

Rev 26-03-18b

We pick up our study here in the book of Revelation, looking at the last verse in chapter 13 and entering into chapter 14. We have reviewed over the last three sessions or so, this pattern that is discernible throughout God's revelation, throughout the Old and the New Testaments. And it tells us that even the interim periods, what you might call a gap or a delay or a time of waiting is important.

It is useful for preparation, for purification, for faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. It is yet future.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen, not yet seen, but we treat them as certain. We treat them as fact. David understood that he was God's anointed and that he would one day rule Israel years before he actually sat on the throne, before he was recognized by the Southern tribes and the Northern tribes.

It ruled in Hebron and then moved to Jerusalem. It was a long time coming from when Samuel poured the horn of anointing oil on his head in the presence of his brothers. It was this period of time.

We started out looking at this concept in Acts 7 and the testimony of Stephen when he is surrounded and being tried by the corrupt religious authorities and ultimately is stoned. There is the twofold mention of Stephen. If you go back a few chapters and see that when they needed someone faithful to deal with the administration of food to widows and so on, Stephen is one of those that was recognized.

And so he is mentioned, then you don't see him. And then he reappears in chapter seven and gives his testimony and then is slain for his trouble. One quick thing I wanted to point out, if you've not already done so in your Bible, take a look at the result of Stephen's testimony.

In chapter seven, verse 54, after he delivers the preceding three verses, which say, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers, so you." You can scratch out the words in italics. As your fathers, so you.

"Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the just one, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels, of messengers, and have not kept it." Look at verse 54. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed at him with their teeth. Verse 57, they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, ran at him with one accord, cast him out of the city and stoned him." That is the reaction.

Notice, when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart. If you have a pen right out there in the margin, put 2,37, 2,37, and then turn a few pages back to Acts chapter two, verse 37. Acts chapter two, if you recall, contains the sermon that Peter gives on the day of Pentecost,

beginning in verse 14.

"Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, men of Judea, all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and heed my words." He gives his sermon. Verse 33, "Being exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the father the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ has poured out this, which you now see and hear. David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your footstool out of your enemies.

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now look at verse 37. "Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart." Identical reaction to what happens when Stephen delivers the same message. You have crucified the Lord of glory.

But look at what follows. "On the day of Pentecost, when Peter delivers this message, they were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter said to them, repent, let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off as many as the Lord our God will call. With many other words, he testified and exhorted them, be safe from this perverse generation. Those who received his word were baptized.

And that day about 3000 souls were added. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. Fear came upon every soul.

Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles and so on. They were cut to the heart and there is a positive response on the part of 3000 individuals. That is the first delivery of the message.

Then there is a gap. Then you have Stephen delivering the very same message, rooted in Old Testament scripture, founded on the word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. In chapter seven, the listeners are cut to the heart, but their response is the opposite.

They are infuriated. They drag Stephen outside the city and they stone him until he is dead. At the first opportunity, those who are going to respond, responded.

Those who are left, when they are cut to the heart, it reveals what is inside. Is it a positive response or a negative response? Essentially the same message. It is the hearer that makes a decision about whether to accept it or reject it.

Powerful word. In Acts chapter two, verse 37, I have a circled reference to 754 and vice versa. What happens when we are cut to the heart? Do we respond in humility and in repentance? Do we allow the presence of the Holy Spirit to baptize us in the sense of filling us and exerting

influence, leading us into truth, convicting us of our sin, enabling us, shining light on our path? Or do we get our back up, reject the message, shoot the messenger, stone the messenger, and go our way? It's horrific when this is the self-appointed, self-chosen fate for unbelievers.

How much worse when we are believers and we resist the Holy Spirit? Why do you resist the Holy Spirit, Stephen says? He is coming to you with a message. It is necessary to identify a problem before we can recognize that we need the solution. We have to acknowledge a problem.

People that have no sense of need have no sense of wanting a solution. Even when there is a sense of need, there is a choice, am I gonna try to solve this myself? It is not by works of righteousness, which we can do, that we are saved. It's according to God's mercy, by the washing of water, renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Washing of water by the word. The word and the spirit, that is the power to change us, but it depends on our choice. To what extent are we teachable, amenable, humble enough to accept the pointing out of our failure, our shortcoming, our sin? If we are overly defensive, the Holy Spirit can't do His work.

