

Rev 26-06-07b

We are in Revelation chapter 19, and we are looking at this scene as it is presented. There is tremendous celebration in heaven. And I think that if you pause and reflect on this, the marriage of the lamb and his wife does not take place until Babylon is destroyed.

It is as though the Lord Jesus, as the groom, is not going to enter into this new phase without first eliminating the threat and securing the premises. So this, in a sense, couldn't happen any earlier. This marriage supper of the lamb could not take place so long as there is this existential threat.

And we're going to find that in connection with this judgment, when we get to the next chapter, Satan is bound, he is cast into the bottomless pit. His proxies, the seven heads, the 10 horns, the scarlet harlot, are all eliminated. The beast and the false prophet have been defeated and judged and cast into the lake of fire.

Now, with the important business of salvation and judgment and deliverance accomplished, now there is the opportunity to move forward with this marriage, which begins with the marriage supper, the marriage celebration. But there is a sequence that is important. You can't enter into a phase of peace and prosperity and contentment and productivity so long as there are these unresolved dangers and threats.

It is similar to the work play balance that we try to achieve in our own lives. It is irresponsible, if not dangerous, to try to entertain or play or indulge in enjoyable activities when there is necessary, important work that should be done first. And this is one of the ways we implement our goals and values and priorities in the circumstantial world, guided by the light that shines on our path from the word of God and the spirit of God.

But this is one of the things that we can pray for ourselves. It's distantly related to the old serenity prayer. You know, God, give me the grace to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Discerning the difference between responsibilities and priorities that need to be dealt with now without being distracted, with not being led away by clickbait or an entertainment opportunity or something that constitutes persuasion or seduction or self-indulgence when the necessary, important priority work is left undone. Yes, I would like to watch a movie, but I think I'll do the dishes first because I fall asleep in movies and I don't wanna wake up to a sink full of dirty dishes tomorrow morning. This is a trivial example, but you can think of more substantial aspects.

We don't plan a vacation in the midst of a very high-visibility, high-priority work project. Let's plan a vacation for after that is complete when I can truly relax and be good at my work and also good at my rest and relaxation and do them guilt-free, responsibly, reflecting character and integrity and a sense of values that reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus. He said, my father's working, I am working.

And the Lord Jesus didn't go say, I wonder if there's some version of club med out here on the seashore. I think I'll take a powder from Galilee and Jerusalem and go out and just swim in the med and relax a little bit. He would go into solitude and spend time in concourse and in dialogue and in prayer and encouragement from his father, our father.

And we can often do the same. We can take a break that restores our soul, as it says in Psalm 23, without compromising the necessary fulfillment of responsibilities. You know what this is like.

So the Lord Jesus has taken care of business and has ensured that these threats and these evils and these injustices have been dealt with before he enters into his own marriage with his betrothed. So we see here, the marriage has come and this sort of comes out of the blue, the marriage supper of the Lamb. So here are some passages that you can reflect on in connection with this.

It really just turns a blind corner and arrives out of nowhere in the book of Revelation. Who knew the Lamb was going to get married, as I said before. Matthew 22, two, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son.

And you can go on from there. Wonderful parable. Matthew 25, verse 10, the wise and foolish virgins.

And the ones that ran out of oil while they went to buy, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding and the door was shut. We talked in the first session about the bride having made herself ready. Those who are going to attend the wedding and hopefully bring light and illumination and glory to it.

These virgins aren't just guests, they are light bearers. They are there to illuminate the procession and the festivities with light. It's an opportunity to enjoy and to serve.

And this ought to be the nature of our Christian life and faith is to serve and to be good stewards, know what our assignment and our responsibility is. We're not preparing the food. We are not setting up the tables.

We're not decorating. We have a function in the plan of God and to know what it is and to focus on it and do it well, not to the exclusion of all else. We're not all work and no play.

We're not all spiritual and no enjoyment of life. Remember what we talked about a session or two back, a little bit of the word of God is like immense power in a small package. The word of God is living and powerful.

We can take 10 or 15 minutes in the morning to reflect on something, open your Bible, review your notes, listen to somebody on the radio, open up streams in the desert or my utmost for his highest or any devotional. I like C.H. McIntosh, the old guy everybody's largely forgotten, but he

wrote some little books and commentaries. I love to just crack those open almost at random and such a godly man with wonderful insights into the word of God.

