bounty of spiritual food. It is a wonderful treasure of insight and of stimulating and thought-provoking truth that enables us to more fully understand you and your plan and your purpose for us in this life. We ask your blessing on us as we spend time in fellowship in your Word and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will find our hearts ready and willing and susceptible to the truth so that we can live by it and bear fruit because of it.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we find ourselves now in the fifth of the seven letters to the churches of Asia that Jesus Christ himself delivered through the Apostle John in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. We have already seen the church at Ephesus whose prominent characteristic was that they could discern good leadership and bad leadership.

They could spot the false apostles and refuse to listen to them. They had persevered. They had done good things.

But in the course of doing all of those, they had lost sight of the reason. They had lost sight of the heartwood at the very center of the tree. And even as they continued to push out branches and bear fruit and hold to the faith and eliminate the false teachers, they, Jesus says, had lost their first love.

He said you've got to go back and do the works that you did at first because motivation defines your works. I've often pictured in my mind as a child I sat in denominational church, a couple of three different denominations, and in all of them they passed those nice polished wood oak offering plates. And you can imagine a pew with six people sitting in it.

And as the usher hands the plate to the first one, they slip in a \$5 bill. It goes to the second one. This is in the old days when \$5 was a lot of money.

It's handed to the second one. He slips in a \$5 bill. The third one, the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth.

Each puts in a \$5 bill, hands it to the usher at the other end. And you could have six different kinds of fruit, six different kinds of production from those six men, each putting in a \$5 bill because it is not the action. It is the motivation behind the action.

It is why you do what you do. It is not so much even that you gave as why you gave. There could have been a seventh little old lady who would love to have given, but had nothing to give.

And she might get more credit than the other six put together because it's what goes on in your heart that counts. Now we are quick to twist that in our human minds and say, well, I'll just give her my heart. That way I'll have more money to go to Walmart with.

Or I'll just be filled with good intentions and I won't have to really do the works. Of course, James gives a good answer to that in talking about faith without works. Our faith needs to produce work.

And it is motivated by our hope. It is done in the light of our faith. And it is an expression of love.

So what has happened if you have lost your first love? The love of God, Romans 5.5 tells us, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by God the Holy Spirit. One of His many ministries to us is to shed abroad love in our hearts. How does He do that? Well, He takes nothing from Himself.

He takes of the things of Christ and imparts them to us. So this is the love of Christ. Paul talked about the fact that the love of Christ compels us.

I think in the King James it says the love of Christ constrains us. It's a compelling, a motivating love that gives us recognition and appreciation for God and expresses itself in the horizontal

plane. And I was talking to my father on the occasion of his birthday a week or so ago and he was remarking about the cross.

We often talk about love in its vertical and horizontal aspects and that it mirrors the very shape of the cross. And he was musing about that at some point and the thought occurred to him, and I think it's an excellent one, that the nature of a cross is such that you can have the vertical component and it can stand on its own, but you can't have the horizontal component without the vertical. It is supported by, held up by the vertical.

And in the same way, the love that we have for one another, the ability to obey the commandment to love one another is entirely dependent on whether the vertical aspect of our love, we love because He first loved us, God is love, His love is shed abroad in our hearts, but that portion has to be complete. And if we have difficulty with our fellow man, be they near or far, the place to look is not how can I be more loving or how can I patch up and express this love more completely in the vertical plane. Usually the problem with our horizontal relationships, I think I said vertical, but I meant horizontal, the problems among us as believers and as people usually stem from a lapse or a deterioration in our relationship with God.

Our ability to deal with one another and to bear the fruit of the Spirit in connection with one another depends entirely on how healthy our vertical component is. So the Ephesian church, having lost their first love, he says, remember from where you have fallen. And it's almost as though that horizontal cross piece has just fallen to the ground.

And he says, remember from where you have fallen and do the first works. Those first works are defined by love. Without love, of course you can go to 1 Corinthians 13.

Paul has many different descriptions of what happens when you lack love. So that was the church at Ephesus. And they had done a good job of organizing.

