

Rev 26-06-24a

Greetings, welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 24th of June, 2026. We continue our study in the book of Revelation.

We're in chapter 20 and we have come to the subject of resurrection, the composition of the millennial kingdom. How do we fit in? Who gets raised? When? Where? Why? How? For how long? And we are going to look at the scriptures tonight and refresh our understanding of that. Those of you that have been through it before, this is a welcome refresher.

But it is important to understand our place in God's plan, the place of the other saints of God. And that's what we will look at tonight. It will prepare us and give us great understanding when it is our turn to enter into the eternal future.

Let's ask God's blessing into our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, we thank you for this time of fellowship, of refreshment and renewal in your word, the presence and power of your Holy Spirit to enable us to live a life that is beyond ordinary, that redeems the time, that reflects your glory and the glory of our Savior, that prepares us for service and function now and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at these passages of scripture, that your Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts, help us to not only understand their meaning in the great flow of your unfolding plan in human history, but also motivate us and encourage us to daily application in the hours and days that remain to us in this life.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Taking a look at our passage, we have the, I'm going to wear my cat eyeglasses tonight.

You like those? This came from my great aunt, but for some reason her eyes and mine are the same and I don't know where my real glasses are. These will work. Chapter 20 of the Revelation.

John says, Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan and bound him for a thousand years and cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal on him so that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years were finished. But after these things, he must be released for a little while.

Verse four, I saw thrones and they sat on them and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years, but the rest of the dead lived not, did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall

reign with him a thousand years.

We remember contextually that this section of the revelation, largely from chapter six to the end of chapter 19, has concerned itself almost exclusively with the nation of Israel. 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. Prophets who stand and witness for three and a half days and then are martyred.

They are not said to be anything but prophets. They're not disciples. They're not apostles.

They have that Old Testament mode of operation. And in many cases, the speculation as to their identity settles upon Old Testament figures, Moses and Elijah. My personal preference, John and his brother James, who began as Old Testament and are so suited to proclaim the fulfillment of Old Testament promise in the New Testament dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, what is available, and stopping all comers with the kind of miracles that characterize the Old Testament age.

But here we have the individuals who are sitting on thrones. Individuals sitting on thrones, as we saw last time, harks back to the 24 elders who are seated on thrones and who are given the ability to judge. They wear crowns, which is a sign of authority.

And so these thrones, John mentions in passing, he has already described them and their occupants in detail. So he sees the thrones and they that sat upon them and judgment is committed to them. So then souls who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands, lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

There are many modes of death during the tribulation and the brief period of rulership that is exercised by the beast, the false prophet, under the auspices of the dragon. The things that are released in the various judgments are largely judging the unbelieving world. But when the dragon pursues the seed of the woman after he has issued the flood trying to do away with her and she is taken and protected for a time, time and half a time, then the dragon is said to go after the remainder of her offspring.

So beheading is representative of all forms of martyrdom. And these individuals, like the 24 elders who are representative of all of the overcomers in the church, these individuals represent the overcomers of the Old Testament age. The Hebrews 11 types, not just those who are named, but those who are referred to later in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, who did not love their lives unto death, remained faithful, were sought into, were persecuted, and so on.

This is highly representative. But what we're going to look at tonight is what exactly is taking place here. There is a resurrection.

Beheading is a certain form of death. You don't come back from it. You don't fool somebody that

you might be dead and you're really not.

Beheading, you know they're dead. And if they are coming back to live and reign, they have been resurrected. So what kind of resurrection is this? This is what we're going to look at.

And we're going to look at this first and foremost in terms of Old Testament saints. These all died in faith, not having received the promise, Hebrews 11. So first of all, what was the promise in the Old Testament? So we're going to take a look, and you will hear people say, we're going to take a look at these Old Testament passages.

You'll hear people say, well, the Old Testament doesn't really anticipate resurrection at all. This is a new thing, innovation from Christianity. Not so.

So let's begin at the beginning. Death enters the world. Paul talks about this in Romans.

Sin entered the world and death by sin. So the death passed upon all men for all have sinned. I've been through Romans.

