

Revelation 20-06-04b

We're ready to resume our study now in Revelation 17 and 18 by way of Daniel chapters 2 and 3. We're kind of flipping back and forth. If you return to Daniel for just a moment, remembering that the mystery woman on the beast is labeled Babylon for a reason. There is associated truth about Babylon and about the attitude within Babylon.

It's very interesting to read through the book of Daniel, the early chapters and see the story of Nebuchadnezzar in the first four chapters. And although he is directly talked to by God, he receives direct communication from God in the form of his visions. He doesn't respond to that as he should.

And by the time you get to chapter three and his second dream, where he sees the tree that has a great height, this is chapter four, verse 20, the tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens could be seen by all the earth leaves, lovely fruit, abundant food for all under which the beast of the field dwelled in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home. By the way, birds of the heaven are almost always, you know, unclean carrying birds. The parable of the Lord Jesus with the tree growing up and the birds roost in its branches.

Those are the birds that are going to be a part of Gog Magog and join Satan in the rebellion. You don't want birds roosting in your branches. If you ever parked under a tree, you know why.

Anyway, a watcher in verse 23 says, come down, chop down the tree and destroy it. Leave the stump and roots in the earth bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven.

Let him graze with the beast of the field till seven times pass over him. Seven times pass over him. Now, this times is indefinite in the sense of biblical symbolism.

A time times and half a time winds up being three and a half years. So a time would be a year. And in the immediate fulfillment of this, Nebuchadnezzar loses his mind for seven years, seven times.

So the interpretation is verse 25, they will drive you from men. Your dwelling will be at the beast of the field. They'll make you eat grass like oxen, be wet with the dew of heaven.

Seven times shall pass over you until you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses in as much as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree. Your kingdom shall be assured to you after you come to know that heaven rules. Therefore, O King, let my advice be acceptable to you.

Break off your sins by being righteous and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps

there may be a lengthening of your prosperity. And of course there isn't.

And so all of this comes upon Nebuchadnezzar and you can read the fulfillment in the next several verses there. And at the end of that time, verse 34, Nebuchadnezzar lifts his eyes to heaven, his understanding returns, and he blesses the most high. And then that's, that's the end of the Nebuchadnezzar story.

But this self-satisfaction, the hubris, the feeling of self-sufficiency is a dangerous thing. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. And when the scarlet harlot false religion is brought down and destroyed, there will be a few who are going to learn this lesson and change their minds.

Uh, but most will not. So as you make your way back to the book of revelation, uh, stop at chapter two and three, we're going to make a real quick survey. We've looked at these in great detail.

And you remember that, uh, there are a number of different ways that these chapters are understood. The seven churches, the letters to the seven churches, uh, many have taken this to be sort of chronological that the early days of the church are represented by Ephesus and then Smyrna, the days of persecution under the Romans and carrying on through so that in the latter days, we are basically the church of the Laodiceans picking up in chapter three, verse 14. I don't think so.

And I can show you if you have a pencil or a pen and want to just mark a few things as we pass rapidly across these seven churches, it's important because in my view and knowledge isn't going to die with me, but here's the reason I think all seven churches pertain in every generation between Christ and now to and through the end of this age. Here's why turn back to chapter two, start with Ephesus. By the way, there's kind of an interesting chiastic structure in these.

I don't have time to go into, but for fun sometime, uh, compare Ephesus and Laodicea. And remember that the letter to the Laodiceans has been mislabeled as the letter to Ephesus. If you needed a clue anyway, uh, compare those and then compare, uh, Smyrna to, uh, Philadelphia and so on and, and work toward the middle.

It's fun. You you'll see, I don't need to explain it, but look at chapter two church of Ephesus. These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand.

Notice he holds all seven stars at once. He doesn't pick them up and lay them down one at a time. Jesus has got the seven stars all in his hand at the same time.

They co-exist. Co-exist. Have you ever seen the bumper sticker co-exist? Well, just instead of all those funky religious symbols, seven stars, that's co-exist.

Um, look at verse two. I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear

those who are evil. There have been believers in every generation since Christ, since Pentecost who are fitting this description.

Labor, patience, don't put up with evil. You know, people like this, you are people like this. You manifest love.

