

Revelation 20-06-25a

Good evening, welcome to the Thursday edition of Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're continuing our study of the end times and how close might we be to it? What are the signs of the times, the signs of the end of the age, as Jesus put it, talking to the people in his dispensation, which was the age of Israel. We, of course, are the age of the church and we are quite interested in what the Bible has to say about the end times, because it sure looks like we're in it.

So many people have thought that over the years, they were all wrong except us. And it remains to be seen if we're maybe leaning a little too far forward, but I like to think that we're closer than anyone has ever been to the return of the Lord Jesus at the rapture to take us to himself. So you can be turning in your Bible to the book of 2 Peter, 2 Peter.

We're going to take a quick look at what the apostle Peter had to say. We, in previous weeks, have looked at what Paul described in terms of the signs of the end of the age for the church, and we're going to see what Peter has to say. And then we're going to look at the brother of the Lord Jesus as well and what he has to say.

And between these three perspectives, we should be able to get a pretty good grip. And then we'll also be looking at how closely we might align with these descriptions, which is the Lord's exhortation to observe the signs of the times. Let's take a moment as we begin our study of the word of God, this very interesting topic by asking God's blessing that the Holy Spirit will stabilize us and encourage us and help us to grow in our faith and in our fruitfulness through the study of God's word and its subsequent application.

Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege, what an encouragement, what a comfort it is to know that we are securely fixed within the body of Christ. We are your special gift to your son, the Lord Jesus, and we thank you for that privilege, for that unique opportunity in this day and in this time to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of an ever darkening world with the maelstrom of events and movements and the forces of darkness seemingly on the march and on the rise. It is wonderful to be secure, to be safe, and to have an opportunity to serve and to be a factor in the spiritual conflict.

We pray that as we look at your word and what it has to say about these times and this type of situation, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each of our hearts and will collectively encourage us and strengthen us for the task at hand. May we see clearly the right path, the right words, the right method of life to adopt and to persevere and maintain as we see such movements of change all around us. We know that you are constant, your word is constant, your plan and purpose are immovable and immutable.

We pray that as a result of our study tonight, each one of us will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name. Amen.

There is a little bit of background I'd like to first of all share as we begin our evening in 2 Peter. Did I say 2 Peter? Well, you can flip back a little bit to 2 Peter and look at beginning at chapter 2. So this is where we're going to begin, 2 Peter chapter 2. Almost confused myself there, I was at 1 Peter 2 and I want 2 Peter chapter 2. As a little bit of background, we're going to be looking at 2 Peter and we're also going to be looking at Jude. Jude, the brother of James, which is a modest way of saying he is one of the Lord's brothers.

James and Jude are authors of scripture, both of them half brothers as we would understand it, to the Lord Jesus Himself. But we're going to cover this portion of 2 Peter first because it is my belief and I'm happy to be joined in this persuasion by fairly well qualified scholars, much more qualified than myself to judge, such as Daniel B. Wallace, one of my favorite Greek scholars and one of Patty's favorite former Bible teachers. And it is his understanding and he makes a good argument for this, you can find it online if you look, because there is some very similar material and we're going to see it tonight, talking about our subject, what will things be like in the church in the latter days? We've several times referred to Paul's words on this.

We're looking tonight at what Peter and Jude have to say. And much of this is such an overlap that it becomes clear that someone was familiar with someone else's letter. Either Jude had 2 Peter in front of him or Peter had the letter of Jude before him.

They're so similar that it's kind of like you see in the synoptic gospels where it's very obvious that there is some sort of commonality there. Well, I believe and Dan Wallace believes that 2 Peter came first and Jude wrote about it. And we're going to see why as we look at it tonight.

But this is sort of a secondary issue. It's kind of an interesting side note. The primary purpose of our investigation tonight is especially in the light of current conditions, prevailing attitudes within the church in our current day, along with the swirl of current events that you see around you.

You cannot turn on anything without finding out that there's a great deal of upheaval and upsetting of the old landmark, if you will. So what does this all mean? What does the Bible have to say about it? What should you and I be thinking about it? And most importantly, what, if anything, should we be doing in the light of it? So we're going to start and I'm going to read Peter because I believe that just as the order in the scripture, Peter wrote these words and Jude alludes to them. And we'll see the reasons for that upcoming.