You know where this is. This goes back to Genesis chapter three, verse 19. When God encounters Adam and Eve after they have sinned, they have given in to the wiles of the devil, if you will, God says to Adam, because you have heeded the voice of your wife, an oft referred to verse by husbands down through the ages, because you have heeded the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you saying you shall not eat of it.

That of course is the condition. It doesn't mean you should never heed your wife, but don't heed her when she is encouraging something wrong. Sin or evil.

You heeded her voice and what was heeded was breaking God's commandment. Cursed is the ground for your sake and toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the herb of the field.

Now we understand, again, looking at the symmetry of the word of God, that this is metaphorical language. Certainly it has a truth in terms of cultivation, but it speaks of the labor that is required to stay alive in every form. Not everyone tills the some do flocks and herds.

Oddly enough, Cain was the one that was more literally fulfilling this in terms of trying to draw his bread from the dust of the ground, where his brother Abel let the wild grass grow and cultivated flocks and herds. Nevertheless, the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, for dust you are, and unto dust shalt thou return. It says in the King James.

Dust. You are made of dust. God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, it tells us a chapter earlier, right? So death is a return to the dust.

Circle the word, put a little asterisk by it, because this is a reference to the hope of resurrection. So for example, wait for me to turn to Job 19.25-27. Nehemiah, Esther, Job 19.25-27. Here, Job says in verse 23, O that my words were written, O that they were inscribed in a book. And he got his wish.

We are reading them 3,000 odd years later. O that my words were written, O that they were inscribed in a book, that they were engraved on a rock with an iron pin and lead forever. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth.

Look at what Job knows. The Redeemer, who has yet to come and accomplish redemption, lives. He lived before Job.

He lives during Job. He lives after Job. He will come and live on this earth.

He will accomplish redemption. And He shall stand at the last, not the first advent, the second advent. He will stand at last, the latter days, the last days, on the earth.

And after my skin is destroyed, this. I know it's in italics, but that's the force of it. He says this.

This is true. This is what I know. This is what I wish was inscribed in a book.

That in my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and not another. It's not fulfilled because my descendants are going to see Him. I will see Him myself from my flesh.

My eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me. After my skin is destroyed.

The old King James had talked about when skin worms destroy my flesh. What is implicit in this? For your skin to be destroyed, especially by skin worms, you are in the ground. You're in the earth.

You have returned to dust. Worms of this nature don't fly necessarily. Their parents might fly, but the things that eat you are terrestrial.

You're carnal, your physical flesh. So that is the truth that Job knew long before much of the Old Testament events took place. So what do we know from this? It will be for Job a restoration in the flesh.

His Redeemer is going to stand in His flesh on the earth. Job is going to stand and see Him with his own eyes. So his eyes are going to need to be restored.

His body and flesh will need to be restored so that this claim and this prophecy can be fulfilled. So it will be a restoration, A, in the flesh. And isn't it interesting that our resurrection passages don't talk about returning to flesh, but watch this in the Old Testament promises.

It will be in the flesh. It will be based on redemption. Redemption makes resurrection possible.

My Redeemer lives because He lives, Job says, I will live and I will see Him. It doesn't say I'll see my family. I'll see my loved ones.

I'll see my ancestors. The focus of resurrection is to see the Redeemer. He is the hope.

He is the reason. He is the source of this new life. So it is A, a restoration in the flesh.

B, it is based on redemption. C, this is an event that takes place after death. It is life after death.

The skin being destroyed and so on is that reference. This is bodily decay, genuine, no kidding, physical death. This will come after that.

That's what we know from Job. Here's a fascinating passage that directly bears this next one on our chapter, chapter 20, and this is Isaiah chapter 26. Short distance forward in your Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 26.

This entire chapter is a depiction of and a promise of the millennial kingdom, which we are about to study. In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah. What is the most important prominent thing you can think of in the land of Judah? What's in the land of Judah that is nowhere else that is essential for every future Bible prophecy to be fulfilled? It is the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is in Judea, Judah. So in that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah, which is the county, if you will, in which Zion, the city of Jerusalem, the future millennial temple, the throne of David on which the Lord Jesus, David, and David's sons will sit, perhaps in a rotation fashion. This is what they'll sing in the land of Judah.