You have patience, you work, and you don't tolerate evil. You don't compromise with it. You don't parlay with it.

It's evil. You have tested those who say they are sent ones and are not, and have found them liars. You have sifted out teachers of bad interpretation, bad biblical application, twisters of truth.

You've identified them and set them aside. Every generation of believers have had to figure out who is accurately representing the truth of God and who is twisting it for whatever ends. You've done that.

Verse three, you have persevered and have patience. Notice this is the second time patience has been mentioned. The testing of your faith produces patience.

Patience needs to have its perfect work in us so that we can be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Patience, hugely important attribute, fruit of the spirit. You have patience.

You have persevered and have labored. Notice again, labor, patience, perseverance. This is manifest in works.

Jesus says in verse two, I know your works. You have done this for my namesake, verse three, and have not become weary. Do not become weary in well-doing, knowing that you have a reward from the Lord Christ.

Keep on keeping on. Do not grow weary in well-doing. Persevere.

Be patient. Keep working. But here is the danger for those who are strong in these areas.

Many times, certain strengths are almost united with concomitant weaknesses. It's the flip side of a coin. When you have this strength, you have this weakness.

You know, I have this against you. You have left your first love. You can get so busy working that you forget the reason for which you came to faith.

And you can get caught up in the work of ministry rather than in relationship with Christ. Just remember Mary and Martha, Mary sitting at the feet, Martha washing the dishes, and Martha gets a little peeved. Well, if Jesus is at your house, put the dishes in the sink and go listen.

He's not going to be there always. Dishes you have with you always. And there's a time to be sure.

This is basically an encouragement to respect priorities. There is a time to work, and there is a time to nurture, give space to, and cultivate love. Couples have this challenge.

People progressing from youth to middle age to retirement years have this challenge. You can work and work and work saying, boy, you know, one of these days we're going to enjoy life. We'll travel.

We'll do this, that, and the other. But you've gotten so used to working that you work right until you drop into the grave, and you never do relax. And you've got to do, you know, there's a song back in the 70s, stop and pick the flowers along the way or whatever.

You've got to be balanced and remember that there is a time for every purpose under heaven and a season. And there's a time to work, and there's a time to sit down. There's never a lack of work, almost never.

There's always something you could be doing, but don't forget love and your priority love. Your first love is your priority love, love for God, love for one another. Don't lose sight of those in the midst of your persevering and working, laboring, and your patience.

Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen. In order to remember something that pertained in the past, you've got to stop and sit and think. You can anesthetize yourself with busyness.

Well, I can't think about that now because I'm caught up in my current task. Set the task aside and think. This is why we are encouraged to reflect.

The one in Psalm 1 that is blessed meditates in the law of the Lord day and night. He's the tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth his fruit in his season. There's a season for fruit bearing, and there is a season for nurture and sucking up the water from the river.

Remember, from where you have fallen, change your mind and do the first works. They're working, but the first works were infused with and motivated by love. You can lose the love and keep on working, keep on keeping on, but if you're not doing it for that first love, the works become empty and without meaning.

So remember the first works associated with the first love. The latter works, love's not in them. You see this.

And notice here in verse five, this is where we're going here. Verse five and six, change your mind and do the first works or else I will come to you quickly. Remove your lampstand from its place unless you change your mind, change your mind, or I will come and your lampstand's going to go away unless you change your mind.

Notice Jesus says, I will come. Now, if this is the first church and everybody's died centuries ago,

the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ wouldn't be pertinent. This church is existing.

And when he comes, they're going to lose their, their honor of being one of his seven lampstands. They lose that reward of light and position and proximity. So just circle, I will come.

This church is going to be present when Jesus comes. That's how I understand this. You could say, well, when they died, Jesus came in the sense of the rapture.

This is the entity of the church. This is a group. This is a category, a type of believer.

And Jesus says, you don't want to lose your lampstand. When I come, you don't want to be dismissed as a representative, as a light bearer, as a reflector of glory. And you'll lose that.

If you don't change your mind and be sure that your work and your labor and your patience is motivated by infused with and reflective of that first love, do the first works, the works you did for love, not from habit or for convenience. Second church, verse eight, Smyrna, I know your works in verse nine, your tribulation and poverty. You say, whoa, tribulation is the church in the tribulation.

