

Rev 25-09-03b

We're ready now to resume our study. We're going to dive right into the book of Revelation. It has many unique characteristics, one of which is the number seven is prominent.

Everybody knows this, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven churches, seven lampstands representing those churches, the seven stars which represent the angels of those churches. There are seven pairs of titles as Jesus addresses each church in Revelation 2 and 3. In all but one case, and even that case, there is a doublet of the description of the Lord Jesus in chapter one. He will select a title for himself that is different for each church, and it is generally a twofold description in each of them.

So these seven pairs, in these letters are seven overcomer promises that are distinct and separate. When you come to the beast with its seven horns, seven eyes, there are seven angels who appear in chapter 8, chapter 15, chapter 16, chapter 17, chapter 21. These groups of seven angels we're going to see even here at the beginning.

We have the seven thunders that are the unspoken portion of the message. You have 7,000 mentioned in chapter 12 and chapter 13 and chapter 17. The seven heads of the beast, in addition to the seven horns, you have seven crowns.

There are seven plagues. There are the seven mountains on which the woman sits, Mystery Babylon, the seven kings in Revelation 17. We have seen this promise of blessing to the one who reads, those who hear, and those who apply, keep the things which are written in verse three.

There are actually seven total beatitudes, seven statements, blessed are those who in the Revelation. So the one we just reviewed in chapter one, verse three, in chapter 14, verse 13, blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. This is the second.

In Revelation 16, 15, blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments. This one is going to be repeated later, but to be watchful and to remain unstained, undefiled. That's Revelation 16, 15.

That's the third. The fourth is Revelation 19, nine. Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the lamb, which tells you not everybody is called.

Not everyone has the privilege of attending. Revelation 19, nine. The fifth is blessed and holy, he that hath part in the first resurrection.

And of course, that part is the word meros, has an inheritance that is granted at the first resurrection. That's Revelation 20, verse six. Blessed and holy, he that has a portion, a part in the first resurrection.

There are many who will be raised who will not. The sixth is blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. That's a repetition of one three that we just saw in Revelation

chapter 22, verse seven.

He that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. Finally, in Revelation 22, 14, another repeated beatitude, blessed are they that wash their robes. 22, 14.

Seven blessed are they. Blessed is he. There are many other sevens that are embedded in the book.

You can count characters in various scenes, such as when you get to the woman who has the man child and you have the dragon, you have the seven headed beast, the false prophet, you have the angel Michael, the archangel Michael, you have the lamb, the duration of this time of Jacob's trouble in terms of seven years. There are seven times where the Lord Jesus is going to say, I am, that you can enumerate. There are seven doxologies in heaven where those who surround the throne sing praise and so on.

In the description of the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem, there are seven new things. What I find of more interest, because many of those are somewhat subtle, is that there are symmetries with the book of Revelation and the book of Genesis. Things that begin in Genesis find their bookend in the Revelation.

You can think of some of these if you stop and reflect, but let me give you just a few. In Genesis 1.1, God creates the heavens and the earth. In Revelation 21.1, there is a new heavens and a new earth, and the old is rolled up and passes away.

The sun, moon, and stars are created in Genesis 1.14 through 16. In Revelation 4.12 and Revelation 8.12, they are subdued. They fall from heaven.

They are wrapped up. The sun is given to govern the day in Genesis 1.16, but there is no need of the sun in Revelation 21.21. There is no night there. The lamb is the light and so on.

Darkness is called night in Genesis 1.5, but there is no night there in Revelation 22.5. The waters are called seas in Genesis 1.10. There is no more sea in Revelation 21.1. There is a river that blesses the earth in Genesis 2.10-14, and it divides into three rivers and so on, but there is a new river that proceeds from the throne of God in Revelation 22.1-2. There is the entrance of sin into the world in Genesis 3. There is the eradication of sin in Revelation 21.22. There is the curse pronounced in Genesis 3.14-17. Cursed is the world. Death enters. You have Paul talking about this, whereas by one man sin entered the world and death by sin, so the death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.

