

Rev 25-10-19b

We resume our study now in the Book of Revelation, looking at Chapter 2 in particular here, and I want to focus on something that has nagged at the edges of my understanding for a long time and it is directly pertinent here in our passage. You remember the promise to Ephesus, To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. To eat from the tree of life.

I will say a quick thing about a lot of the aforementioned commentaries and books that are repurposing Revelation to support social gospel, social justice, be more involved in repudiating culture and government and don't be subsumed by the empire and things of this nature. I don't want to go into that too far, but there is a tendency on the part of those who try to make revelation into a book that has that purpose and says those things to go to the back of the book and import things back into the front. A quick example, I don't recommend this book.

I've been through it. I'm going through it with the family here a second time just because we can. But there is the notion that God doesn't judge.

God doesn't implement negative consequences. God, those who will not abandon their sin, their sin has sort of built in pain, built in consequences, and God just doesn't deliver them from it. And it's a stew of their own making.

It's self-inflicted, self-induced misery. And that he is not a God of judgment, that he does not cause any bad things to happen, particularly through violence. There's a strong anti-violence, non-violent motif.

And so it fixates on the upcoming image of the Lord Jesus as the lamb as it had been slain. And so you have the lamb and the idea that God's power is unexpectedly exercised in non-violence, in passivity, in self-sacrifice, and that it's a lamb message, not a lion message, that we would be wrong to ever support enforcement by forceful means. They don't want to talk about Joshua conquering the land of Canaan and eradicating sin by force.

This is all metaphorical. And we should be completely disassociated from any form of violence. What we do versus what God does obviously are two different things.

We are enjoined in Scripture. We don't need the book of Revelation to tell us that as much as it is up to us, live peaceably with all men. But what they do in order to make this work is they'll come here to the letters to the seven churches.

And say, this is a cruciform, self-sacrificial, or a lamb-shaped message. And they're taking the lamb from chapter five. And who can open the scroll? The lion of the tribe of Judah, you turn and you don't see the lion.

You see the lamb as it had been slain. He's self-sacrificial. He's a lamb.

He's not threatening. And this should be the defining feature of our Christian faith. And our response to what is in the letters to the seven churches is it should be defined by God's power operating through the lamb.

God's power isn't like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces. It isn't the seals, trumpets, and bowls coming down. And God initiating violent judgment on the earth.

These are metaphors for people judging themselves. This is where a lot of these go. I only say that to say this, any book of the Bible is designed to be read from the front through to the end.

Or to be heard from the front to the end. And so we want to be careful about going to the end and then importing things back to the front. If you had take any book of the Bible and if you lost the last half of it, it shouldn't change the way you understand the front half.

You should not need the back end in order to understand the front end is my point. These approaches which I believe are not accurate, they don't yield true interpretation. Go further on in the book and try to pull that back into chapter 2 and chapter 3. And I think you're supposed to go the other way.

Take what you learned in chapter 2 and 3 and use that to inform what follows. There's a reason God presents these things in the order that he does. Look at the book of Daniel.

There's a reason why you have the images and the visions in the order that you do. So we want to respect that. Having said that, I want to talk about this tree of life because this book isn't just designed to be heard.

It is designed to be studied in its entirety. And so you go through it with an initial pass and then go back and study it in detail. And that's why Jesus doesn't send John to preach these messages to the seven churches.

Think about that. We take for granted that it's a written book. But he doesn't say, John, I'm going to release you from Patmos like I released Peter from prison.

And go preach this message in the hearing of people. To the messenger, write, write, write seven times, write it down so that it can be studied. And there are times when we do get some additional insight not to reinterpret.

Back to this cruciform lamb shaped thing that you find in, I think this is a guy named Gorman who wrote Reading Revelation Responsibly. His approach is that the whole thing is a lamb shaped message and you get that from the future. But if that were the case, I would submit that when John turns around to see the voice speaking like a trumpet, he would have seen the lamb.

And it would be the lamb that informs these exhortations and critiques. Instead, it is the glorified Jesus with the fullness of his deity glory on display. And that is the Jesus that walks

among the lamb stands and holds the messengers in his hand.