No, there's lots of different kinds of tribulation. Just like there are a lot of different things that are referred to as the day in that day or the day of the Lord. What I tried to read some mid-trib people this past week and get my head around their position and see if the, if it had merit, if I was on the wrong track or whatever, one of the fatal mistakes made by folks who embrace something other than a pre-tribulation rapture is they put a technical definition on the day of the Lord and that the day of the Lord is only the bowl judgments.

A, they don't understand that the trumpets and seals and bowls are not necessarily sequential, that they are sort of concurrent and overlap. They don't see that. So they've got 21 separate phases in the seven year period, which means you've got what, three different phases every year.

Each, each thing lasts roughly four months. It's, and they say the day of the Lord is specifically only the part of the bowls. Well, look at Malachi.

I think it's four, six, if my memory serves and don't trust it, look it up. But memory says, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord. And then Jesus later on says, John the Baptist was Elijah.

If you receive it, if you receive it, John is he who shall come. John is Elijah if you receive it. Well, so what's the day of the Lord? Well, there's a sense in which Jesus coming the first time was the day of the Lord, the beginning of the day of the Lord, because John is Elijah.

I will send Elijah before the great, but remember great and terrible. And if you close up the gap between the 69th and 70th week and leave out the church age, well, the day of the Lord is only

about 10 years long, the three years of Jesus ministry, three and a half, and then seven years of the tribulation. So you've got a week and a half there.

And that's the day of the Lord. And three and a half years before the 70th week in that view, just loop the church age below that and tie those together. At any rate, I know your works, verse nine, chapter two, revelation and your poverty.

Some believers have a tough row to hoe circumstantially. And I know a lot of you and it just seems like you've had a second helping of hardship, not of your own making, not of your choice. You just have hardship.

Tribulation flips us is just difficulty. It's just a lot of friction in trying to get from point A to point B, whether it's health, whether it's economy, whether it's people testing, whether it's whatever challenge there may be. It can be congenital.

It can be circumstantial. It can be external. It can be internal.

You can have a besetting sin that's just bedeviling you your whole life, whatever it may be. It's a tribulation and poverty. You lack things you wish you had.

You look around and think other people have them and you don't. Jesus says, I know your actions. I know your difficulties and I know what you don't have.

Make sense? Don't think Jesus doesn't know that you've got a tough row to hoe, that you don't have a lot of things you wish you had and you look around and it seems like other people have. I know the blasphemy, those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Put a little star by that, those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan, because that's going to occur later on again in identical phraseology and it means something.

These are churches, so why would they be worried about Jews and synagogues? Interesting, no? They say they're Jews, but they're not. They're a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.

I cannot emphasize enough. We are not going through the great tribulation. That is the time of Jacob's trouble.

It doesn't mean that we are without trouble. Our faith is going to be tested. Our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory, but don't forget there is affliction.

The more affliction, the more potential eternal glory, weight of glory. Light affliction, heavy glory. Momentary light affliction, eternal weight, eternal freight of glory.

What we think is overwhelming, what we think is unendurable now is but for a moment, but there is a weight, there is a substantial, eternal reward associated with it. We have to cultivate that

perspective and we can only do it by soaking ourselves in the word of God, being prayerful, being reflective about divine truth, keeping ourselves in the faith. Keep yourself in the love of God.

Keep yourself in the faith. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. Encourage one another unto love and good works.

But look at verse 10. Do not fear any of the things that you're about to suffer. It's a hardship, but it should not produce fear or reluctance or dread or stepping away.

The devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested and you will have tribulation 10 days. You are going to have 10 days of tribulation. Now this also tells you that this is a different tribulation than the seven years of tribulation, because that tribulation doesn't last 10 days.

Half of it doesn't last 10 days. You don't go through the first 10 days and then leave and then there's 1260 times two. None of that.

This is a different period. It's during this age, testing 10 days. What that tells us is not so much when or a specific duration in our life, but that it is fixed.

It is bounded. God has set the limits of it. Time-wise, intensity-wise, we're not tested above what we are able to bear, and so we should not fear it.

Testing is for our benefit and God's glory. It is never to harm us or to leave us with a deficit. Nothing God does is going to hurt us.