We can be cut to the heart and react, or we can be cut to the heart and respond. Are we Acts chapter two, verse 37 people, or are we Acts chapter seven, verse 54 people? It is a choice. It's the same Holy Spirit.

It is the same message of deliverance, cleansing, renewal, and life through Jesus Christ. What is our response? And just because we're saved doesn't mean we can't be chapter seven people. Look around at the worldliness, the apathy, the ineffectiveness and the unfruitfulness of so much of what claims to be Christianity today.

God needs a remnant. God needs a faithful few who will be faithful even unto death. Be faithful as long as we are alive, whatever our circumstance, good, blessed, challenged, difficult, faithful.

I both know how to be abased and I know how to abound, Paul says. Whatever state I find myself, I'm content. We should endeavor to bear fruit.

If God's gonna prune the vine, let Him prune away so that we can bear more fruit. So important to see these patterns. If we are in a period of waiting, we're in that interval between the promise and its literal fulfillment, redeem the time, use it to advantage.

That's the message. We now start chapter 14. The number of a man that these who worship the beast and his image are going to take, they receive the mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.

No one can buy or sell except the one who has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name. There is a logo, there's a symbolic representation or there is the name or the number of the name. People have talked about barcodes and QR blocks and who knows what

this might be.

Could be a chip, could be some as yet unknown technology. There is some link, there is some visible representation, some advertisement, I am on the side of the beast. I am comporting, I am obeying, I am complying.

I am either going along to get along, I am engaging in this worship, however heartfelt or not, to take this mark, either the representation, the name itself or the numerical representation. There are three different ways this name is evidenced and it says on the forehead or the hand, one or the other, some will do both. The number is 666.

This is going to be similar to the reign of Nero Caesar who slew people for their Christian faith and cowed and intimidated people into going along with his policy. They dare not resist. They dare not, in most cases, go against the Roman system.

There were those who were faithful unto death, went in and suffered a martyr's death. They have a reward awaiting them from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. But then John says, I looked and behold.

When John says, I looked and behold, this is emphatic. We are coming to a new and very important scene. We've seen this previously.

It's no accident. He could have just said, then I looked and I saw. He says, I look and behold, I want you to see it too.

Idu, pay attention. Wake up, look, look, exclamation mark. So we want to pay close attention to what is upcoming.

A lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him 144,000 having his father's name and his name. If you don't have it in there, add it. You may have a text note.

Having his name and his father's name. This is true. We see it later in the context.

Having his name and his father's name. These individuals have both. Name of the Lord Jesus, name of the father, written on their foreheads.

And I heard, and you can do what you like here, but every place you see voice in this next verse, I suggest you change this to sound. I'm not sure why they made this choice. It's phonay.

It can be translated either way based on the context. The first two of these, let me just tell you how context works here. Phonay in every case, you should read.

And I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. Many waters and thunder doesn't speak words. It's a loud sound.

It's a unique sound. It's an identifiable sound. Coming from heaven, the sound of many waters,

the sound of loud thunder.

And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. Sound is good there. That's what it should be.

They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women for they are virgins.

These are the ones who follow the lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men being first fruits to God and to the lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit for they are without fault before the throne of God.

No deceit. They're without fault before the throne of God. Now, in broad strokes, we'll talk about this more a week from today, but look at this broad picture.

Who are these 144,000? We know who they are because we saw them identified way back in our previous chapter, where they are sealed before the winds are released, right? The 144,000 are sealed back in chapter seven. I heard the number of those who were sealed in verse four, 144,000, they're detailed there. Here, they reappear and they are now standing on Mount Zion.

Previously, they were on the earth. Now, they are on Mount Zion and this is the heavenly Mount Zion. How do I know that? Because the sound that comes from heaven when they sing the song, they sing so loudly.

This is bigger and grander than the vocal majority at full throat. They sing so loud, it drowns out every other sound. That's what many waters and thunder does.

During the sound of a gigantic crashing waterfall or a roaring river or a thunderstorm, you can't hear anything but that. They sing so loudly, it drowns out all other sounds. They sing a new song before the throne.

Nobody knows this song except they. We will talk next time about not being defiled with women, being virgins and having no deceit in their mouth and being without fault. We'll see what this means eventually.

