

Rev 26-08-12b

We resume our study in the book of Revelation. This is our final session in this study, and I know for me personally it has been a very fruitful study and has made quite a difference in my own thinking and understanding.

But we are looking at the exhortation that opens and closes this message from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, ministered by angels and apostles to us, the church. It is manifestly for us.

That's why Revelation chapter two and three are about the church. That is why we have the foundation stones of the apostles that we see in the new Jerusalem. And so we know that our goal is to keep the words of the prophecy.

We have seen, and if you're writing these down, you can just check really quickly. Chapter one, verse three, keep the words. Chapter two, verse five, three exhortations.

Remember, repent, and do the first works. Do what we're supposed to do. Remember from where we have fallen, change our mind if we have fallen and get back to doing what we're supposed to.

Hear what the spirit says in chapter two, verse seven. Don't give in to fear. One of the few negative commands in this whole collection is about fear.

It reminds you of Joshua. Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid. Do not fear, chapter two, verse 10.

Also in that verse, be faithful as long as you're drawing breath. If you haven't died yet, it's time to be faithful. If the Lord Jesus hasn't appeared in the sky with the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, it is time to be faithful.

Do not fear, be faithful unto death. 2.16, repent, which we also saw in 2.5. 2.25, hold on to what you've got. Hold the ground.

If you've made it partway up the hill, hang on. Don't backslide, as the Baptists like to say. Hold fast to what you've got.

Chapter three, verse two, two imperatives. Be watchful. Gregore, oh, stay awake.

Be spiritually vigilant. And strengthen what remains. We saw hold on to what you've got in 2.25. Now that you've got it, chapter three, verse two, strengthen it, reinforce it, build into it.

Strengthen what remains. Then in verse three, we had another three imperatives in a single verse. Remember, retain, and repent.

Recall the good news that we've received. Continue obedience. Continue to heed it, to let it make a difference.

And turn away from complacency, taking things for granted, assuming that we're on the road and we've got enough momentum to carry us across the finish without further effort. Chapter three, verse 11. Hold fast what you have until the Lord Jesus comes.

Death, the rapture, same difference for us. So, hold fast. Reminds us of what we had up in chapter two, verse 25.

Chapter three, verse 11 says the same thing. And go to the Lord Jesus when we realize that we are not as well-off as we thought. We're not as strong, we're not as well-dressed, we're not as spiritually functional and spiritually advanced as we thought.

So, once we recognize through the word and the spirit that we are, in some ways, poor and miserable and blind and naked, go to the Lord Jesus. Notice it says, buy from me gold refined in the fire. Buying means we give something in exchange.

We have to get rid of something in order to get these things from the Lord Jesus, to get the white raiment, to get the refined gold, to get the salve for our eyes so that we can see clearly. There is an expenditure. He doesn't say, hold out your hand and I will give you these.

He says, purchase from me. That requires giving something we are clinging to away so that we can get something the Lord Jesus has into our possession. It's an exchange.

Give up what you can't keep anyway to obtain what you can never lose. It's an exchange, it's a purchase. Buy from me, chapter three, verse 18.

And verse 19, we have two imperatives. Be zealous, get busy, get aggressive, get motivated, be zealous, pursue earnestly the application of these things. And once again, 319, change your mind.

If we find that we're lukewarm, gotta get out of that mode. Turn away from lukewarm, half-baked. Nobody wants to see someone coasting, doing the bare minimum, just going along to get along, half-hearted, half-interested.

God says, the Lord Jesus says, I don't want this halfway business. Be cold and refreshing, be hot and therapeutic. Don't be lukewarm in the middle.

You're just gonna get spit out. I can't think of anything more horrific than for the rapture to take place and at the judgment seat of Christ to be the equivalent of spewed out of his mouth because we didn't use the time and the resources that he's given us for God's glory and our benefit. Be zealous, repent, 319.

Then we skip forward to 13.9, and this is a review of the sevenfold. If you have an ear, listen, listen carefully. In chapters two and three, it's what the Spirit is communicating to the churches through the messengers of the churches, the angels of the churches.

