

The Jewish Final Solution to the World's Problem - Revelation, Part 9-Letters to the Seven Churches, Part 5

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Turn to Revelation chapter 3, and this morning we'll be reading about the message to the church at Sardis.

To the angel of the church in Sardis write, He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars say this, I know your deeds, that you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead.

Wake up and strengthen the things that remain, which we were about to die, for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God.

So remember what you have received and heard, and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

[1 : 25] He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not erase his name from the book of life.

And I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

While you are still located there in Revelation chapter 3, I want to reiterate the points that we made in our last foray into this particular chapter.

And share with you a dozen propositions. I'll be as brief as I can, but I want to keep these in front of you all the way through the Revelation, because these are very important, very pertinent key points for understanding the book as a whole.

And these issues will surface time and time again as we work our way through these 22 chapters.

The first thing that I want to remind you of is that which is not in keeping with the standard pre-tribulation view of the book of the Revelation.

[2 : 53] And by that, I am including, of course, all those who are futurists, because the vast majority of them are of the opinion that the first three chapters belong to the church age, and that at the end of chapter 3 is when they believe the rapture occurs, and then that's why you find nothing more about the church throughout the balance of the book of the Revelation.

That is probably the standard party line regarding most pre-trib eschatology. And we, of course, are pre-tribulationist.

And we see the entirety of the book of Revelation as future, all of it, including these letters to the seven churches. And that is one thing that distinguishes us from most of those who are pre-trib, because most see the first three chapters as belonging to the church.

And the reason they do is because there is so much about church in it. After all, the letters to the seven churches is about as churchy as you can get. But we have taken the position that these churches are assemblies, if you will, or gatherings, are entirely Jewish.

And that this will be realized during the tribulation period after the rapture has occurred. So let me just briefly run through these, if I can, and number them, because for those who may be listening by way of electronic recording, I want to advise them up front that this is not a repeat of the previous session.

[4 : 34] It is a consolidation of it. And because of the interruption we had with communion service, you've had an additional week to forget everything I told you two weeks ago.

So I'm going to remind you again. And the first is, the entirety of the book is all future, including these letters to the churches. The first three chapters do not refer to the church age at all. The seven churches of two and three that are commonly referred to as the churches in Asia Minor, the third, or the chapter three having to do with the message to Sardis that Gary just read. And the first read, these, we believe, are not to be interpreted of the various stages of church history from Pentecost onward. But we see them as seven churches or assemblies that are actually Jewish assemblies.

And what I am saying is, at the time John wrote these and was instructed to write them, these congregations did not exist as they are addressed here.

[5 : 47] Well then, where are these going to come from? How are they going to get on the scene? We're getting there. The seven churches are actually seven Jewish assemblies that will be in existence at the future date after the rapture of the body of Christ.

These churches are clearly tribulational. Now, how can we have churches involved in the tribulation?

And the answer is simple. The church, which is the body of Christ, will have already been removed. The rapture occurs before the content of the book of Revelation ever begins.

And those seven assemblies that are going to exist in Asia Minor, of which Sardis is one that we will be discussing, are going to be Jewish assemblies that will have surfaced and have arisen out of the preaching of the 144,000.

And they will succeed in winning many of their Jewish brethren to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. This is all tribulational content.

[7 : 04] Please keep in mind, the church which is the body of Christ, of which we are members, has no place here in the Revelation at all. Revelation, the rapture will have occurred, we will have been removed, and this content that follows in Revelation, all 22 chapters are all tribulational material, tribulationally related, and they are primarily Jewish.

During the Russian invasion of Israel, there is going to be a catastrophic loss on the part of Russia and her allies.

And the text makes it very clear in Ezekiel that there will virtually be no survivors at all. The context also seems to suggest that there may very well be nuclear activity involved.

And if that is the case, it will be the result of the nuclear armaments that Israel will apply toward an invasion enemy because her very survival will be at stake.

And we'll look at more details regarding that in our Tuesday morning study. The 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes, will surface from the utter devastation of the Russian invasion of Israel.

[8 : 31] Not only will this result in the demise of Russia and Israel and Russia at home, but also in the revival of Israel. Israel as a nation, which today, for all practical purposes, is pretty much a secularistic nation.

Even though it is Jewish by ethnicity, only a very small percentage of the Jews living in Israel are what you would call practicing Jews or observant Jews.

