

Rev 26-07-29a

Greetings fellow members of Grace to Truth Bible Church. This is Wednesday, the 29th of July 2026. We're in Revelation chapter 21.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship. We'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for another opportunity to investigate the truth of Your Word as we look at the closing chapters of this wonderful scroll of Revelation that was delivered to us from You to the Lord Jesus through the angel to the apostle John.

We're grateful for the insight that it gives us for our lives today as well as the anticipation that it creates in us for the future kingdom of Your Son and our Savior and Your own kingdom where we fervently hope to be qualified for service, function, residence, and opportunity. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will help us understand what we are looking at and see its pertinence and application at the present time. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Always good to begin by making sure we have the passage firmly in our minds. Chapter 21, the new heavens and new earth.

John sees the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Loud voice from heaven says, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. He will dwell with them.

They shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.

There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. This is something that believers have turned to across the ages and have looked at for future hope for a long, long time. This is a fascinating statement that follows it, because the one who sits on the throne, who is our God and Father, the creator of all things, the creator of the universe, the one who sits on the throne says, Behold, I make all things new.

He said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. We've seen the emphasis on that. Then in verse six, he said to me, It has been accomplished.

It has come into being. It is done. It's the perfect from Ginnomai.

It has arrived. It has reached its completion. It is fully in existence.

He says, I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. We looked at this in great detail, and you would think that we have exhausted everything that is here.

But I want to point out one additional thing. The form of this is something that we have actually

seen in the past. The Lord Jesus would say, I am, and follow it with a promise.

So, for example, he would say in John chapter 11, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. But it's an I am statement.

Jesus said in John, I am the light of the world, and the one who comes to me will not walk in darkness. That is John 8, 12. I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. Notice, I am a specific aspect of the Lord Jesus, and then a promise that is applicable, something you can get some traction with and move forward in life. So Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

If you follow me, you will not walk in darkness. He has a characteristic of light. We look at him, we see his character, and we convert that into application.

We know that he wants to illuminate our path. Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. That light enters us, and we become lights shining in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

But it begins with an I am statement. I am the light of the world. We saw a similar one in John 6, 35.

And I find it fascinating that it's the same author. And I am more and more convinced that when John was told at the beginning of this revelation, at the beginning of this series of visions, write what you have seen, the things that are, and the things that are to come. And I think John took that literally.

And what he had seen, as he says at the beginning of one of his epistles, that which our hands have handled, that which our eyes have seen, that's what we communicate to you. And I think he wrote the gospel of John in response to this command, write what you have seen. Most interpreters say that's just the short vision that has been communicated in Revelation 1. What had John seen? This beautiful gospel account, structured around seven signs, is such a beautiful thing.

And that is what John had seen. The things which are, these are the letters to the seven churches. And the things which are to come is everything really starting in chapter four, but you begin to see the unfolding of the tribulation period in chapter six, all the way up to the present.

But in John 6, 35, as with John 8, 12 that we just looked at, Jesus says, I am the bread of life. I am the light. We understand there's illumination, there's guidance, there's insight, there is wisdom for the task.

What about the bread of life? How do you apply, I am the bread of life? Well, again, there is a promise attached. He who comes to me will never go hungry. And he who believes in me will

never be thirsty.

The basic sources of life, bread and water, food and water, are sourced in Christ. So this attaches to a panoply of other scriptural concepts. Why should you worry about what you're going to eat or what you're going to wear? Look at the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin.

Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these. Your heavenly father knows what you need before you ask him. Give us this day our daily bread.

So you look at this pattern, I am, and then there is a promise. There is something that can be applied. I am the bread of life.

We can take comfort and encouragement and have faith that my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. But there is a condition. He who comes to me will never go hungry.

He who places faith in me will never thirst. It's not a universal claim, it's conditional. A12, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. There is a characteristic, there is a facet or an aspect that has applicational value. When we're in doubt about what passage should I apply in my specific circumstance, I'm not sure what part of scripture might pertain.

I've looked at Old Testament, I've looked at New Testament, I can't quite figure out, or I have a question and I can't find the answer. What will happen at the rapture? And there's little children that I love and care about and they've not yet had the chance. I don't see a specific passage of scripture that says what God will do to provide for the little ones that are dear to my heart or others in my periphery.

If we don't have specific guidance, we go to the character of God. I may not know the details in this area of God's plan, but I know God's character. When He says, I am, I place my faith in that.

He is the things we learned in the old essence box. You remember the essence box? God is, God could say, I am, sovereignty, no greater authority than He has. Righteousness, what He does is perfectly right.

Justice, this is His righteousness as it applies in the case of creatures. Sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love. God is love.

We love because He first loved us. Eternal life, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, unchangeableness, and veracity, truth. It's a wonderful summary.