The human messengers are to preach this word and to make it stick in their congregations. It's what every pastor, every teacher is supposed to do. So in chapter 13, verse nine, listen carefully.

Verse 10, this is where faith and patience comes from. It's the word of the Spirit. We know this, but we have it refreshed and reiterated and emphasized here.

Chapter 14, verse 12, same thing. This, look at this, this is the perseverance. We have need of endurance.

We have need of patience. After we have suffered a while, we inherit the promises. You have need of patience.

You have need of endurance. Where do I get it? I don't feel like enduring. I feel like doing something different.

I'm tired of the grind. I'm tired of the pressure. I'm tired of the burden.

Look at what it says. Look right here, chapter 13, verse 10. Look right here, chapter 14, verse 12.

This is it. Look, here is the perseverance. If you're gonna keep God's commandments, if you're gonna maintain your faith in the Lord Jesus, this is how you do it.

So that brings us now to finish up our list. Chapter 16, verse 15. Chapter 16, verse 15.

Notice in a lot of black ink on previous and subsequent pages, right here in the middle, we have a reminder from the Lord Jesus. I love the red letter edition because it really makes things stand out in a context like this. Jesus says, look, I am coming as a thief.

Blessed is he who watches, who stays awake. Watch and pray. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments.

Keeping our garments is like keeping the word. We keep them neat. We keep them clean.

We wash our robes in the blood of the lamb. We use our basic spiritual skills. If we screw up, acknowledge it, confess it to the Lord God in heaven and claim the promise of cleansing and renewal and enablement to return to walking in the light and having intimacy and fellowship with our Father in his good graces, qualified for his many promised benefits.

Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments. You don't wanna walk naked. What does that remind you of? Don't go back to being poor and miserable and blind and naked back in chapter three, verse 18 and thereabouts.

Pay attention. You don't wanna walk naked and be ashamed. I knew better.

I heard the word of God. I wrote it in my notes. I had annotations on the margins of revelation on what to do, and then I got distracted.

I got deflected. I got busy. I got tired.

I gave up. And now where I should have a wonderful heavenly garment for the new Jerusalem and the kingdom of the Father, I am ashamed and I'm naked. I'm not qualified to even enter the city.

I am in the darkness, which is outside. I'm waiting for the creaking wagon full of leaves from the tree of life to come out to be my therapy. Shame on us if we do not heed the words of this prophecy.

It has told us of things to come. It's real. Better than a weather forecast.

They sometimes get it wrong. Better than a political forecast or a social forecast or any other kind of here's what's about to happen. This is what companies will do.

This is what the economy or the stock market or technology will do. This book is giving us the ultimate and final truth. If we don't pay attention to it, we only have ourselves to blame, seriously.

And we will personally bear the consequences if we don't heed it. I can't think of a better way to conclude our study than to remind ourselves of how important it is that this study not drift into the past of our consciousness but stay current and stay active and motivate us day by day in whatever time remains to us in this life to sprint to the finish. So stay awake, be vigilant, keep our garments.

Remember your basic skills for cleanliness, for functional witness, functional usefulness, function of our spiritual gift, opportunities to be ready to give an answer when there is a conversation, when there's an opportunity. As a man once wrote in the lyrics to a hymn, your life will be your witness and the scripture shows the way. Your life is a witness, whether you know you're being witnessed or not.

It is a witness to the angels. It is a witness to the Lord Jesus. It is a witness to Satan and the fallen angels and it frustrates them.

I can't think of a better way to poke a finger in the devil's eye than to live a faithful life. Look at Job. So keep your garments.

Chapter 18, verse four. So much interpretation in recent decades of revelation has centered on empire and don't be deceived into colluding with earthly powers and so on. It's a valid point.

It's not the theme of the book, but it is something that is taught in this book. And you find it in chapter 18, verse four. Looking at Babylon the Great, the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication in 1803.

The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. Desire for control, desire for influence, for power. Look at all the people on the internet who call themselves influencers.