He isn't encouraging these believers in the seven churches to overcome by passivity and love. And he is also not telling them to be violent. But the Jesus behind this message is consciously presented as the Lord of glory, not the lamb as it had been slain.

That has its own purpose, introducing the judgments on those who are in the world, starting with the breaking of the seals in chapter six. I say that to say this, turn with me to Revelation chapter 22. The text note that you have in verse 19 is pertinent here.

Verse 19, starting in 18, I testified to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. Put a yellow sticky by that in your mind.

There is an action that someone can take, i.e. importing ideas, interpretations, adding something to the words of this book, this entire book, all 22 chapters. If you add to it, if you shoehorn things into it that are not intended by God or the Lord Jesus. God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.

You know the plagues, seals, trumpets, the unknown consequences of the thunders and the bulls, and these are unique, never-before-seen plagues. Nobody's ever seen a third of the earth burned up. Nobody's ever seen the sun darkened and the moon turned to blood and the stars falling from heaven and so on.

These are unique plagues. It says God will add to him the plagues in this book if he adds to this book and doesn't respect it as the word of God and take it as it is intended and as it is meant. Add to him the plagues that are in this book.

Then it says in verse 19, if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his portion from, and in your New King James it says, the book of life. That's not what the best texts say. In my Bible, it's text note eight, the New King James text note eight.

The Nestle, Alland, UBS text and the majority text, the M text, read tree of life. Scratch out book of life. This is tree of life.

Notice the bookend here going all the way back to Ephesus. If you are an overcomer, it will be granted to you to partake of the tree of life. If you take away from the words of this book, the privilege of partaking of the tree of life will be taken away.

And the specific word used there is God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city. That word part is Meros. We've talked about this many times.

It's time for us to quickly review the passages where you find that word. Take away his part, his Meros, M-E-R-O-S, this can be used, it means portion when you're talking about geography, it can mean region or district. In other words, the division of the land, something has been

divided.

If it's a nation or an empire or a country, then that division, that portion is going to be a district. So Matthew 2.22, you have the regions of Galilee. It's Meros, Mere, Tes Galileas.

So the district of Galilee, the portion of the land that is called Galilee, he goes there. In Matthew 15.21, you have the district of Tyre. In 16.13, you have the district of Caesarea.

So geographically, it is a subdivision. There's a big thing, and this is a portion or part. Mark 8.10, it's Dalmanutha that is the portion.

But in Luke 12.46, the one who is ejected from the wedding feast is assigned his portion with the faithless. Portion of what? This is portion of future promise, future inheritance, future opportunities. Those who are faithless, that's the division of the spoils, if you will, what you can expect in the future.

Your expectation, your portion of what is to come is going to be that of the faithless. In Luke 15.12, prodigal son, I've mentioned this many times, Father, give to me the Meros of the estate. Give me my portion, my inheritance, what comes to me.

In Luke 24.42, the resurrected Jesus appears in the upper room and they give to him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb, a Meros, a portion, not the whole fish, it was a part of it. When they parted the Lord's garments at the foot of the cross, the soldiers, they made four Meros, in the plural, four portions. You're dividing something up and each of these soldiers gets a part.

When it is Ananias and Sapphira selling their land in Acts chapter five, others had sold things, including Barnabas, and brought the proceeds and they were appreciated by others. So Ananias and Sapphira sell a big piece of land, but they only bring a Meros, they bring a portion of the proceeds and lay it at the apostles feet. They lie to the Holy Spirit, they lie to the church.

So in inheritance terms, this pertains, what does the future hold for you? Inheritance is a metaphor for the future. You remember in first Corinthians 13, when Paul says, we know in part and we prophesy in part, that what we know is good and what we prophesy is good. But it's not complete.

It is a portion, first Corinthians 13, nine and 10. When that which is complete has come, the partial will be done away. But when it comes to inheritance, you have Meros here, you either have a portion in the first resurrection, if you flip back a page to Revelation chapter 20, verse six, blessed and holy is he who has a portion in the first resurrection.

