

Rev 25-09-07b

We're in Revelation chapter one. We are moving smartly forward. We are aiming in the direction of getting to these letters addressed to the seven churches of Asia.

In the introduction, we have seen the source, which is God the Father, and what a comfort that is, that God the Father has the plan. He knows the end from the beginning. He is the one who is, who was, and who is to come.

There is nothing that surprises him. There is nothing that puzzles him. There is nothing that sets him back.

And knowing what he knows, with his purposes, he reveals through the Lord Jesus Christ and through faithful witnesses and messengers what we need to know. This is that revelation. John is bearing witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This is what he does. He has done it in the past. He is in exile on Patmos, which seems like a bad thing, but evidently, this is an ideal place for this extended vision to be communicated.

I am sure that John could have questioned, I'm an apostle, shouldn't I be traveling about, visiting congregations, training pastors, encouraging the faithful, comforting those who are afflicted and oppressed and uncertain and in need of that kind of encouragement, and I need to be present. You could think the same about the apostle Paul when he was imprisoned so often and for so long, and it looks like a setback. We can look at our circumstances and say, I'm limited.

I'm constrained. There are so many things I wish I could do, I used to do perhaps, and at this time and in this place, I am, my options are extremely few. That's John on the Isle of Patmos.

At most, they might be taking him down to the mines to dig for salt or to break big rocks into little ones. There was a labor camp on Patmos. John is elderly at this time, whether they forced him to work or not, we don't know, but he is exiled, he is limited, he is constrained on this island.

Few, if any, visitors can get there. He certainly cannot leave, and this is the time, and this is the place where he receives this incredible revelation directly from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the angel, to him, to transmit to the angels, the messengers of the seven churches, to benefit them at first blush and at firsthand, and through them, every single servant of God and servant of Christ since. John had to have faith that God was in charge of his circumstances, that God knew what he was doing, let him be arrested and exiled.

But without the exile, we would not have this book. It's clear. And he is exiled because of his faithfulness as a witness and giving testimony to the Lord Jesus.

So we have twice emphasized that these things must shortly take place. Entake is the Greek.

Shortly take place in verse one.

In verse three, keep the things which are written in this book because the time is near. The time is near. In my mind, there is only one way to understand this, and that is it is as near as the end of our lives.

That makes it true for every single servant of Christ. It is near for all of us. It is soon to take place for all of us.

It is vital and essential information. If you are suddenly in need of medical help and you have a surgery or a procedure that is scheduled, you visit the doctor and he says, this is coming up. Here's, it's gonna come up soon.

Here's what you need to do in the meantime. Start taking these antibiotics. Stop eating this kind of food or taking this particular medicine.

Don't eat anything after midnight, right before the procedure. You have a whole set of instructions that are essential preparation so that the operation itself will succeed and be beneficial and restore health and function and so on. But it is soon at hand.

Here's what you need to do to be ready when it happens. That's what this book is. Now, in case you have any doubt about this, turn back to 2 Timothy 4.9. We just saw this a few months back.

2 Timothy 4.9. Paul is writing to Timothy in verse six. I'm being poured out as a drink offering. The time of my departure is at hand.

The time of my departure is at hand. Now, he is going to say, Timothy, come to me down in verse nine. Demas has forsaken me, but in verse 13, bring me my coat that I left with Carpus at Troas.

Bring the books, especially the parchments. The time is at hand. The time of my departure is close, but there's some intervening time.

So let's make the most of that time. Come see me. Bring me some stuff that I need.

But the time is at hand. Look, especially at verse nine. Be diligent to come to me quickly.

Be diligent to come to me entake. That's not certainly, some people like to take this in Revelation and say, well, these things must certainly take place. There are some English translations that phrase it that way.

No, it is certain because it is directly from God the Father. But this means soon. Get here soon, Timothy.

I need my books. I need my cloak. Come to me and be diligent to do so.

Interesting. Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, an unashamed workman. Be

diligent to come to me quickly.

There are things that ought to be priorities for us. So quickly, that's 2 Timothy 4, nine. Again, our recent study in James, which we are midway through.

Hebrews, James. We haven't gotten there yet, but in James chapter five, look at verse eight, James 5, eight. Verse seven.

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Be patient until the coming of the Lord. When people say be patient, you're in the same doctor environment and you're in the waiting room.

And be patient. Sometimes you are the patient and you're waiting. You're in a thing waiting for anesthesia to kick in.