I'm an influencer. I like to sway opinions. I film myself reacting to a song or reacting to a movie because I'm an influencer.

People watch my reaction and I want them to react the way I do. So I'm gonna show them how to react. They don't have to think for themselves.

They'll go to an influencer. The influencer will tell them. People crave influence.

I want followers. I want those who subscribe to my channel. If you ever see me cultivating followers and subscriptions, you will know I've been replaced by the pod people.

This is Babylon where people want power. People want to be kings in the earth. They want to have control.

They want to merchandise the word of God. They want to merchandise and gain a profit, gain personal benefit by addressing the word of God in some fashion, selling books or what have you. Watch out.

What does it say in verse four? I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, come out of Babylon, the scarlet harlot, the self-aggrandizing, self-important, self-gratifying attitude that pervades the world around us. Come out of it. Distance yourself from it.

Separate from it. Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Come out of her, my people, otherwise you will share in her sins and you will receive of her plagues.

There is a clear distinction between the materialism and the self-aggrandizing, self-gratifying ways of the world and the sacrificial to self beneficial law of love that characterizes the body of Christ, the genuine body, the body that acts as he did, that is dedicated not to our own will, but the will of the Father. Come out of her, separate from Babylon the attitudes and the sins that result from those attitudes. That is 18.4. Then we come to the four exhortations that are in our chapter, chapter 22.

Chapter 22, verse seven, like chapter one, verse three, keep the words of this prophecy. The messenger, when John begins to misdirect his appreciation, worship God. Our worship should be directed to God alone.

And we saw this in chapter 19 as well. Worship God, don't worship the messenger. Don't even worship the message.

Worship the originator, the source, our father, the creator of all good things. Worship God. Then in 22.17, the spirit and the bride say, come, let him who hears say, come.

We focus on drawing near to the father. This is John 14.6. You come to the father, Erkamai. Come to the father in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The spirit says, come. The bride, the new Jerusalem. This is not the bride, the church.

This is the bride, the new Jerusalem. Invites us, exhorts us, motivates us to come. The Holy Spirit motivates us and says, come to the father.

Draw near to God so that he can draw near to us. Enter boldly and come before the throne of grace. Hebrews chapter 10.

Come, the Holy Spirit tells us to come. The explicit descriptions of this incredible future, capital city and dwelling place of God, the new Jerusalem, draws us and implores us to come. Let him who is thirsty, come.

Are we thirsty? Are we thirsty for the living water, the river of life, the tree of life that grows in its midst and on its banks? Come, whoever desires, take the water of life freely. Notice that these are present tense imperatives, present tense, cohortatives, exhortations. Take of the water of life now.

Get the dipper and be in line. Show ourselves thirsty. Show ourselves responsive to the spirit.

Show ourselves responsive to this beautiful two-chapter description of God's future kingdom and its capital city, where there's no reason why you and I should not dwell, live inside the gates, inside the walls, in the presence of the father and the lamb and those who by faith and patience inherit the promises. We have only ourselves to blame if we are not in there. That's why this city is so big.

Have you looked at the dimensions? 1,700 odd miles on a side. I gave you last time how much of the United States, if you planted this thing, just the base of it on the United States, it occupies more than half of the continental United States and it's got a third dimension that is equal. In 2006, I was sort of leaning toward the pyramid, but in thinking about the Holy of Holies and its perfect cube dimensions, I really think that this is an echo.

Whatever it represents in the new space time that will exist in the eternal future, this is big enough that we will all comfortably fit with big lawns that never need mowing, never need trimming. Don't grow any weeds, no gophers, no raccoons, no possums, nothing coming in and eating your plants and nibbling them down. This should be us.

This better be us. I don't want to be kicking myself down some far distant road in the new earth, looking at a faint glow on the horizon that is the new Jerusalem where the lamb is the light and I'm at a distance. Why? We are without excuse.

Read Romans chapter two. We, by patient continuance and well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, the immortality of this city. That's what these imperatives are here for.