It is not exhaustive. There are many other things that are true of God, but it's a convenient

summary of some of the most important ones. Sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, and veracity.

Memorize that list. Come up against something, you've got a question, it's unsettling, it is a temptation to worry or to succumb to alarm or excessive concern. Go to the character of God.

Go to the I am's. The children of Israel were concerned about a big change. They'd been in Egypt for hundreds of years and suddenly Moses says, we're going to the promised land.

Well, who told you this? Who says we're leaving? Who thinks they can take us from here to there? God said, you tell them I am has sent you. I am. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

Jesus used that I am because it's a present tense. It's ongoing. And he said, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

He is the I am. So I find it fascinating that in only the second time that God speaks from the throne explicitly in Revelation, the first time back in chapter one, I think it's 118 if my memory serves. And here both times he begins by saying, I am.

When he gets into the promise phase, he says, I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. And then he continues. So I gave you the three examples from John, just so you don't lose track of him.

John 6, 35, John 8, 12, and John 11, 25, and 26, three times that Jesus says, I am. And it is accompanied by a promise that is good for application. And if we've learned one thing in this journey through the Revelation, it is how applicable every part of it is.

And even as God speaks here in the perfection of the eternal future, the old heavens and the old earth have passed away. He has made everything new. He says, I am.

And based on that I am, we have a promise. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. And it goes back to the very first I am statement of the Lord Jesus in John chapter six.

There is thirst and there is the water of life that flows from the fountain and God grants that privilege. So there's a great example here of tying the character of God and who God is to our confidence, our faith, and our application in circumstances where we can't always find a rule or a law or a principle or a doctrine. We go back to the character of God.

God is not unrighteous to forget those who place their faith in him. Keep your finger here and turn back. We're only going to be there briefly, but go to first Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, first epistle of St. Paul the apostle to the Thessalonians, Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

You've got the whole pastoral epistles group right there. Of course, that's actually Paul and Silas and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God, the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing what? Three things. What is the triad of Christian virtues? What is it that makes us an overcomer? We are serious about being and remaining overcomers after going through this revelation, right? What is the way to be an overcomer? How do we know if we're in the process of becoming an overcomer? Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of our God and father. That's what we have in view.

That is the goal. That is what is at the center of the is the Lord Jesus Christ and our God and father. And what makes us remembered? What enters us into the roles of those who have unrestricted access to the holy city, to the river of life, to the tree of life, and all of these wonderful things that we're looking at in these last two chapters of Revelation.

It is the triad of Christian virtues. Faith, hope, and love. So what are these? They're associated with something.

They're kind of abstractions. Faith can be somewhat abstract. You need to put some limits on it.

What is faith and what is your faith in? But here Paul says, not just remembering without ceasing your faith, hope, and love. He says your work of faith. And that is from the word where we get energy.

It's *ergon*, E-R-G-O-N. And this is movement. This is where things happen.

I've mentioned this before when we've come across this word, but it's my favorite illustration. My roommate at Navy was crew. He rows.

He's on those long boats where you've got a coxswain and eight oarsmen. And so for training, you can't always get the other seven guys in a coxswain and a coach in a boat and go out on the Severn there or out into the Chesapeake Bay or any other river where you want to row. So how do you develop your skills and how do you measure your fitness? There is a rowing machine.

It's got a sliding seat just like you have in a boat. It's got an oar lock. It's got a handle.

You can configure it for port or starboard depending on which side of the boat you stick your oar out of. And it's got resistance that is settable. The one at the boathouse at Navy was in stones like the British.

You know, how much do you weigh? I'm 12 stone or whatever. I think a stone is 14 pounds if I remember. But you set the resistance and then you row for a set amount of time.

The name of that machine that tests and evidences how strong you are and what your endurance is at a given resistance is called an ergometer. They would just call it the ergo for short. It's from this word.

You are moving something with energy. You are expending energy to accomplish work. So what are you moving with your faith? Are you moving mountains? Are you moving moderately sized hills? Are you moving little bits of gravel? Are you having trouble moving a single piece of gravel with your faith? What kind of moving is going on with your faith? Think about circumstances.

Things can reach a stagnation point. They can be stuck. There seems to be no movement.

Faith creates movement. Paul says, we are impressed, O believers in Thessalonica, because your faith moves things. You trust God, you pray, you operate in faith, and stuff happens.

It's movement. It's progress. It is the expending of energy in a good and righteous cause.

So your work of faith, then your labor of love. What's the difference in work and labor? Well, it's a different word in Greek. This is the word *kapos*, K-O-P-O-S.

And this means a beating. Weariness as though you have been beaten. You come in after a long day and somebody says, well, how are you doing? You say, I'm beat.

That's *kapos*. I have expended all remaining. This is exertion.