We have a strong city. Jerusalem is strong. It is pure.

It is inviolable. It has been restored by God. God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks.

Nobody's going to attack it. Nobody's going to mess with it. Open the gates that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in.

This is a subset of all Israel. All Israel will be saved, but some who are first will be last. Some who are last will be first.

The Lord Jesus talked about this extensively. But who is going to have the right to enter the gates? And think about this now because this portends, this foreshadows, this anticipates what's going to happen in the new Jerusalem, in the new heavens and new earth. Lots of people raised resurrection and entering into eternal life, but not everyone has a right to the city.

Who has a right to the city? Open the gates that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, holds it, prioritizes it, obeys it. You have to know the truth to be set free by the truth and to lay

hold of righteousness by faith in the truth. The Lord Jesus is the truth in bodily form.

Open the gates of this strong city that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Memory verse, one of the first we ever learned together, that will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.

They said in 1611, trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah, the Lord is everlasting strength. He brings down those who dwell on high, the lofty city, he lays it low. He lays it low to the ground.

He brings it down to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy. You could imagine this being an allusion, at least in part, to Babylon, which we just saw destroyed in our previous two chapters.

That used to be a strong city, but it is laid low and it is trodden underfoot by the poor and the needy. The low are elevated. I don't have time to look at it, but read the song of Hannah, read the song of Mary, the other celebration songs about God's attention and visitation for the poor and the needy, his provision for the poor and needy, which is of a very special kind in the law of Moses.

Not a handout, not unrestricted charity, but opportunity. Leave the corners of the fields ungleaned so that they can care for themselves. Lays it low to the ground, brings it down to the dust.

The foot shall tread it down, the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy. Notice, where does he bring it down to? The dust. Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, is brought down and it is dead.

It is not coming back. Verse seven, the way of the just is uprightness. O most upright, you weigh the path of the just.

Yes, in the way of your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for you. Notice, judgment is committed to those who are on the thrones. In Revelation chapter 20, God is the ultimate judge, but God uses agency.

God delegates the operation of judgment to these faithful occupants of the thrones who have earned that privilege of service and function by their faithfulness. They know the mind of God. They have practiced discernment and knowing what is good, what is better, and what is best in this life.

And when they enter into this future day, they are qualified. We think many times, I don't understand what is going on. Why am I enduring the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune here? I'm trying to take up arms against a sea of troubles.

I don't understand. I thought, you know, God looked out for his own and the righteous ought to be

blessed. In many cases, it is not easy to see, but our difficulties are a blessing and we will understand the wisdom that these experiences, as we negotiate them in God's power, confers on our soul and we will be so glad.

I think of people who may have started out in a medical education and then have shifted into some other form of education, but they are educating people who have medical issues and medical needs. And it seemed like a setback that their early direction of education got stopped and in sometimes an uncomfortable and even painful and suffering way. And yet, what looked like it was meant for evil turned out to be for good.

And there is awareness and there is empathy and there is wonderful effectiveness because of past experience that was difficult at the time, but you wouldn't trade for anything in the present. We often refer to it, one of the clearest anticipations of the Lord Jesus as the suffering servant who eventually becomes the conquering King is Joseph. Sold into slavery by his brothers, abused, lied about, unjustly imprisoned, neglected, ignored, forgotten.

Many, many injustices and false accusations perpetrated against him, but he remained faithful. And in the end, you know, for this reason, God hath highly exalted him. So we think about this.

The way of the just is uprightness. O most upright, you weigh the path of the just. And in the way of your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for you.

The desire of our soul is for your name and for remembrance of you. With my soul, I have desired you in the night. Yes, by my spirit within me, I will seek you early.

For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Is this not a perfect description of the millennial kingdom? When God's judgments prevail on a daily basis throughout the world, the world is going to learn righteousness. The sad thing is, there are some who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

And when righteousness is revealed, they hate it. It's an almost impossible thing to wrap our minds around because we're believers. We love the Lord Jesus.