That occurs in Genesis 3.19. But there is no more death in Revelation 21.4. Cherubim are first mentioned in Genesis 3.24 to guard the way to the tree of life. Cherubim are finally mentioned in Revelation 19.4. Man is driven out of the garden of God, out of the place where the tree of life grows in Genesis 3.24, but man is restored to that access and that environment in Revelation 22. The tree of life no longer accessible as previously mentioned, Genesis 3.24. But there is access to the tree of life in Revelation 22.14. Sorrow and suffering enter the world in Genesis 3.

They are no longer in the new heavens and the new earth.

No more sorrow, Revelation 22.4. We are separated from God by sin, by suffering, by defilement and corruption in the early chapters of Genesis. It is restored in Revelation with the judgment of those things in Genesis. Religion, art, science, man's accomplishments, Nimrod, engineering, these things that are talked about in Revelation 4 are wrapped up and replaced with the perfect re-creation from God in Revelation 18.

Babylon itself, you remember Nimrod is the founder of in Genesis 10. But Babylon falls in Revelation 17 and 18 and there is no more Babylon in the new creation. You remember that God sends a flood to destroy the generation in which Noah dwells in Genesis 6-9.

Satan has a flood where he endeavors to destroy the man-child brought forth by the woman in Revelation 12. The rainbow is introduced in Genesis 9 as a sign of God's promise. The rainbow reoccurs in Revelation 4.3 and Revelation 10.1 as a sign of remembrance in heaven.

There is a bow that surrounds the throne of God and is over the head of one of the sign angels in Revelation 10. Many, many things that are originated in Genesis come to completion. What a wonderful symmetry that these books occur where they do in our Bible.

The dominion of Satan begins in Genesis 3. It ends in Revelation 20 and 22. This is a book of prophecy and as such it foretells future things, not just to its immediate recipients. God's prophecy always extends to, through, and beyond its first recipients.

We saw this in Daniel. We saw it in Ezekiel. There was a near-term fulfillment, but it has adumbrations and anticipations of future things that are not yet fulfilled.

All the way to the book of Malachi. Prophecy is for all of God's people until all of prophecy is fulfilled. So the notion that Revelation was fulfilled in and by the events of AD 70 takes away its prophetic value.

It is a book of prophecy. It is called a prophecy in verse 3 of our chapter. Those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep the things which are written in it.

So here's my second question for you tonight. Here you've got the unfolding of events. The seals break.

Horsemen ride forth. There are famines. There is death.

There's catastrophe. There are things happening in heaven and things happening on earth. How do you keep the words when it is a description of events? Blessed is he who keeps the words of this prophecy.

Those who hear the words and keep them. Keep those things which are written in it for the time is near. This is the second time reference in three verses.

These will take place shortly. The time is near. The only way that can be true is that it is as near as the end of each of our individual lives.

And we are to be prepared for the end of our life. Life is not over when we die. Eternal life begins when we die.

This is a time of preparation, of training, of gaining experience and understanding, qualification, be faithful in a few things so that we can be involved in God's superintending of many things. To be ready is to keep the words of this prophecy. The time is near.

So then in verse four, John writes to the seven churches which are in Asia. Again, why the churches in Asia? If you look at a map, you can find one in the back of your Bible somewhere, but I can describe it for you. There is the coast of Turkey.

Turkey is kind of up in the northeast and off the coast is this island of Patmos. If you go to what is modern day Turkey, was then Asia minor, you will find these seven churches in sort of a flattened ring. If you start at Ephesus and go clockwise, you can go sequentially in the order of these letters to each of these seven churches.

They are close to John. John can submit this book to the hands of a messenger who can take it to the shore, take it to the church at Ephesus and then take it to each subsequent church. If you want to remember, this is the most valuable thing I will tell you the whole evening.

Get ready. Right now, if you shut your Bible, can you name the seven churches? We ought to be able to. Most of us can't.

I won't put you to the test. I could pause here for 30 seconds. See how many of them you can remember and can you get them in the right order? Here is a way you can remember them and you will always remember them and you will get them in the right order.

