

02-09-29a Revelation

As we continue our worship service this morning and prepare to study God's Word together, let's take a moment at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts to seek the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We know that our human mind can't grapple with the truths that pertain to God and that are contained in His Word, and God has made provision for that by giving us His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is greatly misunderstood in our day, but we have seen the Scriptures that teach us about what He does.

He has a convicting ministry. He has an enabling ministry that strengthens us to do things that are not a part of our nature, to bear the fruit of love and joy and peace that is not native to us. And He gives us insight and understanding into the Scripture.

And the other great thing is He gives us memory of it and brings it to our mind at the times that we need it. For all of those reasons, we are grateful for His presence, and we pause at the outset of our lesson to make sure that we have availed ourselves of God's grace and have removed any impediments to His ministry in our soul. We acknowledge our sins before God and acknowledge the presence of the Spirit and ask that He is with us.

So let's take just a moment and pray. Father, thank You for this day. We thank You that we live in this country where we have unprecedented and unparalleled freedom and opportunity to live in prosperous circumstances, to pursue our faith and our understanding of Your Word without fear of persecution, without oppression.

We thank You that we have Your Word available to us in a multitude of forms and a multitude of ways. We have scholarship and access to the deep truths of Your Word as never before in human history. And we realize that this is an opportunity, that it is a limited opportunity, that the time is short, whatever the span of our lives, whatever the remainder of human history in this age.

And we pray that we will be ever conscious and mindful of our responsibility to pursue our upward call in Christ Jesus. We thank You for our form of government. We pray for our leadership.

We pray for the President and for the Congress as they make important decisions that affect both our foreign policy and our domestic situation. We pray that You'll be with President Bush, give him strength, give him the support that he needs in our government and the various other branches so that our security and our freedom will be maintained. We pray for those in the military service and those in law enforcement that You will bless them with the provision that they need and with the encouragement that they need to continue to guard our borders both internally and externally.

We ask Your blessing now on each one here and on all those who study with us by recordings. We ask that You will give us insight and understanding into Your Word and that these truths will live in our souls and will motivate and encourage and equip us for every good work. We pray it in

Jesus' name.

Amen. We resume our study this morning in Revelation 3. We're in the study of the letters to the seven churches. We have already seen Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, and we're concluding the fifth letter, the letter to Sardis.

We did a review last time of the emphasis of each of the first four letters. We noted that while many people take those letters to address themselves to different periods of church history, I believe that it is much more apropos to understand each of these letters as addressing different possibilities for us as believers, believers within an individual church in any generation. And indeed we can have phases of our life or areas of our life where one or more of these evaluations and exhortations will apply.

So in Ephesus where they had organized themselves and identified good leadership and really gotten the machine built and operating and yet began to lose sight of the purpose. He says you have lost your first love. Change your mind and do the works that you did at first.

And really their works have not changed but because the motivation has changed. The works themselves in God's sight are different. It's not what we do but why we do it that is in view when God judges us.

We saw the other churches and we're going to resume now looking at the end of the letter to the church at Sardis. And one of the things that we have already observed here is that Sardis had a reputation for being alive. Now who maintains a reputation? Who maintains your name? Well, name and fame are present in the human experience.

It's our peers, our fellow human beings who maintain. If you were on a desert island all by yourself you would have no reputation because there's no repute to be had with anyone. There has to be other people present.

I'm saying it awkwardly but you know what I mean. There has to be a crowd of people who think of you and that's your reputation, that's your name. So Jesus says to this church, I know your deeds that you have a name that you're alive but you're dead.

So the human evaluation of you is not accurate. Everybody thinks that you're fruitful. And we've seen the different kinds of life and death in Scripture.

Reviewed them very briefly because this is very clearly understood. To be alive means to be fruitful. We talk about a tree that has a dead branch.

It doesn't push out leaves. It doesn't produce fruit. So here is a... And I compared them last time to the fig tree outside Jerusalem when Jesus in his final week of life approached Jerusalem.

And here was the fig tree. And he went to it looking for figs and there weren't any. And he said,

since you don't have fruit that I was looking for, you're cursed.

And the next morning Peter looked out there and that tree was all withered up and dead so that its outward appearance would reflect its fruitlessness. And so this is death in the sense of fruitlessness. The people are not laying in the pews, as it were, dead in Sardis.

