

Rev 25-11-23b

We are ready now to resume our study here in Revelation chapter three, looking at the letter to the Laodiceans from the Lord Jesus. And our purpose here, as we saw toward the close of the first session, is to not try to figure out how close is the world aligning to the end times. Is Erdogan about to do something in Turkey because that's where Satan's seat is? And what about Israel? And what's the significance of the Gaza peace agreement? And whose name can be parsed to be 666? And is there a European union correspondence to the revived Roman empire? And all of these other things.

This is Satan using God's scriptures to distract believers and to deflect them and get them off the subject. Think about these letters. We have spent weeks now looking at these letters in chapter two and chapter three.

What is Jesus' emphasis? Is he saying, look at the Roman empire, you can't be invested in the empire, you've got to resist and be a dissident disciple and I'm using phrases that are from some of these 15 books I've surveyed recently about revelation. And you've got to be counter-cultural and you've got to do this and do that and do the other. That the church needs to have a different role than it has.

These letters speak to us as individuals. There are those in your church who are making mistakes. They're following Jezebel and they're being seduced by Jezebel.

They're in bed with Jezebel and they're gonna share her judgment as individuals. There are those in Smyrna who are going to be individually tested and it is going to be for a period. It's not a momentary test.

Will you turn down the bribe? Will you cheat on your taxes? Will you compromise your integrity at a specific point? You'll have testing 10 days. You're gonna have some tests in some areas of life that are ongoing and 10 is the number of completion. That's why we have 10 fingers to count with.

And so there's some of these tests in some areas of our lives as individuals test us over time. Some of them, we're pretty sure they're not going to have a terminus ad quem. There's not gonna be an ending point.

This will be something we have to contend with for the remainder of our life. And we go to Smyrna and look at the example and look at the council, look at the example of the Lord Jesus. This entire book is introduced with these letters and these letters speak to us as individuals.

What am I doing? How am I pursuing my faith? Am I holding fast to Jesus' name? Am I holding fast to his word? Am I investing? Because I know what is coming in the future. I know that there will be a time of testing that is coming on the whole earth. We saw it in the letter to Philadelphia.

And remember Jesus promised, because you have kept my word, I will keep you. Here's a pop quiz question. Look up from your Bible now.

What did Jesus promise to keep the believers in Philadelphia from? Who were faithful to keep his word. What did he say to, I will keep you from? Remember there was Philip's, the time of tribulation that's coming on the whole world. But what did he say? He didn't say, I will keep you from the tribulation.

What is the object of the preposition from? I will keep you from the hour. I will keep you from the hour of testing, of tribulation that is about to come on the whole earth. He didn't say, I'll keep you from the test itself.

I will keep you from the time. I will keep you from the hour. That's worth thinking about.

We have days of testing. You can have 10 days. And by God's grace and God's strength, we will persevere.

We will glorify God. We will be shining examples. We will be a light set on a lampstand like these churches are supposed to be and the people in them during the 10 days of testing that Jesus promises to Smyrna.

Some of us or all of us in various periods of our life will have extended periods. This is an endurance test. This is a bear up under test.

Others, it is an hour. And it's not just, you won't have to take the test. It is, I will keep you from the hour of testing.

And I find this fascinating when you think about it. The example that is given is that, and I'm trying to find who gave this because I thought it was really good. Give me a second here and I'll find it.

Oh, here we go. The word from, as I mentioned, when we were talking about Philadelphia is ek, which means out from or away from or remove. It has the idea of standing away.

The only other place it's used, we looked at this a couple of weeks ago is in John 17, 15. I do not pray, Jesus says to his father, that you should take them, my disciples out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. Ek, out from.

And of course he's praying that the believers will not be seized by Satan. He's roaming the earth seeking whom he may devour. Jesus prays that his disciples' faith will not fail.

