

Rev 26-04-15b

Let's resume our study now. We're in the Revelation and we are doing an overview, not a review so much, as an overview of what we have covered so far. It is no accident that the Lord Jesus Christ himself appears as the one delivering the Revelation to his servant, John, who is enjoined to pass it on to us via the seven churches.

But Revelation 1, 2, and 3 are the introduction for a reason. This entire book is delivered to us and it's incumbent on us to make the best use of it we can. And simply parsing world events and rejoicing when Israel becomes a state and, you know, yea Israel, boo enemies and so on is fun and nothing wrong with it.

It's great to keep an eye on the sky and read the signs of the times. But the primary reason it's given to us, and you see the evaluation phase in the letters to the seven churches, you have been given communication, you've been given instruction, you've been contacted via the apostles by God himself and the Lord Jesus. What are you doing with the information? Where you're doing well, you will be commended.

Where you're doing poorly, you're going to be brought up short. Repent and do the first works, he tells the Ephesians. You've lost your foremost love.

Get back to remembering who you are and why you're here, each of the churches. And then we have this unfolding of scenes in heaven and scenes on the earth, actions in heaven, judgments on earth. What do we do with it? We don't wanna get distracted and say, this is a fun puzzle to try to solve.

What do we do with it? So that is our undertaking. Turn with me back to 1 Peter chapter four. You remember Peter is the one that says that the trials we undergo, that we experience, are to test the genuineness of our faith.

You say you're faithful, you think you're faithful, you thought you were faithful. How faithful are we? We find that out in times of trial. But we move to chapter four and verse five.

These up above, talking to people who think it's strange that we don't do worldly things and think like the world, they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. Ready to judge the living and the dead. One of the things that occurs to me over and over as I move through this book is the wrath of God is going to be revealed in particular in this 70th week of Daniel, there is a particular collection of humanity on the earth at that time.

Some of them are Old Testament believers who have come to faith shortly after the rapture of the church. There are no church age believers, but there are those who will come to faith. And you see them represented by the souls under the altar who are martyrs during this time.

You see them represented by the 12,000 from each tribe comprising the 144,000 Israel believers because they are under the Old Testament covenants. You see the Gentiles throughout the world, the earth dwellers as they are called. But if you think about it, all of the tremendous global events and things falling out of the sky, wormwood, blood, scorpions, demons, death and destruction, mayhem, fear, panic, chaos, everywhere.

And the earth becomes just this horrific, dark and smoking ruin, Babylon Falls. And it's horrific. Here's my question.

Did God arrange for absolutely the most heinous, awful, perverted and corrupt people that ever drew breath to be born and live during this time? Haven't there been people just as evil, just as unrepentant, just as corrupt throughout history? Why aren't they raised up to go under these judgments? Seems a bit unfair that a lot of these people died, without any real temporal justice or so it would seem. So why is the wrath of God so graphically poured out on this one generation when there are manifold numbers of people that had the exact same attitude that do not live in this awful time? There are believers who worry. I've got children or nieces and nephews or other young loved ones in my periphery.

And if I go up in the rapture and they are quote unquote left behind, I fear that they are gonna undergo this terrible period in history. There is nothing particularly special about the group of people that experience the seals, trumpets, thunders, and bowls. They are a representative slice of humanity as it has existed ever since man began to multiply on the face of the earth.

God had to wipe them out once with a flood because they were just as bad. But there have been any number of incomprehensibly and unrepentant people all the way down. So we know that this is a representative judgment.

If the people in the 70th week are deserving of and required to undergo this judgment, it is my belief based on scripture that all such people are going to undergo a similar level of judgment. It just will not be couched in temporal, historical, geological, geographical, biological terms as it is for this particular generation. It isn't the agency of judgment that produces the judgment itself and the attendant misery.

It is the judge. And those who are deserving of this judgment have existed throughout history. What form will that take? I personally believe, you know, this is a variation on the hotspots in hell belief.