This is spiritual death and it doesn't mean that they're not saved. Jesus wouldn't even be talking to them about works if they were unsaved because the issue for unsaved people is faith and faith alone. The only issue for an unsaved person is do you claim or do you not claim the work of Christ on your behalf to solve your sin and separation problem with Almighty God? That is the only issue.

It is not a matter of, well, get saved and change your lifestyle. It's not a matter of get saved and anything. It is simply a matter of negative righteousness, negative relationship before God.

And the only way to solve that is to accept the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to claim him as Savior. And when the question is asked as you approach eternity, why should you not go to the lake of fire, your claim is the Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood on my behalf. And that is the only reason I have any claim to an eternal place outside the lake of fire.

It's the work of Christ. Substitutionary atonement is the theological term. We have a hymn in the hymnal, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. No other fount I know that makes me white as snow. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Well, this is not the case in the church. We're talking about people who are Christians, people who are saved. To the angel of the church at Sardis writes, he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, says this, I know your deeds.

Once you attain saved status, God's evaluation is on how you live your life. We have been called to be holy. We have been called to fulfill a purpose after we're saved.

I used to ask myself when I was a young lad, why is it that God leaves us in a fallen world with a corrupt nature to just wander around bumping into things and sinning all the time. Once we get it, you know, I grew up in church hearing all my life, you've got to be saved, you've got to accept Jesus. Okay, I've done that.

So once I've done that, why do I have to stick around and go through this life and just keep disappointing God all the time? Once I'm saved, why doesn't he just transport me to the heavenly realms and let these other people raffle with the question of salvation? The reason is there is a grand and extensive purpose that God has for your life and for my life as a believer here in this fallen world, still struggling with our corrupt nature. God can do things here. God can teach us things.

God can reflect his glory and demonstrate his character in this environment in a way he could never do in the eternal realms. Think about it. If you and I say, Lord Jesus, I recognize your work on my behalf, we acknowledge, we claim that, we say to God the Father, I accept the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on my behalf.

Thank you for your grace. And God zapped us into eternity. What's the status in eternity? What's our status? Are we imperfect or perfect? We're perfected.

We're completed. How about our bodies? We've got an eternal, everlasting body. It's raised and in corruption, Paul says.

How about heaven? Is there a bunch of sin and failure going on up there in the eternal future? No, there's not. There's not sin and corruption in God's heaven. There's not sin and corruption in the new Jerusalem or the new heavens and the new earth.

So, that environment means that there are certain things that we will be able to learn and come to understand and there are other things that we will not. It's only here with a nature that has fallen and corrupt, in a world that has fallen and corrupt, rubbing elbows with other people who are equally corrupt, that we push against this kind of resistance. You have the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Satan is active. He may not personally visit us. I doubt that any of us are important enough for the devil to come personally and say, I'm just going to spend my day seeing how I can knock Sam off track or Dan off track or somebody else off track.

He's got some 15th level sub-demon detailed to that task. But he's in the world and he's influencing policy and trying to change the course of nations and trying to thwart the progress of the gospel and trying to distract and divert believers in large groups into unproductive areas. So you've got the world, you've got the flesh, and you've got the devil here, all of which create resistance.

You think about weight training, you think about running, you think about maintaining the calcium level in your bones as you age. What is it that stimulates growth and health? It's exercise. Nobody who knows anything about health says you can be a couch potato or you can lay in bed all day and be healthy.

We have to get up and fight gravity, if nothing else. We have to get up and move things, get our circulation going, overcome inertia and resistance, and that makes us healthy. God leaves us here for our spiritual growth and our spiritual health.

We push against this resistance and it forms something eternal in our souls. We will carry that and that only forward into eternity. We won't take our possessions, we won't take our

accomplishments, we won't take our reputation among people.

What will we take? We will take the things that we have learned. We will take those decisions and actions that have reflected the glory of God and have taught us something and have taught the angels something and that God will use as his eternal Bible. We look at David and Moses and Daniel and we see the glory of God and the power of God and the grace of God reflected in those lives.

Each one of us has a life that could be written in this larger eternal Bible. How will we spend eternity? We'll have a much bigger Bible. There is a record in heaven of every life.

We're going to see the passages that support that this morning. So what's the point? I know your deeds. You have a reputation among men that you are fruitful.

People think well of you. People think, oh, they're a fine salt of the earth. Give you the shirt off their back.

Fine person. Wonderful, good deeds. But you are dead.

