

Revelation Overview Pt. 2

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon provides an overview of the messages to the seven churches in Revelation, emphasizing their historical and contemporary significance.

Duration: 1:18:16

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:18, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 1:19, Revelation 3:7-8, Revelation 3:20-21, Revelation 4:1

Topics: "Revelation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Revelation, specifically Revelation chapter 2. The key to understanding the book is found in Revelation 1:19, where it is instructed to write the things that have been seen, the things that are, and the things that will be after these things. The speaker emphasizes that we are currently in the final period of church history, represented by the church of Laodicea. The sermon also highlights the importance of remaining faithful and not defiling one's garments, as those who overcome will be clothed in white and have their names confessed before God.

Transcript

Good evening, let's turn to Revelation chapter 2. In the first chapter, verse 19, the Lord gives us the key to the understanding of the book of Revelation. And it's important that you have that key, otherwise you can get all confused as you're trying to understand the prophecies of Revelation. Revelation.

Write the things that you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will be after these things. Three things. The things that you have seen.

Chapter 1, he writes, the vision that he had of Christ walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which are the seven churches, holding the seven stars in his right hand, which are the angels, or the ministers of those churches. Chapters 2 and 3, he writes of the things that are, and basically chapters 2 and 3 are the letters of Jesus to the seven churches. And as we pointed out last week, they had a local application to the seven churches of Asia at that time.

They have a historic application because they do accurately cover the seven periods of church history. And they have a present day application in that you can find conditions existing in churches today that parallel the existing conditions of those churches of Asia when Jesus addressed them. The things that are, or the church age.

I am convinced that we are approaching the end of the church age. Just how much longer we have, nobody knows. But my own personal conviction is that the church age is about over.

What will happen to the church when it has completed its witness here on earth? Hopefully we'll get to that tonight. But first of all, we want to look at the messages of Jesus to the seven churches. Last week we covered the message to the church of Ephesus.

From a historic standpoint, Ephesus was the early church. The church that was begun on the day of Pentecost. The church that was blessed by the apostles ministering to it.

The church that was probably the most successful period of all church history. Because the early church, guided by the Holy Spirit, brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world. When Paul was writing to the Colossians some 30 years after the birth of the church, he said to the Colossians, the word of the gospel as it has come to you as it is in all the world.

I think that it is important to note that the book of Revelation was written right at the close of the first century. And by this time, all of these problems that Jesus addresses had already developed within the church. False doctrine, false teachers.

I do think that it is wrong to go to church history to try to find the true model for the church. I think that to find the true model, you have to go back to the book of Acts. And there you see the church as God intended the church to be.

But unfortunately, it didn't remain as God intended it to be very long. Even with the church of Ephesus, by the closing of that first century, they had already left their first love. That fire of passion for the things of the Lord had waned.

And the Lord is rebuking them and calling them back to that first love. The church of Smyrna, beginning with verse 8, is the church historically that underwent tremendous persecution by the Roman government. There were 10 major periods of persecution under 10 of the emperors of Rome.

As Jesus addresses the church of Smyrna, a church that went through great persecution, many of them were martyred because of their faith in Jesus Christ, to the angel or the minister of the church of Smyrna write, these things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive. A church that is going to face death, martyrdom, because of their faith in Jesus Christ, he declares to them, I was dead, but I'm alive. I know your works, your tribulation, your poverty, but you are rich.

As far as the world's standards were concerned, they were poor, but oh, they were rich in their relationship with the Lord. I know the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews and are not. They're the synagogue of Satan.

Jesus didn't get along too well with the Jews. It seems like he was in constant conflict with them until they finally conspired to put him on the cross. But one day when he was talking with the Jews, they bragged and said, we have Abraham as our father.

And Jesus said, you are of your father, the devil and his works. Will you do here? He speaks of the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. God used the Jewish nation in the accomplishing of his, his purposes of bringing the savior into the world.

But we read that tragic commentary in John chapter one. We're concerning Jesus. It said he came to his own, but his own received him not.

But as many as received him to them, he gave the power to become the sons of God. Jesus is saying to the church of Smyrna, fear none of those things which you will suffer. Behold, the devil will cast some of you into prison that you might be tried.