And he doesn't want them to be seized by Satan and then delivered as Peter was out of prison, but that they never fall into his hands in the first place. Be kept from Satan. They will have a different kinds of tests.

So Dr. Ryrie, there's the Ryrie Study Bible, Charles Ryrie. He gave the illustration because he was

a seminary professor. And he said that if he as a teacher told the class that all students that had an A would be kept from the exam, they would not know whether or not they should come to class on the day of the test.

He could mean that he would give them the exam and then give them a sheet with the answers on it. On the other hand, if he said all of the A students would be kept from the hour of the test, they would know they did not have to come to class. They would be exempt from the time of the exam, not even be there for it.

So since Revelation 3.10 says that these believers will be delivered from the time of the tribulation that occurs just before the second coming, this is the reminder that there is a rapture. My view, having thought about this partial rapture idea, because you've kept my word, I will keep you from. What about those that haven't kept his word? Will they not be kept from the hour of testing that comes on the whole earth? There is a view that says that depending on how faithful you are, you may or may not go up.

I don't subscribe to that. And I've assured myself that that's not the case. What does Jesus mean when he says, those who have kept his word will be kept from the hour? I think that there is a single rapture in which all church age believers, dead or alive, are going to be caught up and meet the Lord in the air.

However, there's not a degree of rapture. You're either raptured or you're not. So everyone is raptured.

But what kind of rapture is it? I think when you look at the notion that Paul gives, that there are those who are saved yet so as by fire, their works are burned, but they themselves are preserved. You're in this least in the kingdom phase that Jesus spoke of so often. The last shall be first and the first shall be last.

Everyone goes to the kingdom, but there are different experiences. There's a range of experience in the kingdom. Are you near the top of the class with privileges and opportunities for service and function and reflecting the Lord's glory? Or are you at the bottom of the class? You did graduate at the Naval Academy.

They call the guy that had the lowest GPA and still graduated the anchor man. The anchor is all the way at the bottom in the silt. He graduated, he gets a diploma and a commission, but he's absolutely dead last in the class.

So what kind of experience do you have? Are you summa cum laude, magna cum laude? Are you in the comfortable middle of the class? I was right in the middle and so grateful and happy to be there. I did not excel, but I did not scrape across the reef in order to get to the harbor. I was okay, right in the middle.

Actually, just a little bit above the middle, but happy to be there just by God's grace. So being kept from the hour of trial, I think that those who are raised at the rapture and meet the Lord in

the air will still have so many connections to this earth because in life and in time, they did not release that, didn't get out of the materialism and the involvement and the investment that when things start going badly on the earth during the tribulation, during that hour of testing, they're still going to be affected by it. They're going to be thinking about stuff on the earth.

What happened to my stuff? What happened to my job? What happened to what I built? What happened to my people? Are my barns and fields on fire? What about my this and my that and my other? Because if you're invested in this world, even though you rise above it and you yourself are saved, it's saved yet so as by fire and you feel the heat of the incineration of what you invested your life in. Those who keep the Lord Jesus' word and hold fast to his name and are invested in heavenly things, as you rise, this is sort of a metaphor in my mind. As you rise to meet the Lord in the air, are you Lot's wife looking over your shoulder at the burning city or are you fascinated by the sight of the Lord Jesus and those dead in Christ who have risen? Are you looking ahead or are you looking behind? Those that hold fast to the Lord Jesus' word who love him and love his appearing, there's a crown for all those who love his appearing are gonna be looking forward, not back.

But those of us who are too invested in this life, we are too much in this world, when we leave it, it's looking back, looking over the shoulder and you're not kept from the hour that is about to come on the whole earth, it affects you because you're invested in it. And you suffer loss because what you thought you had is in the past. Isn't that the message here in Laodicea? You say, I am wealthy and have need of nothing because you've got all of this material wealth, you've got this business, you're a dealer in this fine black wool and garments that are made from it.