Now this is a scary thought because if everybody around me is saying, oh, Sam, you're such a wonderful person. You do so many good things. And I, in the back of my mind, have a sneaking idea that maybe I'm not as great as everybody thinks.

Which opinion is going to be more attractive to me? Well, I would rather believe that I am a wonderful person because I like that. And if enough people tell me enough times, this is the syndrome with celebrities. You notice how a lot of times a celebrity will get so full of himself and we say, well, they're believing their press.

They're starting to listen to all of their sycophants. Elvis Presley had this group of people who just kept telling him how great he was. There are pastors and evangelists and ministers who have a group of adoring supporters who will spend their money and give endowments.

And I'm working in an environment where I see the fruit of this every single day. It is not the evaluation of people. God is not going to take an opinion poll at the judgment seat.

And God isn't going to ask me, well, Sam, how good do you think you were? I'll base my judgment on your estimate of yourself. I wish he would, but he won't. And I can't gather a pool of trusted, devoted friends and family and say, now, y'all, when it comes my turn to stand up in front of God, I want you to, you know, it'll be like one of those applause meter things where they say, now, which one, you know, they stand the three people up, which one sang the best or danced the best? And then they have the applause meter.

And whoever gets the loudest applause wins. None of that equipment is going to be present at the judgment seat. And it's not your opinion of me.

It isn't my opinion of me. It is only what God sees. So this is a scary thing because what does Jeremiah 17, 9 say? My heart is deceitful above all things.

If there's anything that can fool me in this earth, it's my own heart. That's what Jeremiah 17, 9 says. The heart is deceitful above all things.

It's more deceitful than a con artist. It's more deceitful than a virtual reality. It's more deceitful than a false friend.

It's more deceitful than persuasive logic, false science. You know, people can take statistics and prove just about anything. I've watched court cases where they'll present one side and you'll swear there was this man, I can't think of his name, but his family all got murdered and he got bonked on the head or slashed or something.

David somebody or other. It seems like maybe he was even a doctor. Who was that? Janson? Yes, okay.

So here's this guy. And I saw a TV special on that whole thing. It happened many years ago now.

But they presented all the evidence on one side and you'd swear the guy was guilty of sin. They did that for like 45 minutes and they ran about nine minutes of commercials and then they came back and did another 45 minutes from the other side. They said, well, that's true, but.

And then they showed all of the reasons why maybe he didn't do it and the things that didn't add up and didn't click. And so by the end of the second 45 minutes I thought that guy is just as white as the driven snow. There's no possible way he could have done it.

Well, then they came back in the third hour and showed some more stuff and I was just as clueless at the end of it as I was at the beginning. People can present things in such a way as to deceive. Why do you think so many people bought the belly buster and the Thighmaster and the Popio Pocket Fisherman and all of these other things? You can be sold a bill of goods, but there's nothing as deceitful as my own heart.

My heart will tell me I'm right when I'm wrong. My heart will tell me I'm good when I'm not. And the scary thing is, here's the Lord Jesus Christ standing there looking at a church full of believers just like you and me and he says, you have a reputation that you're alive but guess what? You're not.

You have a reputation that you're productive and that you're producing good and guess what? You're not. You are dead. Verse 2, wake up.

You're dozing. You've become complacent. You're satisfied that, well, I'm pretty good.

I'll be in the... You know, the other thing, the other way we comfort ourselves is we think, well, maybe I'm not the saintliest person that ever came along. I'm not going to be a shining Billy

Graham type. But I'm not going to be Mussolini and Hitler rolled into one either.

I'll just be kind of in the thick of the crowd. I'll be out there in the middle and I'll just blend in with all the other average people that kind of do the average amount of good and bad. Jesus says to an individual, remember, all of these are in the singular.

The you's here are you singular. He says, you wake up. Don't be dozing.

Don't be complacent. Don't settle. Wake up and strengthen the things that remain.

You have got some truth in your soul. You know about God and you know about this life and you know about the coming judgment and you know about the eternal future. You know that there's going to be a wide spectrum of situations in the kingdom.

Jesus said there's going to be those who are great and there are going to be those who are least. We like to think it'll all be one big happy, you know, all men are created equal and they'll end up equal. They won't.

The Bible teaches that they're, just look at the angelic creation. You've got archangels. You've got seraphim.