But beginning at 2 Peter chapter 2, he talks, you remember the beginning section of this and the end of chapter 1, he's talking about the inspiration of the Old Testament scriptures. And they foreshadowed and predicted and prophesied the coming of the Lord Jesus. And in verse 17, the Lord Jesus, he received from God the Father, honor and glory.

When a voice came to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Please circle, put an arrow on or otherwise emphasize that point. This is my beloved

son in whom I am well pleased.

What does the Holy Spirit assure you and me of? Paul talks about this, the Holy Spirit speaks in our hearts, assuring us that God is our father, Abba, father. You remember that? We are children of God. The spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, sons of God.

If you want to use gender specific language, we are sons and daughters of God. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Right.

Children of God, what is your goal? Why are you here breathing good air, eating food, getting up in the morning, investing the time that constitutes your waking hours in pursuits? What is your primary goal? Self-satisfaction, keeping others happy, not getting locked up or otherwise inhibited from having another day tomorrow. What is the goal? As believers, our goal is to live our lives in such a way that these words are the summation. This is our eulogy.

This is the judgment at the bama of Jesus Christ. God says, you are my child and in you, I am well pleased. If God is not pleased with our life, what's the point of living it? This is a momentary season.

The grass withers and the flower fades. God is eternal. His word is eternal.

Our future life with him is eternal. Why would we waste our time in earthly, temporal, mundane, fleeting pursuits, attaining of goals in the short term and in the earthly perspective when eternity is on the line? Our citizenship is in heaven from which we await the return of our savior. That's paraphrasing Paul again.

So there's no happenstance or accident here when what we're about to look at is preceded by the voice coming from the excellent glory, judging the earthly human life of Jesus Christ and saying, this is my beloved son and in him, I am well pleased. What an achievement, what an honor, what a glorious day. If we can get anywhere near similar words, judging the fruit of our lives.

Peter says, we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. This is the Mount of Transfiguration. And so we, meaning I, Peter and the other disciples slash apostles, have the prophetic word confirmed.

We read prophecy in the Old Testament. We were familiar with it. That's why when we heard John the Baptist was prophesying at the Jordan, I and my brother Andrew and James, John, Philip, Andrew, we went down there because we knew what the word of God said prophetically and we saw that it was a time of fulfillment.

And so we did something. We moved. We went to where the action was.

This is where the spiritual battle was going to commence. Jesus was baptized and immediately he goes into the wilderness for 40 days and faces down Satan. Spiritual battle on the earth at that

time.

Remember, we've seen in recent weeks how Israel is the physical nation. There are physical signs, physical prophecies, physical rituals. We are in the age of the spirit and our battles are spiritual.

We do not wrestle against Philistines and Moabites and Ammonites and all of the other ites that were dwelling in the land of Canaan when Joshua took the people in. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age, headed up by Satan himself. It's a spiritual conflict.

Our worship is spiritual. Our forms of fellowship are spiritual. Our gifts are spiritual.

Our objectives are spiritual. Our signs for the beginning and the end of the age are spiritual. So, if you flip back to verse 10 of 2 Peter chapter 1, Brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.

What does that mean? They're uncertain. I might be called or I might not. I might be elected or I might not.

Make it manifest. Let there be no doubt. A lot of guys who are former Marines still have their Marine Corps tattoos and they'll still wear a high and tight haircut and you'll see them wearing some allowed portion of their utilities.

Maybe the utility pants or they'll wear their boots when they're working or whatever. It's very manifest and evident. It is certain that that guy is a Marine no longer on active duty.

No such thing as an ex-Marine or a former Marine. There's just some of us on active duty and some of us not. Even if you change services, you are still a Marine.

If you've ever been a Marine, you are a Marine, right? And you make that designation, that identity certain in your conduct, be it visible or invisible. As you can see, I never did wear high and tight and I chose to express my Marinality in other ways, but it ought to be evident. People that know me know that it is a, a character trait.