You've got the ophthalmologist with this wonderful eye salve so that if you have afflictions in your eyes from the chemical buildup from this water that is being piped over from the hot springs, you've seen hot springs, all the mineral encrustations around that as the water boils off and leaves the sediment behind. Well, they had an aqueduct that channeled that water from Hierapolis over and it was just encrusted over the years with these minerals. Did that create eye irritation? Is that why they had to specialize in eye salve? Because they lived in an environment that irritated their eyes and prevented them from seeing as they should? So that's what Jesus says here.

So what is this book about? What are these letters really about? What is the meaning to us? I am not nearly so interested in, although we keep an eye on the sky, you know, red sky in the morning, sailor take warning, red sky at night, sailor's delight. Jesus said, look out for the fields. You can see if they're white for harvest.

Watch the sky. You should know the signs of the times. Be aware and be grateful that God is orchestrating world events.

He is supervising. The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord and these things are conspiring together with the redevelopment of the nation of Israel and so on. We watch that.

We should not be blindly supporting Israel just because in the Old Testament, they are God's people or that God has not forgotten them or cast them aside, that he's going to fulfill their promises. That doesn't mean blind political support. They have a secular government and secular governments make mistakes.

Heck, even non-secular governments make mistakes. Look at the religiously motivated governments. For many centuries, the Catholic church was influencing government.

They claim to represent God and Christ and scripture and look at the heinous things they perpetrated. So we are not blind to the status. This is not the Israel of God that is in the Middle East and they need to be viewed objectively.

God is in favor of us blinding ourselves to mistakes that are made by individuals or by nations and governments. Bad things happen. Bad decisions are made.

Bad priorities are pursued. We need to be clear. We need to be defined by the truth that Jesus represents.

Be faithful and true as he is. And the truth is that nobody's perfect. No government is shiny in everything that they do.

And criticism is warranted where criticism is due. Mistakes are made. But this book is not to equip us to parse the world or to judge the world.

We are to be examining ourselves and ensuring that we are ready because any of us can go at any time. It astonishes me the number of people who are younger than me that suddenly get a diagnosis or suddenly suffer an accidental death or something unexpected happens and they are gone. They are at the rapture.

That's the rapture. The rapture has happened. Every church age believer that has departed this life is at the rapture.

And the next time our heart needs to beat and doesn't, the next time we close our eyes in the sleep of death, we're at the rapture. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. Old Testament and new.

And there's no scriptural support that I can find for an intermediate state. God is the God of time. He invented time.

He doesn't need everybody to roll like a marble through a garden hose and experience every moment of time. God can pluck you out at one point of time and drop you in another just the way he grabbed Ezekiel by the hair from the river Cabar and plopped him down in the temple courts that quick. Our death is the rapture.

And that is much more likely, frankly, to happen than being in that last generation that happens to still be standing on the earth when the Lord comes. Either way, it isn't, wow, I was survived

and I'm alive and remain. Who cares? There's no special dispensation for those who are alive and remain when you get to the judgment seat of Christ.

Oh, well, you were still alive and standing, so you get a special pass. Everybody, dead or alive, is gonna be equally judged. Are we gonna be saved yet so as by fire? Will we be looking over our shoulder and saying, but I had unfinished business.

I was just about to cash in on that investment. I was just about to avail myself of this wonderful potential. I was so lucky.

Oh, Lord, could you just leave me here a few days longer? I'm not quite finished. That's what to be afraid of. If we are faithful and hold fast to his word, we will be kept from that hour of testing that is about to come on the whole earth because we're not gonna be Lot's wife.

We will be looking at the face of the Lord Jesus Christ in his full disclosed glory. We will be looking at each other. We will be looking at our loved ones who have gone before us and who have arisen from the ground first.

We will be looking forward and ahead, and we'll be ready. We'll be equipped for every good work because we held fast to his word. That's the message.

There's a door at which Jesus is knocking. When you open the door, you don't see the tribulation taking place off on the horizon in the distance. It's the Lord Jesus and his presence.

