

## Revelation 20-06-18a

Good evening. This is the 18th of June, 2020. You're at the Thursday night Bible class at Grace and Truth Bible Church.

And we're continuing our study in the book of Revelation, variously known as our end time study last days. Oh my goodness. I didn't know that was happening.

It has, has any number of names, but we'll be picking up again tonight. And it's seemeth good unto me at this point to fall back and regroup a little bit and summarize and synthesize a little bit what we have seen in the past several weeks in terms of the structure of the book. As you remember, it's not a verse by verse study or an exegetical study so much as a fly over looking at the topography and figuring out in general how this book works and why it's important to us as well as to the people for whom it is going to be applicable at first hand in the true last days, the time of Jacob's trouble.

Let's begin as we always do by asking God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study. And we'll start. Father, what a wonderful privilege it is to address ourselves to you to come directly into your throne room through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, his work on the cross to qualify us and to sanctify us and to give us this unprecedented access to represent ourselves and make our appeal as your children.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word tonight, that your Holy spirit will be our teacher, help us to see its pertinence and its applicability in our own lives. And we ask that you will bless our fellowship and our praise and appreciation for the Lord Jesus himself, who features so prominently in this portion of your word. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen. Well, as you remember from our introduction, the book of revelation is in some ways daunting. You start waiting in and there's seven of everything.

You've got seven churches, you've got seven seals, you've got seven trumpets, you've got seven thunders, you've got seven bowls, you've got seven heads and 10 horns, you've got seven hills. And, uh, it, it doesn't help any to have these come in a, in a manner that, that makes us think, well, at a minimum, the seven years of the 70th week, uh, are really chopped up into a lot of very small pieces because, uh, if you, if you understand these as sequential, there are 28 different parts to that seven year period. Seals, trumpets, thunders, and bowls, right? If I remember right, four times seven, 28 and in seven years, you know, that's, that's just a couple of months for each phase.

And it's, you just begin to get lost in, in some of the, uh, destruction. And well, I thought that was already destroyed a couple of chapters back and how can there still be a third of the earth to get burnt when it was already devastated back here? So what we've attempted to do, and this is my suggestion, it's, you know, you're welcome to pray for me and understand it a different way, but it

seems to me that there is a, uh, a almost Hebrew way of going back and forward in time. And I have a graphic that I've put on the church website.

Some of you have it. Uh, the ones for tonight are sitting on the printer. If you'd like to get those.

Uh, and, but you don't need them. It, it'll help and you can look at it after I've said what I'm about to say, and then you'll say, Oh, so, but in my understanding because John is in a heavenly perspective, think about what is possible and visible in heaven. You're not in the time continuum in which we live in this earth.

In my mind, we're like a golf ball rolling through a tube and we can pretty much only go. Even science says time only flows in one direction. We can have length, width and height in the other three dimensions, but time only travels forward.

And it's absolutely true, but not in heaven. In heaven, God can be the beginning and the end. He can be the alpha and the Omega.

He comprehends everything at once. Your name is written in the book back at the foundation of the world. Yet, how could it be written in there before we were even born or before Adam walked around and named things? Well, it's a difficult concept for us.

Less difficult in this age of science fiction and time travel fantasies and such, but it is true and you can document it in the book of revelation that time is not a restriction when it comes to the overview of human history and God's outworking of his plan and purpose. And it kind of stretches the limits of our mind in a different way than it does trying to sequentialize the book. But in another way, if you, if you grant that one point, are you willing to entertain that one perspective? It greatly simplifies it because it's one big seven, but it is a seven in terms of years.

It's a seven in terms of seals. It's the same seven in terms of trumpets. It's the same seven in terms of thunders and it's the same seven in terms of bowls.

But these are turned in the light like a, like a jewel with facets and you see the same thing from these various perspectives that are possible in heaven. That's why in four one John hears the voice that says, come up here so that I can show you. Why didn't he leave John on earth? Couldn't he have a vision on the earth that nearly every other vision recorded in the Bible was had by someone on the earth.