People that have been excessively evil, well, God's gonna put them in a hotter part of hell and they're going to suffer more. No one gets away with a perverse life of evil. You could wish, you can observe the Pol Pots and the Ho Chi Minhs and the Stalins and the Hitlers and the name your intensively evil figure in history.

You could wish that they were in this judgment generation. God is just, and if he is pouring out

this level of judgment, specifically the bowl judgments on these individuals, notice that it is restricted to a relatively short space of time, something measured in weeks or months at the most, a few years maximum, not more than three and a half years, at which point when that judgment is fully poured out, they die, they are gone. I suspect all such people in ways that are not revealed to us will experience this level of judgment, concomitant to or with the great white throne.

They will be judged according to their works is a pregnant phrase. They will be judged according to what is written in the books. It doesn't say what the judgment is.

It says what the destination will be afterward, but it says they were judged according to what was written in the books. And then they are cast into the lake of fire, right? They are judged, then they are cast. It doesn't say that the judgment is being cast.

They are judged and then cast. I am just suggesting that it seems wildly unbalanced for God to tolerate the same level of evil, rebellion, unrepentant action and vicious hatred and perverse treatment of the people of God in other times in history, and only pour out the bowls of judgment on those who happen to be alive in the last three and a half years of the age, right? Doesn't that seem unbalanced? Well, what does the word of God give us by way of understanding where there would be balanced? At the great white throne, which is a judgment of unbelievers. All believers have already been raised, adjudicated at the judgment seat of Christ or the equivalent for the Old Testament saints.

Only those who have not been raised because they are not believers show up at the great white throne, but it says they are judged according to their works. If it was just a destination judgment, they were brought to the great white throne, their name was not found, they were cast in. It doesn't say that, does it? It says they were judged according to their works and the works are written in these books.

Just saying, if you wonder why is it so incredibly, literally bloody awful, this is the visible judgment that will be seen on the earth a thousand years before all such people receive such judgment at the great white throne. That's how I understand it for whatever that's worth. The application is when you see preservation of the faithful in the future, you can also read that back into preservation for the faithful throughout history and preservation of the faithful to and through the end of human history and into eternity.

The way God treats the faithful in this period is also consistent. And those who did not receive the promise, remember in Hebrews, it's worth turning, if you're in Peter, just go back a few pages to Hebrews chapter 11, verse 13, talking about Abraham in verses eight and nine and 10, by faith he dwelt in the land of promise, Hebrews 11, nine, Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise which they never got. The promises to Abraham that he would be given on all of the land from the

Euphrates River across, never fulfilled.

Sarah herself received strength to conceive, bore a child when she was past the age because she judged him faithful who had promised. She laughed, but she judged God faithful. She figured if God promises, I'll believe it, Hebrews 11, six, just look up above, believe that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

Therefore, 12, for one man and him as good as dead were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. Verse 13, here's our target. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. Truly, if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. If they spent their time thinking about everything they lost, leaving Ur, and you can imagine Sarah saying, do you remember the carpets we had? Do you remember the drapes? Do you remember the gardens? We were at ease.

We were comfortable. You had a good job. You were respected in the community.

We threw all of that over and we became nomads and vagabonds in the desert, dwelling in these tents. There's camels and there's dust, and we can't stay in one place too long, and et cetera. Or it might've been Abraham doing those things, or them commiserating with each other.

But if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, if they kept looking over their shoulder like Lot's wife, oh, my China is still in the house. Why do you think Lot's wife looked back? That's a fruitful mind puzzle. But now they desire a better, that is a heavenly country.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. They left a city, dwelt in tents. They are going to a city.

Do you want to keep harking back to the old city that is now dust and rubble? There is no ur of the Chaldees anymore, but there is a city founded and built by God that Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Jacob are headed for. So, so, these, verse 39, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they should not be made complete apart from us. We are all, across the ages, going to receive the fulfillment of the promises that God has made to us, right? By way of analogy, the flip side of that coin, those who have earned and merited and chosen God's judgment instead of God's grace across the ages are going to be completed with these that you see under the trumpet and bowl judgments.