I've always pictured, and when people put artistic representations of Jesus standing at the door and knocking in Philadelphia, you see a door and Jesus is knocking. They have a cityscape, and Jesus is kind of a ghostly spiritual figure knocking on the side of a building. I'm knocking.

It's opportunity. Picture this. Imagine that metaphorical situation that Jesus describes, but picture yourself inside a room, inside a home, and you're looking at the inside of the door and you hear a knock, and you think, I believe that's the Lord.

And you cross the room and you open that door. What are you going to see? You're gonna see the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you swing open the door and he walks across the threshold and comes in, he and we will walk over to the table and sit down and visit over food.

Now picture that. I don't care what's burning down on the earth. I don't care how many scorpions have stings in their tails.

I don't care what happened when the fifth trumpet blew. I do, but not at that point. At that point, it is the full experience of personal individual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is this gonna be an introduction? Hello there, my name is Sam. I know you're the Lord Jesus. Or do we know him? Is this gonna be a comfortable condition where it's just that much better? You visit with somebody at a distance, you correspond with them, you talk to them over the phone,

you see them here at church on the screen, and then you meet them in person.

It's a whole new level of experience and it's wonderful. But it's so much more wonderful if you've already gotten to know them in a more distant fashion. Now it's that much better in person.

That's how it ought to be when we respond to the knock and open the door. That's what revelation is about. What is your individual preparation and readiness for this future absolute certainty of the Lord's return? People can quibble and argue about when is the rapture, pre, mid, post.

That is not nearly as important as when it happens, where am I? Which direction am I looking? So this is the Lord's message here to Laodicea. And remember, this is the seventh church. This is the culmination of everything that's in the preceding six.

You can look at the center of the chiasm in Thyatira. You can look at the inception of this when you're at Ephesus. But the conclusion and the consummation is here at Laodicea.

And if you don't remember any other letter, the Lord figures you'll remember the last one. Somebody giving you a little memory test or whatever. They used to have games where they would reveal something and you'd flip cards up and then flip them back down.

And you had to try to remember where were the different words. You can almost always remember the very last thing somebody says. They give you a grocery list.

You can remember the very last one because it's most recent. Here's Laodicea. Because you say in verse 17, I am rich, I have become wealthy, and I have need of nothing.

Notice this is a threefold self-analysis. I am rich. I have become wealthy.

My preceding activities have caused me to become. Become is a process. We become old.

We become mature. We become qualified. We become educated.

We become motivated. It's a process. Anytime you see become, you remember the helping words that you learn as a kid in English grammar? Is, are, was, were, be, am, been, seem, become, stand, grow, continue, turn, remain.

I think I learned that in like the second grade. But become, it's one of those status words like is, are, was, or were. Become, it's a process.

I am rich. That's what I am now. I have become.

I look over my previous activities and I'm happy with the result. I have become wealthy because that was the goal of my activities. I'm comfortable.

And this doesn't have to be material wealth, as you know. This can be I've achieved something

in my work or my relationship or my projects or my ambitions, my desires. I wanted a thing and I've invested in it.

I've spent some time on it. I've researched it. I've put the effort in.

And now I've got this thing that I aspire to. Ain't it great? I have become wealthy. Therefore, I am rich.

I have become wealthy. I currently have need of nothing. I am satisfied.

In the material realm, this is how the prodigal son felt when he collected his inheritance and was walking out the front gate of his father's property. I'm rich. I have become wealthy.

I have need of nothing. And you know the rest of that story. And you do not know how important is it to know the truth.

Jesus represents himself as the faithful and true witness. This, by the way, is the only letter, as I mentioned before, that does not partake of the chapter one description of the Lord Jesus. He doesn't talk about the sword that issues from his mouth.

He doesn't talk about his eyes of fire. He doesn't talk about any of the things that are described in that vision. Here in Laodicea, it is new.

The amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I thought about going into all of the things that relate to the beginning of the creation. It is enough to know that the Lord Jesus is responsible.

You know all of this stuff that you think you have? You say, I've got what I need. I've got wealth. I've got riches.

Do you know the Lord Jesus made that? He is the beginning of the creation of God. There are some wonderful passages that talk about him being the firstborn of all creation and so on. Don't have time to research those.

You know this already. We've seen them in the past. You do not know.

When the faithful and true witness speaks the truth, we should know, we should take that on board, and that is our factual reality. You do not know that you are in fact wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. They say three positive things about themselves.

Jesus says five negative things. Rich, become wealthy, need nothing, sorry, no. You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire. Again, he doesn't say, walk over here and I will give you clothing and I will give you these other things. You have to buy it.

I am suggesting to you, I am counseling you. I am encouraging you and exhorting you to buy

from me. Buy from me.

We've seen that this suggests some sort of cost to oneself. Turn with me to 1 Peter 1, verses six and seven. One of the most direct parallels here, Peter and John were party to the very same faithful witness from the Lord Jesus personally.

And Peter says in 1 Peter 1, six, you are going to be in verse five, kept by the power of God through faith for deliverance, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials. Smyrna being the contextual example.

So that, why are you grieved by various trials? So that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire. Why does Jesus say, buy from me gold refined in the fire? We express our faith and faith and maintaining our faith can come at a cost. It may cost us time.

It may cost us relationship. It may cost us the pursuit of things that are gratifying. It may come at the cost of self-indulgence or other areas where we might want to go astray.

Your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to the praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love, though now you do not see him, yet believing you rejoice with joy, inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end, the outcome, the purpose of your faith, the deliverance of your souls. That's what Jesus is talking about here. This is what you need to buy.

Gold refined in the fire, faith refined in the fire, faith that is made real, substantial, meaningful, valuable through testing. Refining takes away those elements that don't need to be there and reveals the beautiful, eternal consequence of maintaining that faith. Turn back just a page or two to James 1, 2 through 4. Saw this very recently.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Various trials, the testing of your faith has this purified gold outcome. Let faith have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

You're not wretched, poor, miserable, blind, and naked because you focus on faith under pressure. You lack nothing. You are actually rich.

Isn't that what Jesus told the people in Smyrna who were being tested and would continue to be tested for 10 days? Be faithful unto death, you'll get the crown of life. They say you are poor, but you are rich. Couldn't be more directly connected to James and 1 Peter than what you see here.

What does it take? By this gold refined in the fire, cultivate faith, be faithful, persevere, look at what we're doing. What is taking up our time? In the upcoming week, we've got the

Thanksgiving holiday. So there's going to be opportunities for conversation, for fellowship, for eating food and cleaning up the dishes afterward.

It's traditional for guys to watch football. They have some good, I don't think I've seen 10 minutes of football this whole season. I don't even know how Navy's doing.

I will tune in for Army, Navy if I don't see anything else. But what are we going to do? As soon as we anticipate that, what is the effect on my faith? Am I going to maintain my faith? Am I going to set my faith in the closet and shut the door, turn out the light while I go do these other things? Or will my faith continue to define my approach, my conversation, topics I choose to pursue, topics that I pull back and try to steer in a different direction? Will I be a benefit and a blessing in my presence? Will I remember who I am and why I'm here? Because these are minutes and hours that are capital. Redeem the time.

If you don't, the day will be by definition evil. Redeeming the time because the days are evil. Told you before, this is the screensaver I put on all of my computers.

When the work screen disappears and it's time for a screensaver, I don't get the lines and the rows and the bows and the slideshows and that. I put text in there that says, redeem the time. What am I doing that my screensaver came on? Redeem the time, invest the time.

Buy from the Lord Jesus, gold refined in the fire. What will enhance my faith? This isn't a stick in the mud, Psalm singing, abject, I only do spiritual things. We do all kinds of things, but we do them as unto the Lord and not unto men.