They had done a good job of weeding out bad leadership. And you can imagine the types of believers and the types of churches where you get everything really well organized and underway. All of the wheels and cogs and gears are meshing and fitting together and you're cranking out a lot of production.

But the why and the wherefore tends to get lost in the doing. In Smyrna, the second church, their prominent characteristic was their poverty and their persecution. In Smyrna, we think about death with the myrrh aspect there.

Jesus didn't comfort them by saying, well, you're about to see the light at the end of the tunnel. He said, you know, there's more tribulation coming. Satan is going to cast you into prison for 10 days.

Be faithful until death. Be faithful all the way up to the point where your life ends and I will give

you the crown of life. To him that overcomes you will not be hurt by the second death.

So in Ephesus, the reward is the tree of life. That is so representative of their need because their works are going to be hollow. It's going to be like a bowl of wax fruit that looks great but doesn't have any genuine nutritive value.

Jesus says, if you can overcome and return and do the first works and recover your first love, you will have the right to the tree of life. What's the outstanding characteristic of the tree of life? Its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Its fruit that changes every month is wholesome and beneficial.

It's genuine fruit. Really, the fruit of the tree is what imparts life. God was talking and saying that he had to run man out of the garden.

He said, lest he partake of the tree of life. Well, he's not eating the bark and he's not eating the stems and the branches. He's eating the fruit.

It's the fruit of the tree of life that has the benefit as well as the leaves and the eternal future. So, the right to the tree of life means, in the same way that your life is genuinely fruitful, you're going to have the right and the access to that genuine fruit in the future. In Smyrna, great poverty, great deprivation, tribulation, persecution, more is coming.

He says, endure, persevere. For some of us, that is our particular calling. It's our particular place in the body of Christ.

If you look at a normal human body, you find that there are certain surfaces that bear a load and bear a weight and do work. And they wind up having thicker skin and heavier calluses. The palms of your hands, the soles of your feet get calloused because they bear loads and they do work.

And some of us in the body of Christ, that is our particular calling, is to bear the weight and to carry the burden. And the believers in Smyrna are like that, where the Ephesian church was more like the head, the planners, the organizers, the leadership identifying and that kind of thing. And in Smyrna, he says, if you overcome, you will not be hurt by the second death.

We're going to have more to say about the second death even than we have said thus far when we get down to the book of life tonight. But we know that there is a significant possibility of loss at the judgment. This is an unpopular doctrine.

It is a much avoided subject. But for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, at the judgment seat of Christ, at the bema, there is the distinct possibility of shame. There is the distinct possibility of loss.

And there just isn't any getting around it. That's what the Bible teaches. And people don't like to hear it.

I take flack for talking about it, but that's what the Word of God says. And so it is a wonderful promise when Jesus says, if you persevere and you don't cave in, you don't give up, you don't weaken, as my great-grandmother used to say, it's a great life if you don't weaken. If you persevere until death, Jesus says, and you overcome that area, you will not be hurt by the second death.

That means that your inheritance, your blessing, and your reward are secure. You have possessions in the eternal future that cannot be taken away. I don't know.

Different ones of us have had different experiences with someone who dies and who has possessions. Maybe a grandparent or someone in our close periphery that has accumulated nice things. Maybe they have nice furniture or they have antiques or they have cash money or they have other assets.

And then they pass away. And it is as though those material possessions have a kind of gravity field around them, a warping sort of power. And when people get in the near periphery, have the possibility of inheriting or gaining or obtaining those things, it starts to draw stuff to the surface of their soul like a magnet pulling metallic particles up from the sludge at the bottom.

And you see things in the close proximity to wealth and close proximity to money, not just when someone dies. I'm thinking of that because I've been having that experience this week. There is someone who I knew and cared for who passed away and now this individual's possessions are going various directions.

And you just can't believe the awfulness of human nature that gets exposed in situations like that. And people you would never dream of being acquisitive or covetous or suspicious of one another. Well, what happened to thus and so? I really like that.

That was promised to me. Where did it go? I don't see it anymore. Who took that? And just the worst kind of bile and poison.