What I want you to focus on at the moment is they are the first fruits. They are redeemed from men, first fruits to God and to the land. How on earth can these individuals be first fruits? There are many Old Testament saints.

They're not the first of those. There are many church age believers. They are not the first of those.

How can these individuals be first fruits? Here again is an affirmation, if you will, of our understanding of how dispensations work. What period of time are we looking at here? This is the final week of Daniel's 70 weeks. Midway through the week is three and a half years in.

At the beginning of the 70th week, there are 62 and seven weeks until the coming of Messiah the Prince. Actually, I reversed that. There are seven weeks and 62 weeks until the coming of Messiah the Prince.

He comes and that last week is unique because unlike all of preceding history, Messiah was not present. Now he is. At the beginning of the week, he appears.

Halfway through the week, he is cut off, but not for himself. And so then there are three and a half remaining years. So look at it in the sense of how many Israelites in the age of Israel have the chance to see the Messiah, respond to him, and be faithful and obedient not touching women, not speaking any deceit.

These are put for sins of the tongue and overt sins. They follow the lamb wherever he goes. The three categories of sin that we think of are illustrated throughout scripture.

You have mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, and overt sins. Some of you will recognize the source of that vocabulary and it's good. Three broad categories of sin.

Almost everything can fit into one of those. These individuals follow the lamb wherever he goes. That's mental attitude, no sin.

There is no deceit in their mouths, no sins of the tongue. They are not defiled by women or by extension anything else. These are overt sins.

They are fully obedient and faithful. They are the only individuals in the age of Israel who are able to see and respond to Messiah the King, the lamb standing on Mount Zion, not the suffering servant, but the lamb having already been slain, having already returned. And they evidently have been martyred because they are now in heaven singing this song.

They are preserved for a time. They are preserved by the seal in their forehead before the winds are released and so on, but they are now pictured in the heavenly realms. You expect that they got there through martyrdom during the rage of the dragon who seeks the rest of the seed of the woman to try to devour them.

Like the two witnesses, they are overcome. They are sent to glory, but they are faithful unto death. They are first fruits in the sense that these are the first individuals who are Old Testament, non-church individuals to recognize, believe in, obey and follow Messiah the King.

All of those who responded to the Lord Jesus in his first advent jumped the fence into the church age. All of his disciples, the ladies, the crowds on the mountainside, those who listened to him by the sea, they lived and became the first generation of church age believers. They were added to the fellowship.

They heard Peter preach in Acts chapter two. They responded. Those individuals all became a part of the church, the bride.

These individuals are the first fruits of Israel. Remember the last shall be first, the first shall be last. They are the last in human history before the millennial kingdom, but they are the first, the first fruits of Israel.

And it makes perfect sense that these who are sealed to God, 12,000 from every tribe and are faithful unto death are the first fruits of Israel. Later on, the rest of Israel will be raised at the beginning of the millennial kingdom and they too will see the Messiah and have the opportunity to accept him and to follow him and obey him the way these individuals do. They are the first fruits.

So that's what's going on here in the beginning part of chapter 14. Now, verse six. I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come.

Worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water. So this is, again, during the time of the great tribulation. This is the time of Jacob's trouble.

Very significant that it's all about Israel. Those who come to faith are joined to Israel. But just for fun here, notice something.

If you have a pen and you're not afraid of marking your Bible, in verse six, circle another angel. And or out beside it, put number one. This angel preaches the gospel on the earth.

Those who remain on the earth have no excuse. Even if the two witnesses have been slain, even if the 144,000 servants of God have been slain, there is still the everlasting gospel available to be heard, to be heeded, to be believed, and to be responded to. It is delivered to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

This is delivered in a loud voice. Fear God, give glory to him. Notice it doesn't say believe in the lamb, accept Jesus as your savior.

This is the Old Testament basis for salvation that we see in Hebrews 11, six. Those who come to God must believe that he is, that he rewards those who seek him. Without faith, it is impossible to please him.

What kind of faith? Believe that he is almighty God. Fear God, give glory to him. The hour of his judgment has come.

The hour of his judgment. This is the last part of the 70th week, the seven-year period. This is the last three and a half years.

This, I believe, is the time of testimony for the two witnesses of the 144,000. I think all of this occurs in the latter part of the week provisionally. It's a little difficult to place these brackets, these periods of time.