Who has inheritance, who gains benefits, who has some of these promises and overcomer promises fulfilled, you are blessed, you are sanctified. If you have a portion, a Meros in that first resurrection, over such the second death has no power. This is what Jesus mentions to the Smyrnans.

You will not be hurt by the second death, if you are faithful unto death, I will give you a crown of life, you will not be hurt by the second death. Life and death are the big issues in Smyrna, be faithful unto death, crown of life. You will not be hurt by, you will not lose out due to the second death, over such, Revelation 26, the second death has no power, they shall be priests of God and of Christ.

I shall reign with him a thousand years, those who are not hurt by the second death are those who will reign with Christ. And we have another promise coming up, overcomer promise, be granted to sit with me on my throne. So you can see there is some overlap and some qualification on these that spans more than one church.

But notice that this is the portion, the Meros, back to Revelation 21, 8, those who are outside, the cowardly, the faithless, the abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their Meros, their portion. In the lake which burns with fire, it doesn't say they will be in, their portion, their inheritance, they can get a stick and a marshmallow and roast that over the flame of their inheritance, their portion is in the lake of fire. That is the second death, losing your inheritance, you are hurt by the second death, it doesn't say destroyed by the second death, hurt by it, suffer loss from it.

Now this is important, we are going to look at a set of passages that are concerning in this regard. That is Revelation 21, 8, and then our passage 22, 19, Anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his Meros, his portion, his inheritance, from the tree of life, the holy city, and the things written in this book, the positive things that are written. If you add to the book, God will add the plagues.

If you take away from the book, God is going to take away those 27 potential promises and blessings in the eternal future. And the idea is that this is language for if you do either one you are going to be subject to both of these consequences. You will be added problems and you will take away blessings.

But you have to be in the eternal future. This is two chapters after everything goes into the lake of fire in chapter 20. These people are outside the city, they are present, but their portion is in the lake of fire.

They are hurt by the second death and this is after the lake of fire. Why am I stressing this? Because in the prospect of the rapture, which we believe in because we think that a dispensational approach, respecting the biblical differences between Israel and the church, and the differences between God's promises to one and promises to the other, it doesn't matter how many dispensations or a lot of the details, but there are clear biblical distinctions. Just read Romans 9, 10, and 11.

Paul says God has not cast away his people. He hasn't absorbed his people. He hasn't just expanded his people into the church.

This is what 9, 10, and 11 in Romans are good for is emphasizing this. So let's take a look at some scriptures. And you can title this list of scriptures.

What happens at the rapture? This ties to the tree of life. This ties to inheritance. This ties to what we have just looked at.

So turn with me back to Matthew chapter 24, verses 40 through 44. Write it down. You're going to want to look at it again later.

Matthew 24, 40 through 44. I've been through the gospel of Matthew. We've revisited chapter 24 many times, but look specifically at what Jesus says.

Two men will be in the field. One will be taken and the other left. Two women grinding at the mill.

One will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what day your Lord is coming. If you have hour there, scratch it out.

The word is day. Know this, if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

You don't know the day nor the hour. You've got day in verse 42. You've got hour in verse 44.

But this idea that two individuals who look very similar. We always take this as the rapture and there's a believer and an unbeliever. But these who are grinding at the mill are doing the very same kind of job.

Those who are sleeping in a bed and so on in the parallels. Taken in the field. Taken and left.

So flip over to Luke chapter 21. You've got that one written down. That one by itself doesn't disturb us much.

We have an idea of how to understand it. Luke 21 verse 26. The coming of the son of man, there will be signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars on the earth, distress of nations, perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring.

Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth. Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming upon the earth. The powers of the heavens will be shaken.

They will see the son of man coming. I'm reading 26, 27, 28. When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads because your redemption draws near.

People's hearts are going to be failing them. Don't be afraid of God's judgments which are to come. This is your redemption drawing nigh.

And there's a wonderful application in our own personal tribulations and hardships. The more we are challenged and tested and the more we endure suffering as good soldiers of Christ Jesus, the closer our redemption is. It is drawing nigh.

But specifically here, look at verse 34. You take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life. And that day comes on you unexpectedly.