Why does John have to come up here to get the content of the revelation? I think it is because it's a clue to us that it requires the perspective that's only possible in heaven. So at the break or maybe sooner, if you haven't seen it already, I'll, I'll show you my crude but effective alignment of, and I can do it in the air here. If you can imagine the seven seals coming across like this, you remember the four horsemen at the beginning of the seals and then there's more things that continue.

Well, that comprehends the entire seven years or it begins at a certain part in the seven years and culminates at the end. Underneath that you say, okay, I've seen that from the seals perspective. Seals are of the earth, clay seals, wax seals.

It's, it's earthly and the perspective in the seals is from the ground level. Then having opened the sixth seal, then the seventh seal, you back up and now we have the trumpets. Trumpets, where do they function? In the air.

This is sort of what I consider to be the angelic perspective. Who lives in the, it's not exactly middle earth, but it's, it's midst between heaven and earth. This is where the ladder that Jacob saw is and, and angels are going up and down.

So this is sort of the angelic perspective on the same period and it picks up some of the same major episodes, but you're looking at it from a different standpoint. If you've ever been to the grand Canyon, you can look at that thing from so many different places and you appreciate different things. Some things are the same, but you say, wow, I didn't realize that that thing that looks like the ship out there on that tall prominence is, is so narrow from this perspective and it's so wide from this perspective.

So seals and the more you look at them and there's war and pestilence and famine and death riding out on these horses. But these are real earthly consequences that people are going to see on a day to day basis. When you get to the trumpet judgments, it's, it's a little different.

And then after those trumpets, you have the thunders and John's not allowed to write down the thunders, but I'll, I'll review and remind you tonight that there are seven thunders. Count them seven in the book of revelation. Then you have the bowls in order to pour out a bowl.

You have to be above everything. So God's perspective, the heavenly perspective, the throne room perspective is on high and the vials or bowls of God's judgment is poured from that perspective down through the air, down onto the earth. And once again, it backs up.

And one of the great keys to this is that at the end of each of these sevens, there is an earthquake. It's, it's not in Greek. It's not an earthquake.

It's the earthquake. And it is kind of the clue and the pin that runs down through all four of these sevens. All of them culminate in the great earthquake.

And so when you, when you drive that stake through them at the seven and then unfurl them back to the first of each one and begin to look, they're not precise. They don't, the first seal doesn't line up with the first trumpet that doesn't line up with the first bowl, but because they're different perspectives and time isn't a big issue in heaven. It's, it's sequence, it's cause and effect.

And, but you begin to understand why there can be famines, uh, in the beginning of the seals

sequence. And then when you get to trumpets and bowls, there is devastation of the earth's surface. So, and if you have the original, I could use looking at that.

And then the same is true for your, for your trumpets and, and bowls. Of course, the thunders are somewhat mysterious, but they still have a, uh, did you get the original? That's all right. That'll work.

All I need is something to inspire my confidence. But, uh, I can, I can show you this. You'll see that, that the seals, because this thing really begins by stopping the, there are two cuckoo clocks on the wall.

One of them is the church age. It's ticking away right now. And every so often there's a cuckoo that comes out and sings the song of triumph of the church.

But God is going to stop that pendulum and then he's going to tap the pendulum of the clock of Israel that stopped on the day of Pentecost. And it's going to resume ticking and it's going to measure off the last seven years and things are going to start to happen on the earth. And at the beginning it seems fairly innocuous.

You remember the seals, the four horsemen that come out and ride and going forth, conquering and to conquer. And, and it doesn't seem too bad at first. He doesn't come out and slay a third of the earth's population, but it's a, it's a false hope.

There have been people who thought the first horseman was Christ himself, but it quickly degenerates into the pale horse, the green horse. If you look at it, I always think of a, of a dentine gum that has chlorophyll and Retsin and chlorophyll is what's in grass and it's green. And the fourth horse is actually, they say pale horse, but it's a green horse, which to me is even more off putting.

But if you just look at this, you can see that, that at the, at the beginning, the seals from the earthly perspective are reflecting the resumption of that 70th week that Gabriel told Daniel about 70 weeks are determined upon your people, the holy city to fulfill God's old Testament covenants and, and bring in righteousness and so on. It's Daniel chapter nine. So, uh, it is a resumption.