Those who love God and are the called according to his purpose are incorporated into his good and into his glory. We become a part of it. We reflect it.

We benefit from it. Nothing to fear. You think about a child and they need an operation.

I remember when our daughter had her appendectomy and you're trying to comfort and encourage a toddler that's going under the knife and in a room full of strangers and so on. It's extremely difficult, but if you could just impart that there's nothing to fear here. You're in good hands.

This is for your benefit. It's an ugly process. It's a challenge.

There's going to be some pain associated with it, but you need this. Otherwise, your appendix will burst and you will die. So this momentary light affliction is going to have a long-lasting benefit and grant to you opportunities for the rest of your life.

Trust me on this. I know you don't understand it. You've got to look into the eyes of your father and mother and trust that we know what we're doing when we put you through this time of trial.

It's exactly like that with God. Do not fear what you're about to undergo. It is for your benefit.

You're going to come out on the other side grateful and rewarded and blessed. Don't fear the devil. The devil is going to throw you into prison that you may be tested.

Notice, thrown into prison. It doesn't say the devil is going to kill you. The devil is going to torture you.

The devil is going to flay you alive. He's going to put you in prison and imprisonment makes people nervous. Let me say as a quick aside, you know, my reluctance to delve into current events or politics or any of the rest of it.

But as you look at current news and you see worldwide rioting, if you want to go out and hold a sign and say, hey, I think this is wrong and this is right. Great. I think this guy is good.

I think this guy is bad. I think this policy is good. I think this policy is bad.

This circumstance. Fine. Expressing opinions.

It's a God given right. It's an American constitutional right. Great.

Why is it that so much of this has gone beyond that? And you watch people who are vicious, violent, strutting in front of cameras, strutting in front of law enforcement, throwing frozen water bottles and bricks and ripping down plywood and this hubris and this sense of entitlement. Why? What is at the root of it? You'll hear people, you know, talking heads talk about all day. I'm just going to give you one quick thought.

We are built for identification with the cause of Christ. We are made in God's image. All human beings are built to be connected to God and to represent his cause and his truth.

If you choose like the harlot, like mystery, Babylon, the mother of harlots, if you choose to reject that order, like a harlot, you still have a lot of the equipment and proclivities that would have been used in a noble purpose to be the mother of children, to be the nurturer of the next generation. Instead, you are a mother of harlots. You're still engaging in relations and you're still getting pregnant and giving birth, but you're using all of these God-given things for a nefarious, self-centered and evil purpose.

People are built to be representatives to identify with and associate with God and the cause of Christ. When that is lacking, that instinct gets misdirected. People feel a false and temporary sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in identifying with some other cause, some other agenda, some other priority.

And there is a pale imitation of what happens with believers who are rightly connected and rightly motivated and direct their love and their energy, their labor and their patience and their faith in

godly, productive, eternally rewarded directions. You take the same equipment. You've heard my analogy of the movie Kelly's Heroes a thousand times, where you take all of the equipment that is given to you to win a proper victory against a bad enemy, and you pervert it and use it for your own satisfaction.

I'm not going to fight the enemy for freedom and liberation and the end of the war. I'm going to go rob a bank so that I can have gold. Well, this perversion is what the harlot is all about.

And when you look around and see people and you say, but it's not rational. They're tearing apart minority businesses and tearing apart people like themselves. There is no reason involved.

It is instinctive. It is animal. It is sensual.

It fulfills these perverted instincts and these perverted attributes in humanity that are supposed to be connected to God and the things of God. Instead, they have been co-opted and directed into evil. And there is a momentary satisfaction in the same way that illicit fornication and adultery gives a momentary satisfaction.

It's the apple that turns to ashes in your mouth. This is why it's not a thinking thing. It's not issue driven.

It's gut driven. It is seeking that connection, seeking to identify with something that is considered to be righteous. If I march for this, if I represent this, if I speak out and hold a sign for this, this cause is righteous, therefore me supporting it makes me righteous.

Well, it doesn't. It can't address sin. It doesn't address corruption.

It doesn't restore the soul. It doesn't change the corrupt, perverse instincts of the fallen heart. It doesn't undo deception.