It comes from desire for things. And one of the greatest places of overcoming for believers is to turn loose and release our grasp on material possessions in this life and try to lay hold of eternal things. Solomon talked about it.

We saw it in Ecclesiastes. Jesus talked about it. Lay out not for yourselves treasure on earth where moths corrupt and where thieves break in and steal.

Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. It's a long-term investment. The believers in Smyrna are promised that they will not be hurt by the second death.

That is a promise of inheritance. It is a promise that your treasure in heaven is intact and is waiting for you and will not be taken away. Because the second death for believers is loss of your

spiritual inheritance, loss of your spiritual blessings in heavenly places, loss of these unimaginably wonderful things that eye has not seen and ear has not heard.

You wonder how there could be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in heaven, looking at Jesus Christ and being resurrected and being free of sin. And people think, how could I possibly be unhappy in the golden realms and the pearly gates and all of that? You watch when somebody sees these wonderful, incredible spiritual treasures go pouring into the lake of fire because they were not seized and laid hold of in this life. And you will see and hear and I'm going to see and hear.

Hopefully we will not be participating. But there is going to be weeping and there is going to be wailing and there are going to be teeth grinding, resurrection teeth. Maybe Dan will still have a job in the millennium because there are going to be a lot of people grinding their teeth in chagrin and in sorrow and in shame and in disappointment because what was available was not recognized in this life.

Some temporary, tangible thing here took its place. So in the church at Smyrna, it's the issue of poverty and pressure. And Jesus says, He doesn't promise them relief.

He doesn't say, oh, you will soon be relieved. He said, you're going to get more. Just hold on.

Be faithful until death. You just have to last until death. And you cannot imagine what is in store for you.

A second death will not even touch you, will not hurt you. Your spiritual possessions, your heavenly, whatever you want to think of it, mansion full of wonderful treasures and furnitures and priceless possessions are all going to be waiting. And you will have the crown of life.

And even though they are poor, it puts us in mind of Luke 16 and the rich man and Lazarus where the poor beggar by the gate seemed to have no kind of life at all. The rich man seemed to have everything. And yet in the future, it's just the reverse.

And that crown of life says, be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life because you have learned what life is all about. The third church at Pergamum we saw held fast to their faith even in the days when Antipas was martyred and they were in fear for their very lives. But they were too flexible.

They were too interested in fellowship. They were willing to overlook some things that they should have taken note of and purged out of their fellowship. And this was the errors of Balaam and the doctrines of the Nicolaitans.

And they were too inclusive and too interested in fellowship. And you see this happening a lot today in Christian fellowships where the need for unity and the need for numerosity and the need for let's all get together goes beyond the bounds. It's a wonderful thing to be unified.

We've seen in Ephesians one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. We've seen it in 1 Corinthians 1. I hear that there are wars and divisions among you. It shouldn't be that way.

However, that does not mean unity at any price. It doesn't mean ecumenicity at any cost. We have to identify doctrinal error and separate from it.

There are essentials of the faith and there are non-essentials. I had a discussion earlier in the week with some folks who have a different view of eternal security. They think, well, it seems as though looking at the vine and the branches in John and some other passages that maybe the Bible speaks of those who become so reprobate that they toss back the salvation that God has freely given them in grace.

Well, honestly, that is a non-essential. People can say, oh, yeah, I can't believe you're really saved unless you think you're always saved. But the Bible doesn't say that.

The Bible isn't super clear on eternal security. I believe it teaches eternal security. I think you can make a good case.

But there are people who understand the Scripture differently. That is not worth separating over. But the deity of Christ, the efficacy of the blood atonement, and I would submit to you that some of the points of the Reformation that have been pushed to an extreme and become parts of Calvinism and Reformed theology are separation material because you cannot dismiss human responsibility.

You cannot dismiss the unlimited atonement of Christ and say that He only had a limited work on the cross. That is very close to missing the entire mark. And if you think that God was selective, that He took a tiny fraction of the human race and only applied the blood of Christ, only sent His Son to die for those, that He created the others and consigned them to hell just because He wanted to reflect His own glory, you're worshiping a different God.