But that's angel number one. He delivers the everlasting gospel. Worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.

Contrast it with those who worship the beast and his image and take his mark, his name, or his number. Instead, worship God. Now in verse eight, another angel.

You can put number two here. This is angel number two, follows. The first angel proclaims salvation based on giving glory to God.

That's the opportunity. That's the invitation. The second angel announces judgment.

Second angel follows, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Babylon is fallen, that great city. That probably should say Babylon the great. Doesn't matter too much in this context.

We know who it's talking about. "Why is she fallen? Because she has made the nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This picture, this theme, this metaphor is gonna be picked up in chapter 17. That's number two.

Verse nine, a third angel follows, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation. He, the person who worshiped the beast, shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name." This, of course, is part of the reason that there are people who believe in eternal conscious torment.

They think this is the lake of fire, that it is unending, that it lasts forever and ever. We will parse this as we go through. For now, just note that this is the message of the third angel.

There is judgment on the system, on corporate Babylon, on the entire enterprise and way of thinking. Now that judgment is made specific by the third angel. Individuals will suffer if they make the decision to fall in with this system and to worship the beast and take his mark and so on.

Not responding to the message of the first angel, fear God and give him glory, worship him. Now we have another reference to the saints. Here is wisdom, here is understanding, here is the patience of the saints.

Here, those who... Lost my place. Here's the patience of the saints. Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

This is harking back to the 144,000. This is a description. They are the saints.

They are the sanctified ones in this context. These three messages are delivered. The 144,000

respond to the message of the first angel, the everlasting gospel.

They are the pattern and the example for all others of the nations and tribes and tongues and peoples. Follow their example. They are the Israel that God always intended would be a light to the Gentiles.

Israel failed in their first commission. Here is the remnant of Israel that succeeds in its commission to shine a light to the Gentiles. Pay attention.

There is life and death at stake, but here is the patience of the saints. Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Look at the preceding context.

It's the 144,000. Be faithful unto death. Here's the result.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works follow them. It is an advantage to be taken home at this point.

This is another section we'll spend a little more time on in the future. I want to finish our pattern matching here. So in verse 14, then I looked and behold a white cloud and on the cloud sat one like the son of man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle.

If he looks like a son of man, reminds you of the fourth man in the fire with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, right? Sitting on a cloud, speaks of deity, having a sharp sickle. This is a representation of Jesus as he most often referred to himself as the son of man who has come to seek and save that which was lost and so on. Put in the margin, this is not an angel, but nevertheless put a number four out beside verse 14.

This is the fourth figure that is introduced. Number four, then in verse 15, another angel put number five by verse 15, another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him, capital H is correct, who sat on the cloud, thrust in your sickle and reap for the time has come for you to reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe. So he who sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth and the earth was reaped.

This is vocabulary associated with grain being reaped. This is a wheat harvest, if you will. This is a grain harvest.

So this is the harvest that the Lord Jesus reaps and he does it first. He's gonna gather his wheat into the barn as it were, but this isn't the church, the church is long gone. These are the remaining saints, the remainder of the 144,000 and those from tribes and nations and kindreds and tongues who follow their example.

The Lord Jesus reaps them and takes them to himself. At the instruction of the angel who carries the message from the temple, who's in the temple, who's issuing the command, this is almighty God, the father, he sends an angel to the son of man sitting on the cloud. This is the

resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus.

He is a son of man. He is still the God man. And at the Lord God's instruction, he reaps his harvest.

The earth is reaped. Now there is another angel. This is number six in verse 17, put a number six there.

He comes out of the temple in heaven. He also has a sharp sickle. This is an angel that is going to do some reaping.

This is not the Lord Jesus reaping. The Lord Jesus reaps that which belongs to him. This is an entirely different kind of reaping.

This is more like the reaping you see in, what's that girl on fire movie? Hunger Games. Yeah, the Hunger Games, they called it the reaping where somebody is selected out and basically sentenced to an ugly death at the hands of others. So this angel comes out and has a sharp sickle.

And another angel in verse 18, put number seven by this, comes out from the altar who has power over fire. What does fire represent? This is judgment and purification, right? This angel has power over fire. Fire to judge, to burn, to eliminate the dross, the chaff, that which shouldn't be present anymore.