You just have to remember this mnemonic. Every smiling person, thy sorrows fill loudly. Every smiling person, thy sorrows fill loudly.

You got it? One more time. Every smiling person, got a happy crowd, every smiling person, thy sorrows, contra expectation, fill loudly. Every is Ephesus.

Smiling is Smyrna. Person is Pergamos. Every smiling person, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos.

Thy is Thyatira. Sorrow is Sardis. Fills is Philadelphia.

And loudly is Laodicea. Run that through your mind a few times. If you can't remember the mnemonic, just think, seems like there were happy people that got sad.

They were smiling persons, but sorrow filled them loudly. Remember when the people are going to cry out for the rocks to fall upon them? People who are content and complacent, far from God. Every smiling person, thy sorrows will fill loudly.

Okay? That's your seven churches in order. Easy to remember. I made that up myself and you can tell.

So John to the seven churches, which are in Asia. There are many other churches. By most estimates, there are well over a hundred large established churches.

By the time John receives this message from the Lord Jesus, over a hundred well-known church at Rome. The others I mentioned earlier, Berea, still a remnant in Jerusalem or in Achaia or in Athens or in the places in Macedonia. You think about the places that Paul went and established churches such as Lystra and Derbe and so on.

These churches are still around. Why these seven? John is the representative apostle. These are churches that he has been associated with.

It was his area of ministry in later life. And because he was ministering in and around this area, he has been judged a threat and has been exiled to Patmos. So he is writing in the same way that Paul had ministered to the Ephesian church and other churches and then was imprisoned.

He would write letters back to them. So these churches know John. And according to church history, to the extent that we can trust later accounts from the first few centuries, this is written during the reign of Domitian, Titus's brother, Titus who destroyed Jerusalem.

Domitian rules from the mid 80s to 96, AD 96. In AD 96, Domitian dies. And his son comes to rule and releases the exiles.

And tradition tells us, early church father history says that John was released in AD 96 and returned to Asia Minor and went to Ephesus and to these other churches, perhaps to reinforce and rehearse this message that he initially delivered to them in writing. So they are representative churches, representative not only in the day in which this message was first communicated, but representative through every subsequent generation, every subsequent believer who has access to hear this read, to receive the words, these are representative for us, every one of them. It's not only Laodicea for us, it is all seven.

Churches which are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come. The same order that we had in verse one is present here. This is God the father.

God the father is him who is and who was and who is to come. These things are said of the Lord Jesus as well, but in this context, this is God the father. And there is a message of grace and peace to us.

Grace to you and peace from God the father. This is the father and the title he chooses for himself is he who was, he who is, he who is to come. What kind of foundation does this provide for us when we want to receive grace and peace? God knows the end from the beginning.

He knew ahead of time, every circumstance, every challenge, every opportunity. He knew our

heredity. He knew our situation.

He knew our strengths, our weaknesses, our successes, our failures. In the past, he who was saw it coming, made provision, made preparation. Jesus said, your father knows your needs before you ask him.

He didn't say don't ask him because he already knows. But he says, when you come to the father and you say, give us this day our daily bread, know that your father knows what you need before you ask him. Why? It is he who was as well as he who is and he who is to come.

So many things come and go, fads, trends, waves through society. God is constant. He is the unchanging with no variation or shadow of turning.

We saw in James 1, there is no variation. He who was is the same as he who is. And he who is, is the one who is to come.

And when you get grace and you get peace from that God, this is a peace that passes understanding. This is not peace as the world gives, because the world changes. The world turns.

What was yesterday isn't today. And in many cases, more is the pity. And what is now will vanish.

The elements are going to melt with a fervent heat. Heavens and earth are going to be rolled up like a scroll. This stuff is going to vanish away.

Peter tells us twice, knowing this, what kind of persons ought you to be? Be those who derive their grace and derive their peace from the unchanging God who was, who is, and who is to come. He is the God of creation. He is the God of the Old Testament faithful.