All of them will be similarly judged, just as those to whom God has made promise will be similarly

blessed. Similarly given inheritance. So fret not thyself because of evil men.

So back again to 1 Peter 4. This then is sort of an application by way of conclusion. Verse seven, the end of all things is at hand, therefore what? We're looking at the end of all things, aren't we? That's what the book of Revelation communicates, right? The end of all things is at hand. It's in your hand, we're looking at it.

Therefore what? Circle it, underline it. I've got it underlined and circled in my Bible. Be serious and watchful in your prayers.

It would be one thing if we had to make a trip to Mecca every four years, or if we had to scale some mountain to get close to God and communicate with him. If we had to travel to Jerusalem and make some sort of sacrifice to be heard by God, can you think of anything easier than prayer? How hard is it to pray? Turn off whatever's emitting sound in your periphery and pray. Pray while you're driving.

Pray while you're sitting, standing, running, walking, folding, mowing, washing, resting, preparing. Anything we are doing. The beautiful thing about prayer is it doesn't require a physical action to be performed in connection or conjunction with it.

You just pray. What a blessing. Don't even have to get down on your knees and bow your head and close your eyes and fold your hands.

Just pray. So again, listen to Peter. The end of all things is at hand.

We are reading the book of Revelation and seeing what the end of all things is going to entail. Therefore, what? Doesn't get any easier than this. What should we do as a fruit of our Revelation study? Be serious and watchful in your prayers.

And above all things, have fervent love for one another. If you have any questions about love, read the homepage of our church website. The goal of our instruction is love, 1 Timothy.

Pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith. Remember, the goal of our instruction is love. The goal of instruction in Revelation is not to parse the newspaper or the evening broadcast.

The goal of this instruction is love. Our love is founded on a fervent prayer life because what does prayer do? Cleanses our mind, forces us to bring up the word of God that we have learned, that we pray, we claim, I am about to come boldly before the throne of grace to find help in my time of need. That's scripture.

That's the word of God. So when you think of Revelation, seals, trumpets, thunders, bulls, I love to throw in the thunders because nobody does. Those poor thunders are so routinely ignored.

I love the thunders. I can't wait to find out what they are. The thunders are my favorite of the four

cycles of judgment.

And you can actually get some insight into the thunders if you work, but God encrypted them. I'm not messing with it, but I'm telling you, there's some metadata in that file that you can read. In any case, above all things, be serious and watchful in your prayers.

What does it mean to be watchful in your prayers? Watch what's going on, figure out what to pray for. Who can I pray for? What kind of prayer can I pray for those who need prayer? What is a proper prayer? We've been through this many times. You know how to construct a prayer that God is gonna answer with a yes.

I don't believe in no answers to prayer. I believe in praying in such a way that God will say yes, because I am claiming his promise, right? Oh Lord, if it be thy will, is appropriate in certain extreme cases. But in most cases, we know what the will of God is and we pray accordingly.

So above all things, fervent love for one another. Love will cover a multitude of sins. When sin is the problem, remember the seals? Remember the trumpets? Sin and evil surrounding us on earth as it is in the heavens? Love covers a multitude of sins.

Love keeps us knitted together. Love is the bond of the Holy Spirit. The unity of the faith and the bond of peace, love.

Read the love chapter, you know where it is. Be hospitable to one another. Ooh, here's the tough part.

I wish there was just a period. Be hospitable to one another. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Without muttering under our breath. Without remembering the crime over and over again. You see it, you address it, you fire, you forget.

This is what good artillery batteries do. You fire and forget. That was that mission, I've got a new one.

Where those rounds impacted, if our data was good, they went just where we wanted them to go. But I don't have time to worry about that. On to the next mission.