You never come away from McIntosh without fresh grist for the mill. And he didn't have a computer. He didn't have a lot of the advantages that we have, but these that have soaked themselves in the word of God and can bring it out in a meaningful way, you can spend five, 10, 15 minutes with somebody like that.

Just read through a book of the Bible, say, you know, this week or over the next period of time, however long it takes me, I'm gonna read Gospel of John. I'm gonna read 1 John. I'm gonna read 1 Timothy.

I'm gonna read James. I'm gonna read Hebrews. And I'm just gonna, I'm gonna read a chapter.

I'm gonna think about it. I'm gonna see its pertinent application in my life. I'm gonna pray in its light.

15 minutes, you are, it's like putting gas in your tank. And, you know, whatever the gas costs, you're willing to put it in there because you've got to go. Whatever it takes, get up a few minutes earlier and just stop the presses.

Focus on the word of God. Already stored, something you can read or listen to. Just a few minutes, fill the spiritual tank.

And you can run into, like Elijah, you can run in the strength of that meat 40 days and 40 nights. Remember when God encouraged him, brought him some food? He was good to go for six and a half weeks. Well, six weeks, but don't miss it.

You know, breakfast is the most important meal of the day, they say, how much more so our spiritual. So be prepared. The bride prepares herself.

Here in Matthew 25, 10, half of the bridesmaids, these lamp bearing virgins, aren't ready. And they've got to go try to get ready. Well, it's too late.

The festivities have gone on and the door is shut. The opportunity to prepare and to be ready is no longer there. It's not as bad as the door on the ark shutting, but it's pretty bad.

You were called, you were chosen, you were given lamps, but you didn't keep oil in the lamp. You didn't stay prepared. And when the time comes to serve, you're disqualified.

How tragic. Matthew 25, 10, Luke 12, 36. All of these are marriage allusions, marriage examples.

You yourselves be like men who wait for their master when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Luke 12, 36. John 3, 29.

He who has the bride is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him, listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled.

Here's one for you. You wanna know exactly who constitutes the bride in Revelation chapter 19? Second Corinthians 11, verse two. Paul writing to Corinth, first letter.

I'm sorry, second letter. We're gonna see the first one in a minute. He says, second Corinthians 11, two, for I am jealous for you with godly jealousy.

I have a great personal concern. I'm invested in you in a godly way. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Why does Paul say that? You remember in first Corinthians, where Paul says in chapter four, verse 15, though you have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet you have not many fathers. Who did the betrothing in those ancient days? The father would oversee the betrothal of his daughter, the handoff of responsibility and stewardship for the care and preservation and provision for a daughter. Goes from the father to the husband when she becomes a bride.

And there's this betrothal. And so Paul says, I'm your father because I've begotten you in the gospel. And so as that father, he can say in second Corinthians, I have betrothed you to Christ.

And this makes perfect sense. So we have in second Corinthians 11, two, I want to present you to Christ, not besmirched, not unqualified, not in a shambles, not disorganized, not unprepared. Revelation 19 says, this bride has made herself ready.

The wife has made herself ready. This is up to us. We're not hapless victims.

It's not Calvinism and tulip and God's gonna make sure the saints persevere. This is up to us. Are we gonna be analogously prepared like the five wise virgins? Or are we gonna be unprepared, disqualified and excluded from that wonderful privilege and opportunity out of lack of diligence, lack of paying attention, getting busy, prioritizing other things.

So present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Ephesians 5, 23, the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church. And he is the savior of the body.

He is the foremost. He is the head of all things to the church as you see there in Ephesians 5, 23. In verse 32 of that same chapter, this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Can read that whole chapter, it's great. And of course, upcoming here in verse nine, blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper. We'll see that shortly.

So there are two categories of people involved in this scene. One is the wife who has made

herself ready. The other are these who are invited to the marriage supper.

So to the bride, to the wife in verse eight, it is granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And notice white doesn't glow of its own energy or power or characteristic. White reflects light that hits it.

You can wear a white shirt as I am on purpose this morning, but you wouldn't be able to see it if you go into a cave and they turn off the flashlights and turn off the electric lights and say, see how dark it is down here? White shirt does you no good. White only works when it is reflecting light and the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ who is the image of God shines. And white is the best reflector of that glory.

If you're gonna be in proximity to Jesus Christ, you want to reflect his glory to the utmost. So you don't wear purple, you don't wear scarlet, don't wear black, wear white. And it's not dirty white.