That is a different God and a different Christ and a different cross than what the Bible teaches. And I would encourage anybody that has leanings in that direction or has people in their periphery who are diehards for that point of view, be careful. It is an insidious doctrine.

It will limit people's ability to grow spiritually. It will limit their understanding of Scripture. It will limit their appreciation for Christ.

And it will make the God who lives and reveals Himself in the Bible a complete stranger, because He is redefined as a completely different person with a completely different set of motivations and a completely different heart. It is like knowing someone well and then finding their worst enemy who has a completely different view of everything they do. I'll tell you an example.

I read a book called American Caesar by William Manchester, I think it was. A book about Douglas MacArthur. I am not a big fan of Douglas MacArthur.

I think he was a great general. I think he did a brilliant job in the Pacific in World War II. I think he has many credits to his name.

I don't think he was a particularly lovable human being. I don't think God put him on this earth to be a lovable human being. I think there were a lot of people who thought he was pompous and arrogant and his shirt was stuffed too tight, and that may all be true.

But I don't really care about that. I like my American freedom and the fact that I didn't grow up speaking Japanese and I think we owe a lot of that to Douglas MacArthur. But William Manchester took, if you read American Caesar, every episode, every decision that MacArthur made, he cast it in the worst possible light and throws in all of these suppositions and motivations.

Well, MacArthur was just doing this because of this. He doesn't have a clue why MacArthur did that, but he cast it in the worst possible light and it makes MacArthur into a caricature and into a person that he was not. I've read many books on Douglas MacArthur and that's one of them.

If you make certain fundamental assumptions about a person and then cast everything else they do in that light, you're going to warp and distort and caricature that individual. That, in a nutshell, is what Reformed Theology does to the Lord God. It takes a few of his attributes, blows them out of proportion, defines everything else that God does in the light of his sovereignty and his omnipotence, and distorts him and caricatures him and makes him into someone he is not.

And everybody has to draw their lines according to the light of Scripture in their own lives, but I will tell you that Reformed Theology is a danger, it is a menace, it is a growth-stunting point of view, and I would equate it in severity with the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrines of Balaam because it gives you a false theology, particularly if you become a die-hard advocate. It's sort of like the Masons. Guys can be a Mason.

I had a good friend in the Marine Corps who was a Mason. He didn't know up from down about the Masons. It was just a good old boy club.

His barber was a Mason and the guy that was a carpenter that came and fixed his house when it flooded was a Mason. It was kind of like a secret handshake, good old boy kind of a club. He didn't know anything about the 32nd degree and all of the weird theology and the all-seeing eye and all the rest of the weird stuff.

And a lot of people who go to Reformed churches have no earthly idea about the deeper theology. They like the emphasis on the Bible. They like having a Scripture to punctuate and underscore everything that they believe, and that's fine.

But if you find someone who is militant, if you find someone who is evangelical, if you find someone who loves to get into a debate and try to crush their fellow believer with their superior knowledge of Scripture, that is time to separate, because there is someone who is apostatizing and evangelizing for a false view of Scripture. Well, I've diverged enough on that. But that is Pergamum, and that is an aspect of Christianity that the Lord Jesus Christ presents to us.

We remember the two extremes in Balaam and in Nicolaitanism. You can either go into licentiousness or you can go into legalism. And Reformed theology has a heavy dose of the latter, of the Nicolaitan point of view, and deciding who is saved and who is not, and when they got saved, and what God decided and when He decided it, and telling people they are depraved and hopeless, helpless and useless, and so on.

To overcome, to shake free of that, is to receive the hidden manna. What is the hidden manna? These are the deeper understandings of the things of God. Manna was food for Israel.

In spiritual terms, it is the bread of angels. And that doesn't mean that they serve it on their kitchen tables in the heavenly realms. It means, what do angels do? Angels are learning.

The entire human experience and human creation exists, among other things, to teach the angels, to show forth the glory of God. And manna being presented as the bread of angels, in spiritual terms, is spiritual truth. It is what feeds our souls.