Forgetting those things which are behind, I press to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Don't dig up old bones. Don't regurgitate the past.

Do not bear a grudge. Bury the hatchet. Let somebody give an occasion for a fresh grudge.

Don't bear an old one. Deal with what happens in the present. You certainly want to access your experience for wisdom's sake, but not as a grudge.

It's one thing to be aware. It's another thing to be angry and bitter over that awareness. We have to be good custodians.

We have to be careful with what we know. We can access it without being judgmental over it. We are enjoined to watch out for those who are wolves in sheep's clothing and to avoid them.

We identify those who are not good for fellowship and we keep a distance. That is a command. Bad company corrupts good morals, Paul quotes.

So you have to know somebody is bad company by referencing your past experiences, but do not let it be a source of mental attitude sin or be an occasion to endeavor to put our own judgment on them, penalize them in some way. All of this is wrapped up in this. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

All of these are things we should be doing because we're studying Revelation at the moment. It's actually true of any book, but especially Revelation because the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, A, we're serious and watchful in our prayers.

B, above all, go up and make a zero line. If you say number one, be serious and watchful in prayers, then go up and put zero, have fervent love. Three, be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Number four, you have a gift. He says, it says as, that is since. If you haven't already done so in verse 10 of first Peter four, the first word is since.

Since each one has received a gift. I don't care who you are. I don't care what's going on.

You have a gift. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have a gift. You have a unique and special capability that others around you do not have.

I know they don't have it because God distributes gifts to benefit the group and you don't need three or four of a thing. God works so that each one has a gift. Some are this, some are that, some are the other, but he doesn't put two pastors in one church.

You have a unique gift that has unique opportunities. As each one has received a gift, since each one has received a gift, minister it to one another. Notice, spiritual gifts function in that inner sphere of fervent love, which is one another love.

There are exceptional gifts like evangelism that function outside that circle, but 99.5% of spiritual gifts function in the one another realm. So if you wonder what your gift is, look at the one another's, figure out in what way your presence seems to be, can be, could be, should be a benefit. That's your gift.

And we are commanded to minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of

God. We have that gift by grace. It functions by grace.

It is exercised in wisdom and power through the Holy Spirit and it is a manifestation of the manifold grace of God. Manifold, there's all kinds of gifts, all kinds of ways in which they function. If anyone speaks, speak as the oracles of God.

In other words, don't hand out advice unless you are quoting solid scripture. That's the only kind of advice that should be given is based directly in scripture. If it fails for some reason, let the people deal with God.

He's the one that gave the advice. If you give advice and it fails, now you are the bad guy. Resist the temptation to try to live someone's else life for them.

You can suggest, that reminds me of an episode in the Old Testament, you know, it calls to my mind that principle that what we don't understand, we commit to the hands of our faithful creator and heavenly father and wait for him to reveal. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not to your own understanding.

In all your ways, acknowledge him. He will direct your paths. It's a promise.

I want him to direct my path. I'm gonna trust him with all my heart and I'm not gonna trust my own understanding or the understanding of the guy standing next to me. If anyone speaks, it better be the oracles of God.

Obviously, you can suggest applications and so on, but be sure you're on solid spiritual ground if you offer anything by way of speech to other people. If you administer or minister, do it with the ability which God supplies. That in all things, God may be glorified through Christ Jesus to whom belong the glory and dominion forever and ever, amen.

That's the application of our revelation study. First and foremost, the pattern of prophecy fits like an overlay time and again through history. It was not illegitimate for people to look at Adolf Hitler and think Antichrist or to look at other horrific butchers and abusers of power throughout history and see the pattern apply.

But then what? Okay, I see beast-like operations here, people trying to control others and limit their commerce and so on, and they are speaking great blasphemous, swelling words and trying to push people out of their Christian faith. This is the real test. Anybody can be a dictatorial oppressor, but are they oppressing Christian faith specifically on purpose? Because that's the satanic element that defines the beast.