You will have tribulation for 10 days, probably referring to the 10 emperors and the 10 periods of tribulation that the church experience. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give to you a crown of life. So it is estimated that during the period of 100 to 300, that some 5 million people suffered martyrdom because of their testimony for Jesus Christ.

There is a wonderful book. If you have never read it, you should read it. It's called Fox's Book of Martyrs.

And in this book, he records for us many of those early saints, the Christians who were martyred for their testimony of, for Jesus Christ and of Jesus Christ. I recommend it. I try to read it once a year just to make me appreciate the freedoms that we have and to appreciate those who were willing to give their lives for the gospel of Christ.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes will not be hurt with the second death. They'll put you to death, but that's not, Jesus said, don't fear those that are able to kill your body.

But after that, have no power. Fear him who after the body is destroyed, is able to cast your soul into hell. I say, fear him.

So you don't need to be afraid of the second death, Jesus is saying. All those who die outside of Christ will one day be raised to stand before God. We'll get to that in Revelation chapter 20.

And they will stand before the judgment seat of God and be judged out of the things that are written in the books. And whosoever's name is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake that is burning with fire. This is the second death.

Blessed are those who have a part in the first resurrection, the scripture said, over them, the second death will have no power. If you have received Jesus Christ, if you have been born again by the spirit of God, you need not to have any fear of the second death. Jesus paid the price for your sin.

We will all die once. That's not bad. When Jesus said, if you live and believe in me, you'll never die.

He's not referring to this physical body. This physical body cannot inherit the kingdom of God. In order for me to enter into the kingdom of God, the presence of the Lord, I have to have a new body.

This corruption must put on incorruption. This mortal must put on immortality. There's to be a metamorphosis.

Now I said we're all going to die. That's probably not quite correct. Paul said, I show you a mystery.

We're not all going to die, but we're all of us going to be changed. And so when Jesus said, if you live and believe in me, you'll never die. He's not talking about physical death.

Thank God. Wouldn't it be horrible to just go on living in this body after the body gets old and decrepit and, you know, it can't function as God purposed and it can't fulfill the purposes for God. I'd hate it.

You know, to be lying in some hospital bed and, and just, you know, you can't communicate anymore. People are putting food in your mouth and it's drooling down the side. You're just lying there day after day.

This is life, man. You know, not for me, but Jesus is talking about the spiritual death. You see, there is the physical death and we'll experience that, but the spiritual death will not experience.

We who have been born again by the spirit of God. And so that's the second death, the death of the soul and the spirit of man when they are cast into the lake that is burning with fire. So the comfort of Jesus to him that overcomes, they will not be hurt by the second death.

Now the church of Pergamos is that church that developed around 313 AD. Constantine became the emperor of Rome and when he was in a battle for Rome and for the power over Rome, he saw a vision of a cross in the sky and it said in this sign, conquer. It is said that his mother was a Christian.

And so when he ascended to the throne of Rome, the persecution of the church ended. So that was basically historically the end of the church of Smyrna when Constantine signed the declaration of toleration. Christianity would now be tolerated within the Roman empire.

He joined really the church and the state. It was really, I believe, a clever ploy of Satan. He tried to destroy the church with a frontal attack.

The more Christians he killed, the more people believed. And he soon discovered, this isn't working. I kill one and three more believe.

And for every one he killed, there were that many more who became believers. And the church prospered and grew under the persecution. And so Satan decided, I'll join the church and I'll destroy it from within.

And that's basically what began with Pergamos. For in order to gain the support of the people, Constantine began to take the pagan holidays that were celebrated in Rome. And he began to Christianize them.

The winter solstice, the Saturnalia, he changed that to Christmas. And he said, we'll celebrate the birthday of Jesus. And took the pagan holidays and just sought to Christianize them.

In other words, go ahead and still celebrate. Have your parties and so forth. But we're now, you know, celebrating the coming of the Savior into the world.

And so there was this marriage of the church with the state. So to the angel of the church of Pergamos write, these things saith he that hath the sharp sword with two edges. You would think now, and rightfully so, sharp sword with two edges, going to be speaking in judgment.

I know your works where you dwell, even where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast my name. And you have not denied my faith.

Even in those days where in Antipas, my faithful martyr who was slain among you where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you. Because you have there those that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to

commit fornication.