It's clean and bright. Clean and bright. It says that for a reason, it's clean.

The saints wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the lamb. We should regularly examine ourselves, see if we're in the faith spot where we have failed, bring it before the throne, claim the forgiving grace of God. 1 John 1 7, 1 John 1 9, Psalm 51, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. And when our self is clean and purged and sanctified, we can then engage in activities, thoughts, words, and actions that are righteous deeds, righteous acts, righteous thoughts, helpful words, apples of gold and pictures of silver. Righteous acts of the saints.

Now in verse nine, then he said to me, write this, get this down. This is important. John has been writing everything that he sees, but he is explicitly told to write this.

Why? If he's going to write it anyway, why tell him to write it? In the same way that if you're talking to someone you love deeply and they are telling you something, you listen and you remember. But if your mom or your dad says, remember this, son, remember this, my daughter, remember, fill in your name here. It isn't that they think you won't remember unless they tell you to.

It is an emphasis. It is a highlight. It is a way of saying, this is especially important.

If you don't remember anything else, remember this. If you don't write anything else down, be sure you write this. Write, blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the lamb.

Not talking about angels. This is not an angelic host who are attending and all humanity is the bride. There are two different categories of humanity who are redeemed, cleansed, saved, and in heaven.

They have two different assignments, two different roles, two different identities. And we have seen this throughout the book of Revelation. The church, Revelation chapter one, two, and three.

You see their future reflected with the 24 elders and white robe throngs in heaven, beginning in chapter four and five and so on. On earth, 12 tribes, and here are their names. And it's a curious list because it doesn't exactly match the 12 sons of Jacob.

We know Joseph is represented with Ephraim and Manasseh, but the tribe of Dan is left out. We talked about that, but it is all about Israel. And the fact that the list doesn't quite match, where does it take you? You don't turn to Paul to find out why the list of tribes is strange.

You go back to the Old Testament because it is all about Israel. It is a way of emphasizing the 144,000 servants of God are Israel. The woman with the 12 stars that is chased by the dragon that gives birth to the child is Israel.

Saints on earth are Israel in that period. Israel and the church are separate and distinct. Woe to the people who think that the church is spiritual Israel, that it's all a continuity.

Israel is the church, the church is Israel. You are never gonna understand scripture beyond a few simple promises if you don't understand the clear distinction. It doesn't get any clearer than having an Old Covenant and a New Covenant, an Old Testament and a New Testament.

Old Testament, Israel, New Testament, church. Look at your Bible. All of the books are not in one Testament.

We have New Covenant in the blood of Christ founded on new and better promises. Remember when we studied Paul and his stewardship of the mysteries? He's the apostle of the mystery things. And we looked at every reference where Paul says, this is a mystery.

I'm telling you something that was not previously known because it wasn't for Israel, not about Israel, didn't pertain to Israel and wasn't revealed to Israel. This is a great mystery. We just saw it in Ephesians 5. I speak of Christ and the church.

That's a mystery, previously unrevealed, new and special. The bride here, the wife is the church. Those who are invited and blessed because they are able to attend are Old Testament saints.

Not every Old Testament believer, wise and foolish virgins, those who prepared themselves by extension, the privileges and opportunities represented by the bride. This bride is another woman, like the lady with the 12 stars in her headdress that we saw chased by the dragon. That is a corporate entity that is not all of Israel.

How do I know that? Because after she is secured, the dragon goes to seek the rest of her offspring. So if all Israel were the preserved lady, the dragon would have nobody to chase and persecute. But those who aren't ready, who aren't obedient, who aren't paying attention, who

didn't listen to Jesus' words, when you see the abomination of desolation flee, are gonna be hunted down and martyred by the dragon.

They were unprepared. The bride who has made herself ready is that fraction of church age believers that, like the wise virgins, have washed their robes, are qualified to participate and fulfill this role, metaphorically represented by the bride. Those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb are Old Testament saints.

Look at the parables that Jesus told. We alluded to one earlier in Matthew chapter 22, and again in chapter 25. Over and over again, this picture is presented.

And Jesus refers to himself, the friends of the groom celebrate while he is with them. Friends of the groom. He doesn't say, hang on, disciples, you're gonna be my bride eventually.

They are friends of the bridegroom at that point. He said to me, these are the true sayings of God. Why that emphasis? Isn't everything God says a true saying of God? These are the true sayings of God.