Probably 90% of them are secularized, and out of that 90%, a great many of them are even atheistic. But as a result of God summarily defeating the Russian invasion, we are told, upon the mountains of Israel, which will be the mountain range that runs right down the middle of Israel, all the way down into the African rift and into the continent of Africa.

The invading armies are going to be absolutely decimated. And Israel will recognize that this is the Lord's doing.

And that will result in a massive wholesale turning of the people of Israel to the one true God. And out of that massive revival, God having rescued them from the Russian invasion, there will surface 144,000 Jews.

[10 : 02] And they are going to disseminate the gospel of the kingdom, not the gospel of the grace of God. The gospel of the kingdom, which we'll be looking at later in Matthew.

And there will be many who will come to faith during that time. And many of them will be Jews. This is heavily tribulational. And those who come to faith, some of them, numbers of them, will be martyred.

Because this will also be during the reign of the Antichrist. And the crisis that occurs in the middle of that 70th week of Daniel. When the Antichrist is revealed, the one of whom Jesus spoke when he

said, When you see the abomination of desolation, the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place.

Then flee to the mountains. Because everything is going to break loose. So all of this content is tribulation. And when we look at some of the accompanying texts and context, I think it becomes abundantly apparent there is no other time frame, no other description of activities that begins to fit the description that is given here, apart from the revelation.

So let me hasten on. These seven churches, then, to which John is writing, will surface in the biblical Asia, that is Asia Minor, which is today modern state of Turkey.

[11 : 23] And a period of time will be required from the establishment of these Jewish assemblies to the time they will fulfill the sad state of spiritual demise that is depicted in chapters 2 and 3.

So you'll note, those of you who've been with us for the studies we've had thus far, there's a great deal of criticism that Christ levels against each of these churches. And only a couple of them escape any criticism at all.

There is condemnation and commendation that is distributed from the exalted Christ. And the one in Sardis we'll be looking at momentarily will fit into that, and you'll see how it fits.

So Israel, Israel throughout their Old Testament existence, repeatedly ran hot and cold in relation to their God and their flirtation with idolatry, for which they once paid an ultimate price of being carried away into the Babylonian captivity, etc.

That was all because of their idolatry and their turning away from the true God. We noted that it takes only one generation for apostasy to set in, and these seven churches will be in various stages of spiritual fidelity and infidelity, as described here in chapters 2 and 3.

[12 : 48] Item 10. The frequent reference to Jews and things Jewish is unmistakable and is found throughout the book. As I have said before, so say I now again.

And I want to say it not only so you will remember it, I want to say it so you will not be able to forget it. And that is, the Revelation, all 22 chapters, is intensely Jewish.

It has Jewishness written all over. The only book you will find in the New Testament that is more Jewish than the Revelation is the book of Hebrews.

Revelation has to be joined, has to be married to the four Gospels, and not only to the Old Testament and prophets, but has to be married to the book of Genesis.

The connection between Genesis, the first book, and Revelation, the last book, is absolutely undeniable, and it will become more apparent as we go through. In addition to things Jewish, an overwhelming presence of the supernatural will be seen time and time again, particularly through the activities of fallen and unfallen angels.

[14 : 06] Supernatural events are going to be the norm. We do not live with these today, except in very, very rare occasions.

But during this time of tribulation, the supernatural is going to be commonplace on earth and in the heavens. It is going to be absolutely stunning. Matter of fact, it will be the consistent display of the supernatural that will increase the culpability of those who reject the true God because the evidence is going to be overwhelming.

Today, many people insist that God has not given them sufficient evidence to really put their confidence in Him.

Well, according to Romans chapter 1, the evidence has been more than fair, more than significant. But in the Revelation, it is going to be in abundance.

And the end result will be many are going to say they still will not bow the knee to this true God.

[15 : 29] And for all this, John will tell us in Revelation, and for all this, men repented not, but continued to shake their fist at God.

So the evidence that is abounding and superabounding and occurring and reoccurring is going to be used as an additional judgment factor for their culpability.

And it will not be a pretty thing. The presence of angels begins to surface in chapter 1 and verse 1 and will be found throughout the book. And that too is really significant.

We know there are angels that exist today. We just don't know what they're doing. We know that they are created beings. We know that they are superior to humans.

In power and strength and intelligence and other ways, we also know that angels are not subject to redemption like human beings are. So that separates us from them and there are numerous other things.