You've got many different, you know, in the fallen realm, you've got principalities and powers and rulers. God's order always sorts greater, lesser, lesser, lesser, down to the least. Well, I don't know about you, but in this life, I have tried to not wind up least.

I don't want to be least in income. I don't want to be least in housing. I don't want to be least in, I don't want to be having to eat reconstituted hot dogs or soy burgers or any other, you know, we want our food to be good.

We want to be able to afford decent food. We want a decent place to live. We don't want to be down at the lower level.

Well, guess what? If we remain dead and we remain asleep, we will be least. We're going to be, and people try to think ahead. We try to plan for retirement.

We try to plan for the future. We put something away for a rainy day. We plan ahead in this life.

Jesus told a parable about that, about the unjust steward, and he said, you know, the sons of this generation are smart enough, even in the fallen world, they know to look ahead. They know to try to line their nest for the future. If in this life you think that way, do you not really think that there's a next life? Do you not really think that there's a resurrection, that there's a God who will stand in judgment and that there is a vast, endless eternity, and our place and our situation in that eternity depends entirely on how we live this life, how dedicated we are to pleasing God.

So what a shocking thing for the Lord Jesus Christ, who sits at that judgment to say, you know,

you thought you were doing well, and everybody else thought you were doing well, and guess what? You are dead. Wake up and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. You've neglected these so long they're like a plant left in the pot with no water.

The little branches and stems have just flopped over the edge there, and they're wilted, but if you snap back the little branches, there's still a little bit of green in the middle. So prune that thing and water it, and let's strengthen what remains. Why? The end of verse 2 says, I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God.

And we looked at that verb last time. Pleroma means to be filled up. Your deeds are not filled up.

Pleroma is the word that's used for the filling. Pleroma is used for the filling of God's Holy Spirit. It is the inner motivation.

It's the reason why you do what you do. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they did holy things. They prayed.

Is prayer a biblical concept? Is prayer a good thing? How about giving to the work of the Lord? Is giving a good thing? It is. Well, guess what? The Pharisees prayed, and the Pharisees gave. How about learning Scripture? We all have an emphasis on learning the Scriptures.

Is learning Scripture a good thing? Pharisees learned the Scriptures. How about memorizing verses? Pharisees memorized verses. How about sticking up for the things of God in your society? Pharisees stuck up for what they understood to be the things of God in their society.

They were agents for change. They resisted the pagan Romans and called them the godless, non-God-worshipping people that they were. Why were the Pharisees condemned? Why did Jesus call them a brood of vipers? Why did He call them whitewashed tombstones? Because their deeds were not play-Roma.

They weren't filled up. They weren't inspired on the inside by a genuine understanding of God's Word and God's plan. It is not what we do.

It is why we do it. I gave you my example last time. There were six people sitting in the aisle, and the offering plate goes by, and everybody drops in a bill.

Why do you do what you do? That is what is judged by God. We have our scriptures. The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword.

It pierces right to the center of our soul and our spirit. It is a judge. It is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

There is nothing that is hid from God's view. We can do a pantomime in front of people. We can put up a facade.

We can wear the mask. We can do things, and it seems great, but God is looking at the very center of our being. He knows every subtle motivation.

He knows the why and the wherefore, and that is the basis of the judgment. We might as well stop doing good things if we are just doing them because people are watching. Wake up and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete.

If they are not inspired on the inside by God's Holy Spirit, if they are not motivated properly, if they are not done... Remember what Jesus told His disciples? He said, The things that you do, don't even let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, because if you do it so people can see and people can pump up your reputation, you have your reward. Whatever people think of you, that is as much as you get. But what is the opinion that people are going to count for after this life? Does it count as a judgment? No.

Does it affect how many rooms are in your mansion? No. Does it have any influence whatsoever on anything past the point where people think the thought? No. How long does the good opinion of people last? Well, it depends on the people.

Sometimes it only lasts a very short time. You ask them tomorrow and you can kill yourself and knock yourself out pleasing somebody. Today, tomorrow, they see some... We had a saying in the Marine Corps that if I clean it up it says you can have a thousand attaboys and it only takes one oh no to wipe them all out.

Somebody says, oh, look at that failure and your thousand attaboys are forgotten forever. So there is no point in cultivating a name, a reputation in this life. I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

The Lord Jesus is looking and His standard of evaluation is God the Father. That is what is contained in God's Word. So what is the solution here? What is the exhortation? Verse 3, remember how you have received and heard.