And this angel cries out to the angel that has the sharp sickle and says, thrust in your sharp sickle, gather the cluster of the vine. This is not a grain harvest. You can put grain up by verse 15.

The Lord Jesus says, the fields are white for harvest. This is the grain harvest. Pray that the Lord will send workers into the field.

And the Lord Jesus essentially does this one. This is a grape harvest. These grapes are gathered and they are put in the great wine press of the wrath of God.

The wine press is trampled outside the city. Blood comes out of the wine press up to the horse's bridles for 1,600 furlongs. This is a couple of hundred miles.

Entirely different harvest. Count your figures here and notice there are three angels before the Lord Jesus and three angels after the Lord Jesus. The three preceding angels give an announcement of sin, righteousness, and judgment of the opportunity for deliverance of what is going to happen to the system and what is going to happen to the individuals who follow it and buy into it and worship the beast in his image.

The angels that follow perpetrate the separation. The Lord Jesus is going to take his believers home and the final two angels are going to reap the harvest of judgment, those who will be crushed like grapes in the wine press of God's wrath. Another seven in the book of Revelation.

Wonderful symmetry. And as with the menorah, when you see that there is a higher candlestick in the center and three on the left and three on the right, you have the three opportunities to heed and hear the warnings. You have the Lord Jesus at the center.

He reaps his harvest and those who do not respond are subjected to the fierce wrath of God. Beautiful symmetry here. We'll look more at the details next time, which will be a week from tonight.

In the interim, what is our application? Why does the Lord Jesus tell us that this is what is going to happen? We are so blessed with opportunity, with warning, with the voice of the Holy Spirit to remind us of who we are and why we're here and the importance of dedicating our lives, our thoughts, our words, and our actions to reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus. We are his body and our thought life, our verbal life, and our overt activities should reflect the Lord Jesus. It should be as visible as having the name of the Father and the name of the Son on our forehead.

You look at somebody, they might be wrapped in robes, they might be seated, they might be standing, but if you look at their face, you can't help but see what's written on their forehead. It's obvious. We should be discernible.

We should be distinguished from the run of the mill, from the average, from the world. We shouldn't be wearing such good camouflage that we blend, and nobody knows we're a Christian. Heaven forbid we get to the judgment and someone we know says, what, you're telling me there was a believer that knew all kinds of things about the word of God right in my vicinity? I never knew that.

I thought they were just like me. Our presence, our integrity, our character, our willingness to be self-sacrificial, to be beneficial, to represent the integrity that believers should be obvious and be known for is a witness. As a wise man of my acquaintance once said at the end of a song, your life will be your witness.

We don't have to go out with missionary zeal and tackle people and try to force the gospel into them. Our lives are our witness. But if somebody looks us in the face, they should see the name of the Lord Jesus and the name of the Father written upon us.

Don't have to be forced or awkward, but we shouldn't be hesitant. We shouldn't put our light under a bushel either. Something comes up and somebody says, well, why do you have that opinion? Why do you think this? Why are you doing that? Why aren't you joining in here? Or why aren't you supporting that? We say, it's not my understanding.

You know, I'm a believer and I endeavor to base my thinking and my support or lack thereof on the word of God. I think it's important to reflect biblical viewpoint and biblical standards and not be shy. Don't have to be crazy.

Don't have to be strange. Just matter of fact, this is who I am and this is my understanding of why I'm here. And that's why if anyone asks us a reason for the hope that is in us, we should be

ready to respond, not shy.

Are we marked on our forehead or are we subtly emulating those who follow the beast and his image, who live in Babylon and are happy about it, don't want to return to the land? We'll see that more looking at Ezra and Nehemiah, which may well be our next Old Testament study. In any case, food for thought here. We'll look more at chapter 14 next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the privilege of representing the Lord Jesus Christ. What an opportunity to live in this time, in this status of being granted understanding of your word and the presence and power of your spirit.

I could only imagine those in Old Testament days that would long to be in our shoes and have the opportunity to mine the treasures of your word and to live each day in its light, enabled and empowered by an ever-present Holy Spirit with the opportunity to have your presence and the presence of our Savior, the Lord Jesus, with us as well. We pray that we cannot forget this opportunity, this potential, that the Holy Spirit will remind us and bring to our minds the truth that defines us and gives us such wonderful opportunities now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.