[16:28] But one thing I want to point out in addition to what we've said that I think is very, very important, and that is John is told to address these things to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, to the angel of the church of SARS, to the angel of the church of Perth, and so on.

And the typical position that is taken, one which I must confess I took in our earlier exposition of the Revelation, was that all of those angels were pastors.

Now, those of you who know this pastor have never confused him with an angel. But the word angel in the Greek is simply the word messenger.

It's angelos, and it means a messenger. Well, a pastor is certainly supposed to be a messenger to the church. And I think this is what has led a great many expositors and a lot of Christians to take this term and to the angel of the church of Sardis, right, and to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, right, and so on.

And they just kind of assume that John is writing these messages to the pastors of the churches so that they, as a pastor, can pass the information onto the congregation.

[17:43] And really, who could argue with that? That makes pretty good sense. But I've reconsidered that, and I think that these angels are angels. And what makes me conclude that is the presence of an angelic being in the very first verse of the very first chapter.

And I think that sets the stage because in keeping with the law of first mention, which is a hermeneutical principle, and that says when you find a word in the Bible and you don't know what it means, go look in the Bible at the very first place where it is mentioned, and very often that will establish the precedent and the pattern for the meaning of that word when it is used afterwards.

And if you do that with the book of Revelation, the law of first mention, finds an angel, and it apparently is an angel, not a human being, in verse 1.

So we have a line of communication that begins with God the Father who reveals it. Well, let's look at chapter 1 and verse 1, and let's see the text for ourselves.

It is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God, that is the Father, gave Him. The Father gave this revelation to the Son to show to His bondservants the things which must shortly, and that does not mean soon, it means the things which will take place with great rapidity of speed.

[19:17] a typical appreciation or understanding of this word shortly leads some to believe that these things have already happened.

Because if the text says they are shortly going to take place, well, this is 2,000 years later, and they haven't happened yet. You call 2,000 years shortly, and then, of course, some come back and say, well, with the Lord today, there's 1,000 years and 1,000 years and 1,000 years.

But the word literally bears this meaning. The things which, when they take place, will do so with great rapidity.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. Very fast. One after another. You'll scarcely put down one blaring newspaper headline if there even are any newspapers then until the next edition comes out and it will be another blaring headline.

There will be crises in major proportions, natural and supernatural, happening all throughout this world. That's what's going to make it.

[20:30] Tribulation. Ho flips us. It is a time of incredible stress and pressure, the likes of which the world has never been subjected to in all its existence.

So, and he sent and communicated it by his angel to his bondservant, John. So, we've got this chain of information here that began with the father, to the son, to the bondservants, to the angel, and then to John.

And when it gets to John, John is going to witness all of these events, if you can picture a panoramic screen where John is looking and seeing the future unfold right before his eyes.

And after he has seen all of these visions and heard all of the content for 22 chapters, he is then told, John, write down everything you've witnessed and everything you've heard.

John is going to do that. And the book that we are now examining is what John wrote. This is what is going to transpire in rapid-fire order.

[21:50] So, the order and identity of those involved include the angel. And the reality of all 12 of these events that we have just enumerated briefly, more would be added, must be kept in mind when reading and understanding this book of the Revelation.

And that led us to believe that back to chapter 3, the angel that is mentioned there is an angel, not a pastor. I do not know, do not understand exactly what authority or responsibility these angels have,

how they are going to communicate this message, I do not know.

All I know is this, throughout the Revelation, there is a continual presence and surfacing of angelic activity, and demonic activity, who are fallen angels, but they are all of a supernatural kind of quality.

And that is something that just completely escapes us, but it will be commonplace then. Another item that I want you to note is that in verse 1 of chapter 3, when he says, he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, and we've related this to the frequent usage of symbols throughout the Revelation.

And this is one of the things that makes it kind of difficult, but in a sense, it isn't nearly as difficult as it seems on the surface, because all of these symbols are we will find to be self-interpreting.

[23 : 32] We won't have to guess at what they mean. Because if the Bible does not adequately interpret itself, then it is left to the interpretation of man.

And we're up to our eyeballs with man's interpretation of the Bible. And this is how and why we get so many different interpretations and different opinions. Because if the text is subject to human interpretation, then it is also subject to human imagination.