And if you think about it, it's interesting because when you come to faith in God through Christ in this age, what are you? They first call them this at Antioch. You're a Christian, right? What does that mean? How do you relate to God? What are we called? When we look around at each other, we are the body of Christ and he is the head. The Bible never uses that terminology for old Testament saints.

They are Israel. They are related to God through the covenants to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and through Moses and to David. And it's a national and a people relationship.

Uh, they are God's people. We are Christ's body. But when we leave at the rapture, it reverses

what happened at Pentecost and that last seven years, according to Gabriel, talking to Daniel, that's age of Israel.

So think about this. Now, if somebody comes to faith in God, through Christ in that last seven years, what are they? Israel. They are Israel.

This is why when people are getting sealed to identify them before the judgments of God fall. Remember the, the chapter where how many are sealed 144,000 and how are they identified? Tribes of Israel. That's why no mention of them being Christians.

Now they're going to be looking at Christ in retrospect, just as we do. So it's an interesting period in the, in the age of Israel because Christ has, has already come. And so they're going to know a lot more than those who were seeing through a glass darkly, as it were trying to, uh, look ahead, but they are nevertheless going to be related to God through the old Testament covenants and promises.

And that's why they are identified as tribes. Well, so this is, that's one summary of the book of revelation. John is introduced again to the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter one, but it's not the kind of familiar greeting and fellowship that John enjoys with him between the resurrection and the Ascension.

He doesn't say, Oh John, come and sit at my right hand here and lean back into my bosom and I'll share some, some truths with you. This is, that was the suffering servant Jesus. That was the Jesus that John the Baptist identified, the lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world.

And in our Matthew study on Sundays, we're looking at that period where John sends his two disciples and says, are you the one who will come? Are you the coming one? Capital C, capital O. Are you the conquering King Messiah that's going to bring in the kingdom or should we look for another? Because they couldn't understand looking at Isaiah and Ezekiel in some cases. Well, how can he both be a conquering King and be a suffering servant who's going to be wounded and bruised and, and by his stripes we are healed. And maybe there's two, God's going to send one to be the redeemer and send another to be the ruler.

And, and so John's sitting there in prison and he has this question because he knows Jesus is the lamb of God. He's the one that pointed him out. There's no doubt in his mind about that.

But are you also the coming one? And, and how's that going to work? And so when Jesus gives him the answer and says, go back and tell John what you see and hear the passages that we looked at just this last Sunday in Isaiah are all conquering King passages. They are all kingdom passages. This is how it will be in the kingdom.

And so Jesus, instead of just saying, Oh, tell John, I'm the coming one and they leave, uh, as is so often the, the way with Jesus, he says, if you think about it, you know the answer. You've got

the information. You just connect the dots.

So go back and tell John that you've seen the fulfillment of the coming one Isaiah passages. And, and he'll know the answer. He'll figure it out.

So that's the, the introduction in chapter one, Jesus now comes to John, not as the lamb and the suffering servant, but with the feet of burnished bronze and the face like the sun. And this is a formal meeting. I remember one time there was a pastor of my acquaintance who came to Dallas seminary and was going to give a chapel, uh, message.

And he was introduced by the president of the seminary. At that time, he was well known enough that the president of the seminary came and it was Dr. John Walvoord and a renowned, wonderful biblical theologian scholar did great things for the school. So Dr. Walvoord came up and introduced this pastor.

Well, this pastor had been a student with Dr. Walvoord and in the very early days of the seminary. And so after Dr. Walvoord introduced him and took his seat, this pastor came up and said, thank you, Johnny. And it just sent a giant shockwave through.

Nobody remembers what the man talked about after that, because you know, Dr. Walvoord to nobody present is Johnny. Uh, and I don't know if the pastor was nervous or what, but there is a time and a setting for intimacy and familiarity and being casual. And there's a time for formality and for recognizing office and position.

And it's, it's, Whoa, if you get those mixed up. So that's why in chapter one, John who is the beloved disciple doesn't have a familiar meeting and greeting with the Lord. Jesus, Jesus has to, has to keep him from sort of melting in fear.

And he says, look, I've come to give you a message and it's important. Here's some things I want you to communicate to the seven churches. And then in chapter two and three, you have one of those sevens.