You're waiting for the doctor to be available to do the procedure. But there is a certain event that is future. And in anticipation of it, you are both prepared as we saw in 2 Timothy and patient.

Bide your time, make good use of the time. What do we do in waiting rooms? You grab one of the magazines, find an article. And I would have never read this except that I was in the waiting room trying to redeem the time.

And isn't this interesting? I did not know that. This is helpful. I need to look into this further when I get back home.

But be patient, redeem the time, make the most of it. Therefore, verse seven, James five, be patient brothers until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth waiting patiently.

Wait, wait, wait, be patient, be patient, be patient. Think about John on Patmos. I don't know how long he was there before the Lord Jesus appeared to him and he heard the voice and experienced this revelation.

How many days was he there? What was he thinking? Frustrated, limited, hemmed in, unable to do his apostolic function. I suspect because John was who he was and is who he is that he was patient. I wonder if he thought back to the words exchanged between the Lord and Peter.

What is it to you if he sticks around until I come? And John says, well, I'm getting up there. Think of Simeon. It'd been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn't depart this life until he had seen the Lord's Christ, had seen the salvation of Israel, had to be patient.

Days go by, weeks go by, months go by. I'm old, what can I do? Why am I here? John, exiled, be patient. Remember that the coming of the Lord is a certain future.

It is near at hand. It is soon. It is entake.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and the latter rain. You know there's a gap between the early and the latter rain and you just gotta be patient. People say, wait for it, wait for it.

Takes patience. Trust God's timing. God knows what he's doing.

Our timing is like life in the fast lane. I want everything all the time. What did we learn in James? You have need of patience.

Let patience have its perfect work so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. This patience is essential to our growth. It is essential to our function.

It is essential to our testimony and our witness. It is essential to our preparation and our qualification for service and function now and in the ages to come. Patience, part of the fruit of the spirit.

Be patient. Look at verse eight. You also be patient.

Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is what? At hand. How many centuries ago did James write this? The coming of the Lord is at hand. James chapter five, verse eight.

Romans chapter 16, verse 20. Paul the apostle in the final chapter of that great theological treatise. In verse 19, your obedience has become known to all.

This takes time, doesn't it? To build a reputation for faithfulness and obedience. You Roman Christians, your obedience has become known to all. Therefore, I am glad on your behalf, but I want you to be wise in what is good and simple concerning evil.

Be naive. This is why we as a group don't spend a lot of time investigating bad ways of practicing Christianity, faulty understandings of scripture. What's wrong with this denomination? What's wrong with this theological position? What about the preterists? What about the historicists? What about the allegorists in interpreting revelation? We're not going to go through that.

We're not going to investigate beliefs that other people have about the book and why we think it is wrong. It's not nearly as important as being wise in what is good. That's where we want to spend our time and our focus.

I want to understand the right way. I don't need to know the 500 wrong ways to do it or to understand it. They used to say there's the right way, the wrong way, and the army way.

There are many ways. There are so many ways to mess something up. I don't need to know about all of them.

It is helpful to hear about some of them so that I don't repeat the mistake, but I want to concentrate on being wise in what is good. Be wise in what is good. Simple concerning evil.

You don't have to know too much about it. You do have to know something. Got to be able to identify it, but a little goes a long way.

Look at verse 20. And the God of peace, grace to you and peace, is in the introduction to our book. The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet and soon, soon.

Let me ask you this. How old are you? Don't answer that out loud, ladies. How long have you been alive? How long have you been a believer? Has Satan been crushed under your feet yet? As far as I know, he is still roaming the earth seeking whom he may devour.

He is slinging darts that need to be quenched by the shield of faith. I need to resist him so that he will flee from me. But if he's walking around and doing the darts and seeking whom he may devour and fleeing when I resist him steadfast in the faith, one thing he's not is crushed under my feet.

Yet scripture says, Paul says to the Romans, the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet. Notice he doesn't say your feet are going to crush Satan. God's gonna put him under your feet and God's gonna crush him down there.

We don't do the crushing. God crushes him under our feet. We will stand on the crushed remains of the attempt to perpetrate and overcome by evil.

Evil people, evil forces. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Remember the God of peace, grace and peace constantly, almost every one of Paul's letters, grace to you and peace.

Our revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace. The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly, soon, that is gonna take place at the end of this earthly life and the beginning of the next for us. We are out from under his influence.

We are out from under his sway. We are no longer vulnerable to attack or to deception or to deflection or to defeat or to depression or discouragement to sideline us, to render us ineffective, to neutralize us. Satan's power has already been broken at the cross.