This spiritual fornication, the worship of idols, the introduction of idols into worship. If you go back to the story of Balaam in the Old Testament, the book of Numbers, as the children of Israel were coming through the land of Moab, the king of Moab knew of a reputation of this fellow named Balaam. He was a fellow that could put curses and hexes on people.

And so the king wanted to put a curse on these people coming through the land. And so Balaam prayed and the Lord said, you can't curse them, they're my people. So Balaam sent the message to the king, I can't come and curse them, they're God's people.

The king sent other messengers saying, just come and advise me then. So Balaam went to advise the king and as they built altars, he would begin to prophesy, but they were all blessings. So the king clapped his hands, he was angry, he said, shut up, if you can't say something bad, don't say anything.

And so he said, I intended to make you a wealthy man, but your God has kept you from the riches. Well, Balaam was greedy. He wanted those riches.

And so he said to the king, you know, I told your servants, there's no enchantment I can bring against these people, but I'll tell you what, these people serve the true and the living God, and He is a jealous God. So what you need to do is go down and get the people, your people, to invite them into their homes, invite them to dinner. When they come and they sit down to eat, then bring out your gods and show them your gods and say, this is how we worship our God.

Send your girls down and flirt with the guys and get them all excited. And when they go into the tent, then have the girls bring out their little asterisks and show them and say, this is the goddess that we worship. Would you like to see how we worship our God? And so he caused the servants to commit fornication or spiritual fornication.

That is, worshiping God in an unprescribed way. The introduction of many things in the worship of God, which were not there in the early original church. And so you also have those that hold the doctrine of the nickel, they attend and we talked about that last week, the establishing of the priesthood over the laity.

And the Lord said, repent, or else I will come to you quickly and I'll fight against you with the sword of my mouth. And he that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches and to him that overcomes, I'll give to eat of the hidden manna. I'll give him a white stone and in the stone, a new name that is written, which no man knows except he that receives it.

As we move into the church of Thyatira, we have now in church history, the development of the Roman Catholic church. And this great church system after the split between the Eastern and Western churches, we have the development of the Roman Catholic church in Thyatira. And unto the church in Thyatira, these things saith the son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like fine brass.

It should be noted that in the Bible, brass is always a metal that symbolizes judgment. I know your works, your charity, your service, your faith, your patience, your works, and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed and them that commit adultery with her into the great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds. Here's a warning.

To those in the Catholic church, that unless there is a repentance and a true faith in Jesus Christ, not trusting in the works, but trusting in Jesus, unless there's a repentance from this idolatry, they will be cast into the great tribulation. Many people say, well, yes, the church is going to go through the tribulation. A part of it definitely will.

That unrepentant church of Thyatira, who is following the teachings of that false prophetess Jezebel, they will go into the great tribulation if they do not repent. I will kill her children with death and all of the churches will know that I am He which searches the reins and the hearts and I will give to everyone according to your work. But unto you, I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, which have not known the depths of Satan as they speak, I will put upon you no other burdens, but that which you have ready hold fast until I come.

Notice he's now we're getting to the churches that are going to be existing out to the end. He's talking about his coming and he's encouraging them to hold fast the truth until he comes. For he that overcomes and keeps my works to the end, I'll give power over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron and as vessels of a potter so they be broken in shivers.

And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear. Now the church of Sardis is the Protestant Reformation.

And I should say that in the church of Thyatira, there are some great names, faithful men, great saints. The church of Sardis, it also has great names attached to it. The Reformation.

When Martin Luther in his own heart and conscience could not support the selling of indulgences in order that they might build the great St. Peter's, he went to Wittenberg and tacked the 95 thesis upon the door, his really ultimatum for the reformation of the church. They were not wanting to leave the church. They were only wanting to reform the church, the evils that they saw within it.

And so to the angel of the church of Sardis, write these things, saith he that has the seven spirits of God, the seven stars, I know thy works. You have a name that you are alive, but you're really dead, dead Protestantism. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die because I have not found your works perfect towards God.

There was a reformation, but there really wasn't a complete reformation. Martin Luther carried over many of the trappings of the Catholic church. He carried over the antisemitism of the Catholic church.