And that comprehends what we have had running now for the last 2000 years. Almost exactly are, are those seven churches. There's different ways of understanding it.

Many people understand them sequentially. Uh, and, and others, uh, myself included, think that this is also a clue to, and a key to understanding the rest of the book where these are facets that exist in every generation. There is a Smyrna group in every generation.

There's a Philadelphia group in every generation. There are those who basically are being seduced by Jezebel and have a synagogue of Satan in every generation. And it's, it's a little bit dangerous in my view to think, well, we don't have to worry about those warnings or those exhortations because that's already happened in history.

They all are happening simultaneously. But after those three chapters, uh, then in four, one the voice says, come up here and I will show you what's going to happen. And you have the seals, trumpets and bowls.

So you have the white horse, uh, the rider with the bow and a crown goes forth conquering and to conquer. Then you have the red horse. Peace is taken away.

The first rider doesn't take away peace. There is a time at the beginning of the 70th week after we are gone when there is a, a peace and it lasts a little while, but then peace is taken away. Um, and you see, you see the, the first guy had a bow.

The second rider has a sword and the sword always represents, uh, people being killed. Then in a chapter six, verse five, you have the black horse. Remember there's an interlude in heaven where you see the white robes sing new songs and you've got the 24 elders and the crowns and that, but that is giving us the heavenly setting and the seals start, uh, breaking in chapter six.

Then in a six, eight, you have the green horse death with Hades following after and one quarter of the people die due to the sword, hunger, death and beasts, which is violence. Um, so then in a, the fifth seal breaks in the ninth verse and that's when the souls under the altar cry out and say, Oh Lord, how long? And there's already been a significant amount of death. Uh, you had a 25% death rate in the preceding seal and now you've got these martyr souls, a lot of them under the altar saying, Lord, how long? And the response is wait a little while longer.

There are some others that are going to join you, but they feel like they've got enough of a, of a group that they can say, you know, are we going to wrap this up? Well, if this is all crowded into the beginning of the 70th week, it's, it's really a head scratcher, uh, to me at least. But then the sixth seal is broken. Chapter six, verse 12, chapter six, verse 12, the, actually it's the, no, it's the, by the way, just so you know, there's a difference between the and the, you know, the rule.

If the next word, if the word that the article is, is attached to starts with a vowel, then it's one thing. If it's a consonant, it's something else. And James Taylor had a song where he purposely breaks this rule.

And it's one of the hooks of the song is used, uh, uh, something that people, oh, shower, shower, the people, you know, with love. You ever heard that song? Shower, the people, you know, with love, the people is wrong. It's the people, the, and a consonant, the, and a, and a, a vowel.

So the author and finisher of our faith is how it works. So this starts with a G great. So it's what the great earthquake, not the great earthquake, the great earthquake.

Glad we got that straight. It's this great earthquake is one of our big clues to the structure of the book in my view. And of course that's, uh, the sun and the moon and the stars, uh, start, uh,

being obscured and people are hiding.

Then you have the intervening scenes. You have three scenes, you've got the four angels holding back the wind. You've got the white road multitude once again in chapter seven and in chapter eight, when the seventh seal cracks, there is silence in heaven for half an hour and that's it.

Why? In my view at the end of the six seals and when the seventh seal is cracked open, heaven is not dispensing any additional judgments on the earth. And so from the seals point of view, there's, there's silence down here. Looking up there.

We don't know what's happening. There are, uh, seven trumpets mentioned. There are prayers and judgment, noises, thundering, lightning.

And once again, that earthquake is mentioned. This is chapter eight verse one. Then we have the introduction of the trumpets in chapter eight.

Well, take that set of seals and stack it on the shelf. We're going to put another shelf down below it for the trumpets. And so in chapter eight, verse seven, it begins with hail, fire, blood, a third of the trees and all the grass is burned.

You think about this. Why was it that there was suddenly famine and pestilence and 25% of the people dying up in the third and fourth seals area because of this and these weather and atmospheric and celestial phenomena are controlled by the angels. We know that angels control the winds.

We know that angels control, it's not the hairspray that comes out and eats the ozone. It's not your air conditioning coolant. It's not, uh, the, you know, CO2 emissions, God's angels dictate climate and all, uh, climatic, uh, consequences on the earth.