So come in 22, 17. And the final section here, verses 20 and 21, he who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming quickly. Amen.

Even so, come Lord Jesus. He is coming. We need to be coming.

We belong to him, uniquely so. He is responding to the word of the father to come. We should respond to the word of the father to come.

Those are the imperatives. Now let me turn these at a little bit of an angle. The messages to the churches that we saw in chapter two and three had that consistent pattern that we observed.

Hear, that he who has an ear, hear what the spirit says. It is repeated seven times. You know where those verses are.

I don't need to give them to you. Repent. Once you hear the word, it should spark a response.

There are many who hear the word. James talks about looking into the perfect law of liberty, walking away and forgetting. You look at it as a mirror.

It shows reality, but you walk away and straightway forget what you saw. It is easy for us to forget what we have heard. Hear and change.

The word of God is a change agent. The Holy Spirit is a change agent. People want to make all kinds of changes.

I need a better lifestyle. I need a better diet. I need better exercise.

I need better control over my words and my attitudes in conversations and in interactions with others. I need better attitude at work. I need a better attitude in my relationships.

I need to change for the better. That's what repent is. Repent is change for the better.

So in chapter two, verse five, repent. Chapter two, verse 16, repent. Chapter two, verse 21, talking about Jezebel.

Jezebel needs to repent. Chapter two, verse 22, those who are associated with her need to repent. Chapter three, verse three, and chapter three, verse 19, we have six times in those two verses where repentance is the issue.

It is one of the dominant themes throughout this book. Hear the word, keep the word, and change in the light of the word. Let the power of the word and the spirit transform us by the renewing of our minds.

Romans 12, one and two, hold fast. We saw this in our list of imperatives in chapter two, verse 25, chapter three, verse three, chapter three, verse 11, and chapter 22, verse seven, four times, hold fast, hang on, keep what you've got, strengthen what remains. Hold fast, gain some ground, and hang on to it.

Why claim the high ground and then abandon it? Hold on. So what have we seen so far? Emphasis throughout this book is to hear, to pay attention. Hear what the spirit says to the churches.

Specifically said eight times, if you've got ears, listen. Secondly, change in the light of what we hear. Three, hold on to what we have heard and the change that it is able to make in our souls, in our thinking, in our responses.

We think, oh, you know, I just have a knee-jerk response. When this happens, I just go off, I can't help it. It's just instinctive, it's who I am.

No, it's not. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things pass away, all things become new.

So become new and hold on to the change. Hold fast and keep. So we've seen hear, repent, and hold fast.

Fourth, be an overcomer. Claim the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ achieved at the cross and shares with us. We saw those overcomer promises throughout chapter one, chapter two, and chapter three.

You see it in chapter 14, verse 13. By the way, there are seven beatitudes. We know there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven bowls, seven churches, and so on.

There are many sevens in the book of Revelation. Remember the seven beatitudes. Chapter one, verse three, we've already seen.

Blessed are those who hear and keep the words of this prophecy. The second one is in chapter 14, verse 13. I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.

Yes, says the spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works follow them. Notice, they continued their labors until they died. Be faithful unto death, Smyrna is told.

That's a beatitude. Chapter 14, verse 13. Blessed are those who die in the Lord.

Yes, says the spirit, they rest from their labors. They don't rest until they die. Pushing until the last heartbeat, the last inspiration and expiration.

And their works that they did, faithful unto death will accompany them. You can take it with you. Your work of faith, your labor of love goes with you.

That's the second beatitude. First one, chapter one, verse three, hear and keep the prophecy. Second one, 14, 13, faithful endurance in labor.

Keep on working, accept no excuses, accept no day passes to go home and nap. Faithful endurance in labor until death. The third is in chapter 16, verse 15.

Exactly seven beatitudes in Revelation. This is the third. We already reviewed this.

I'm coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments so that he doesn't walk naked and isn't ashamed. Blessed is he.

That's number three. Stay awake, pay attention to your clothing. Keep it clean, keep it washed.