You cannot put any limits on that. You can get some really bizarre things. So we take the position, as we have in our subject of hermeneutics, that the Bible is self-interpreting.

And all of these symbols that are used, admittedly, on the surface can be quite confusing. But when you understand how the Bible explains the meaning of the symbol, so we don't go astray, and you find great logic and consistency in it, all of a sudden, it isn't such a difficult book after all.

And let me remind you, this is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing for those who read this book.

[24 : 54] Now, it doesn't mean there's no blessing in reading the other books. Of course there is. It's the Word of God. But this is the only one that comes with a built-in blessing. And I do not think for one moment that the Spirit of God, who inspired this through John the Apostle, I do not think for a moment the Spirit of God says, yeah, I'll give you a blessing if you read it, but I'm going to make it so tough and so full of symbols that you're never going to be able to figure it out.

Well, thanks a lot. Well, that's no good. Listen, in order to obtain a blessing from what you read, you have to be able to read with understanding.

There is no blessing that is passed on by osmosis from simply going over the printed words on the page. It doesn't work that way. The blessing comes when the content, is filtered through your intellect, and you are able to understand and comprehend the truth of what you are reading.

Therein lies the blessing. The blessing means the benefit, being spiritually well advantaged by what you read.

That's what the blessing means. And if it is going to be devoid of meaning, so all you can do is shrug your shoulders and say, ah, beats me, it's just a big riddle.

[26 : 25] Well, lots of luck obtaining a blessing out of that. It isn't to be had. So, let us continue on. When he says the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I think a better rendering of that with the Greek chi, and in the English it is just spelled kappa, alpha, iota, or k-a-i in the Greek chi, and it is very often, very frequently translated, even, even, equating the second thing with the first thing.

And I am suggesting that that is exactly the meaning here. It isn't two different entities. It isn't the seven spirits and the seven stars, two different entities.

No, it's the same entity, and the way it ought to be rendered, and the seven stars, he who has the seven spirits of God, even the seven stars.

I am saying the seven spirits and the seven stars are synonymous. They are one and the same.

Now, if you use the conjunction and, then it makes it look like there are seven of these and seven of these.

But if you use the conjunction as chi, or even, it is then the seven stars, the seven spirits of God, even the seven stars.

[27 : 52] And the seven spirits and the seven stars are the same seven angels. It doesn't mean that he possesses them as part of his being, or that they are part of his character.

It means that he has these seven spirit slash stars at his disposal for his use. And he will employ them as we will see time and again all throughout the revelation.

These supernatural beings are going to be very, very active. Time and again, John is going to say, and I saw an angel.

What angel will it be? It will be one of these seven stars. And we pointed out to you, the usage of the word star carries over even to our present vernacular today.

And it simply means the principal player. We put on an act, a dramatic act, there is somebody who stars in the play or stars in the movie.

[29 : 01] Well, they're not a star, but they are the principal person. They are the chief character. And we call them the star of the show. It's all such and such a movie. Oh, who stars in it?

Well, Humphrey Bogart or whatever. He's the star. Well, these angels are going to be principal players.

And they are referred to as stars. They are synonymously referred to as spirits. They are both. Because they're being spirit beings as opposed to human beings, they can assume physicality or deny themselves physicality.

Either way. And that, of course, is uniquely different. So, keep that in mind. We will see these spirits and stars repeatedly throughout the revelation. And once again, it is the law first mentioned that will help us to define exactly who they are and what they mean.

He continues by saying, I know you're deep. Now, we've been through this, so I'm going to be very brief with it. And if anybody is interested in more detailed examination, you're free to get the CDs.

[30 : 08] They're available back there and get them by date. It would be a couple of weeks to go. So, I'm going to just skip over some of this until we get to the newer content. Wake up and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die, for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God.

And keep in mind, this is the Christ that is speaking here. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard, and keep it, and repent. But these people have already repented.

They repented when they embraced Yeshua Hamashiach as their Messiah, based on what God did for them when Russia invaded them.

They've already repented. But as I've said before, you never outgrow your need for repentance.

And repentance doesn't necessarily require any kind of a moral issue at all, although that's what we usually assign to it.

When someone repents of their sin, that means they acknowledge, they confess, they admit their sin, they have a regret for their sin, they change their mind about their sin.

[31 : 20] That's what the word repent means. It means to change your mind. About what? About anything! It doesn't make any difference. It doesn't have to have any moral involvement at all.