He carried over the baptism of infants from the Catholic church. He carried over the communion of the Catholic church and the idea that it actually is turned into the body physically and the blood of Jesus. Now he said, remember therefore how you have received and heard, hold fast and repent.

If you will not watch, I will come on thee as a thief and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You'll be unprepared when I come for my church. And that's the warning for them to be ready that if they're not really watching that the coming of the Lord will be as a thief.

And so you have a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. They walk with me in white for they are worthy and he that overcometh will be clothed in white raiment. And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.

Jesus said that if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my father, which is in heaven. But if you will confess me before men, then I will confess you before my father in the presence of his holy angels. Tonight and at other times, we ask people to make a public confession that they are receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord.

It gives you an opportunity to confess Jesus before men in a very friendly environment where people are praying for you, where people are rejoicing because you are making that decision to commit your life to Jesus Christ. But still we ask you to make a public commitment because Jesus said that if you deny me before men, I'll deny you before my father. But if you confess me before men, I'll confess you before my father and before his angels.

He is promising here the church of Sardis. He that hath an ear, let him hear. Now there is a faithful remnant and God has always had his faithful remnant.

Not strong, not many, but they're faithful. In the day of Elijah, when Jezebel had introduced the worship of Baal and the nation had turned away from the true and the living God, Elijah had a contest with the prophets of Baal. There on Mount Carmel, it was the God who answers by fire, let him be acknowledged as the true God.

And as the prophets of Baal had prayed and nothing happened, finally Elijah prayed, fire came down, consumed the sacrifice, the altar and all. And as the people were responding, falling on their faces saying, Jehovah is God, Jehovah is God, rising to the occasion, Elijah took these prophets of Baal down to the Brook Kishon and there he killed all 400 of them. When Jezebel heard what Elijah had done, she said, God do so to me and more if I don't get the head of that prophet.

And so Elijah, this great man of faith, began to run from Jezebel. He ended up clear on down in the south part of the country in a cave on Mount Sinai. And the Lord said, what are you doing here Elijah? And he said, they've killed all your prophets.

I'm the only one that's left and they're looking for me to kill me. And the Lord said again, what are you doing here Elijah? You see, he didn't answer the question. The question is, what are you doing here? And what would the answer be? Nothing.

But he's laying out this, you know, well, they've killed all your prophets. I'm the only one left, you know, and they're trying to kill me. So the Lord said to him, hey, get back to work, go up to Syria and anoint Haziel as the new king of Syria and so forth.

And he said, finally he said, and I have 7,000 who have not bowed their knee to Baal there in Israel. And so God always has that faithful remnant. And so in the church of Philadelphia, you have the faithful remnant and they are described as having kept the word of his patience.

They have held to the Bible. Now in many churches today, they no longer hold to the Bible as God's divinely inspired word. They often say, well, it has inspired words in it, but to say that the Bible is God's inerrant inspired word, they don't believe that.

And thus they hesitate to say it. But here's the true church that is holding fast to the word of God to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, right? These things saith he that is holy, that is true, that has the key of David that opens and no man's can shut and no man can open. I know your works.

Behold, I've set before you a door open door. No man can shut it for you have a little strength. You've kept my word.

You've not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but they are lying. I will make them come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee because thou has kept the word of my patience.

Notice carefully because you have kept the word of my patience. I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Now to the church of Thyatira, the Lord threatened to cast them into the great tribulation here to the faithful church, Philadelphia, because they have kept the word of his patience.

The promise of the Lord is to keep them from the great tribulation. Behold, he said, I come quickly. Hold that fast, but you have that no man take your crown and him that overcomes.

I'll make a pillar in the temple of my God and he will no more go out and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God. I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

And now we come to the church of Laodicea, the final apostate church, the church that has really denied Jesus Christ as the virgin born son of God, the church that denies the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the church today that denies the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the last days apostate church. Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, these things saith the, a man, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know your works.

You're neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot, but because you are lukewarm, neither cold or hot, I'll spew you out of my mouth. Because you say I am rich, I'm increased with goods.

I have need of nothing. You don't know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. And so I counsel you to buy of me gold that's tried in the fire, that you may be rich, white raiment that you might be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear.

Anoint your eyes with eyesalves that you may see. And then he said, as many as I love, I rebuke. Even this apostate church he still loves.