He will be crushed under our feet by God soon. Wait for it, be patient, it's not long. Whatever Satan may be doing in our lives or near at hand or what we observe in the world, tell Satan, enjoy it while it lasts because you are about to be crushed.

You're about to be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. You're gonna be crushed by my God under my feet. So, get your kicks while you can because shortly you're gonna be out of the picture.

What a wonderful promise. God will crush Satan under your feet real soon. That's what this phrase means.

You can turn back to, and of course this goes all the way back to Genesis 3.15. He shall bruise thy head, you will bruise his heel. And it is the Lord Jesus Christ who in Christ, as he crushes the

head of the serpent under his heel, we share in that victory. Luke chapter 18, Luke 18, flip back there real quick.

This is the episode where Jesus is telling the parable of the importunate widow in Luke chapter 18. The persistent widow, if you will. There was in a certain city, verse two, a judge who did not fear God or regard man.

There's a widow. She came to him saying, get justice for me from my adversary. He would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself, though I do not fear God, I do not regard man because this widow troubles me.

I'll avenge her less by her continual coming. She weary me. This judge is pushed by no actual sense of justice.

He's not saying justice needs to be done. This woman has a valid case. He's a human judge, but he will avenge her for a relatively trivial reason.

This woman is pestering me. I'm tired of it. I'll just give her justice.

That's at the human level. For a trivial reason, he will grant her request. Then the Lord said in verse six, hear what the unjust judge said.

Shall God not avenge his own elect who cry out day and night to him? Though he bears long with them, they have a valid case. They are crying out to the just judge who is interested in righteousness and justice and recompense. Vengeance is mine.

I will repay injustice, evil, wrongness, oppression, affliction. I will repay, says the Lord. So if a human judge for trivial reasons will honor the request of the persistent widow, how much more your heavenly father will avenge his own elect who cry out day and night to him, though he bears with them? Bears long.

You gotta be patient. Wait for it. God's timing is perfect.

Our timing is, I want it now. I want it all. What's the delay? What's the holdup? I don't see any reason why this shouldn't happen right now.

God's ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His plan is better than our plan.

His timing is infinitely better than ours. We don't know what's good for us in many cases. God does.

Wait for it. Be patient. He bears long with them.

I tell you, verse eight, that he will avenge them speedily. This is our same word, same root word as used in Revelation for being at hand. The time is near.

God will avenge them speedily. Now, have all of the afflicted and the victims of injustice been avenged yet? From my perspective, I can look back over centuries. I can look back over a couple of millennia and see that there were those who were wrongly oppressed, unjustly slain, robbed, tortured.

I was looking at Naboth and his vineyard the other day. There's nothing that says Naboth deserved to be murdered and have his family land taken away from him by Jezebel to make Ahab happy. Jezebel, who's going to be mentioned here before we're a chapter or two hence.

And as you can see, I'm working ahead. I'm looking at Jezebel and her entire career. But Naboth was just a guy with a vineyard.

And Ahab comes and says, your vineyard's right next to my garden, sell it to me. Naboth said, sorry, no, I don't want to. It's mine.

I like it. It's my family land. It's an inheritance.

I'm keeping it. And Ahab goes into a funk. And so Jezebel has Naboth murdered and then goes to Ahab and says, well, Naboth is dead.

Go ahead and take the thing for yourself. That's Jezebel for you. Where is justice for Naboth? He's been dead 2,500 years and more.

Where's his justice? It seems like a long time from my perspective, but you know how long it is until he gets justice in his own perspective? Naboth was murdered and closed his eyes in death. And his next waking experience is resurrection with possession and opportunity in the millennial kingdom. He's a righteous man.

There's nothing wrong with him. And he receives justice from God and vengeance speedily. God will avenge him speedily.

What a wonderful promise. Shall not God avenge his own elect? He will avenge them entake. The exact same phrase we have in Revelation 1.1, things which must take place entake, shortly, soon, quickly.

So, John to the seven churches, verse four, Revelation 1, which are in Asia, grace to you and peace. What should you come away with studying Revelation? There are those who become alarmed, who look at world events and wonder, what if we're wrong about being pre-tribulation rapturists and we're going to go in, what about my family? What if I'm saved, but they're slow to awaken to the truth of Christ and they end up having to go through the tribulation. They're a tribulational saint, perhaps a tribulational martyr.