It just means you held one opinion and now you no longer hold that opinion. You've reversed yourself and you hold a different opinion. Well, what causes you to change your opinion?

Information. Always. Information. These are going to receive information from this angel that will cause them to repent.

some will, probably some won't, but they will have a basis for repenting. And this is why God is requiring repentance of them. All it means is this. You need to change your way, you need to change your thinking because you've been wrong.

You've been wrong about this. Do you realize that no one is saved by repenting of their sin? but no one can be saved without repenting of their sin.

[32 : 29] Because the word means you change your mind. And in order to move from not embracing Christ as your Savior to embracing Christ as your Savior, you have to change your mind to do that.

There's no way you can do it if you don't change your mind. Repentance is absolutely essential.

And as a Christian, you never outgrow your need for repentance. I've told you before, and so say I now again, and somewhat to my chagrin and embarrassment, I've changed my mind about a lot of things in the 45 years that I've been preaching here.

Why have I changed my mind? You mean doctrinally? Yeah, I mean doctrinally. I mean, I used to believe this verse meant thus and so. I don't believe that anymore. Why not? Because of information.

Because of things I have learned since I held that position that no longer allow me to hold it. I've got to say, Marv, this is just one more thing that you were wrong about.

What are you going to do about it? Are you going to dig in your heels and say, well, that's the way I taught it, and that's the way I'm going to hang in it. That's what I believe. That's what I've always believed, and I'm not going to change that.

[33 : 43] That's stupid. That's just plain stupid. It isn't even ignorance. It's a lot worse than ignorance. Ignorance means you don't know.

Stupid means you do know, and you still refuse to change. That's stupid. Any takers? I suspect not, at least none that we would admit to.

But this is tough, and I'll tell you the reason it is tough because it impacts the ego. And I've wrestled with this, sometimes at two o'clock in the morning, and I've said to myself, what are these people going to think if I tell them that I know I taught you this, folks, and I'm sorry, but I taught you wrong. What are they going to think? And then the thought came to me, well, Marv, they never did think you were perfect, so I've got an out.

Hey, I messed up there. I taught you wrong. I no longer believe that. I've had to reverse myself on that. And you may be thinking, well, what else is it that you've taught that was wrong?

[34 : 56] Well, I don't know, but I'm looking for it. And if I find it, you'll be the first to know. But I've gotten over the embarrassment factor because you know why? I have come to grips with my humanity.

I don't have to be perfect. I don't have to have all the answers. I don't have to know it all. I don't have to have all my theological doctrinal ducks in a row.

That takes a lot of pressure on. It really does. So, here we are. Repent. Change your mind. Reverse yourself.

You've been given information to do so. If, therefore, you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. Doesn't that sound tribulation on?

Listen, listen. Don't stick the rapture in here. This has got nothing to do with the rapture. This is tribulation. Keep your place here in Revelation, and come back if you would, please, to Matthew.

[36 : 01] I want you to see the similarity. We've talked about the law first mentioned, and how these subjects apply. Let's go to Matthew chapter 24.

Very familiar passage. It's the Olivet Discourse. Our Lord is speaking shortly before he's going to go to the cross. Matthew 24, verse 6.

You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightening. And he's telling this to the twelve apostles. They are his audience here.

Actually, he's talking, I think, to a Jewish community in general. In verse 7, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. This is all tribulation.

Various plagues, famines and earthquakes, more tribulation. Merely the beginning of birth pangs, that's the first three and a half years of the tribulation period. Before the abomination of desolation in Daniel 9.

[37 : 04] Then they will deliver you up to tribulation. This is the intense persecution that's coming during the 70th week of Daniel. They will kill you and you will be hated by all nations on account of my name.

And Jesus is talking about his name. Can you imagine any nation today hating the people of Israel because they embrace the name of Jesus?

Of course not. In the first place, Israel as a nation does not embrace the name of Jesus today. Not at all. But they will.

They will. And they will pay a tremendous price for doing so. You will be hated by all nations on account of my name.

This, listen, this will be the basis for God gathering all the nations of the world together and bringing them to Megiddo and Armageddon.

[38 : 08] They're going to come because of the hatred for the nation of Israel and with the intent of completely eliminating them. That will be fulfilled then.

At that time, many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. And this is the repentance thing that means many false prophets will arise and will mislead many because lawlessness is increased.