Ergos is what you do to the environment, what you do to a situation with your faith. Your faith is moving mountains. It's moving things.

Labor is what it does to you. And exertion, this is the sacrifice side of love. Love that is beneficial.

You are moving things on behalf of someone else, perhaps. We associate the movement with faith. But love is sacrificial.

And so this is the sacrifice of love, the beating you take in exercising love. And what it does to you when you have to limit your love. We have learned this in recent studies, that love has limits.

Love has conditions. We distinguish between one another love, and neighbor love, and those who are outside love, hoi polloi love, and enemy love. They have different expressions, they have different conditions, and they have limits.

And it can be hard to limit love, because we understand the guidance that we have from God. God limits his own love. God loves the world, but God doesn't save the world.

God loves those who are faithful, and diligent, and is able to express his love in ways that he can't express to recalcitrant, and what Baptists like to call backsliders. You get distracted, get busy, you're apathetic and indifferent. God loved the Jews in the days of the Lord Jesus, but he

didn't give them the kingdom.

Why? They did not qualify for the inner circle of God's love. There were some who did, and they had a preview of coming attractions. You think of Simeon, and Anna, and Joseph, and Mary, and you think of the disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Philip, Bartolomeo, Nathaniel, and the rest, entered into things that are still in prospect, but they got, as the song says, a foretaste of glory divine.

That's the blessed assurance song. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine, heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his spirit, washed in his blood.

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. But we have a foretaste, we have a preview, as it were. So your work of faith, your faith is making a difference in the situation, in the circumstances of the world.

The labor of love, this is the hardship and the sacrifice. In some cases, you want to just forget the rules and just wrap somebody in a big hug, but it takes discipline, and sometimes it is a painful level of restraint. And sometimes we can wear ourselves out in love.

And this is kapos. It literally means a beating. The Lord Jesus loved us to the point of going to the cross.

And the representative, many people have been tortured and suffered, but that which the Lord experienced in his trials and up to and including the crucifixion is representative, because this is the expression of his love. The one who loved us and gave himself for us, he took a beating doing it. So we have to know which kind of beating, but it is sacrificial.

Love is sacrificial. And then patience of hope. If you've lost the place, we're in 1 Thessalonians 1.3, because we want to be overcomers.

When God says, I am the Alpha Omega and I will give, we want to be the person to whom he gives. That's being an overcomer. What is the definition of an overcomer? You can look at the letters to the seven churches in this book, but the essence of it is throughout the New Testament scriptures.

And it is faith, hope, and love. What are they? Here they are. Your work of faith, your air gone, your labor of love, kapos, and your patience of hope.

This is hupomone or hypo. You know, when hupo means hypo, turn the U to a Y. Hypo means under. Hypodermic, under the skin.

Hypo, mone. Mone comes from minnow. It's an odd thing.

You just switch the vowels and instead of mone, you have minnow. Minnow is to stand or remain.

So you remain under.

The load is heavy. The cross is on your shoulder. You remain, you stick it out, you persevere.

Your patience of hope. We endure because there is a bright hope set before us. We know that we can overcome and that God will remember.

We will be those who have prepared themselves like the wife who has made herself ready, like the bride prepared that we're seeing in these last few chapters. So Paul says, remembering without ceasing. And this is something we can do for each other.

We all want to have work of faith, labor of love, patience of hope. When Paul saw believers that were so doing, what did he do? We are constantly making mention of you in our prayers. And we remember without ceasing that these are your qualities.

You are on the narrow road. You are headed for the straight gate. You are going to be overcomers and we pray for you.

He didn't relax and say, well, they've got that nailed. Let me go find somebody else to pray for. He says, we constantly think of you.

We give thanks to God for you. And we are making mention of you. This is a present.

This is an ongoing thing. Every time he thinks of the Thessalonians and these attributes, he prays. What a privilege we have to pray for one another.

And he goes on in verse four. These things are in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and father, knowing beloved brethren, you're choosing by God. You were chosen to live in Thessalonica at this time.

You were chosen to hear the word at this time. You were chosen to receive the preaching of the apostle Paul and the ministry and the filling of the Holy spirit. You are first generation Christians in the church age, and you were chosen for this role.

And you are taking hold of that with everything you've got your beloved brethren. And this is the opportunity that God put before you. You were born in this place in this time and given this potential for a reason, and you're hitting it out of the park.

Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but in power, the Holy spirit, much assurance. And you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. We were communicators.

We were examples. We gave you guidance. And by the way, this guidance idea is coming up in our, in our context.

So back to revelation chapter 21, God says, I am the alpha and the omega. Do you remember

back in just go ahead and flip back to chapter one. We'll see if my memory is right.