You have received and heard things. That is why there are some things that remain, some things that can be strengthened. But He says, remember how you got those? Paul makes the same point when he says, as you have received Christ Jesus, so walk.

We were saved by faith. We have got to walk by faith and not by sight. And what does that mean? It is not just hoping and plying the sky by and by.

Faith means we know what the Word of God says. The Word of God says, my God shall supply all your needs. The Word of God says, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

The Word of God says, whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Word of God says, in everything give thanks. This is the will of God concerning you.

The Word of God says, cast all your cares on Him, because He cares for you. That ought to change the course of our life. It ought to change the why of what we do.

And as we tackle any mundane task, I have got to run the sweeper. I have got to change the plugs in my truck engine. I have got to mow the grass.

Whatever it is I have to do, why am I doing that? Do I have one eye on eternal things and the eternal realm? Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men, is what it says. It just doesn't count. I can't tell you how many times I have mowed the lawn.

I can't tell you how many times I have driven to work. I can't tell you how many times I have done various repetitive tasks. But God can, and God can tell you how many times I did it with an eye on heaven, and how many times I did it because people were looking, or because I wanted something that was a big part of the plan of Sam.

And it didn't have any spiritual component. It didn't have any heavenly aspect. Well, guess what? That time, that effort, that accomplishment is gone in the dust of history never to return.

It has no eternal component whatsoever. But, what I like to think about is the encouraging side. When we do stop, and we say, Lord, I am going to mow this lawn because it is the right thing to do.

It is something that is pleasing in your sight to have a good stewardship, to maintain things. I am doing it because I know it pleases my wife. I am doing it because it is a right and proper thing to do.

It is part of the light that shines in the world. That counts, and it is written in the eternal records. Let's talk about that a little bit.

If we go on down here, it says, Remember how you have received and heard. Hold fast and change your mind. If you do not watch, if you are not alert, I will come upon you as a thief.

And you will not know what hour I will come upon you. We looked last time at the passages where Jesus several times says, I will come like a thief. The day of the Lord will come like a thief.

Why does it say that? Because many people who have things, they have a reputation among people. They have a reputation in their own mind. They have built up in their imagination this pile of good that is going to hopefully kind of balance or outweigh all of the failures and the faults.

Jesus says, When I come like a thief, that onoma, that name that you have, that idea that you have, that you have this reputation for good, what does a thief do? Why is he called a thief? Because he takes things away that are dear to us. He takes things away that are meaningful to

us, that we were counting on, that we had a mental investment in. If the Lord Jesus Christ, he could have said, I will come like lightning.

He could have said, I will come like the cavalry. I will come like a giant rescuing army. Why does he use a negative image and say, I will come to you as a thief? It's kind of like the potter and the clay.

If you look in scripture, every place you find the potter and clay imagery, it is in a context of judgment, negative judgment. And every time you see Jesus saying, the day of the Lord will come like a thief. You see Paul saying, the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

Peter says it will come like a thief. Jesus describes himself as coming like a thief. Every single time it is in the context that if you are not ready, you are going to suffer loss.

And we would like to prevent that loss. Jesus says it in the very same context. He says if the owner of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have guarded his goods.

We need to think in those terms. We need to look at ourselves and say, if I'm just piling up a name with myself and others, that's something that the thief is going to take. I need to be storing up for myself treasure in heaven, not treasure on earth.

But this idea of the name threads through this entire letter. Here in verse 4, you have a few names even in Sardis. Why doesn't he say you have a few people, or you have a few holy men, or you have a few saints? He says you have a few names, and it's onoma once again.

He says you have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. The garment is the white robe of righteousness. You can begin with a robe of righteousness and then besmirch it.

You can soil it. You can wipe out your attaboys with some oh-noes. But you have a few names, Jesus says, even in Sardis, who have not defiled their garments.

And do you know what the reward is for maintaining that righteousness? They shall walk with me in white. This is walking beside the Lord Jesus. People think, oh, well, when I die or when Jesus comes and goes to glory, we'll all be with Christ.

That's not the case. Being with Christ and walking with Him, He has resurrected humanity. He is in a single place.

And everybody that's ever been saved can't all crowd around Him at the same time. Who is going to have the privilege of that proximity? Who is going to enjoy the presence of Christ in the eternal future? The same people who enjoy it now. Who wakes up in the morning? Who, at different times in the day, thinks about Christ and wonders whether He's pleased? Wonders whether when

He looks, He sees an undefiled white garment? Does that thought cross our mind at any time in the day? If it does, we care about Him.