The day comes on you unexpectedly. Now, these guys as Old Testament saints would be in the grave, right? So how can the day come on Jesus' apostles to whom he is speaking here if this is the second coming at the end of the tribulation? They would not yet have been raised. It is only living tribulational saints that are in danger of persecution, martyrdom, or not being ready when the Lord returns.

So whichever part of the Lord's return is in view, Jesus says you need to be watchful. Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down. You're distracted.

You are out of line in some way. You take heed to yourselves. He doesn't say people in that day will need to take heed to themselves.

He's talking to individuals that he knows are going to cross the line into the church age and be eligible for and products of the rapture, right? Church age coming of the Lord Jesus. It will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Verse 36, circle it, put a star by it, write it down for later study.

Watch therefore and pray always that you may be counted worthy. And or the alternate reading in the Nestle-Allen UBS text that you may have strength, be worthy and or have strength that there's not a great amount of daylight between those two, whichever way you take it, watch and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the son of man, pray, be strong, be prepared, be ready so that you will be counted worthy to escape, have the strength to escape these things that will come to pass and to stand before the son of man. Just take note there that there seems to be a conditional escape, not based on saving faith, based on whether or not your heart is right, whether or not you are worthy or strong to escape these things.

Oddly enough, if you have the strength, you'll escape them and you won't need to use that strength. If you don't have strength, you're going to have to develop it because you're going to experience them. I will just note, we don't have to turn to it.

You know it well, Matthew chapter 25 verses 1 through 13. This is the parable of the 10 virgins. They are all virgins.

They have exactly the same relationship to the wedding, to the groom, and so on. They are 10 virgins. They all have lamps.

Five of them go into the celebration. Five of them are outside because they are not prepared. If you say, this is just the place of celebration and you're there, but you're in the darkness outside, this is how we understand it.

It is possible to see a bit more serious consequence here that will become evident as we look at a few other passages. So we've seen, and we're going to see in Revelation chapter 3 verse 10, to which you can turn back. Revelation 3.10, looking at Philadelphia, the one who is holy and true, has the key of David, opens and no one shuts, shuts and no one opens.

Because you have kept my command to persevere, verse 10. Not because you have believed that I am the Christ, the Son of God, and you have life in my name. Because you have operated faithfully in your Christian life.

Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. The hour of trial is what is going to be detailed in the rest of this book. To what extent is this metaphorical? Jesus says in another place, in this world you will have tribulation.

Be of good cheer, I've overcome the world. Here he says, if you persevere, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole earth. The only hour of trial that comes on the whole earth is the 70th week, the time of Jacob's what is going to be detailed in 13 or 14 chapters of this book.

Hebrews chapter 9, verse 28. Titus Philemon Hebrews chapter 9, verse 28. Verse 27, as it is appointed to men to die once after that the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, to those who eagerly wait for him, he will appear a second time apart from sin for deliverance.

I thought he was appearing to everyone regardless of their faithfulness, regardless of their perseverance, regardless of whether they are watching for and hasting the appearance. But Paul here in Hebrews says, to those who eagerly wait for him, he will appear a second time apart from sin for deliverance. Second Timothy chapter 4, verse 8, which we saw recently, there is the crown of righteousness to all those who have loved his appearing.

To those who love his appearing, those who eagerly await for his appearing, he will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation. Those who have loved his appearing, there is this crown of righteousness. And one of the most puzzling passages in my estimation, I'm still not quite sure I understand it, is Philippians 3.11. Paul says, I strive if by any means I may attain to the righteousness of God.

The resurrection from the dead, the first resurrection, the resurrection at the rapture. Paul says, I strive because I want to attain to that resurrection. So these passages have led to the notion that there is a, it's called the partial rapture theory.

That when the Lord Jesus returns, and he said this, when he returns, will he find faith on the

earth? What is going to happen to those servants who are not being good stewards when he comes? And there is a case that can be made that at the point of the rapture, the ones who will ascend with John, so to speak, in Revelation 4.1, and watch what happens hereafter, are those who have not just believed in the Lord Jesus, but have been accounted faithful. I think there is a potential picture of this in the Mount of Transfiguration, or in the upper room resurrection of the little girl, Talitha Kumi. Jesus has disciples, they all believe in him and follow him, even Judas, up to a point, but only three of them go up to see resurrection in that upper room.