What about that? All of these cataclysms and what will happen to things I love, people I love? What if I'm still here and there is alarmism and there is being disconcerted and unsettled? And what if I'm not right? What if I misunderstand? What if I get fooled and take the mark of the

beast because I took out a new credit card or the drone flies over and Amazon delivers a package with a robot? Oh, what's going to happen now? How does this letter begin? Grace to you and peace. If the book of Revelation has any effect on us other than peace, watch out. Reconcile yourself that God knows best.

He knows what he's doing. Whatever he allows is for a good purpose. He will work it together for good.

Romans 8, 28 through 30. There are conditions. God works all things together for good.

For whom? To those who love him, to those who are called according to his purpose. If you are called, you are one who responds to the call. It becomes an effectual call by choice.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come. This is a background of all of the titles of God. And there are many.

You've seen posters where they've got El Shaddai and Yahweh Rapha and the Lord of hosts and Yahweh Sabaoth and all of these other titles of God, the almighty, the everlasting father, the prince of peace, all of these titles that you could claim for God and or the Lord Jesus. The selection of these titles is critical. We are going to see that Jesus will select specific titles for himself in the address portion of each of these upcoming seven letters.

So God selects in the introduction to this letter of all of his potential titles at this point, grace to you and peace. If this was a Pauline letter, what would it say? Grace to you and peace. This is Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, writing to you people in such and such a place.

Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. From God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't say father here, does it? Paul is anxious to assure his audience of the interest and the attention and the grace and the faithfulness and the power of God, the father in and through the Lord Jesus Christ for their benefit.

Here, the servants of God are addressed. Grace to you and peace from him who is and was and is to come. Nothing is beyond his purview.

Somebody didn't concoct a plan before God arrived. Someone didn't plant a bomb before he was there to keep watch. He is, he is in the present, he is aware.

We're going to see Jesus say in these letters several times, I know your works. Why is that? He is, he is alive forevermore. He's awake and aware.

God is. What is necessary to come to God? Hebrews 11, six, do you remember it? Without faith, it is impossible to please him. He that comes to God must believe first and foremost what? That he is.

Him who is to come and the seven spirits who are before his throne. Who are these seven spirits? We'll close with this real quickly. What do we know about these seven spirits? Many

people, and you can, I'm not saying this isn't so.

I think I have assumed in the past that this may be a reference to the Holy Spirit. You go back to Isaiah and when he comes, he will have the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of this, that, and the other. And it's a sevenfold description if you include spirit of the Lord.

And then there are six characteristics. So Holy Spirit, many people go with that. Don't argue with it.

I think it's, you don't come out with a harmful application if you take it that way. But let's see what scripture says. Let's test our theory that scripture interprets scripture.

Who are the seven spirits before the throne? What do we know about them? Look at chapter three, verse one. I told you that Jesus is going to select titles from the initial list that is given in chapter one and put them in the greeting in each of these letters. So when you get to chapter three, verse one, to the angel of the church in Sardis write, these things says he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

He who has the, this is the Lord Jesus, right? He's the one who has the seven stars. We're seeing that in chapter one. Who, what are the seven stars? They are the angels of the seven churches, right? The seven spirits who are before the throne are in parallel with the seven stars.

The stars are angels slash messengers of the seven churches. They are in parallel to the seven spirits of God that are before the throne. They are likely to also be servant messenger operatives of a sentient sort.

They are in parallel to the stars. They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the glorified Christ.

He is no longer functioning, emptied, taking on the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men. In that form, he is enabled and empowered by God, the Holy Spirit. He doesn't function in that mode in his resurrected and glorified state.

He is back to the fullness of deity and bodily form. Now, he doesn't need the Holy Spirit in order to open the seals. He doesn't need the Holy Spirit to be the lamb that was slain and to do all of the things that we are gonna see unfold in this revelation because he is the glorified and ascended son of God and operates in his own deity.

We are the ones who need the full-orbed ministry of the Spirit in our fallen and limited flesh. He test drove that life for us by emptying himself of his deity, not thinking of it as something to be grasped. So, that's what you find in chapter three, verse one.

These spirits are possessed by the glorified Lord Jesus. And in the same way that he charges the angels, the stars, the messengers to the churches, you get the idea that he is in charge of these spirits and will detail them to do things and perform tasks and fulfill commands just as he does

the stars, the messengers of the churches. We find that in chapter three, verse one.

Look at the next page, chapter four, verse five. John is called up to heaven. He's in the Spirit.

Notice the Spirit singular in chapter four, verse two. He doesn't say, I was among the seven spirits. If those seven represented the Holy Spirit, why do we keep switching from singular to plural about the self-same Spirit? Immediately, I was in the Spirit.