The dragon generates the beast and the false prophet. So it isn't enough that somebody be a dictator, even a brutal dictator, what is their attitude toward Christianity? Are they trying to rub it out? Now you have more points of contact with the pattern and more points of application because you understand the pattern. But remember the judgments of God.

God's timing is perfect. God's order and sequence is perfect. The intensity level is perfect.

We have a wonderful Heavenly Father who knows exactly what we need and He knows exactly when and how to judge those who oppose us and oppose Him. We repose faith in that, large and small. It's a funny thing to think that these global judgments and incredible stellar and interstellar and galactic seeming levels of judgment apply in our personal relationships.

If someone is absolutely adamant in their rejection, step away. Love notwithstanding, relationship notwithstanding, God's attitude towards someone who is an inveterate, incorrigible rejecter is an intense level of judgment. You cannot help them.

You cannot persuade them. You cannot get inside and flip a switch and change their mind or their heart. You can be ready to give an answer for your hope if they bounce off of a bottom rock experience maybe rock bottom experience and begin to question.

I know that you've had some hard times. Why weren't you crushed the way I feel I'm being crushed? That's asking you a reason for the hope that is in you. Now you have an opportunity.

Do not volunteer or advise someone who is uninterested. God doesn't. God doesn't say, I'm seeking you.

You're my lost sheep. Unbelievers are not God's lost sheep. That's a whole different picture.

The sheep belongs to God. It ought to be in the fold and it's wandered away. This is restoration of family.

Has nothing to do with unbelievers. The Lord Jesus is not a shepherd searching for unbelievers on the hillside. If it was, there would be one sheep in the fold and 99 on the hills, right? Whole different picture.

I've got to try to gather them in before the world does. The wolves get them. No, the 99 that safely lay in the shelter of the fold belong to Christ.

And so does number 100 out there that goofed. And the Lord Jesus is interested in restoration. This is not initial salvation at all.

If God is not combing the hillsides, trying to compel them to come in as people misunderstand the scripture, we shouldn't either. We live our lives and let our light so shine that men see the light in us. And if they are drawn to light, they will be drawn to God and to those who have that light.

And they will ask a reason for the hope. You slow the process if you try to get ahead of God. God is dealing with people who have not yet come to him who eventually will.

Don't get in the way. Don't gum up the works and muddy the water with well-intentioned

shortcoming. Stay away.

If you feel compelled or motivated, fervent prayer. Go to the Lord in prayer. Ask for wisdom, ask for self-discipline, ask for guidance.

Ask for God to provide the opening where it's a garage door you can walk through. God knows what he's doing. No one loves these people more than God does.

Our love pales into puny insignificance next to the love that God has for every single unbeliever. If you want them to be saved and you love them, get out of the way and let God do his work and be ready always if and when you're called upon. But don't get in the way.

You're like the person that tackles the rescue swimmer and the rescue swimmer can't bring the drowning person ashore. Oh no, let me. And everybody drowns.

Not worth it. Well, all of these are applications from Revelation. Read Romans chapter one and Romans chapter two.

Read first Peter, the whole book, especially chapter four. The end of all things has come upon us. These are our applications.

That's why the Lord Jesus gives us the Revelation. And I am so glad that he did. I don't need a roadmap for the tribulation.

I need a roadmap for tomorrow. And that's what it provides. Praise the Lord.

So thankful for the light of his word. It's a lamp to my feet, light to my path. We're thankful and we bless his name for that.

And father, we do thank you. We do bless your name for caring for us. When we look at the sky with the psalmist, what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you visit him? That's us, but you have and you do.

And nowhere is it more clear than in the person and work of our savior, the Lord Jesus. We thank you for him. We pray that we can be able and fit and skillful representatives as members of his body, that we can do in his place your will to be a blessing to the fellow believers that are in our circles of love and to those who are outside so that in all things, ultimately and finally, the Lord Jesus will be glorified and you will be pleased with us and embrace us as your children.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.