Only three of them go up to see the preview of the resurrected and ascended glory of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. There is a judgment, there is a separation even among Jesus' disciples of those who are privileged to witness from a height the fully revealed glory of the Lord Jesus. I am not preaching the partial rapture point of view, but I can see why some people understand the scripture this way.

I think it is a motivation beyond the ones that we have looked at in so much detail to, as a steward, be found faithful, as a servant, to be so doing when his master returns. It is interesting to me that you have the specific promise to a church, because you have persevered, I will keep you from the hour of trial. The flip side of that coin being those who are apathetic and indifferent and have not persevered, who haven't interested themselves in the things of the Lord enough to qualify for the fulfillment of these promises, what does it mean to not be kept from the hour of trial that is about to come upon the whole earth? About to in the sense of, behold I come quickly, suddenly.

Is it possible that there are those who will not be qualified until the second coming to be raised and observe what goes on? It is a thought worth considering, in the sense that if you are a faithful believer, you have no worries. Whichever way this falls, whichever viewpoint is right, does the worst, most heinous, apathetic, indifferent, belligerent, sinful, evil, those who are roasting marshmallows over their inheritance in the fire because they are cowardly dogs, liars, sorcerers, idolaters, fornicators, the worst of the worst, are they going to go up with everybody else at the rapture? Or is the Lord Jesus going to select those who will be the white robed throng, who can with full heart and full throat praise the Lamb who has redeemed us and made us kings and priests? Everybody going to be a king and a priest? In other words, it is possible to understand. I am not saying this, I am suggesting that it is worth reflection and prayerful study.

It is possible that one of the overcomer blessings, one of the things that will and is promised to faithful believers is the rapture itself. It is not an original thought to me. Based on some of these passages, why is Paul worried that he will be worthy of the resurrection? The Apostle Paul, I strive that I may be found worthy of that resurrection.

I offer this for your consideration. If you want to research it, it is generally labeled the partial rapture theory. I will tell you I am not a fan.

But if it is not the case, how do we understand these passages? This verse 18 and 19 of the last chapter of the Bible is based on what you do, not what you believe. How you treat this word

from God, this book, and by extension the entire book. Those who are claiming to be believers, who may believe that Jesus is the Christ and have life in his name, but distort and chop up the word of God, say that many of its books are not inspired, and therefore many of its concepts are not inspired, and create a new kind of Christianity it is an attack from within.

These people in verse 18 and 19, this is an attack from within. Unbelievers don't add or take away from Revelation because they think the whole Bible is bunk. These are believers, and they are present after the lake of fire judgment.

Are they going to end up suffering the plagues of this book as believers, or are they going to participate in the blessings of this book as believers? It is a very sobering thought. And as we go through these letters, we have constant references to the tree of life, to the paradise of God, to the eternal future with its temple, and its opportunities, its kingdoms. And we want to be sure we understand the conditions upon which we see, enter, inherit, and participate in that future.

And God is not kidding around. He is not kidding around. These are serious consequences.

These are eternal judgments. And we want to be sure we understand them rightly. So I would encourage prayerful consideration.

The Holy Spirit will lead us into truth. This is a book from the God of all comfort. We should end up with peace and encouragement.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but we should be sober. And we should recognize that for those who take the Word of God lightly, there are very serious eternal consequences. And we certainly don't want to be in that group.

Well, let's close here in a word of prayer, and we'll pick up our study this coming Wednesday evening. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You both for its encouragements, its opportunities, the uplifting, exciting prospects that we have as faithful believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You also for the warnings and the conditions that are made so clear about both the positive and the negative side of Your judgment, which has been assigned to the Lord Jesus. We pray that as believers, as disciples, as members of His body, we will be found worthy. We will be on the positive side of these evaluations.

We can dedicate our time as good stewards to take every thought captive, to invest our time in ways that are pleasing and glorifying, upbuilding both to one another, and most of all, in ways that reflect Your glory and the glory of our Savior. We ask it in His name, Amen.