We care about what He sees. And those are the people who are going to be walking with Him in white. People who go for days and weeks without really thinking about Christ and whether He is pleased with what we're doing and how we're living.

If we don't care now, why would we care then? Because we see Him. We can see Him now in the pages of Scripture. The Holy Spirit reveals Him.

Jesus said, The Holy Spirit will come to you and you will see Me through His ministry. He told the disciples that in John 14 and 15. He said, I'll send you the Comforter and even though I'm going away, you will see Me.

Because God, the Holy Spirit, will reveal Me to you. Well, we have to cultivate that. We have to seek it.

We have to be looking. Wake up. And look, He says, you will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

They are righteous. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments. You know what that tells us? There is a group called believers.

Church age saints. Church age saved people. Within that group is a much smaller subset of those who overcome.

And to those who overcome, they will be clothed in white garments. And I will not blot out His name from the Book of Life. Now, all my life, I thought the Book of Life was the register of the saved.

But there's been a big problem when I started studying theology and looking around. I found that there were a lot of people who said, you know, this is disturbing that you can have a roster of the saved. Let's assume for the moment that the Book of Life is everybody that's not going to hell.

Okay? Jesus says, if you're an overcomer, if you're in this subset of believers that really gets with the program and devotes themselves to living to please God, you'll walk with me in white and I won't blot your name out of the book. Well, think about it. This is kind of a theological problem here.

This is a Bible understanding problem because if I'm saved but I'm not faithful enough, I'm not holy enough and righteous enough, it sounds like from here, my name could get blotted out of that book. He says, if you're faithful enough, I won't blot you out. Well, the flip side of that coin is if you're not faithful enough, I will blot your name out.

Yikes! I thought once saved, always saved. I thought my salvation depended on the work of God and not on the work of Sam. But here, unless I'm an overcomer and get that white garment, possibility of the name, why else would it be promised as a reward? To him who overcomes, I will not blot out his name.

Well, nobody's name can be blotted out. It doesn't say that. I thought it was scary when he said you're alive and really dead.

But this is even more scary because this is like eternal death. Well, let's take a look at the Book of Life because you can draw erroneous conclusions when your assumptions are false. And what we're going to see is the assumption that the Book of Life is the roster of the saved is erroneous.

And I will tell you at the outset, the Book of Life is not the list of the saved. How do we know that? The Bible tells us so. Take a look.

First of all, we need to establish that God keeps records in heaven. God keeps all kinds of books. There's not just one book in heaven.

There's not just two books in heaven. There are many books. There's all kinds of books.

For example, take a look at Exodus. Even before that, take a look at Exodus 25 and verse 9. Turn back to Exodus 25, 9. This is in the days when God was giving the law. Israel's out in the wilderness and they're going to build the tabernacle, the dwelling place for God.

In Exodus 25, 8, God says to Moses, Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. So you remember the tabernacle, big tent type of thing. It's got all kinds of altars and candlesticks and things in it.

All right. Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. So if God just said, Hey, y'all down there in the wilderness, build me a tent.

How do you build a dwelling place for God? I wonder how big it ought to be. God's pretty big. I don't know if we've got enough animal skin.

You need some kind of plan. And how do you know if God's going to be pleased if you just come up with it all yourself? Well, God solved that problem. He said, look, according to all that I show you, that is the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.

God had blueprints for the tabernacle and he gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai. He said, look, I'm going to give you a pattern. I'm going to give you the blueprint.

Here's the design. When I was a little boy, my mother used to go and get patterns. You recognize them.

They're always in those kind of cheesy paper envelopes and they've got a little picture on the front of how the dress is supposed to look. The people are always long and drawn out. It was the style of fashion drawing back then.

You remember that, the dresses? She used to sew dresses for my sister. She made my dad a shirt, made him a western shirt with snaps and stuff. And it was a pattern because neither me or my mom or most other people, there are probably a few, but most people can't just sit down with a bulk of cloth and start cutting and snipping and sewing and end up with a shirt that fits.

You know, the sleeves wouldn't work or the hem wouldn't be straight or the waist wouldn't be right. You have to have a pattern. Well, God gave a pattern and this pattern was drafted in heaven.