And because he loves, he is rebuking. I chase, and he said, be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

And it's sort of tragic that the final end of the church history, Jesus is outside. He's knocking, seeking to gain entrance. If any man will hear my voice, open the door.

I'll come in to him. I'll sup with him and he with me. To him that overcomes, I'll grant to sit with me in my throne.

Even as I also overcame and I sat with my Father in his throne, he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. So the things that are. Now the completion of church history.

And as is quite obvious, we're in that final period of church history. The Church of Laodicea, the National Council of Churches, and the those that go along with it and with their pernicious ways, Christ outside, they've ruled him out. So as we get into chapter four, it begins with the words, Metatauta, after these things.

Now remember, chapter one, verse 19, write the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will be after these things. So we've now dealt with the things that are, the things of the church. After these things.

After what things? It should be quite obvious, after the things that are, the things of the church. What's going to happen to the church when it has finished its witness upon the earth? And that's what we're going to discover in the next two chapters. What is going to happen to the church after the church's ministry is complete? After that last person has received Jesus Christ through the witness of the church.

And to me, it's always an exciting time when we have that invitation to invite people to come forward, because you never know but what may be the last person is coming forward. And the Lord says, okay, that's it, the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And, you know, and so I'm always excited every time we give an invitation, and I see someone come up to come forward.

Boy, maybe this is it, you know. After these things, behold, there was a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet, and it was talking with me, which said, come up hither, and I will show you the things which must be after these things. So John is now invited to come on up into heaven that he can see what will happen to the church after the church has finished its witness upon the earth.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians chapter 15, his first letter, he said, I show you a mystery. We're not going to all die, but we are all going to be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trump of God shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.

For this corruption must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality, and then we'll be brought to pass the saying, O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? So the trump of God in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Paul writing to the Thessalonian believers who were sorrowing because some of the people had died and Jesus had not yet returned. And they were under the mistaken notion that because their friends had died before Jesus came back, they would not be able to live in the glorious kingdom age with Jesus on the earth. They thought, oh, they missed it.

They died too soon. Oh, you know, wanted to be with Joe in the kingdom, you know. And so they were really sorrowing, grieving.

So Paul wrote to them and he said, now I write to you that you do not sorrow as those who have no hope. For we believe that if Jesus both died and rose again, so then those that are sleeping in Christ will he bring with him when he comes. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

And we who are alive and remain will not precede them. Actually, they have preceded us. The dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the air to ever be with the Lord. So the sound of the trumpet, the rapture of the church right here in verse one of chapter four, as John hears the trumpet saying to him, come up hither, I'll show you things that will be after these things. Up until now, the church has been mentioned 19 times in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation.

The church moves into heaven. And when you begin the great tribulation period in chapter six, there will be no mention of the church until again in heaven as the bride is invited to the marriage supper of the lamb. So the church is now finished its witness.

It moves to heaven. You say, well, trumpets talking. Yes, trumpets do talk.

Before we had walkie talkies and other cell phones and this kind of stuff in the army, they called the troops to different activities through the trumpets. The da, da, da, da, da, da, da told them charge da, da, da, da, da, da says, go to sleep. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, get up.

So the trumpets were speaking. They had a message. And so it'll be interesting to hear that Trump and just what message, what tune it plays that says come up hither and I'll show you things that will be after these things.

So immediately I was in the spirit and I beheld the throne that was set in heaven and one who was sitting upon the throne. The very first thing that will attract our attention when we come into the heavenly scene will be the awesome throne of God. We say, Oh, I've got loved ones.

I'm so anxious to see my loved ones. No, when you get there, the very first thing that's going to draw your attention is the awesome throne of God. And he that sat upon it was to look upon like Jasper and sardine stone, sort of like a diamond.

There was a rainbow round about the throne that was sort of greenish like an Emerald and around about the throne, there were 24 lesser thrones. And upon those thrones, I saw 24 elders who were sitting and they were clothed in white raiment. They had on their heads crowns of gold and out of the throne proceeded lightnings, thunders voices.

And there were seven lamps of burning fire before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne, there was a sea of glass. It was like crystal.

And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne, there were these four living creatures that had eyes in front and behind. The first one was like a lion. The second was like a calf.