They're in control of precession and the wobble and where we are relative to the sun and whether there's an ice age and all the rest of it. So hail, fire, blood, a third of the trees, all the grass are burned. That's at the first trumpet.

And that's in this second walkthrough of the time in chapter eight, verse eight, you have the second trumpet and a giant mountain is cast into the sea and you've a third of the sea turns to blood, a third of the fish and the ships and everything are destroyed. And once again, death and Hades, 25% of the people, uh, dying back in the fourth seal, the sword, hunger, death, and violence, these things line up. And so if you start looking on, on my homemade chart here, you can see that the first and second trumps fall under the third and fourth seals.

And these things are of a piece. So progressing across, you can see the interaction of these things and it basically becomes a much more straightforward period of time. It starts with peace, but while people are saying peace and safety, destruction increasingly comes upon them.

And at the end, this great and final earthquake. So, uh, in a chapter nine, verse one, you have the fifth trumpet blown and there is a fallen star and the abyss is opened. Locust scorpions come out.

There's five months of torment. These locusts are described with their hair and their teeth and their sting in their tail, their breastplates. And, and, uh, people at that point are seeking death and not finding it well, if it's that bad and you still got all the rest of the trumpets, all the rest of the thunders and all the rest of the bowls to go there, it just seems like there would be nobody left to me, but we're getting toward the end of that period.

And, uh, so by the time you get to the, the sixth trumpet in chapter nine, verse 13, um, there's a voice from the altar and the location of these voices is fun to watch. Where does it come from? This is a voice from the altar and these, uh, woes begin the fifth, sixth and seventh, uh, trumpets are, are labeled woes. So just like the seals, remember the seals were a set of four and a set of three, there was four horsemen.

Then there was three more seals. Now there are four trumpets and then there's three woes that are the last three trumpets. So once again, they break four and three.

And, uh, after all of this, there is no repentance. It's specifically noted that there is no repentance and people continue murder, drugs, uh, pornography and, uh, taking advantage of each other theft. And so just like in the gap between the seals and the trumpets, we had three scenes.

We had the, the four angels, the white robe multitude and the silence for half an hour. Now we've got another three scenes before we're going to get the, the bowls basically. So there's three scenes in heaven and that's, uh, the standing angel with the little book.

And we don't know anything about that. This angel has a face like the sun. His feet are burnished bronze.

It sounds like the description of Jesus in chapter one, but this is chapter 10 verse one. See, we're almost halfway through the book already, but this individual has a little book in his hand and seven thunders utter their voices. John's going to write that part down and revelation would be a couple of three chapters longer, but he is instructed.

Don't write that down. That's, that's our secret trick play and we're not letting the other team know what it is. It is.

But if you look at the pattern of these sevens from their perspective, there is another view. There's another piece of intelligence, if you will, from a military point of view, there is another understanding of what is going on that's covered by these thunders. I promise I would mention them.

If you have a piece of paper, you can write them down. But the, uh, word for thunder in Greek

occurs notably other than, than right there, here in chapter 10, where it says the seven thunders under their voices outside of that 10, three and four, the word for thunder, uh, by the way, you know, this word, even if you don't know Greek, what was the nickname for the sons of Zebedees, James and John. It's, it's in your Bible.

It's Boanerges. Remember that Boanerges? Well, that word Boa is the word for thunder and outside of 10, three and four, guess how many times it occurs in the book of revelation? Seven, exactly seven. The first one of those is back in revelation chapter four, verse five.

When you have the spirits before God's throne. The second one is in revelation six, one. When the first seal is open, you're already at the second thunder.

When the first seal is open. Then the third thunder is in revelation chapter eight, verse five. If you're writing these down, the first one's in four, five, second one's in six, one.

The third one is in eight, five. And that's at the seventh seal. Remember there was silence in heaven, half an hour.

And then you had noises, thunderings, lightnings, and the earthquake noises, thundering, lightning, the great earthquake. So that's, that's the second thunder. The third thunder, uh, in revelation eight, five.