Number four is in chapter 19, verse nine. Chapter 19, verse nine. The angel says to me, write, blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

He said to me, these are the true sayings of God. Blessed is he who is called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. We tend to think of this in terms of the invited guests in keeping with Jesus' parables about the wedding feast and those who are invited, who wear the garment.

I would submit that those who have made themselves ready and are a part of the wife, the bride, are also called to the marriage supper. That can be us. So that's the fourth.

The fifth is in chapter 20, verse six. An explicit beatitude, an explicit pronouncement of blessing. Blessed and holy is he who has a part, a portion, an inheritance in the first resurrection.

Over such, the second death has no power. They shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years. Blessed and holy is he who has an inheritance, set aside and granted at his first resurrection.

Second death isn't gonna take that portion away. Okay. The sixth is in chapter 22, verse seven.

Behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. A reiteration of chapter one, verse three.

If it's said twice, it is super important. Finally, 22, 14. Blessed are those who do his commandments slash wash their robes.

Wash their robes, I think is a better translation, a better text here. Blessed are they who wash their robes, who keep their garments, as we've already seen. This is personal hygiene at the spiritual level.

So, four of those seven blessings are directly connected with obedience and perseverance. Not just knowing the word, but doing the word. We're gonna be returning to our study in the book of James.

And as you know, this is one of the major themes in that epistle, is doing. Not just hearing and knowing, but putting into application. This is what separates believers into overcomers and everybody else.

Hear it, keep it, and do it. So, if you were gonna summarize the principles, that was a lot of imperatives, but I can give them to you in a list of 12. Number one, hear the words of Christ.

You're doing that or you wouldn't be listening to me at this moment. Good job. Hear Christ's words.

Anybody that purports to be a pastor or teacher in Christian circles had better be communicating God's word, the words of the Lord Jesus, explicitly in the New Testament. Hear the words of Christ, number one. Number two, keep it.

It ought to make a difference. Being a hearer of the word and not a doer is not the objective. So, number one, hear.

Number two, keep. Number three, change our minds when the word reveals that we're off the track, we're off the road. We're not aimed at the narrow gate.

Make changes. If there's sin, if there's compromise, if there's distraction, if there's self-deception, change. Be transformed.

Let our minds be renewed. It's God's power. We just have to avail ourselves of it.

Be transformed, it says. It doesn't say transform yourself by renewing your own mind. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Number four, remember what we've learned. We can hear it, we can keep it, we can change our mind in its light, and we need to continue to remember it. Review.

Go back to the basics every once in a while. The great golfers, I always think of this. You know, there's so many technical aspects to a good golf swing where you don't hook or slice, where you can do long putts and sink them.

These guys go back to the basics. How straight is my elbow? Where are my shoulders? Where's my weight compared to my feet? Which club am I using? And go back to the basics. Good form is the key to doing anything well, and you learn good form as basics, but you never depart from it.

Remember, that's number four. Number five, hold fast. Hold onto it and reinforce it.

Number two, keep means act in its light. Obey it. Number five, hold fast.

This is guard it. Don't let go of it. Treasure it.

Number six, this is the one negative. Don't give in to fear. Don't be motivated and ruled by dread of what might happen.

Worry is a species of fear. Take no thought. Your father knows what you need before you ask him.

He doesn't say, don't ask, because he already knows. He says he knows what you need before you ask him, but you are still asking in the knowledge that he has anticipated your prayer. Can't anticipate what you don't ask.

So God's foreknowledge doesn't obviate the need for prayer by any stretch. But number six, do not fear. Don't fear persecution.

Don't fear hardship. Don't fear suffering. God works these things together for good, and our momentary light affliction, Paul says, is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

That's what these closing chapters are all about, the eternal weight of glory. I say, if I can enter into these things by a little bit of affliction, I'm ready. Let's do it.

Hopefully, I'm an astute learner, and I don't need that much suffering to get the point. But that's number six, do not fear. Number seven, be faithful as long as you're alive.