It is what educates us and illuminates us about God and His plan and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And to be given of the hidden manna means that you have successfully found the flaws in Nicolaitanism, in the doctrines of Balaam, and you have gotten them out of your periphery, and out of your system, and out of your way, so that you can see the deeper, wondrous things of God. And the white stone and the new name.

The white stone, your not guilty verdict. You have not been sullied, you have not been besmirched, you have not been rendered guilty by being sucked into one of these errors. And you have intimacy with God, because the knowledge, the hidden manna, is not just an end in itself.

In the same way that you, as you love someone, and you grow more and more intimate with them, and you know things about them that no one else knows, and they know things about you that no one else knows, and your knowledge of one another goes deeper and deeper, that's when people develop language that is all their own. Sometimes you can listen to two people that have been married a long time, and one of them makes a noise, and the other one makes a noise, and they've just exchanged a whole paragraph of information to one another that nobody understands but them. And to have the white stone with a name that no one knows, except you and God, means that you have a channel of communication that is yours, between you and God alone.

There's nobody else involved, it's not a group discussion, it's not a family meal with eight or

twelve places set, it's just you and the Lord, one on one. It's a wonderful promise. Then we saw Thyatira, the fourth church.

Their last deeds were better than the first, they've done a lot of wonderful things, but that woman Jezebel, they tolerate her, kind of like in Pergamum. They have forgiven her, is what it literally says, *aphiemi*, they have not separated, they haven't run her off, she's creating proselytes, and you have the mention of Satan there, and the encouragement to hold fast, to not lose those things that they have in their hand. And the promise to the overcomers is authority over the nations, and the morning star, and I think we covered that in pretty good detail when we finished up on Thyatira.

So now we are at the church in Sardis. They have a name, an *onoma*, O-N-O-M-A, that they are alive, but they are dead, Jesus says. And he says your deeds are not complete.

And the word that is used there for complete is sometimes translated perfect. And it is the same word that is used elsewhere in the Bible talking about something that is full, or not missing any of its parts. And this is the word *pleroma*.

It's the same word that is used of being filled with the knowledge of God. It's the same word that is used of filling of the Holy Spirit. And this is the perfect passive participle, which means in the past your works have not been completed in the sight of God.

You got part way and then you didn't finish. You ran well, Paul told the Galatians, who hindered you from obeying the truth? You were running well, but you didn't finish the race. You had a grand start.

My folks were telling me about a fellow that came and preached I think the revival at their church last year and was talking about finishing well. His theme for that revival, and it's a great theme for a revival, is finishing well. So many people start, but how many people finish and finish well? It's such a tragedy to do something 90% or 95% and then stop.

And I mentioned that poor lady that was trying to swim to Catalina and the fog came in and she got all discouraged and the water was cold. She got to aching and getting cramped up and she said, Oh, haul me in the boat. I give up.

I can't make it. And she was less than a half a mile from the shore. She had swum 25 and a half miles and then quit in the last half mile because she lost her vision and couldn't see and didn't have her hope.

So to complete, to fill up, is another way of your deeds have not been filled up. It's a half-hearted effort. It's started but not finished.

It's begun and not concluded. In the sight of my God. Now what this means is they may have been completed and filled up in the sight of men.

They might look good from a human point of view. And a lot of times we put a good cosmetic face on things, but what does it look like to the Lord God? That's the measure. And if there was a single issue in the modern church, especially in America here, in our day and in our generation, it is the difference between what man sees and what man judges and what man says and what God sees and what God judges and what God says.

He says, I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God. It's a fascinating way to say this also, don't you think? Because all judgment has been given, all authority has been given to Christ in heaven and in earth by God the Father. And judgment has been given to Him.

He is going to judge His people. It is the judgment seat of Christ. It's not the judgment seat of the Father that we will stand before.

But He says, I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God. The Lord Jesus Christ uses the standard of God the Father to judge. What does my Father think of this effort, of this deed, of this endeavor? He doesn't say, I have not found your deeds completed in my sight.