It is a set of beliefs and ways of doing things. Do it to the very best. When you've done all that you can do, do a little bit more.

If you got it almost clean, get it completely clean. If it's almost shiny, make it completely shiny. If it's almost painted, finish painting it, finish what you start, set objectives, pursue them, attain them, and then move on from there.

Make your calling and election. Sure. Way more important, infinitely more valuable in terms of identity is not some service or some past area of endeavor that you participated in.

It is the present. It is identity in Christ, body of Christ, believer in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Five fold ministry of the Holy Spirit at work to be indwelt, sealed, filled, gifted, and empowered for service now and in the ages to come.

Make that visible. Let there be no doubt. That's what it means to make it sure.

Is anybody unsure that you're a believer? Is there anyone in your periphery that who's at all acquainted with you who has any doubt that you're a believer? Have you made your calling and you're choosing to be a believer? So evident that, well, I don't know. I know a lot of people, but I can tell you, fill in your name here is a Christian. Make it certain that is what will result in.

This is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased. Now, and at the judgment, Peter says, we knew the prophetic scriptures and we saw them confirmed, verse 19, and you would do well to heed that example as a light that shines in a dark place. Does it seem confusing? Is there some uncertainty as to what's happening and what will happen and where civilization is headed, where our culture and our country is headed, where the community is headed, where government is headed? Is there some uncertainty and you wish somebody would shine a light on it? Well, for practical analysis and a good summary of what's going on, I would encourage you to get up on foxnews.com and pull up the transcripts of Tucker Carlson.

If you read that, that's all you need to know. Doesn't take long. He's distilled it and summarized it.

Can't say it any better myself. I don't spend time on politics and current events in Bible class any more than I have to to encourage application of what we know. But if you want analysis of what's going on, that's my recommendation.

We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Once the day dawns, once we have learned and assimilated and applied enough of the word of God, pretty soon that light shines within us and out from us and we become lights shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. You have to start out by looking for that light, heeding the word of God, learning it, putting it into practice, praying it up to heaven, praying it back down into daily life, and that morning star will rise in our hearts.

Knowing this, verse 20, no prophecy of scripture is of any private, it says interpretation, that really ought to be more like derivation. Derivation. Guys that were writing scripture didn't just make it up.

It wasn't derived privately. It was inspired by God's Holy Spirit. Prophecy never came by the will of man.

Holy men of God spoke moved by the Holy Spirit. You can cross out as they were. Prophecy didn't come by the will of man, but holy men of God moved by the Spirit.

But now here's where we pick up our interesting passage for tonight. Chapter 2, 2 Peter, there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them. In the first verse of the second chapter, we find out what kind of people these false teachers who bring in these destructive heresies are.

Are they believers or are they unbelievers? Well, ask yourself this question. Has Jesus redeemed unbelievers? Are they blood-bought, purchased with His work on the cross? No, they are not. Good job.

Everybody's getting 100% on the pop quiz tonight. Unbelievers are not redeemed. Do a concordance study on redeemed.

You will quickly see that while Christ paid the penalty for the sins of the whole world, everyone's sins have been propitiated, but until and unless an individual accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior, the Son of God raised from dead on the third day, they're not redeemed. Your problem with God is not sins that have not been atoned for or have not been paid for. Your problem is that you are still corrupt, hopeless, and without God in the world.

Redemption fixes the personal relationship. Propitiation and atonement fix the sin issue, but fixing the sin issue by itself, and John tells us Christ died for the sins of the whole world, not for ours only. So people do not suffer eternal separation from God for their sins.

They suffer eternal separation from God, that situation, because they do not have life. He that has the Son has life. He that hath not the Son of God has not claimed Him by faith.

Try to walk up to the pearly gates, as it were, and Saint Peter or the cherub or whoever else is standing guard there in this hypothetical says, why should you be let into God's holy precincts? I lived a good life. I read somewhere, heard somewhere that Jesus paid for all my sins. Wrong answer.

The only answer to claim eternal life and eternal residence in God's future kingdoms is Jesus Christ is my Savior. He died for my sins, and I have placed my faith in Him for eternal life. No other answer will work.