It doesn't do any of that, but it's the great lie. And people fall for the lie that by identifying with something I say is righteous, that makes me righteous. So every time you look and see these crowds, those aren't people who are getting their sense and their understanding of righteousness from God.

They're getting it from themselves and from each other. And it is all the same as if you're going to the temple of palace Athena and offering sacrifices or going down to Molech and putting your children through the fire, putting your fellow citizens in the fire, burning down your citizens' homes and businesses because you believe yourself to be righteous in so doing or justified in so doing. Self-justification, self-righteousness.

That's all I'm going to say about that. If you want to understand the un-understandable, that's a suggestion. It is the characteristic of the end of days where men are lovers of themselves, dot, dot, dot.

That says it all, lovers of self. And when you love yourself, you want to vindicate yourself. You want to satisfy yourself.

You want to justify yourself. You want to find a way to make yourself righteous. I want to be able to tell my kids that I marched.

They've been brought up on stories of I marched in Selma and I was with Dr. King and, you know, in some cases, genuine causes of the past. And they're envious of people who can say, well, I was there when this socially important thing was done. So now everybody wants to be a part of a socially important thing.

And it's self-vindication, self-gratification, self-justification. And God is not in it. And therefore it can't last.

It can't work. And it's just going to feed on itself and lead to greater and greater corruption. Anyway, enough on that.

Looking at these seven churches now, and you can see this testing and the devil will put them in prison, but that's all he can do. God puts limits on it, just like with Job. But notice, be faithful unto death.

I will give you the crown of life. This is Jesus addressing this church at his coming and handing them a crown of life. Those who are faithful.

You come to verse 12 of chapter 2, the church in Pergamos. And notice, I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan, you had the devil mentioned in Smyrna, the synagogue of Satan, the devil is going to throw you in prison. Here you have Satan has his throne there.

And Antipas, my martyr, was killed among you where Satan dwells. Doesn't say Satan killed him, but where Satan dwells, Antipas loses his life. Got the doctrine of Balaam and Balak and so on.

And in verse 15, you also have those in your midst who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. There's been a lot of speculation about what this means. I will just tell you what I think.

And this is the short version of what I taught in the letters to the seven churches study. But Nike is victory. Laos is people.

So Nicolaitans literally, and you can put this in the margin in quotes like I've in my Bible, if you want to, these are the victory people, victory. We're all about victory. We claim victory.

We have victory over this. We have victory over that. This is a word that is bandied about all over the place in the modern church, the secularized church, the entertainment church, the shallow church, the professing church is all about victory.

And it's not the victory of Christ. It's not the victory that is won by those who are humble, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time. No, we exalt ourselves victory.

Now we're going to bind Satan. We're going to do this. We're going to do that.

The victory, people, the doctrine of the victory, people, victory in people, victory through people. We must be victorious because look at the people we're influencing. Look at the people we're assembling.

Look at how many people are in our congregation and so on. It's people, victory, victory, people. Look at verse 16, change your mind or I will come to you suddenly and fight against these people with the sword of my mouth.

I will come, circle it. This church is going to be in existence when Jesus comes. Jesus didn't come in 600 AD or 1100, you know, AD 1100 or AD 1300 or AD 1500, the different times when they think these different churches came and went in terms of a sequential picture of the church age.

In most of these churches, Jesus says, I will come and you're going to be in trouble when I do change your mind. You look at the church in Thyatira beginning in verse 18 of chapter two, verse 20. I have a few things against you because you allow the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess to teach and seduce.

She teaches and seduces. This is in my view, the woman on the beast. This is the adoption, the promulgation of false doctrine.

Jezebel in a leadership position in Northern Israel, dominating her husband, King Ahab and perpetrating evil, giving birth to a harlot, Athaliah, who goes down to Judah and wreaks all kinds of havoc down there. You have slaughter and destruction under Athaliah, who is the daughter of Jezebel. In chapter, you know, in Revelation, we just saw that the mystery is the mother of harlots, the mother of these perverted practices and so on.

Teaching my servants to commit fornication and to eat things, sacrifice to idols. In a nutshell, what does that represent? Eating things, sacrifice to idols. This is partaking of the practices and the predilections of idolaters.

This is entertainment culture, self-satisfaction culture. I'm going to go down and I'm going to do what the idolaters do. I'm going to eat what the idolaters eat.