It isn't that what God says is true because God says it. It is the content of what God says. It is true that there is a bride for the Lamb, which is the prepared portion of the church.

It is true that there are those invited to the celebration, to the unique opportunity to be in proximity and to be in the inner sanctum and the inner circle and to partake of the banquet, the celebration. Those who are prepared, those who are called to that supper. And it is true that these things are going to happen.

It is true that you need to be prepared. It is true that we need to be thinking ahead. If the foolish virgins hadn't just fallen asleep, but had thought, I wonder what I'm gonna do when the groom calls, oh, wow, look at my oil level.

Let me go get some now before he comes. But they wake up when he arrives and it is too late. Don't wake up at the rapture and say, wow, this is really happening.

And look around and you're not prepared. You've got a giant brush pile of wood, hay and stubble, almost no gold, silver and precious stones. You don't have a thoroughly washed and cleaned and pressed garment to wear and you're not ready.

We are here to be ready. This book of Revelation is designed to make us ready. I'll give you a quick little digression here.

As you know, keep track of naysayers, ne'er-do-wells and critics of Christian faith, especially those who formerly were evangelical Christians and have thrown over their faith for one reason or another. So in that vein, I was listening to Bart Ehrman yesterday and on the book of Revelation, he's got a commentary. It's called Armageddon, what's really gonna happen at the end time or

some such thing.

I got the audio book, I listened to it twice. I just, it's worse than being in traffic and having somebody cut you off. But I listened to it twice.

And then I watched a video where he is about to publish this book, it's already at the editors and he's talking about it. And he says, this whole idea that it is prophetic and that it talks about things to come is nonsense. And it wasn't taken that way in John's day and only weird people from the 19th century onward have thought that it was prophetic.

And then he went to cite some examples of people in the past who said it's our day and it's now. Let me give you a few examples of this because that much is true. And what he doesn't understand is what have we seen? If you had to summarize what we've learned together in recent weeks, Revelation isn't just for those people in that future time, right? What we have come to understand is the Lord Jesus gave this to the church in every generation, every believer from the time that John mailed these letters by messenger out to the churches in Asia and they began to be copied and disseminated and spread, believers are supposed to read this book.

Blessed is he who reads and keeps the words of this book. It opens and closes with that blessing. The only book in the Bible that pronounces a blessing on you if you read it.

Think about that, 66 books. This is the only one that says, look, read me. You'll be blessed.

Keep the words of this book and you'll be blessed. To the church, not to, if you're in the 70th week, read this book and you'll be blessed. Every single believer.

Ehrman says, well, because people have understood it as prophetic and obviously it didn't come through in their day, that tells you that it shouldn't be taken prophetically. Au contraire, mon mal frere, my bad brother. And he is a brother and he is going to come to at the rapture and spend a thousand years retracting everything he said and misquoting Jesus and all the rest of it.

So, think about this now. Book of Revelation, it comes out. No sooner is it out than its recipients in AD 90 something think the beast is Nero.

If you write Caesar Nero and do the math, 666 or 616. Either text works for Nero. You can add or subtract the N, it's Nero or Neron.

If it's Nero, it's 616. If it's Neron, it's 666. They said, it's Nero.

We need to make application of this book because we've got a beast and we've got those who are promoting him and we've got those who are persecuting us for our faith and we need to pay attention and be faithful unto death. We need to pay attention to what Jesus said to the churches. Were there those who were harem, scarim and thought Jesus is coming next Tuesday? Of course.

This has been true of every passage of scripture since the scripture was first created, pen and ink to parchment. There have always been those who misunderstand it. There have also always been those who understood it and applied it.

And in the first century, Nero and then later on Domitian. And they said, this guy fits the pattern. Now, did Nero and Domitian fit the pattern? Of the beast and the promotion and the persecution of the servants of God in the first century, yes or no? Yes.

Did it exhaust the prophecy? And once it was fulfilled, it has no further value except as a historical artifact? No. Persecution under Nero, Jerusalem destroyed in 70 AD, Roman imperial worship enforced in many places. The Jewish-Roman war that Josephus talks about.

Remember his book, the Jewish Wars. This is war with Rome. So many Christians applied this imagery to their present day.

Was that a good thing or not? Yes. You can't say, well, I know we've got Nero and Romans and persecution and the rest of it, but this is really for people at the end time. No, they applied it in their day.