So these who are blood bought, these who are blood bought bring on themselves swift destruction. That's in the very first verse of the second chapter of 2 Peter. And many will follow their destructive ways because of whom the way of truth will be ill spoken of, will be blasphemed.

Why would the way of truth be ill spoken of if unbelievers are persuading people away from the Bible and from faith and so on? These are Christians. They call themselves Christians. They claim that Christ is who He claimed to be.

Jesus said in the latter days, people will come and say, I am the Christ. I, Jesus, am the Christ. But they will lead many astray.

They will deceive. That will get their foot in the door, and from there they will drag them away. This is what Peter is saying.

He learned it from the Lord. Many will follow their destructive ways because of whom the way of truth will be ill spoken of. Listen, I will ill speak of the way of truth.

When you look around at what purports to be and claims to be Christianity today, it's heinous. More about that in a moment. By greediness, by acquisitiveness, they will exploit you with deceptive words.

Now, how can you exploit and deceive someone using greed? Whose greed is it? Doesn't say, does it? Covetousness, greediness is going to be involved in people being exploited and deceived by false teaching. Well, the greed works both ways. The teachers are gaining what they covet.

It might be popularity. It might be influence. It might be power.

It might be a feeling of gratification that they've quote unquote made a difference, had an impact, moved many people. Any godless person can seek that kind of accomplishment. I made a difference.

This little girl that's in the grip of the climate Nazis, Greta Thunberg, if you want to see somebody who is full of themselves because they think they are making a difference, she's it. Here to tell you, if you look at the Vostok ice cores and the research, the genuine science that has been done, there is a regular cycle of heating and cooling on this planet. It has nothing to do with whether you used a can of hairspray or not, or what's in your air conditioner.

At any rate, because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed by acquisitiveness on both sides. Teachers are looking for that and they will play into, I want a happy life. I want to feel good about myself.

I want to be raised on a wave of emotion and good feeling when I go to church. I want to come away smiling and I want to see a mouth full of teeth and I want to be a mouth full of teeth every time I go to church. They will exploit you.

For a long time their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber. There have been people of this stripe in the believing community going back centuries. Jude is going to talk about some of them and he's going to name them going all the way back to the days of Moses.

This goes back to the days of the Tower of Babel. This goes back to the days previous to the

flood where angels who were in leadership used covetousness of the daughters of men and they played into the covetousness of those daughters' fathers. There was a deal done.

There was a backroom deal. I'll get your daughter. You'll get favor in the courts.

You'll get favor in the decisions by the ruling angels. We've talked about that before. So this self-gratification, covetousness, greediness, and elsewhere, Paul says covetousness is idolatry.

You come to prioritize and to believe in and to place your faith in things other than God and His Word, His plan, His purpose, His promises, His Spirit, and His Son. If God did not spare the angels who sinned but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment. These are not fallen angels, by the way.

These are God's servant angels who were supposed to be looking out for the interests of the early civilized humans. Did not spare the ancient world but delivered Noah, one of eight, preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly. Sodom and Gomorrah is the one example here that isn't those who are supposed to be serving God.

God made them an example and said if you fall into the same practices as godless, ungodly people, you're going to suffer the same judgment. Delivered righteous lot, oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked, that righteous man dwelling among them tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds. Now, this is a bad thing and this was Lot's choice.

This was a bad choice on Lot's part. Lot was righteous and was supposed to be righteous. He knows how to be righteous.

Learned it from his uncle Abraham, right? But instead, he dwelt among the wicked. He did not separate. He did not distinguish himself.

He did not come out from among them and be you separate. Touch not the unclean thing. Hate the garment spotted by the flesh.

Why would you voluntarily choose to live among Sodom and Gomorrahites? Why would you do that? What does Genesis tell us? Why did Lot move down into those regions? Green pastures, covetousness, greediness, self-interest motivated Lot and he compromised. He was supposed to be righteous but instead he tormented, he vexed, he stunted and harmed his righteous soul day to day seeing and hearing their lawless deeds. Why didn't he stay with his uncle Abraham? Then he wouldn't have had to torture his righteous soul.