I'm going to look like them, think like them, dress like them, hashtag like them and partaking of what the idolatrous, non-God-worshipping world does. You partake of it, you eat of it, you imbibe it, you become identified and associated with it. I gave her time to change her mind of her fornication, verse 21, and she did not change her mind of her fornication.

And it's repeated. If you look at the text note, that's what it should say. Text note in your New King James, engaging in p[ro]f[ane]ness, faithlessness, covenant-breaking, and she does not change her mind about it.

Unwilling to get back to the Bible and back to doctrinal truth. Oh no, it's the cultural church, it's the traditional church. I will cast her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her ring a bell.

The harlot of 17 and 18 and first part of 19, harlot. Those who commit adultery with her will be in great tribulation. Notice, will be in the great tribulation.

Wink, wink. The tribulation, the great. Hey Philip[pi]nes, hey Megalaya.

This is mystery slash Babylon, the harlot going into the tribulation because she's not even saved, unless they change their mind about their works. Repent. I will kill her children with death and all the churches shall know.

Notice in verse 23, if there's one single thing that that cinches this in my mind, all the churches shall know. It's not a matter of, well, there's a couple of churches that have already come and gone and there's a couple more churches that haven't come yet. When I do this, all the churches will know because they're all stars and they're all in my hand at the same time.

All the different types of believers, all the different types of fellowships are going to know at once. I am he who searches the minds and hearts. I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Don't fear tribulation. Respect the evaluation of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He says to you and the rest in Thyatira as do not have this doctrine who have not known the depths of Satan.

I will put on you no other burden. Hold fast what you have until I come. Thyatira is going to be a church until I come, Jesus says, right? So this is not a moment in the history of the church.

Hold fast until I come. Very quickly now in chapter three, when you get to the church of Sardis, look at verse two, Revelation three to be watchful, strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die for. I've not found your works complete.

You're in part. You're kind of doing some stuff, but you're partial. Remember how you have received and heard.

Notice the power to be complete in your works. The power to be watchful and be strong is to remember what you've received and heard. Keep your knowledge of the word of God fresh.

Keep it active in your thinking. Reflect on it. Carve out time for it.

Don't be on your phone day and night. Don't be on your computer day and night. Don't be watching the television day and night.

Carve out some time to remember what you have received and what you have heard. Hold fast and where you need to change your mind. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you.

Notice the church at Sardis, Jesus is going to come upon them. They didn't come and go centuries ago. I will come upon you as a thief.

When at the return of the Lord Jesus believers in this category, because their works are partial, their reward is going to be partial. And there's going to be loss, loss of inheritance, loss of opportunity, loss of reflecting glory, loss of privilege, loss of citizenship in the darkness, which is outside because you can only kind of be half-baked, halfway there, partly done, partly faithful, partly obedient. Well, I had a few things, but a lot of them fell by the wayside.

Change your mind so that Jesus does not come upon you as a thief. Then you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Notice it is those that are having problems that don't know the hour that he's coming.

Those that are doing what they're supposed to, the implication is it's not going to be a surprise. And when he does come, you're not going to suffer loss as you would at the coming of a thief. The unexpected coming of a thief is not going to happen to those who change their minds.

We have to look at ourselves, measure ourselves against the standard of the word of God and change our minds where we fall into these various shortcomings. Look at verse four. You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.

They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. We just saw worthiness. The one who loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.

We saw in Matthew. The one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Doesn't mean don't love your relatives, but when it comes to a conflict, when it comes to a decision, well, is it this or is it that, most of the time we can do both.

We can be faithful to our parents. We can be faithful to our children. We can be faithful to our spouse.

We can do a lot of things, but sometimes there's a push comes to shove. And you know, if you've got a spouse that's trying to pull you in a bad direction, if you've got children or parents trying to pull you in a direction that is away from God, you have to say, look, as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. What I have control of, we're serving the Lord.

If you need to go a different direction, go be warm, be fed. But you're not going to separate me from the love of Christ and from the opportunity to serve him and be found worthy when he comes. They will walk with me in white for they are worthy.