We love the righteousness and the faithfulness of God. There are people for whom it is anathema because it gets in the way of their agenda and their desire and their view of what life ought to be and their place in it. And this is Satan's problem.

This is one third of the angels that fell with him. They just don't cut into God's righteousness. You think about those who denied the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, described in the New Testament, the Pharisee types.

So we desire you in the night. Seek him early. And we have waited for you.

The desire of our soul is for your name and so on. And you think about Job. I want to see my

Redeemer.

I know my Redeemer lives one day. I am going to stand on the ground in my flesh with my eyes and I will see him. I will see him, not somebody else, not a proxy, not a descendant.

I will see him. This is what sustained Job through such difficult suffering and persecution by Satan himself. He got confused.

He asked a lot of questions. But where did he ask his questions? He went to God. Discussed it with his believing friends.

But ultimately he went to God and God appeared and answered him. And he was humbled. He was satisfied.

God said, go offer sacrifices on behalf of your friends who didn't get it. Everybody except Elihu. I'm working, by the way, on posting our Job series.

It should be up here in the next day or so with transcripts and better access. What a tremendous study. I never learned more than I did in the book of Job.

And it's, for the length of the book, it's one of the shortest series we've done. So watch for that. If you run out of things to listen to, that would be my suggestion.

What a tremendous, beautifully structured book. And when you get past the three friends to the fourth friend, like the fourth man in the fire in Daniel, that's where you really want to start paying attention to what is said. So verse 10, Isaiah 26, let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness.

Is this not our experience? And will this not be the case in the millennial kingdom? Grace will be shown to the wicked, but they will not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness, he will deal unjustly. God has eliminated all of the evil, all of the excuses by which people want to justify their bad behavior.

In the land of uprightness, he's still going to deal unjustly, and he will not behold the majesty of the Lord. This is the great sword that divides humanity, and even angels, into two camps. There are those who long to see the Lord, and those who don't want to see him, don't want him or anything associated with him.

Think about some current political repulsions. There are people, it doesn't matter what certain individuals do, nobody's going to ever come around to seeing them as a good thing. Lord, verse 11, when your hand is lifted up, they will not see, they just will not get it.

This is willful blindness. The God of this world has blinded the minds of those who have already decided to not believe, to not place faith, to not accept, to not humble themselves under the

mighty hand of God, and be exalted in due time. There are some of us, it is a free will choice, and we just get our neck bowed, we put our back up, and we're not having it.

It's a scary thing that we are capable of this as human beings. Even when the Lord lifts up his hand, the lifted hand can be for help. Remember, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

If you're upholding someone, your hand is up, but there is also the upraised hand of judgment. What is it going to be? The Lord is going to lift up his hand, but they won't see, but they will see and be ashamed for envy of people. Yes, the fire of your enemies shall devour them.

Lord, you will establish peace for us, for you have also done all our works in us. O Lord our God, masters besides you have had dominion over us, but by you only we make mention of your name. They are dead, they will not live, they are deceased, they will not rise.

This is right where we are at the beginning of Revelation chapter 20. The rest of the dead live not. They are dead, they will not live, they are deceased, they will not rise.

Therefore you have punished and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish. They will be raised at the great white throne for a brief time and then they will utterly perish and their memory will perish. This is why I don't think there's going to be ongoing tears, even for people that we loved and loved well who are unbelievers and die without Christ.

You think, well, how can there be no more tears every time I think of this person I'm going to be? I think that it will not be the kind of memory that will induce sadness. I think we will be so in line and in tune with God's heart and with the understanding that this is by choice and it is necessary. There is really no other option and we will be reconciled.

There are things that we dread, we fear, we are sorrowful over, we have deep regret and get depressed over it. But we come to reconciliation. We realize that things are for the best and this gives us comfort, peace and hope.

So you've made all their memory to perish. Interesting choice of words there. You have increased the nation, O Lord.

You have increased the nation. You are glorified. You have expanded all the borders of the land.

Remember the Millennial Kingdom is going to be the largest extent that the land of Israel has ever known. Go all the way to the river, Euphrates and so on. Lord in trouble, verse 16, they have visited you.

They poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them. This is response to chastening. Recognizing that it is deserved, that it is needful, that it has a purpose, that it is done out of God's love.

And rather than resisting, than becoming bitter or deceiving ourselves into thinking that God is not just, they pour out a prayer when your chastening is upon them. As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs when she draws near the time of her delivery, so have we been in your sight, O Lord. We have been with child.

We have been in pain. We have, as it were, brought forth wind. We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

We have not been able to build the kingdom. If we build it, he will come. We lack something.

We've not been able to bring about a millennial kingdom on our own. But look at verse 19, your dead shall live. These are those who have died in the Lord, in the Old Testament.

Christ hasn't come yet, but they belong to God. They are his. They are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Psalms 100, Psalm 23, your dead shall live together. And it says with my dead body, the versions read their dead bodies. And I think this is probably correct.

Your dead shall live. Their dead bodies shall arise, awake and seeing you who dwell in the dust. For your dew is like the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Remember the dust? Awake and seeing you who dwell in dust. Dust is not the end. You can awake from it.

If you are dead in the Lord, this is Old Testament resurrection promise. And then you have a reference to the end of the millennial kingdom in these last two verses. Come, my people, enter your chambers and shut your doors behind you.

Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment until the indignation is passed. I think this is a reference to Gog Magog. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released.

There is a very short conflict. But verse 21, behold, the Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. These who see the upraised hand of righteousness and don't respond.

These who still refuse when they see the Lord in person, they still will not accept righteousness. They reject it. So he has come to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

The earth will also disclose their blood and will no more cover the slain. But this is a strong resurrection promise here in Isaiah 26. And the key points here are, it is the land of Judah, which is where Jerusalem is, the seat of power, the Davidic throne.

The millennial kingdom is there. These bodies will arise from the dust. They will awake and they

will sing.

Daniel 12, two and three. This is very well known to us. Wonderful promise.

At that time, Michael shall stand up. The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people, Israel, old Testament saints. Israel includes the patriarchs that preceded them before Jacob.

There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time, the 70th week. And at that time, your people shall be delivered. Everyone who is found written in the book.

God knows them that are his. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Very same imagery we saw in Isaiah, sleeping in the dust of the earth and they awake.

Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Everlasting is a contextually defined word. If you are going to awake to an extremely long lasting condition, the Hebrew doesn't have a term for a really long time, but it will end at some point.

If it's over the horizon, it's laolam. It's under the ages. It's as long as you can think for.

If there's an incoming, you can't see it from here. And people get troubled by that. Well, if God gives us everlasting life, does it really have an end down the road? If you know God, that's not the case.

But this everlasting contempt is a sobering thought. If you are raised, but you are everlastingly limited into the indefinite and unending eternal future because you didn't get with the program here, what a sadness, what a lost opportunity that is. We want to awake to everlasting life.

And this is not just duration. This is quality. We've talked about this many times.

Life in the sense of partaking of the God who is everlasting, His plans and purposes, the eternality, the above and beyondness of the resurrected state, beyond time, beyond space, beyond this universe and so on. So some will awake, these are Old Testament saints now, to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt, those who are wise. If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.

James chapter 1. You have to want it to get it. You have to ask for it. You have to seek it.

Seek God. When you're seeking God, you're seeking knowledge of Him, the truth of Him, His wisdom, His righteousness, His justice, to draw near to Him so that He will draw near to us. Isn't that interesting? Calvinists would have it backwards.

God draws near to you and you will draw near to Him. That's not what scripture says. Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you.

Seek Him early while He may yet be found. Call upon Him while He is near. We take the initiative in response to the opportunity, to the potential.

You will seek me and find me when I sovereignly decide you will is not what it says. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart, your decision, your priority. So those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Forever and ever. Slightly different phrasing than everlasting life, everlasting shame and condemned. How long will the wise shine? Forever and ever.

So this is the nature of Old Testament resurrection. We're going to see what this resurrection looks like when they come back and enter into the Millennial Kingdom. What are the conditions and how do they compare and contrast with our resurrection and our situation, our experience, our conditions.

We will see that when we come back from the break.