That's a good thing. You go to the late Roman empire, say AD 250 to 500. What have you got going on? Various emperors persecuting Christians.

It's not till Constantine that they turn around and adopt Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire, which was a tragic mistake, but they did it. You don't say, this is the government religion now. You can be sympathetic to it.

You can support it. You can encourage it without legislating it. Shouldn't do that with a religion or a lot of other things.

But there were sometimes, the leadership was barbaric. And so there's the Decian persecution, the Diocletian persecution. Pretty soon, Caesars are assassinating each other right and left and guys last a few weeks and get killed.

There were barbarian invasions. Rome is sacked in AD 410, if you recall. And those who started to think of Rome as the capital of Christianity, which they should never have done.

There's no evidence Peter was ever in Rome. Did you know that? Anyway, when Rome was sacked in 410, well, the Christians were all shocked because Catholicism was already beginning to develop. But Augustine or Augustinus, depending on how you wanna pronounce it, he's not there for us to ask, how do you say your name? I'm gonna say Augustine.

Augustine of Hippo pushed back against date setting and helped de-sensationalize the study of Revelation. And whatever his other, you know, he's got strengths and weaknesses, but that was a good thing that Augustine did. Come forward a while to AD 1000.

And just like the hoopla that attended Y2K, Y1K was accompanied by a lot of hair on fire, ripping of clothes and scattering of sackcloth and ashes. So people would observe and then go nuts about cosmic signs or judgments and the return of Christ. There was panic in that day because people thought, well, it's a thousand years and that's the length of the millennial kingdom.

So maybe that's the length of the time between Christ and the coming. There was a guy named Joachim, J-O-A-C-H-I-M. When you know Spanish, you don't say Joachim, it's Joachim of Fiore.

He published these prophetic timelines and prophesied a coming age of the spirit in that time. Think about, this is number five, if you're keeping track, black death and the late middle ages, say 1300s, 1400s, black death, corruption of clergy and the church, the manifest horrific evils perpetrated in the Catholic hierarchy. Black death kills anywhere from a third to a half of the European population.

You read about the plagues where a third to the half of the people are destroyed and they think we're in the 70th week. But the effect of that is what is your application? Maybe it is not the final 70th week, but there is a great purge of people. There is plague and death and there is rife corruption.

How should we then live? What does Jesus say to do in an age such as this? So was revelation valuable in the middle ages and late middle ages? Yes, you could misunderstand thinking that, well, Jesus might be right around the corner. By the way, you know my understanding of what happens with life and death and the rapture. And in my view, your last heartbeat, the last electrical signal wiggles the meter from your brain and your EEG goes flat, just like your EKG, absent from the body, face-to-face with the Lord.

When does the Bible say we as church age believers are face-to-face with the Lord? Shout, voice of the archangel, trump of God, dead in Christ, rise. Doesn't make sense to me that you would die. Float up to heaven, be in the presence of Christ in a disembodied or weird state.

And then God looks at his clock on the wall in the throne room of heaven and says, time to send the Lord Jesus to collect the living church. So all you people floating in my presence, go down and get in your graves. Go on, go down, get in the cemeteries, get in the boxes, go down, get in the bottom of the sea, wherever your molecules were scattered.

And we're gonna do the shout, the voice of the archangel, the trump of God. And I want you to rise, come up out of the ground. What a silly plan in my view.

And I could be hung for blasphemy if that turns out to be the way it works. But my understanding is we don't have to exist in some weird semblance of binding our time. Absent from the body, face to face with the Lord.

That is scripture. If I die and I am absent from my body, without loss of existence, without soul

sleep, if time travel is possible, and I know it is, because God does it all the time. Angels do it all the time.

We can talk about that, go back and review the Daniel study. Time travel is imminently possible. God can go to the beginning, God can go to the end.

He can go anywhere in between. It's like a piece of paper laying on his desk. He can read the first line, he can read the last line, read anything in between.

He can erupt if that piece of paper were a dimension of existence. It's limited to two dimensions and he is three. He can stick his finger at any point and appear and speak and be heard.

And that's my model of how time and history work. But God can know what someone is gonna decide without influencing the decision because he just goes forward and looks back. This is my mental model, it's more complex than that.

But when you die, your next experience, the next microsecond of your existence is at the rapture. You're in a hospital bed, you're in a car that got hit by a train. Whatever means of your death, you get shot by a bullet in combat, you are killed.