He who overcomes will be clothed in white garments. I will not blot out his name from the book of life. Notice there is a book that's got those who are saved, but the book of life, this is the book of the living in the sense of these are the trees that bear fruit.

You've got, I've got two cherry trees, Patty and I have two cherry trees out here to the north of the house. One of them's a Bing cherry and one of them's a Montmorency cherry. Two others died.

These are the two that remain. One of them bears fruit and one of them doesn't. One of them is in my book of life.

The other one is alive and has leaves, but I'm not nearly as interested in it as I am in the one that's bearing fruit. I will not blot your name from the book of life. Why? Because there's fruit on the tree.

You're bringing forth your fruit in your season. And look at this. I will confess his name before my fathers and before his angels, before my father and before his angels.

Remember that in Matthew, confess me before men. I will confess you before my father. Your faithfulness is a confession before men, your endurance, your continuation, remembering what you've received and heard and holding fast.

You go down to Philadelphia. Look at verse nine here. I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie very same thing we saw back in chapter two, verse eight and following for the church at Smyrna.

The, the, those who are suffering here, this is called the faithful church, Philadelphia. They're doing, you I've set before you an open door and you've, you have strength. You kept my word.

I'm not denied my name, but the synagogue of Satan is still there. Those who call themselves Jews and not what does this mean? That's that's repeated for these two churches. What is the synagogue in the days, in the, in the days of these early churches? What is the synagogue? What does it represent? Revelation is the book of representation.

What does the synagogue represent? Organized religion, traditional religion. We're clinging to the traditions of the fathers. This is the way it's always been done.

We've got centuries of, you can hear the guy, you know, and a fiddler on the roof tradition. We've always done it this way. That's the synagogue, but it's a synagogue of Satan.

That clinging to tradition has become evil. It has become antithetical and, and, and it's antipathy toward God. It is an enemy of the cross.

They say they are Jews and are not. Why would somebody be saying they're a Jew? What did they say in Jesus day? We are sons of Abraham. We have Abraham as our father.

We are Jews. We are the rightful heirs of all of God's promises. They're claiming to be the faithful, claiming to be those who represent God on earth.

And they're not the Jews were supposed to represent God on earth in their age. In this age, the church is supposed to be, and they claim to, and they're not. They're a harlot.

They're the mystery that is actually Babylon, claiming power that doesn't belong to them and so on. The hubris. Verse 10, you kept my command to persevere over and over again.

Stick with what you know. If you're not sticking with it, change your mind and get with the program. I will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth, keeping the command to persevere.

Now, this is really interesting. We've talked about paying attention to promises and whether or not they are conditional. The hour of trial that is about to come upon the, to test the, all those who dwell on the earth, that is manifestly the tribulation, right? Because you have kept my command to persevere.

I, this doesn't say because you have believed in, in me as your savior, because you have been faithful to persevere, I will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. The hour of trial is the tribulation spoken of in the rest of this book. So what is Jesus saying here? If you're an, if you're not persevering as a, as a church age believer, are you going to get left behind? Is it, this is the partial rapture view.

If you want to read a real hair raising thing, read about people who believe in the partial rapture. That's not the case here. What he's saying is if you don't wake up as a genuine believer, instead of a professing believer, those who say they are Jews that are not, and they're actually in the synagogue of Satan, they're actually part of the harlot, part of the mystery claiming to be church, and they're not, those people are going to end up in the period of trial.

They're going to be church in the tribulation, false church, professing church. Jesus says, if you're a real believer, you need to persevere so that you're not waking up and coming to salvation after the rapture. That's how I understand this because you've kept my command to persevere.

Now, this is where Calvinists get the idea that a true believer will persevere. Well, I don't want to get into that debate. I will just tell you why be anywhere close to that line.

Well, if I've persevered just enough to be a true believer, don't be near that line. Be on the opposite side. I don't have to worry about the penalties associated with breaking the law because I'm as far from a lawbreaker as you can get.

Whatever happens to those people is on them. If they're that close to the darkness, I'll let God sort that out. I'm going to be a persevering person, and then I know for sure I'm not going to be in

the tribulation.

If I can't answer to my own satisfaction or anybody else's, whether or not disobedient believers don't go up in the rapture, this verse would seem to suggest that. I don't understand it that way, but you could see where somebody would. Follow my command to persevere, and I will keep you from the hour of trial.