God wrote it down in heaven, designed it up there and brought it down to Moses. This pattern of the tabernacle pre-existed the giving to Moses. He said, I've got this pattern of the tabernacle here and the pattern of all its furnishings.

The exact dimensions for the mercy seat and the altar of incense and the table of showbread and the lamp stand and the brass laver and the big C outside and all of the accouterments down to the finest detail were drafted in a pattern and given to Moses. There is a... Did you know that the angels have a Bible and it's different than ours? I bet you didn't know that. Take a look at Daniel chapter 10 and verse 21.

This is another heavenly book and it's one that we don't have yet. Daniel 10, 21. This is where you have the... Remember the prince of... The angel comes to Daniel and he says, Do you know why I've come to you? I must return and fight with the prince of Persia and when I've gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.

These are national angels. Angels that are... Michael is the prince of Israel. He's the head angel.

He's another in that strata of government that God has assigned. Those functional roles of varying levels of importance. And so in Daniel 10, 20, he says, Do you know why I've come to you? I've come to deliver some information to you but I've delivered it.

Now I've got to go back and do my real job which is going and contending with this angel... Persia is an unsaved nation and there's a fallen angel that's heading that up and he's going to go contend. There are angelic struggles that go on with nations and individuals that we don't even see. He says, When I've gone forth, the prince, the angel of Greece will come.

But look at verse 21. He says, But before I go, I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth. I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth.

No one upholds me against these except Michael, your prince. These two angels are fighting a

whole slew of fallen angels. There's a national conflict going on to preserve the nation of Israel.

It's been going on all down through history. But he says, I'm going to tell you what's noted in the scripture of truth. And the word scripture there is from katav, katuv.

It's something that was cut or carved. It's something that was recorded. It's been recorded in heaven.

It is an actual record in heaven. And he says, We've got some things in our angel Bible that you don't know yet down here on earth. And I'm going to tell you some of them.

And he goes on in Daniel 11. He says, Now I will tell you the truth. Three more kings will arise in Persia.

The fourth will be far richer. And he goes on to give the mighty king who will arise and rule the great dominion. And his kingdom will be broken and divided.

He tells the future. These prophetic scriptures that are recorded in Daniel 11 were already written in the angel Bible that has a lot of human history mapped out. And God told the angels ahead of time, This is how human history is going to go.

Israel is going to come up as a nation. They're going to dwell in their own land. And I'm going to have to split them in two.

And they're going to go into captivity. I'll restore them to the land. They're going to have to rebuild the temple.

God has a lot of prophecy about national movements in the angel Bible. And this angel came down and said, I'm going to tell you some of what's written down in the scripture of truth. It's a book in heaven.

It may have been the same book that had the pattern for the tabernacle in it. And God revealed that to Moses so that it could be built down here. God keeps records in heaven.

One of those books is the book of life. So we're going to take a look at some of these books and exactly what the criteria is for being written in it or being blotted out when we come back from our break. But what is the conclusion we draw as we read this letter to Sardis? We cannot count on the good opinion of people.

We cannot trust our good opinion of ourselves because our heart is deceitful more than anything and desperately wicked. Who can understand it? Who can overcome the deceitfulness of his own heart? We can't. That's why God gave us his spirit.

And his spirit speaks through his word. And we have to cultivate the ministry of God's spirit. We have to ask about it.

We have to go to the Lord in prayer and say, God, show me my secret faults. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

We have to go to God and ask for his insight so that we can see our areas of failure and work on overcoming them. We have to wake up. We have to become alert.

Gregoreo is the verb and it's used twice in this letter. Wake up. Be alert.

Watch. So that I do not come, Jesus says, like a thief and take away things that you were counting on. If we're alert and if we watch, we will build up that treasure in heaven that cannot be taken away, where a thief does not break in and steal, where moth does not corrupt.

We cannot count on the good opinion of people. We cannot count on our own good opinion. We have to see with God's eyes.

We have to measure with his standard. He has given that to us. We just have to reach out and seize it.

We do that by prayer. We do that by spending time meditating on God's word and by cultivating the ministry of God's spirit to reveal those hidden things to us in our soul, to convict us where we're failing, to motivate us through God's word so that the thoughts and intents of our heart are pleasing in God's sight. That is the way to become an overcomer.

That is the way to walk with the Lord in white, to be fully pleasing to him in every way, to grow up to the standard of a mature man. Well, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see everything the word of God has to say about this book of life in which we fervently hope our name is written.

Let's pause here.