It's the sight of God the Father. So, what is the solution? Remember what you have received and heard. And literally, in verse 3 here, nemenuo, which is M-N-E-M, we have the English word mnemonic.

It's a memory aid to help you remember something. Say, well, use a mnemonic. That's from this Greek word, nemenuo.

And he says, nemeenue un, which is therefore, remember therefore, pos. And pos, P-O-S, means how you received and heard. Not just what you received and heard, but how.

What is the problem in Sardis? They're falling apart in the area of taking in the Word of God, receiving and hearing the Word, how they are doing it. You received and heard some good things. You had a name that you were alive, but you have died.

You've gone dead. And at the source of it, at the root of it, is how you receive and hear. That's the problem.

What are you doing to take in the Word of God? What are you doing to receive divine enablement and divine strength? Believers are new creation in Christ. Old things are passed away. All things have become new.

We who were dead in trespasses and sins have been made alive together with Him, Paul tells us in Romans. We have been made alive. So how could we have a name that we're alive, but we're really dead? Well, we've forgotten how we receive those things.

How do we receive the power of God? How do we receive the life of God? To give you the

answer to the question in the way that I ask it, who accomplishes the work of regeneration for believers? It's God the Holy Spirit, isn't it? One of the five salvation ministries of God the Holy Spirit is regeneration. Regeneration is the giving of life. Remember how you have received.

Remember how you have heard. It's the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. You can still be listening to the teaching of the Word.

You can still be reading your Bible. You can still be meditating. You can be thinking about verses you've memorized and points that you've heard made in Bible lessons.

But it is all in vain and it is all for naught if it is not done in the power and with the illumination of God's Holy Spirit. Remember how you received. Remember how you heard.

If you want what I consider to be a good review of that, get last Tuesday's lesson on the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. Remember how you have received and heard and keep. You notice it is in italics there.

If you have a New American Standard, in the New King James it says, Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Hold fast and repent. Hold fast and change your mind.

The word for hold fast is from tereo, which means to keep or guard. And repent is, of course, our old friend metanoeo, change your mind. Hold fast and change your mind.

We already have the Word. We already have the Spirit. But we have to hold fast and we have to change our mind with what we do with those things.

All believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. All believers have the araban, it says. A-r-r-a-b-o-n.

It means the pledge or the seal, the guarantee. It is like a redemption ticket where something is held for you like your car. I went to the courthouse one day and they had this parking where they took my car and gave me a ticket.

Instead of my nice beautiful Ford Taurus, I had a little piece of red cardboard with a number on it. And that was my guarantee that when I came back out of the courthouse, I could hand in that ticket and get my nice car back. The Holy Spirit is a guarantee.

He is a down payment. He is the ticket that says when you come to the place of death or the rapture, you're going to enter into eternal life. You're going to enter into the fullness and the ultimate sanctification that is the fruit of the work of Christ.

So, He says, Remember how you have received. Remember how you have heard. Hold fast, tereo, keep and guard.

Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief. The word for watch here is from

Gregoreo, which means to be alert, to be on guard. And He says, Therefore, if you will not be alert, if you will not be on guard, I will come upon you as a thief.

This is one of the more fascinating statements that Jesus makes about Himself. And if you recollect for a moment, you'll remember that Jesus uses this adjective, or actually this noun, in connection with Himself more than once, coming like a thief. Why would Jesus, of all of the possible metaphors, why doesn't He say, I will come like lightning? Why doesn't He say, I will come like a whack on the back of the head with a board? Why doesn't He say, I will come like a mule kick, or I will come like a meteor, or I will come like some other unexpected event? I will come like the east wind.

I will come like the explosion of pecans in the fire. There's all kinds of things He could have said, but He says, I will come like a thief. Well, we already have a clue to this metaphor, this comparison, in what we've discussed here in our first lesson that has to do with the second death.

But we're going to pause now and take our break, and when we come back, we'll examine for ourselves the passages that use this word thief in the New Testament, and I think it will illuminate and make very clear for us why Jesus chooses to make this particular comparison about Himself in this context. But let's pause here and take our break.