The reverse side of that coin is, if you read it the other way, if you don't persevere, you're going into the hour of trial that comes upon the whole world. Well, you're going to spiritualize that. All I would say is don't be somebody that has problems with perseverance, and this is a moot point.

Don't be so close to that line that you have to wonder. Look at verse 11. I am coming suddenly.

Quickly means suddenly. It doesn't mean soon. It means suddenly.

I am coming as a surprise. I'm coming surprisingly, coming at an hour that you might not expect. You should always be ready.

This is what good Marines do. They're always ready for inspection. The barracks is always ready for a white glove tour.

Your gear is always squared away. Your stuff is always properly packed. You're always dotting your I's and crossing your T's.

You're ready for inspection at any time. You don't know the day or the hour, so be always ready. You don't know if your heart's going to stop before midnight tonight.

You literally don't know, so be ready. Coming of the Lord Jesus for believers is unknown, but it is sudden, and he said, behold, we often skip the beholds. This is look with an exclamation mark after it.

Pay attention. Look, I'm coming suddenly. Hold fast what you have so that you don't lose your crown.

It is not taken away. Well, the upshot of this, and I'm a little bit over time, but I want to cover one last thing. Turn over to Revelation chapter 19.

Actually, turn to chapter 18. I want to show you two quick things in chapter 18, verse two, the mighty angel comes down having great authority. The earth is illuminated with his glory.

This is a powerful, probably cherub class angel, and he cries mightily with a loud voice in verse two, chapter 18 of Revelation, saying Babylon, the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird. This is what claims to be church, but it's fallen. Look at verse four.

I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, unless you receive of her plagues, come out of her. Otherwise you're going to receive of the plagues. We need to be distinct and distinguishable from the fake church, from the harlot church, from the prostitute church, false Christianity, professing Christianity that does not partake of genuine faith and genuine obedience.

Come out of her lest you almost get the idea that there's a choice here. God calls to come out of her. Well, did you come or didn't you? Those who are the called have one fate.

Those who don't respond to God's call have a very different fate. Come out of her lest you share in her sins. I take this as otherwise you would share in the punishment of her sins.

But look at the previous verse. The nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her Pornia. The kings of the earth have committed Pornia with her.

The merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury, the self-satisfied, materialistic, self-gratifying, self-vindicating, self-righteous, self-justifying church. Come out of her. I think this is an allusion specifically in verse four to the rapture prior to the tribulation.

And the false church is going to be judged along with the rest of the earth. And it's going to be big, so big that they may not miss this remnant of us who will be leaving in advance. How soon that will be is unknown, but it isn't too soon to be sure that we are coming out, that we are separate, that we are faithful, that we have changed our minds, that we are following these exhortations Jesus gives to every different kind of believer, every different kind of group throughout the church age.

Don't be taken in by Jezebel. Don't be taken in by the synagogue of Satan. Don't be fooled by those who teach lies.

Don't get comfortable in self-satisfaction. Remember what you heard and received, reflect on it, be cleansed by it, be humbled by it and be ready always as a good and faithful servant for the return of the master for you do not know the hour when he comes. It could be tonight.

It could be 40 years from now. It could be a hundred years from now. I don't know.

I only know that whenever Jesus comes, it is incumbent on us to be expectant, to be watching, to be prayerful and to be ready. And we know exactly how to do that. It's not hard.

It doesn't require a lot of human energy. It requires accessing and relying on God's strength, God's power, God's spirit, God's word. How does the power of God come into the life of the believer? Through his spirit and through his word.

Focus on those things. And Jesus says, do not fear. Even if there's trial and tribulation, don't be afraid.

God holds us in his hands. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the comfort and assurance we have as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ of your love, of your protection, of the Incomparable Angel who will mark those who care about those things that are a part of your plan and purpose. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that God, the Holy Spirit will encourage us and strengthen us and prepare us to fulfill the purposes for which you have left each one of us, both individually and collectively here on this earth, to shine his lights in the midst of our generation, to be unmoved in the face of the blowing winds of culture and society and the pursuits of those who say they are of Christ and really are not. We pray that in all things, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified both now and in the ages to come through our lives and our obedience.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.