He is the God of judgment. He is the God who sent his son, the Lord Jesus, as a sacrifice and an atonement for our sins, as a demonstration, not only of his love, but also of the severity of sin. You have naysayers who say, this whole need for blood and torture and this God you worship has to torture people before he can forgive us sin.

What kind of a rascally God are you believing in? Miss the point. And consciously so. They have been convicted of sin and righteousness and judgment, but they want to believe that sin is a small thing and that God should be able to wave it away with a forgiving gesture.

Oh, that's okay. I know you were selfish and indifferent and oppressed and committed these various breaches of righteousness, but it's okay. I'm God.

I'll just forgive it. I'm a God of love. I'm a God of acceptance.

I'm a God of forgiveness. Why is the penalty for sin so severe? We're going to see the Lord Jesus as the lamb slain. Why? Sin is not a small thing.

It's a big deal. It is a condition under which we cannot be allowed to live because we are a metastasizing, cancerous, malignancy in creation. It can be born.

It can be managed. It can be tolerated for a time, but you can't leave it for long or it will kill the patient. It has to be addressed.

It has to be remedied. It has to be expunged, expelled. It has to be entirely eliminated.

This is where the book of Revelation is going. Why do we have chapter 21 and 22 where there is no night? There is no sea. There is no darkness.

There is no sorrow. How does that happen? The cause and the source is a big deal. It is sin.

It is separation from the life-giving God who was and is and is to come, who is the one and only source of grace and the one and only source of peace. There is no other option. But people who want to minimize the importance of their bad choices and their rebellious, sinful, and evil ways, if you don't think your sin's a big deal, then you don't think it requires much of a remedy.

God's remedy is the stark, clear, unavoidable communication of just how bad sin is. We should not take it lightly in our own lives, in our own hearts. That thing is a bomb with a lit fuse that's a quarter of an inch long.

Identify it and get it out of the house. Get it well away. Let God separate it as far as the east is from the west because it is destructive.

It is harmful to us. It is harmful to those around us. It grieves God.

It grieves the Holy Spirit. It prevents us from fulfilling our purpose and function for which Christ died. And to minimize the need for the cross is to give away your complete lack of understanding of what sin is and how grievous and dangerous it is and why it has to be deleted from existence.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Going back to Isaiah, you know, the Spirit of God will rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of this and the other. And there is a sevenfold description there beginning with Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord.

And so many say this is the Holy Spirit. I don't think so. I may have even thought so in the past.

I'd have to go back and see what I said the last time we went through this. But I am convinced that the seven spirits and you've got a capital S in your New King James. This is small spirits.

These are seven angels. Keep your finger here and turn over to Revelation chapter eight. When he opened the seventh seal, this is Revelation chapter eight, verse one.

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I

saw the seven angels who stand before God and to them were given seven trumpets. You know, Revelation well enough to know this.

You got seals, trumpets and bowls that are given in detail, right? How do the seals function? What makes the seals give up their content? The lamb breaks the seals. Who is worthy to open the scroll? John weeps because there's no one found. And then the lamb appears.

He is worthy. Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive glory and honor and power. And actually that's another sevenfold description.

When you find it in its final form, it increases each time it's given. Worthy is the lamb to receive. In the last instance, it's a sevenfold glory.

But the lamb, the Lord Jesus breaks each seal and opens them. When he opened the seventh seal, there's silence for half an hour. Now who takes over? I saw seven angels who stand before God.

I believe these are the seven spirits who stand before his throne. In chapter one, verse four, we will see why these seven angels appear time and again in the revelation. They are the seven spirits before God's throne.

They introduced here in chapter one, because they are going to be at the beginning of the unfolding of these events told from these perspectives. Earthly perspective is the seals. Angelic perspective is the trumpets.

The heavenly perspective looking down from the throne of God is the bowls. And the thunders are between the trumpet area and the heavenly area. And we'll have more to say when we get to the thunders.

But in the same way that the great earthquake that we've seen in the past characterizes the ending of the seals and the trumpets and the bowls, these seven angels characterize the beginning. Seven angels begin, the great earthquake is at the close. So just for future reference, and there's been no prior reference to the Holy Spirit whatsoever, these seven spirits, he maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire.