Next thing you know, you're coming up out of the ground and here's the Lord Jesus in the air and you're surrounded by saints and those who are alive and remain. You may or may not know them, but your focus is on the Lord Jesus and you move toward him, form up on him. And with him we go, we shall evermore be with the Lord.

That's it. So, these people that said, I'm in the middle ages, black death, a third to a half of everybody I know is dying and then you die, is it the age in which the Lord Jesus returns? Yes, because when you die, next thing you see is his return. So was it wrong for them to apply the word of God that pertains to a time of trouble and a time of death and oppression for those who believe in God in the literal 70th week, it is going to be Israel subject to that.

But in the entire Old Testament, it was Israel that has experiences and is either blessed or judged and is given promises. When we say, they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they will mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary and walk and not faint. That's a promise to Israel.

Can I say, oh, well, give that to Israel, that's not for me. All these were written for our instruction. In every age, the Protestant Reformation, 1500 to 1700, Pope Leo X and the papacy, egregious.

Why do you think the 95 theses got nailed to the Wittenberg door by Martin Luther? It was grotesquely evil, grotesquely corrupt, grotesquely exploitative of everyone, especially the poor. And Martin Luther, by the way, he himself never left the Catholic church, did you know that? Luther never, he died a Catholic. By the way, he also died a horrific anti-Semite.

It's a different story. But in that day, 1500, 1700, Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Zwingli, Huss, all these other great guys, they all identified the papacy and sometimes the Pope as antichrist, as the beast, as a manifestation of that system. Were they? Yes.

Not in the final sense, but in a fitting the pattern sense. What are believers to do when they see this kind of thing going on? Look at the promises and the principles and the doctrines of the book of Revelation. Live, act, think, and speak accordingly.

So for Ahriman to say, well, obviously the whole idea that Revelation is prophecy is bunk because look at all the people that thought it pertained to their day. We're supposed to look at it as pertaining to our day. This is Barth's problem is he's judging the scripture without even understanding what it says and what it means.

And I grieve that he and those that he has led into his way of thinking are so far in the dark. You're supposed to look at it and apply it in your day. And when you cite historic examples of people doing that, you're blowing your case out of the water.

It is prophetic and it pertains. It pertains now and it pertains if the Lord Jesus doesn't literally come back and perpetrate the 70th week for another 500 years, every generation between us and them should look at it the same way. So the English Civil War in the 1600s, they suspected the Pope as being the Antichrist, their own kings in England as being the Antichrist, their political rivals are Antichrist.

There was civil war, there was murder of kings, you know, regicide, they call it. There was religious upheaval. Remember the Catholics and the Protestants, the Episcopalians, all of that kerfuffle going on.

Many Puritans believed they were witnessing the final conflicts depicted in Revelation and the rise of Christ's kingdom. And many of them expected Christ's return in their lifetime. And it's a funny thing, if you expect the return of Christ in your lifetime, you are always gonna be rewarded because right at the end of your lifetime, Christ is going to come.

The French Revolution, and this is one that Ehrman specifically cites. He says, oh, you know, nobody thought it was prophetic until the late 19th century. And then he goes back and talks about the French in the 1700s.

He contradicts himself if you watch his video. The anti-Christ is Napoleon, obviously, Napoleon Bonaparte. Why? Collapse of the monarchy, dechristianization campaigns, revolutionary violence, the guillotine, let them eat cake, massive European wars.

And many Christians thought, well, this is Revelation unfolding before my eyes. Was it? Yes, yes. Just as we see it unfolding in our day.

It has been unfolding in every day since John wrote it down and mailed it to Asia. Yes, it is true. Yes, it is prophetic.

And it will continue to be prophetic until its final fulfillment. 19th century, the 1800s, you know, the prophetic movements. And they saw Israel starting to be on the horizon as potentially returning.

They started making prophetic timetables and William Miller predicted Christ's return in 1843 and 1844. There was the great disappointment that came when, of course, that wasn't fulfilled. And you can be right in seeing that it applies to your time and be wrong in specific interpretations.

You know, there was many famous recent setting of dates. It's not about setting the date. When the Lord Jesus returns, the time of preparation is over.

The virgins didn't sit around there taking bets on when the groom was gonna come. They concentrated on being prepared or they failed to. But they didn't take bets on, well, you know, I'll tell you what, I'll give you my spare pair of sandals if he comes in the next 15 minutes.