He could have grown and expanded and cultivated his righteous soul instead of tormenting it and torturing it by living down amongst the Sodomites. But God delivered him anyway and the Lord

knows how to deliver the godly out of testings and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and who despise authority. Circle it, those who despise authority.

Now, here's what's interesting. What do you know about the early church? Who was the first generation in the church? Who were the first ones to be evangelized? Who was it that the Holy Spirit descended on on the day of Pentecost? Where were they and who were they? Where were they? They were Israel, they were Jerusalem, right? They were gathered, there was 200 odd on the day of Pentecost celebrating the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. So what ethnicity, what culture and nationality were they? They were Jewish, right? The first generation of the church was entirely Jewish.

The Savior is Jewish, the apostles are Jewish, the first generation, the first couple dozen years of the church was almost entirely Jewish, right? Now, what was the problem in the early church? What was the problem in the church? And by the way, who went to the Gentiles? Was it Peter? He does talk to Cornelius, he sees the sheet let down and he tells the rest of the Jewish Christians that God is doing a new thing. Who's the apostle to the Gentiles? Saul of Tarsus who became Paul, right? So who is Peter the apostle to? The circumcision, he's the apostle to the circumcision. Peter is one of the foremost along with John to the Jews.

Now, this is key if you're going to understand everything else we talk about tonight, this is key. What was the problem in Peter's day in the Jewish church? What did they wrestle against? Even Paul came up against this and finally said, we're going to wash our hands of you guys and go to the Gentiles. What was the problem? Legalism, the circumcision, you've got to keep the law.

You can be a Christian but you've got to keep the law. We have rules. You can only come to God by this specific set of rules.

It's the law. Read the book of Galatians. Now, this is the tough part.

If we get over this little hurdle here, we're going to be running downhill. The problem in Peter's day, the problem amongst Jewish Christians to whom he writes is legalism. Not getting out from under the authority of the law.

Paul writes about it. Peter writes about it. You're too hung up on the authority of the law.

There is a new authority and it is the spirit of Christ and it is the mystery doctrines of the church. It's a new and living way, not the oldness of the law. We serve in the newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter.

So, if Peter is writing a letter to his largely Jewish audience, he's going to write to the diaspora. Remember 1 Peter 1? Peter to those scattered saints in Pontus and Cappadocia and all those places, right? He's writing to them. He's saying, look, your Judaizer friends, your un-Christian Old

Testament believer types are going to try to keep you under the law, under authority.

What's he talking about here? In the latter days, Peter says it's going to be the opposite. The problem in the church is not going to be legalism. It's not going to be people trying to force their rules on you.

It's going to be the opposite. It is going to be lawlessness. The destructive heresies and the deceptions are going to be of the opposite kind than what you're currently facing.

So, in verse 10 of chapter 2 here, 2 Peter, those who walk according to the flesh in the lusts of uncleanness and despise authority, they are presumptuous and self-willed. They're not appealing to Moses and the law and the synagogues and the rabbis. They're presumptuous and self-willed.

They're not afraid to speak evil of authorities. Whereas angels who are greater in power and might do not bring reviling accusations against them before the Lord. Angels are careful to not question, call out, criticize, despise and revile those who past or present have been assigned authority by God Himself.

But these, verse 12, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed speak evil of things they do not understand. Sound familiar? This is Peter talking about what is going to happen in the latter days. Speak evil of things they do not understand and will utterly perish in their own corruption.

Utterly perish. And keep in mind not only is this a trend of culture or of the times or of the generation or of people in general. This is specifically something that infects the church.

It is in the church. It is among people claiming to be Christians. Well, does this passage speak as a helpful light to shine on our path in the present time? Yes, it does.

We're going to look at more of it when we come back from our break. As has been my custom on Thursdays, I'm going to go ahead and close this broadcast and start a fresh one so you'll see me disappear. And when you reconnect, you should see the wonderful break material that includes what Matthew has put together for us and our special music.

And then we'll resume our study right after this break.