Most people's love will grow cold. This is what he's going to be talking about as he writes to these seven churches, some of which will be cold, indifferent, aloof, after having already embraced Yeshua HaMashiach.

Some are going to fall away, some are going to pack it in, some are going to give it up, just like they did in the Old Testament. Same kind of people. But the one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved.

And here he's talking about the end of what? He's talking about survivors of the tribulation. And this gospel of the kingdom, understand what gospel this is.

[39 : 18] This is not the gospel of the grace of God. This is Christ is coming. This is behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The king is about to show up. That's the gospel they're going to be preaching. And Christ will come at the end of that tribulation period. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations.

And then the end shall come. And this verse has suffered so much from misinterpretation. And probably one of the greatest, in my estimation, one of the greatest misdeeds performed upon this particular verse is the idea that the church needs to be responsible for proclaiming the gospel throughout all the world.

and when we have succeeded in doing so, then the end will come and Christ will return. That's the old blanket of post millennialism.

That the world, that the church, through the preaching of the gospel, succeeds in converting the whole world, and then when we have Christianized the whole world, then Christ returns.

[40 : 38] And this is the proof text that is used for that. But notice, if you will, the text is very clear. He said, it will be the gospel of the kingdom.

What was that? Listen, that's the gospel that John the Baptist preached. That's the gospel that Jesus preached. That's the gospel that the twelve preached on the other side of the cross. the cross changed everything. Changed everything. It was out of the reality of the cross and what was accomplished on that cross that made way for the gospel of the grace of God as opposed to the gospel of the kingdom.

So our message today is not repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. that's an outdated message for us. But let me say this, the time is coming when it will be an up-to-date message.

And that will be after the church is gone, off the scene, everything reverts back to the gospel of the kingdom. And that's what, John, that's what Matthew says, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations and then the end shall come.

[42 : 08] What's the end? The end is the coming of Christ, the second coming, got nothing to do with the rapture. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, that's the defilement of the Jewish temple.

Well, there is no Jewish temple now, of course not, but there will be then. and the Antichrist will be the one who defiles it. He will break his covenant with Israel three and a half years into it, and when he does, that's what Christ is talking about.

This is all foretold in Daniel 9, hundreds of years before Christ was ever born. And Jesus is telling the Jewish constituency who will be here at that time, when that time comes and you see the man of sin, the Antichrist walk into the Jewish temple and defile it, desecrate it, contaminate it, by announcing that he himself is God.

Then you head for the hills because it's going to be ho lipsis. It's going to be tribulation, the great one. There will be a bounty put on the heads of Jews, and there will be persecution, the likes of which they have never seen.

And there will be evangelization, the likes of which they have never been. These are going to be those who will be gathered under the altar that John will say, I saw the souls of those that had been beheaded for the witness of Christ, and they cried out, how long, O Lord, how long before you avenge us?

[43 : 50] And there will be some of those who will be martyred during that time. And I don't know exactly what conclusion you can draw from the fact that most of these who will be martyred will have been martyred by being beheaded, if that tells you anything about any certain groups.

This is all tribulation. Verse 16, Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, do you mean to tell me that this information that Christ gave 2,000 years ago has never yet been fulfilled, and is 2,000 years old?

That is precisely what I mean to tell you. None of this has transpired. This is all prophetic, but the time is coming when it's going to be as up-to-date as this morning's newspaper.

verse 21, Then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.

While we're here in Matthew, let's look at verse 36 through 44. Verse 24, verse 24, But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

[45 : 28] For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. Those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving, and so many believers read the rapture into this.

This has got nothing to do with the rapture. The rapture is history when this takes place. This is the second coming content, not the rapture. Then there shall be two men in the field, one will be taken and one will be left.

Where will he be taken? He's not going to be taken to heaven. He'll be taken in death, taken to judgment. And the same with the two women grinding at the mill. And verse 42, look at this.

Be on the alert, be careful, be watching. This has never been in a position to actually be applied and fulfilled from the time Christ gave it.

Now, let me tell you something. Nothing is going to be as pertinent. Once the church is removed, the rapture has occurred, the Pauline dispensation of the grace of God is over and done with, and the world reverts back to that kingdom quality time.

[46 : 46] All of this fits, and it all comes together. There is no way that we can play with these things and make them mean something else and make any sense out of it at all.