And angels are variously described as messengers when they are communicating with people and spirits when they are serving God. So grace to you and peace. The study of revelation should bring to your heart and to your mind, to all of us as servants of God, grace, peace, and a commitment to keep the words that are communicated to us.

We receive God's grace. We are granted God's peace. And we have this opportunity to be faithful servants who will not only hear the words of this prophecy, but keep those things which are written in it because the time is near.

The time is now and the time is soon at hand. You could imagine that there might be centuries.

If we were reading this a thousand years ago, there would be 10 centuries plus before the words of this prophecy would come to pass.

But think about those people that lived in 1025, AD 1025, studied the revelation. How close were these things to them? They lived 40, 50, 60 years and died. This is the next thing they see.

For each of us, for all of us from the first recipients till now, these things will shortly come to pass because they are as close as our last heartbeat, as our last earthly breath. They will immediately transpire. This unfolds at the rapture and in all of the days and weeks and months and the seven years that follow it.

It's near. It's soon. Are we ready? And are we going to live the time that is left to us in this life in preparation, in keeping, heeding, paying attention? We've been given the grace and we've been given the peace to do so.

So I've got a job to do tomorrow. I've got to go places and do things. Can I keep this in mind? I am not here just to go places and do things.

Any godless unbeliever can do that. The worst atheists in the world can go do his job, get from point A to point B in his car. Who can embody and manifest and express the grace of him who is and was and is to come? Who can be a servant of Jesus Christ as they go about their daily tasks? Who can always have one eye on the future that things are not always as they seem? And it is the attitude of heart.

It is the attitude of service and commitment that I express as I carry out in the day of small things, those skills, those applications that are going to serve in the day of big things. You've been faithful in a few things. I will make you ruler over many things.

This is our opportunity. Tomorrow is a day of small things. If we are faithful, if we are aware of who we are and why we're here, and we think about revelation, you don't have to be a rapture fanatic.

We're all rapture fanatics. We will all be at the rapture. And I'm not concerned about how high will I fly and what will the scenery look like.

At the rapture comes the judgment. Am I ready? Will I be put in the group that says, You over here, come help me with the unfolding plan of the Father. You here are worthy.

You are ready. You are faithful. You are the ones who listen when I talk and do what I say.

Come with me. We are going to be involved at the point of the spear. All the rest of y'all, you're in the darkness, which is outside.

Wait till you hear the creaking wooden wheels of the cart that's got leaves from the tree of life and hope you can recover somewhere down the road, but you're of no use. What a ghastly prospect to be of no use to the Lord of glory who bought us with his own blood. We'll see these

songs of praise.

The redeemed who sing in heaven appreciate what the Lord Jesus did and it motivates them to redeem the time, to take every thought captive for Christ. That the small things we do are done in the service of the Father. We do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men.

I don't care if anybody sees it. I don't care if they thank me for it. This is what God has put on my plate and I'm going to do it.

I want him to say nobody ever folded laundry like this guy is folding laundry. Nobody ever tuned a piano or drove a car or got his job done here, there or wherever with such a heart of service to the Father, of gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, of sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. If we are not that, who are we and why are we here? That's the call of revelation.

We ought to be excited about the rapture because it is real close and I could have said this a thousand years ago and it is just as true, just as true now. Are you ready for the rapture? Heart could stop tomorrow. Those of us that have had unexpected accidents can testify.

You don't know what the next couple of minutes might hold. Contrary to all expectation, now is the appointed time. Now is the day of deliverance and we ought to be the most motivated people on the planet to use the time that is left to us in this life to get ready for the next.

That's the message of this book. Hear it. Heed the words.

The time is near. The time is at hand. Father, thank you for granting us the opportunity to get this message while we are still here to do something with it and about it.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will do his wonderful work of revealing truth to us as it pertains to us individually, show us our opportunities clearly, help us to see where your power, your grace, your peace can imbue our thoughts, our words, our actions so that we are truly worthy to represent the Lord Jesus now and in the ages to come. We ask it in his name. Amen.