This is the second time John says that. He tells us this in verse 10 of chapter one. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

We'll see that when we get to verse 10. He's in the Spirit on the Isle of Patmos. Now he's in heaven and he's in the Spirit again, because John is still human flesh.

He needs the Spirit to understand things that are spiritually discerned. I was in the Spirit. Throne set in heaven, one sat on the throne.

He who sat there was like a Jasper, a Sardius stone in appearance, rainbow around the throne in appearance like an emerald. We saw this last time. The rainbow is introduced in Genesis and comes to its fulfillment in Revelation.

These wonderful inclusions. Here is the rainbow around the throne. This is the throne of God the Father.

Around the throne were 24 thrones, and on the thrones I saw 24 elders sitting, clothed in white robes. They had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.

Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. Here's a new fact. The seven spirits before the throne are seven lamps of fire.

Lamps of fire. What are the lamps in chapter one? The lamps, the seven lamps on lampstands. Stars are the messengers.

The lamps burning, belonging to the Lord. They are sentient creatures. They are people in those churches.

Here you have these seven things before the throne. Finally, turn over to chapter five, verse six. The elders talked to John when he weeps in verse four, because no one is found worthy to open and read the scroll.

Verse five, chapter five. One of the elders said to me, don't weep. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven

eyes. You've seen artist depictions of this lamb that's got seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Seven horns and seven eyes.

Obviously, this is symbolic. Horns represent power, eyes represent knowledge and observation, watchfulness, awareness of everything that's going on. These are the seven spirits of God.

So we know that they not only belong to the lamb, as we saw in chapter three, verse one, and that they burn with fire that we saw in chapter four, verse five, like torches or lamps, but they function as horns and eyes on behalf of the lamb, and they are sent out into the earth. It only takes one Holy Spirit to do all of his wonderful works of baptizing and sealing and filling and regenerating and gifting and convicting and so on. It only takes one Holy Spirit for that.

John is in that spirit on the Lord's day when he receives this revelation. He's in that spirit in verse two of chapter four, when he is taken to heaven, transported into the future and into the eternal realms. These are seven spirits and they are sent out into the earth as horns and eyes on behalf of the lamb.

So the greeting is from God, who is and was and is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne. This is the point of contact. These are the operatives.

We are going to see them throughout the book. They are going to receive commands from the throne and they are going to do things. Fascinating.

They are the truest and most powerful servants of God in all of space, time, the universe and beyond the universe. These seven spirits of God are the ones that get it done. They work for God, the father.

They are constantly before his throne. They shine, they reflect his glory and they are possessed by, controlled by and serve the lamb. Very fascinating introduction to them.

This is the power behind the message. There is no more powerful message in all the word of God than the one we're looking at now. How should we then live? How should we look at our time? How should we look at our opportunities given the weight of this critical revelation that is soon to take place? It is pertinent right this minute.

It is pertinent in the next hour, the next day, the next week. The time is at hand. The time is near.

These will shortly take place. What are we going to do in that light? What an opportunity. How exciting.

We'll start at verse five next time. And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness. What we learn in and through and from the Lord Jesus Christ is truth.

He is the way, the truth and the life. We come to the Father. It is a faithful witness.

What did he tell Pilate during the arrest? I mentioned this last time. For this cause was I born. For this reason came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth.

Didn't say it in the Sermon on the Mount. Didn't say it in the Sermon on the Plain. Didn't say it in the Upper Room.

Didn't say it any place other than to Pilate a prince of this world. I'll tell you why I'm here. To bear witness to the truth.

Who is going to receive that witness and do something about it? Doesn't seem to have done much for Pilate, but it ought to do everything for us. This is the way we come to the Father. Through the truth, the way, the life that is reflected in the Lord Jesus.

That is who is sending us grace and peace. That's who is bringing us this revelation. Nothing more important.

We'll continue this coming Wednesday at verse five, but we'll close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful truth of your word. Thank you for the revelation of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

We are uniquely related to you through him. We are his body. We are granted so many wonderful privileges, so many great potentials in him as we saw in Ephesians chapter one, as we are about to see in this wonderful revelation.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts. Help us to see that in what appears to be the simplicity and the earthiness of our life, there is the tremendous divine potential that you communicate to us in this book. Every second counts.

Every thought should be taken captive. Our words, our actions should reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus. We pray that through the Spirit and through the word, we will be enabled to so do, and we ask it in Jesus' name, amen.