Um, that's, uh, then the fourth is in chapter 11, verse 19. Once again, just like an eight, five, it's associated with the earthquake. My personal view, the reason these thunders are not noted, there's the earthly perspective, the sort of angelic perspective, the heavenly perspective.

And then there is God, the Trinity in the throne room, the councils of the father, son, and spirit. And these thunders aren't even necessarily sequential. God is so far outside of time that these thunders are just wherever God wants to think of them.

And I think John may have had a hard time even trying to write them down. But, uh, that, uh, fourth one is in chapter 11, verse 19, also associated with the earthquake. The fifth one is in chapter 14, verse two.

And, uh, you see the lamb and the 144,000 in that scene. The sixth thunder is in chapter 16, verse 18 at the seventh bowl. Once again, associated with the earthquake.

Three times this thunder occurs at the earthquake and God, when that great earthquake comes, God is unleashing his seven thunders. Most of them happen around the time of that great earthquake. The thunders are clustered at the end.

Um, you can notice even in my chart that the seals are kind of at the beginning, the thunders are kind of cluster in the middle and then the bowls sort of move to the end. I think the thunders all cluster around that last time. And I'll, I'll mention why I think that's important.

It's interesting, but why is it important? I'll, uh, suggest something here in a minute. So, uh, 1618 is the sixth thunder. The seventh thunder is in chapter 19, verse six.

And when that thunder cracks, the Lord, our God omnipotent reigneth. This is your Handel's Messiah, a great chorus. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth at that seventh thunder.

That's about as much as we know about those. But, uh, after they are mentioned and John is told not to write them down, then John is to eat the little book. Remember that? And then he's given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple.

And, uh, those things are interesting in themselves, but we're doing an overview. So seals, trumpets, you have once again, these, these scenes, then the trumpets begin. I'm sorry, the bowls begin at chapter 15, verse one.

But one of those scenes in between the, the scenes at the end of the trumpets is in chapter 12 and chapter 13. I hope I haven't completely lost you here. Just remember, John has had his message to the church, and that's going to tide us over for 2000 years.

Now we're, the events of that 70th week are so momentous, so monumental, so catastrophic and cataclysmic that we have to kind of take it in pieces. I've, I've seen the occasional movie where maybe there's a murder and they'll, they'll show you the whole thing from the perspective of one person who was at the mansion when old man with the will is knocked off. Then they'll back up and they'll show you the same events from the perspective of another person and you learn new things.

Then they'll go back, they'll rewind and show you the same period of time from the perspective of the little girl who came with her aunt or something. And what did she see in here? That's what the seals and trumpets and bowls are in my view in revelation. And the reason they are that way is by backing up and looking at this 70th week from a different perspective, you get much of the same benefit that you get from the four gospels.

Why does God repeat in Luke what we already read in Matthew? Why do you have the short book of Mark? Why do you have the theologically profound book of John? You know, they call the first three, the synoptics and then John because John is a perspective unto itself. In my mind, Matthew, Mark and Luke are seals, trumpets and bowls as it were. And, and John is the thunders.

It's, it's just a completely unique perspective, but it all illuminates. That's what it takes to even begin to understand the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these sevens are what it takes to understand the run up to that.

The gospels are the run up to and the fulfillment of God's promise of redemption. This is the run up to and the fulfillment of God's promise of vindication, judgment, judgment on the enemies and

the inception of the kingdom of Christ, excuse me, the kingdom of Christ. So there's, there's a similarity there and a completeness in these perspectives that help us get the dimensionality of it.

And the more you look at these as, as sets and what they emphasize, the easier it is to move into, well, why do I care? I won't be here. What is the application? How does application work when you're not looking at your own age and the exhortations from Paul and Peter and John? And uh, what do we do when we look at our old Testament? There are, there are some churches who really give the old Testament light treatment. Well, that's Israel.

That's them. We're, we're up here in the, in the 27 great books. So what do we do when we look at the old Testament? We observe, we interpret and we apply.

We look at God's dealing with Israel. It is an example. And we find the timeless features of God's character, God's plan, God's purpose, God's standards, uh, God's expectations for people of faith.

And we see the pertinence and applicability of those things for ourselves. Revelation is the same way. It's just a future chunk of the old Testament in that sense.