The third had the face of a man and the fourth was like a flying Eagle. Now, if you go back to the prophecies of Ezekiel chapters one and chapters 10, Ezekiel also saw in a vision, these same living creatures. And he tells us in Ezekiel that these are cherubim.

Cherub is singular, cherubim is plural. And so they are a class of angels, angels who are privileged to be there at the throne of God, before the throne of God. And these four living creatures, each of them had six wings and they were full of eyes and they rested not day or night saying, holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was and is and is to come.

Actually we sang it earlier this evening, didn't we? Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty. And then casting down their golden crowns before the glassy sea, cherubim and seraphim bowing down before thee, which

wert and art and evermore shall be. So here they are before the throne of God and declaring holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was and is and is to come.

And when those four living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat upon the throne who lives forever and ever, the four and 20 elders fall down before him that sat on the throne and they worship him that lives forever and ever. And they cast their crowns before the throne saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For you have created all things and for your pleasure they are and were created.

Now here are the cherubim declaring the holiness of God. In response, these 24 elders sitting on their lesser thrones fall on their faces. They take their golden crowns, cast them on the glassy sea and they declare the worthiness of God to receive the glory and the honor and the power because he has created all things and for his good pleasure they are and were created.

It's extremely important that you pay special attention to that. God has created you. You're among all things.

God created you for his good pleasure. For your good pleasure, they are and were created. So important to recognize and realize I was created for God's pleasure.

You say, I don't appreciate that. Tough. That's the way it is.

You can't change it. You can fight it. You can say, I'm going to live for my own pleasure and God will allow you to do that.

But if you live for your own pleasure, I can guarantee that at the end of the road, when you come to your final breath, you will be a bitter cynic. There was a man named Solomon who decided to live for his own pleasure. He said there was not one single thing that he denied himself from.

Everything my heart wished for, I did. He had the wealth to do it and he didn't withhold one single thing from himself. How did he end up with this statement? Vanity, vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

There is nothing worthwhile under the sun. Why? Because he lived for his own pleasure. And that would be the consequence that you will experience if you live for your own pleasure.

But if you will determine to live for God's pleasure, following the path of Jesus, Jesus lived the perfect life. He said, I do always those things that please the father. And if you would strive to follow the example of Jesus and to always do those things that please the father, when you come to your last breath, you're going to say, Oh, this was the most glorious life.

And now I can't wait for what waits for me in the next life. Satisfied, fulfilled, complete fulfillment. When you will live your life for God, it is a rich, fulfilling life.

I would encourage you to sort of meditate on this fourth chapter, read it over, get it clearly established in your mind, the events. Now it's going to work out because when you get to heaven, you don't want to look like a country Rube first time in the big city, just, Ooh, whoa, man, you know, but read it over. And when you get there, when the cherubim start saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God Almighty, you can nudge this person.

If you watch, see those guys in 24 zones over there, watch them. Now they're going to fall on their faces. They're going to take the crowns and throw them on the glass.

How did you know all that? Oh, I did my homework. Now John notices in the right hand of him who is sitting upon the throne, a scroll with writing on the backside and within it. And it's sealed with seven seals.

This is a legal document. I believe that it is the title deed of the earth. And here going into Jewish law, you find some interesting things.

Whenever you sold your property, you always had the right of redeeming that property within a specified period of time. The contract would be drawn up in which the, uh, requirements for the redeeming of the property were listed. What you had to do, what you had to pay in order to redeem it.

And it was sealed usually with seven seals. It was a, if it were a title deed. And so John observes this scroll with the seven seals and he hears a strong angel proclaim with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose or to break the seals.

No man, John said, was found worthy either in heaven or earth, able to open the book, neither to look there on. And I wept much. Literally, I sobbed convulsively because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look there on.

Why would John be so disturbed? Because under the law, if no one redeems the field, the property, then it remains in the new ownership perpetually. God created the heavens and the earth. They were God's by the right of creation.

When God created man and placed him upon this earth, God gave the earth to man. God said to Adam and to Eve, I give you dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, over every living and moving thing, creeping thing. They are thine.

I have given them to you. And so now this beautiful world, this garden that God had placed Adam and Eve in, it is given to man as a wonderful gift to just take care of. God said, dress the garden, take care of it.