That it's first 18. Um, that is the Lord Jesus speaking there. It is, uh, another I am statement.

We know this is the Lord Jesus in one 18. I am he who lives and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.

Um, the it's one eight that I was thinking of. You can see my confusion. They both are, I am statements, but one eight is God the father speaking.

I am the alpha and the omega says the Lord God who is, who was, and who is to come the almighty. So for only the second time, God, the father speaks. And now it is accompanied with a promise just as it is with the Lord Jesus.

Uh, when he makes his, I am statement in verse 18 of chapter one, the Lord Jesus says, I was dead. I'm alive forevermore. I have the keys of Hades and death.

And this is a promise. We need not fear death. We need not fear the eternal future.

The Lord Jesus, our savior in whom we live and move and have our being. He has the keys. No one is going to die without his say.

So no one is going to remain in Hades without his say. So no one is going to be removed from them and judged without his, his purview, his oversight. So verse seven, he who overcomes shall inherit all things.

I will be his God. He shall be my son. We've looked at the old Testament promises that echo this, uh, concept and we see the alternative.

There's so many that don't understand that these are believers. Let me read you a commentary because it is as though, uh, they are puzzled by this. Um, I'm not sure it matters, which commentary this is.

This is a Ramsey Michaels on revelation, but I was checking to see how people deal with this. But after he sees this, I will be his God and, uh, he shall be my child. Then you get to verse eight.

Here's, here's what Ramsey Michael says. Last comes a warning to all who reject such invitations, whether they call themselves Christians or not. The grim ending is a list of those whose place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Notice how they've taken Maros and changed it from portion to place. Maros doesn't mean place. Got a perfectly good word for place.

This isn't it. But, but they, they translate it and you'll look at NIV and other translations and they change Maros into their place. Well, that's a completely different idea, but their place will be in the

fiery lake of burning sulfur, which is the second death.

Most of the classes of people there come as no surprise. The vile murderers, sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, they stand outside and are hostile to the Christian communities to which John is writing. But some are more surprising.

The reference at the beginning of our list to the cowardly Greek Deloy, remember we saw that last time Deloy and even attaches it to the same passage we looked at. Uh, and the unbelieving, ah, Pistoy, the faithless recalls Jesus rebukes to his disciples. Why are you so afraid? Literally? Why are you such cowards? Do you still have no faith in Mark 440 and Matthew 8 26? We just looked at those.

And I always like it when, when I find somebody that, that agrees with me, even in part, but he, he made that same connection. Such terms seem to refer not to those outside the Christian movement, but to those within the seven congregations who are cowards, unwilling to stand firm in the face of trouble and testing. They are not so much unbelievers as unfaithful Christians compare revelation to 10, be faithful even to the point of death.

We looked at that as well in Smyrna. Um, 1714, these will make war with the lamb and the lamb will overcome them for he is Lord of Lords, King of Kings. And those who are with him are called chosen and Pistoy faithful, not a Pistoy.

So Michael's here recognizes that these terms seem to apply to people within the Christian community, to believers. They are not so much unbelievers as unfaithful Christians. Similarly, at the end of the list, there is emphasis on all liars, recalling Gentile Christians who claim to be Jews, though they are not, but are liars in chapter three, verse nine.

And in chapter two, verse nine, um, those who say they are Jews and are not, but are synagogue of Satan, those who claim to be apostles, but are not in, uh, but are, are found to be false or liars in chapter two, verse two, and in chapter 14, verse five. So if the purpose of these lies is to avoid persecution, then the cowardly and liars are the same. Never is it assumed anywhere in the revelation that all those in the Christian congregations are necessarily overcomers.

Somebody else has figured this out. I am so grateful. Not everyone in the Christian community is an overcomer.

And he's wrestling with the idea that, that they've misinterpreted the text to be that these people are in the lake of fire, but they seem to be believers that are failing in these areas with these patterned sins. And you can see him wrestling with it as he's writing the commentary, you know, missed it by that much. If you've ever seen get smart, uh, some inside as well as outside the church are destined for the second death.

This sobering conclusion to God's voice from the throne leaves it to us to decide where we wish

to stand at the last judgment. And that's as far as he's willing to go. He's not saying these people are evidently believers who didn't overcome and are not qualified to enter the city, but he's, he's that close.

And this is what the text teaches. And even people that have a different view, if you look at the text closely as he does, you come to this conclusion because you can really come to no other. So how important is it for us to know what it is to be an overcomer and to not have our portion on the outside? Their place of course, is on the outside, but their place is not in the lake of fire, but they're excluded.

That's why there is an angel at each of the gates. Well, we are going to look at the gates and the foundation stones. I've got a couple of fresh ideas to share with you about the reason that we are given these in such detail when we come back from the break, but this is a good place to pause.