They didn't worry about the timing of the groom. The wise virgins made sure they had oil in their lamps and were ready whenever he came. And they were content to let him come in his own time and we should be as well.

So obviously there have been mistakes made and foolish predictions. Go back and read the literature during World War I. Kaiser Wilhelm is the Antichrist. Different individuals in Europe are the Antichrist.

The unprecedented death and destruction from mechanized warfare, the invention of the machine gun, water cooled in those days, the collapse of empires, the redrawing of maps in Europe blew everybody's mind. And the scale of the destruction was unprecedented. Never had man been able to kill so many of his fellow men as we could with technology and mustard gas and the rest of it.

World War II, you're familiar with this, with Adolf Hitler as the likely candidate. Some thought Mussolini if they lived in Italy, but the genocide, global war on an unprecedented scale, aggressive totalitarianism, the obvious manifest attempted extermination of the Jews. Well, this is certainly it.

Nobody has aggregated and destroyed five or 6 million Jews in one go. This is it. Was it time for Christians to apply the principles and doctrines and viewpoints and encouragements of the book of Revelation? Absolutely.

Stalin shows up during this time. In the Cold War era, in which many of us were born, you've got Stalin still around, Gorbachev, Mark of the Beast, remember the purple spot he had on his head? Well, Gorbachev, he's the Antichrist. Why? Nuclear weapons, unprecedented.

Hiroshima, Nagasaki and its aftermath. And now we can map technology onto Revelation as never before. But people have thought, well, this is the ultimate, look at where we are now.

Global ideological conflict, the rise of communism, democratic socialism, quote unquote, state atheism, atheism officially adopted and promoted and enforced by the state. So people said, well, the Soviet Union, Gog Magog, Roche, nuclear war is Armageddon. And in the latter portion of that, we come to the 70s and you've got Hal Lindsey, late great planet Earth and others like it.

Now you have Israel, beginning in 1948, return of the state of Israel. All right, Jesus said this generation will not pass away. So 40 years, somewhere between 48 and 88, it's going to happen, right? So you can go on to the rise of the European Union.

Remember the 10 nation Confederacy? Oh, it's the EU. We thought it was revived Roman Empire. It's the European Union.

Now we have the digital economy and people thought credit cards were the Mark of the Beast. Then it was going to be chips. Then it was going to be capsules like they put in your dog and now, you know, AI.

And is this something that we should take seriously and endeavor to apply what we learned from Revelation in and on? Yes, as always, this is a gift to the church. It is given by the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can ready ourselves to be a part of the bride. It doesn't obviate or neutralize the book that people thought it would be fulfilled in their day and endeavor to make application in their day to whatever accurate extent, but they were at least thinking the Bible is true and I should apply the Bible to my current life.

This is not a bad thing. This is a good thing and we should do the same. So, you know, in our day, people have said, well, Antichrist or the Beast, Saddam Hussein, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Putin.

Why? We have things that are unprecedented in terms of terrorism, wars, pandemics, global surveillance, artificial intelligence, digital currencies, the ability to control who buys and sells. So, you know, the restrictions that we saw in the pandemic, was it time to apply the book of Revelation then? Yes. Is it a time to apply it now? Yes.

Do we long for and expect? Do we love the appearing? Remember Paul says there's a crown for all of those who wait for the Lord and love His appearing? Yes. And I know for certain, He is going to appear no later than the end of my life, as far as I'm concerned. Some of the rest of y'all may have to wait, but when I go, that's the end of human history for me and my next experience is the return of the Lord.

So did I spend this intermediate time understanding, thinking about, reviewing in quiet time, loading and fortifying my soul, cleansing my garments and ensuring that I am a part of the wife

who has prepared herself for the marriage supper. That's why we're here. There is no higher priority.

There is no more potent and desirable potential than to enter fully into the plan and purpose of God for us and be ready. Watch and pray. Don't enter into temptation.

Be not deceived. Wash your garments. Make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 19, this is the goal. This is where we will be and what we will do on the good side when we're ready. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how thoroughly and powerfully it presents the choices that lie before us to be subsumed, to be co-opted, to be deflected, deceived, distracted, or to be clear-eyed, to be cleansed, to dwell in the power that you have granted to us through your word and through your spirit. We pray that as we contemplate and review what we have learned, that God the Holy Spirit will minister to our hearts in such a way that we will be good stewards of our time, we'll redeem the time so that our days are not evil, even though the world around us may be. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.