So when we look at what should you do when God is actively dealing with evil in the world and is allowing it a measure of success and a time of progress and overcoming, here's a, here's my question. As we go to the break, why are there any martyrs at all? In particular, why are there any martyrs under the altar in the book of the revelation? The mystery Babylon woman, the mother of harlots and, and she's got a cup full of the blood of the saints. How did that happen? How do God's saints get killed by evil? You never suffer the righteous to be moved.

That will keep him in perfect peace. I put a hedge around you. You, you know, you're nine feet tall and bulletproof during the tribulation period, during the latter half of that 70 70th week, that seven years God is going to pull back and allow even his two witnesses to be slain.

How is that? How is that possible? Why does God do that? Well, the answer is in that other great fourfold revelation. Why did God let his son, Jesus be crucified? It's counterintuitive, but that is the only way for God to accomplish his purpose, manifest his glory, vindicate faith and obedience is to pull back and let Satan have his day. There is a time when God will allow evil to make advances.

And those who are being advanced upon have to rely in faith on the promise that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They loved their lives, not unto death to the Smyrnans. You will have tribulation 10 days, be faithful unto death.

I will give you the crown of life. It's the ultimate in faith when evil seems to have its day and we seem to be overcome. It's not difficult to imagine what the disciples were feeling and thinking when the Lord Jesus was in the tomb.

They were hiding. They were fearful. They were confused.

They were in shock. We have to realize how big God is, how great his plan is. And a great military general will sometimes deploy his forces and purposely make a weak center.

The enemy comes in with a frontal assault and they say, he's weak in the center. Throw all the troops into the weakness and they advance and they conquer and they kill guys who are in that area. And once they have advanced a certain distance, the flanks and the reserves wake up, surround, envelop, and crush them.

The battle is won and the war is over. But it's only done by the flexibility to sacrifice. It's in chess.

It's called a gambit. You get someone to take this piece and it hurts to lose a piece. I hate to lose a piece in chess.

I need every one of them. But sometimes by sacrificing a piece, you win the game. Are we willing? Do we have the faith to trust God in the difficult times when evil and the fallenness of this world seems to have its day? Are we faithful unto death knowing that we are going to receive the crown of life, that we've been marked by God? We are secure in his plan and purpose.

There is nothing that befalls us that is not carefully controlled and allowed in his plan and purpose. And it all works together for good. To those who love God, to those who are the called, see the calling, recognize the calling, aren't afraid of the calling, are excited by the calling, knowing we're going to wake up and see the denouement of the whole thing, see the outworking and the victory, and share in the spoils and fruits and opportunities of that victory for all eternity.

Momentary light affliction, eternal weight of glory. You see it in the book of Revelation, because there are going to be believers there. We are going to leave.

You see that in chapter 18 of Revelation. There's a voice that says, come out of her, my people, because I'm about to judge. But there are Old Testament saints.

There are old covenant believers in that 144,000. And like the church in Smyrna, like believers in every age, there is a measure of suffering that serves God's purposes and accomplishes his ultimate plan for good. And in the largest sense, when you look at the book of Revelation, that's what it's about.

There is calamity and confusion and devastation. And there is the writing of wrongs that have been perpetrated over generations. This woman that rides the beast has been doing it a long time before she's torn down and destroyed.

But God is ultimately in control. You ultimately have chapter 19 and the Lord Jesus Christ with King of Kings and Lord of Lords written on his thigh, riding in to expunge and to cleanse and to sanctify so that God's Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. We

have an opportunity to participate at an even higher level in that.

And then ultimately, both Israel and the church moving into the kingdom of the Father in those last few chapters of this great book. So that's why it's interesting. That's why it's applicable.

That's why it's fun to figure out what is the emphasis? Why is God giving me this view through the trumpets or through the bowls or through the seals? And why is he tweaking my interest with the thunders? There is great benefit, not just in wondering, am I living in the end times? But just like looking at the Old Testament, what is the lesson about God's character, God's provision, God's grace, God's power in these circumstances that I can internalize and apply for myself? We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to, now that I've kind of set the setting for the gym, we're going to go back and look at the three women of Revelation. We've got three women.

We've looked at two of them. We've got one more to go and we'll do that after the break.