We remind ourselves frequently, am I in the right place? Am I saying the right thing? Is my attitude good? Am I praying for what I need to pray for? Am I sensitive to the people and the situations that I should be as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ? I'm going to invest my time. I'm going to buy from the Lord Jesus, gold refined in the fire. What does that do for me? Look at the result.

You will be clothed. And the shame of your nakedness is not gonna show. We all make mistakes.

We all do things of which we are ashamed, whether it's historical or current. You can look back at mistakes in the past and these old bones, I don't know, it rains and they surface and you thought that was deeply buried and it comes back to haunt you. And to be ashamed of poor decisions, bad actions, treatment, words, words come back.

I wish I'd never said what I said. I wish I'd never done what I did. It's a shame.

I can't change history. I can't go back and undo the past. I can't go back and make a better decision.

What I can do is buy from the Lord Jesus white garments of righteousness that will cover me

and clothe me. And the shame of my nakedness is no longer exposed. That was then, this is now.

Forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Can't change the past, but I can certainly change what's happening in the present and what's going to happen in the future. Buy from me with faith, gold refined in the fire so that you have genuine riches.

Clothing that will cover the shame of nakedness. And anoint your eyes with eye salve. By doing this, blindness departs.

Clarity of vision. Do you want to see what God is doing? Do you want to see what God is going to do? You can look over your shoulder and try to get a glimpse of what's left of your house in Sodom or you can see like Simeon saw. You can see like Zachariah saw in the temple.

You can see like Anna saw. You can see like the prophets of old and the New Testament prophets and apostles could see. Anoint your eyes with eye salve.

Even the apostle Paul, you know, he started his career as an apostle blind. He got blinded on the road to Damascus and he had to go where the Lord instructed him and he had to follow those instructions and the scales fell from his eyes. Anoint your eyes with eye salve.

Notice you anoint your own eyes. Jesus anointed the eyes of the blind. Jesus spoke and the blind were healed.

Jesus touched and the blind were healed. But as a believer, we have to anoint our own eyes with eye salve so that we can see. We do it ourselves.

We are required to act and to participate. We have to make a difference in our own life. Well, I stand at the door and knock.

Why? Because he loves us. Previous verse, as many as I love, I chasten and rebuke. If we feel rebuke, these passages ought to be stepping on our toes.

Some of this ought to hurt. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens and he scourges every son that he receives out of love. You're good, I can make you better.

You're my son, I can make you worthy. I can equip you. I can train you.

I can launch you as someone fully qualified for every good work, but you've got to listen to rebuke. Receive the chastening of the Lord. It's not pleasant.

You remember this from other passages. Hear my voice, be zealous and repent. Open the door, then it will be granted to sit with me on my throne as an overcomer.

Lord Jesus says, look at my example. I overcame, I have sat down with my father on his throne

as he will be eternally the lamb in the kingdom of the father where the lamb is the light. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to all of these churches.

Well, that is, you can spend weeks on each one of these letters. I hope we've done justice to the main points of them. We're going to take a break during this Thanksgiving week.

When we come back next Sunday, we will begin at Revelation chapter four, verse one, where there is a door opened in heaven and a voice says, come up here so that you can see what's going to happen. What a fitting continuation of everything the Lord has just said to Laodicea. I'm talking about a door, here's a door.

Talking about seeing, come up here and you can watch. You can see what is going to take place hereafter. What an opportunity, we'll see it in a week.

Father, thank you for the wonderful truth of your word. It's power to convict, to cleanse, to energize, to renew our minds so that we will understand your good and acceptable and perfect will. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister these things to us.

Help us to remember them in the days ahead, even with the distraction of fellowship and visiting and the upcoming events of the week. May we always be first and foremost dedicated to you as following the example of the Lord Jesus. We pray it in his name, amen.