But then when God said of all of the trees that are in the garden, you might freely eat except the one in the middle of the garden. Don't eat of that. If you do, you will surely die.

We read that Satan came in, tempted Eve, she ate, she gave to Adam and he did eat. And then by one man, sin entered the world and death by sin, so that death passed into all men for all sinned. So all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

No longer now though does the world belong to God. He gave it to man, but no longer does it belong to man. He forfeited it over to Satan.

Satan has held the world. Jesus called him twice, the prince of this world. Paul calls him the God of this world.

You remember when Jesus came, the purpose of his coming was to redeem the world back to God. He said the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man going through a field, discovering a treasure, and who for the joy thereof goes and sells everything that he has in order that he might buy the field and obtain the treasure. The field, Jesus said, is the world.

Who gave everything to purchase it? Jesus did. For what reason that he might take the treasure out of it? What is the treasure? You, who have received him as your Lord and Savior. You are his peculiar treasure.

And so it no longer belongs to God. He gave it to man, no longer belongs to man. He forfeited it to Satan.

And Satan took Jesus up into a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and he said, all of these I will give to you, and the glory of them, if you will just bow down and worship me. For they are mine, and I can give them to whomever I will. Satan is bragging.

It belongs to me. All of these, the world, the kingdoms, they all belong to me. And I can give them to whomever I will.

And if you'll bow down and worship me, I'll give them to you right now. You don't have to go to the cross. You don't have to pay the price that's required in the documents.

You don't have to give your life. I'll give it to you now. Just bow down and worship me.

Powerful temptation, because Jesus didn't relish the thought of the cross at all. In fact, we remember how he prayed, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but thy will be done.

So here's the scroll. The time of redemption has come. Who is worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals? And as John begins to sob, one of the elders said, don't sob, John.

Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed. He will take the scroll and loose the seals. John said, I beheld and low in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, the cherubim in the midst of the elders, there stood a lamb as it had been slain or slaughtered, having seven horns, seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

And he came and he took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, worship now directed to the lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. The Bible tells us that our prayers ascend unto the Lord like an incense.

How many times have you prayed, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven? How we long for the kingdom of God to come. We look at the world today and we see the mess that the world is in and we think, oh Lord, how wonderful to live in this world when you come and you reign over the earth. Lord, may your kingdom come.

May your will be done here on earth. It isn't being done on earth now. People are so foolish.

They try and blame God. You know, if God's the God of love, then how come so many people are born blind or how many people killed or raped or whatever? Wait a minute. Hold on.

This is Satan's world. He's in control. Man is in rebellion against the law of God.

All of these are happening because we are rebelling against God's law. Don't blame God. It's man's fault.

He's not living as God wanted him and required him to live. There will come a day when God's will will be done here on earth even as it is in heaven. And when that happens, you can read passages of the Old

Testament.

There'll be peace like a river. The righteousness will cover the earth as the waters do cover the sea. There will be no more lameness, no more blind, no more mute or deaf people.

The lame will be leaping for joy. And you can read of how glorious it's going to be when God's kingdom comes. Don't blame God for the mess that the world is in today.

It's in a mess because we've rebelled against God. So they offer the prayers of the saints. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

And they sang a new song saying, Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals. For you were slain and you have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. And you have made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

Look at the lyrics of that song, this new song. Look at the lyrics. Who can sing this song? I can.

I've been redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the song of the church. This isn't the song of Israel.

This is the song of the church. You were slain, you've redeemed us by your blood out of every kindred, tribe, tongue, and people or nation. You've made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth.

I heard, as it were, the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures, the cherubim, the elders, and the number of them was 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands. Now the angels can join the chorus, 100 million of them plus millions more, 10,000 times 10,000, 100 million plus millions more joining the chorus. What is the chorus? Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive the power and the riches and the wisdom and the strength and the honor and the glory and the blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea and all that are in them heard I saying, blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sits upon the throne and unto the lamb forever and ever. And the four living creatures, the cherubim said, amen. And the 24 elders fell down and worshiped him that lives forever and ever." So that's where the church will be when the church finishes its witness here upon the earth.