Faithful unto death. Faithfulness, in season, out of season. Paul tells Timothy, preach the word, whether it's convenient, inconvenient, in season, out of season.

Whether people like it or whether they don't. Whether it's popular or unpopular. Be faithful to your calling.

Be faithful to the assignment. Doesn't matter what people think. Sometimes they like it, sometimes they don't.

Faithfulness is in God's view. Be faithful, that's number seven. Number eight, wakefulness, watchfulness.

Stay spiritually vigilant. Eyes open, head on a swivel. Don't let temptation or allure or distraction sneak up on us.

Be watchful. This is the Greek verb gregoreo. Stay awake and watchful.

Don't be like the disciples in the garden. Number nine, separate from Babylon. Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins and fall under her plagues.

Note what needs to be cut off. If your eye offends, you pluck it out. If your hand offends, you cut it off, and so on.

This isn't literal maiming of self. This is radical separation from that which hinders us from entering into life, this life. Revelation 21 and 22 life.

Separate from Babylon. That was number nine. Number 10, worship God.

The focus is pleasing God. Be diligent to be approved by God as a workman, working until we die, who does not need to be ashamed, washing our garments so that we're not naked and ashamed. I think there's a program on TV called Naked and Afraid.

I don't know what it is, but I sure wouldn't make a TV show about it. This is what we want to avoid. We want to be clothed and confident, clothed and ready for service and function.

That's number 10, worship God alone. Number 11, persevere. Stick with it.

Maintain an even strain. This is how the Navy tows heavy loads. You get a cable, what you would call a real thick rope, a line, and you've got a hulk or a target or something that you're going to haul through the sea.

You don't pull the thing until there's slack, and then you take up the slack and jerk it and the line snaps. In the Navy, it's about maintaining an even strain. Take the load and be steady.

Don't pull real hard and then give up for a while and pull real hard. You will break the line every time. Maintain an even strain.

This is by God's grace and in his power, knowing who we are and why we're here and how to get the job done effectively. Persevere until Christ comes. This is synonymous with number seven, be faithful unto death.

Persevere until Christ comes. Christ comes at our death. They are the same moment as far as our experience is concerned and finally, number 12, eagerly expect his return.

How many times does Jesus say, behold, I come quickly. Be a servant who is busy observing the master's priority so that when he comes unexpectedly, you're approved. Live in eager expectation, looking forward.

That's what revelation gives us, is a look forward. Pulls the curtain back just enough for us to see what God has in store for us. So, even if we don't understand every detail of the word of God, we hold fast to what we have.

What I do understand, there's plenty of. Let me do that. When you face a situation, the future path is not clear, which option should be selected isn't obvious.

Go with what you know. There's a lot of things I don't know, but I know that in my particular circumstance, God wants me to be a good husband. God wants me to be a good son.

God wants me to be a good father. God wants me to be a good pastor. God wants me to be a good employee.

I may not know if it's time to stay or time to move or what path I should take in some particular circumstance yet, but I can concentrate on the things I do know. And so many times, going with what you know, concentrate on what I do know will suddenly eliminate certain options because I can't do the things I know I'm supposed to do if I go down that particular road. If I exercise this particular option, I can't be and do what I know I am supposed to be and do.

So once I concentrate on what I do know, I find that what I don't know, I suddenly know as well. It's the way God works. Hear, keep, repent, remember, hold fast, don't fear, be faithful, stay spiritually vigilant, be awake, separate from what is known to be wrong, worship God alone, persevere, and live in eager expectation of the return of the Lord.

That's what the book of Revelation is about. That's what has been communicated to us throughout these 22 chapters. And that's a big calling right there.

I think that's enough for all of us to work with. And God, the Holy Spirit can use us to enable us to be overcomers now and in the ages to come. Father, thank you for sending us this message through such a wonderful chain of custody.

Thank you for its truth. Thank you for its promise. Thank you that you have not only called us, but have also given us the means of fulfilling that calling.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will enliven these truths in our souls and be the means by which we can walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, follow his example, represent him on this earth, and dwell in his presence and yours in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.