In Luke 21, when the disciples were talking to Jesus and asking him about the prediction that he had just made concerning the great temple in Jerusalem that not one stone would be left standing on another, they wondered and they asked Jesus, what will be the sign of your coming and the end of this age? And there is where he said, interestingly enough, Jerusalem will be trodden under the foot of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The fact that Jerusalem is not trodden under the foot of the Gentiles today, but it's again under Jewish control should excite you. Because it does mean that basically we've come to the end of the time of the Gentiles.

So we're at this moment of history. But Jesus began to talk to them about the great tribulation that is coming upon the earth. Now, beginning next week, we've gone to heaven.

We've seen what's going to happen to the church. And Jesus, when he was talking about the great tribulation that's coming, and we'll get into that next week, because this will begin a detailed study of

what's going to be happening on the earth when the church leaves. And if you're not a Christian, this should be of great concern to you.

To find out what's going to happen on this earth once the Lord has taken the church out. There are a lot of people that say, oh, those lousy Christians. They're the one that's giving us all the trouble and all.

Wait a minute. You haven't seen anything. Wait till the church is gone.

All hell, literally, is going to break forth upon the earth. As Jesus said, it'll be a time of great trouble such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. But Jesus, in talking to his disciples about it, said, pray ye always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things that will be coming to pass upon the earth, and that you might be standing before the Son of Man.

So we've just seen the church standing before the Son of Man. We've just seen that beautiful heavenly scene where the praises and the glories are offered to him because he is worthy to receive all of the honor and the power and the glory and the riches and so forth that will be bestowed upon him at this time. Pray that you'll be accounted worthy to escape the things that are coming to pass upon the earth.

That's what we'll go into next, the things that will be coming to pass upon the earth. And let me tell you something, you don't want to be here. Pray always you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things and that you might be standing with the church there in heaven as he takes the scroll out of the right hand of him who sits upon the throne.

Memorize the lyrics. You'll pick up the tune in a hurry of the new song that we're going to be able to sing when we are there. Let's pray.

Thank you, Father, for the insight that you've given to us to the future. And Lord, as we look around at the world in which we live today, we see the very things that you said would be happening. We see the distress of nations with no way out, with perplexity.

And we realize, Lord, that the time is getting so close for your return, for your church, for the time of judgment has come. We look at the world in which we live and we see how men are just so blatantly, openly blasphemous against you. We marvel, Lord, at your patience that you can put up with that as long as you have.

The Lord, we realize that the cup of the indignation of the wrath of God is about to overflow. And this world will be bathed in a bloodbath like it cannot possibly imagine. Lord, we do pray that we will be accounted worthy to escape these things that are going to come to pass upon the earth.

Lord, we want to be there in that heavenly scene worshiping you and declaring the glory, the power, the honor unto our Lord, of which he is worthy to receive. Lord, I pray tonight for those that are here who are in that valley of decision. Satan is pulling on them, appealing to their flesh, the lust of their flesh, making all kinds of false promises.

If they would just bow down and worship him. But Lord, I pray that tonight they might realize the consequences of worshiping Satan and that they would turn this night to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives. Give them that courage and that strength to confess you before men.

So on that day, you will confess them before your Father as your own. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Shall we stand? We would like to give you an invitation tonight, if you do not know Jesus Christ, to make a public confession that you want to accept him as your Lord and Savior. You want to be in that heavenly scene when the church has finished its ministry here on earth.

You'd like to this night surrender your life and thus please God. He created you for his good pleasure. We're going to ask that please no one leave right now.

This is the most important part of the service, and it is distracting when people would walk out when there are souls' eternal destinies in the balance. This is serious. This is life or death.

Jesus said, you know, he's offering life or death. Eternal life. Eternal death.

And we don't want to distract anyone or hinder anyone from making that decision now. And so as the cry sings for us, God's Spirit's been speaking to your heart. You'd like to make a confession of Jesus as Lord.

I want you to just come and stand here at the front. We want to pray for you and get you started on the road. God bless you.

You know it's true and he won't let you go. Although the seasons change, he's never been so close. No, he's just a prayer away.

When you hear the Father's call, when he's calling to you, just run into his arms. No, don't hesitate to do it, because he won't let you go. He's forever by your side, and he wants you to know Jesus has paid the price, because he wants you to go forever in paradise, and to give your heart to him is really all you have to do.

And then even when you die, he will still be by your side. Jesus will never let you go.

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