We've got to strive for consistency. And there cannot be contradictions. You cannot have glaring contradictions throughout Scripture. And I'd be the first to admit there are plenty of places where there appear to be contradictions, but when you see the distinctions that are involved and note the differences that are involved, the contradictions just melt away.

It's just absolutely amazing. So here we've got an admonition to watchfulness, and he says, if the head of the house had known at what time the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert.

And all he's talking about here is watch, watch, be on the lookout. And then there are other references as well. We won't take time to go to them, but if you're jotting down notes, Luke 21, verses 34 through 36, Mark 13, 34 through 37, and others.

But I want to deal back to the revelation with this blotting out and names written in the book of life. Verse 5, we didn't get to this in our last session, and I want to at least touch on it.

[48 : 01] He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments, a symbol of purity, and we'll find that occurring a number of times, and I will not erase his name from the book of life.

Well, how did it get in the book of life? Well, just as the phrase expresses book of life, could well be rendered the book of the living.

name. And what this means is that every single individual who has ever been born from the time of Cain and Abel had their names written in the book of life.

This is one of the books that's going to be opened in Revelation 20, when John said, I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books, plural, the books were opened.

One of them is the book of life, and the other has to do with the book of deeds, or the book of Acts. And everyone was judged out of the books.

[49 : 24] And the book of life is going to have names that have been entered in it and blotted out. They were living.

They were living. They did have spiritual life at one time. But they no longer do. Their names are blotted out.

That's the death sentence. That's eternal death. Now, hear me really carefully. It has nothing to do with a cessation of being.

They will not cease to be, but they will cease. They will cease the life they had, and they will enter into an eternal kind of death that will be unending.

The basis for crossing out of the book of life. They are now in the book of the dead. But it will not be a dead that has ceased to exist.

[50 : 42] It will be a living, ongoing dead. Dead God being completely unavailable to them. Complete absence of God.

We were dealing with this in the 9 o'clock hour this morning. Very pertinent information that's connected with this. The one in white garments, speaking of purity, I will not erase his name from the book of life.

And I will confess his name before my father and before his angels. And this confession is exactly what we find in the gospels that we have just read. It's in Matthew, Mark, and in Luke about confessing the name.

And the clothing in white. This white is used, reference to white is used 19 times in the book of Revelation. Ten times it refers to clothing.

And when Christ talks about confessing his name, it means that Christ will acknowledge these and say, I know him. Or, depart from me, I never knew you.

[51 : 59] It will be acknowledgement or admission. Matthew 10 32, Mark 8 38, Luke 12 8. You see how all of these things dovetail?

Revelation with the four gospels all have to do with the tribulation content. It has to be kept in that context. So many preachers today preach from this content and try to make it applicable.

And in some ways it is applicable because while there is one interpretation, there may be multiple applications, similarities, connections, things that remind you of it.

But we must be careful that we maintain a distinction between an application and an interpretation. an interpretation is what it actually means, what was in the mind of the writer when he wrote it.

That's the interpretation. The application means how might this apply in other areas and in other ways. Two entirely different things. And then this blotted out business is as serious as it gets because that is going to be something that is cross-dispensational.

[53 : 11] people can die spiritually in any dispensation. And for a name to be blotted out simply means that they are forever absent from the presence and being of God.

They will have an existence, but it will be, I guess you could call it like a living death. life. And it's a concept that none of us can appreciate or deal with.

In Psalm 139 and verse 16, which will not take time to go to, but you may want to write it down for your reference, we get the indication that all who have ever lived are written in that book of life.

And Daniel 12, 1 seems to support that as well. And then in Revelation, I'm sorry, in Psalm 69 and verse 28, it talks about some names being blotted out, as well as Revelation 20 and verse 15.

So, if you were born, you wouldn't be here if you weren't, your name was written in the book of life. Not only in the hospital record or wherever it was you were born, the name was written in God's book of life.

[54 : 29] And if you exit this earth, if you leave this life without ever having connected with God, your name will be blotted out.

You'll no longer have any possibility of access to the deity. That's spelled out in Revelation 20 about names having been blotted out of the book of life.

you cannot devise a more serious subject than this. We're talking about your very own personhood throughout the time of eternity.

And it may very well be that every single person here has made their peace with God through accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and sacrifice from sin.

In which case, we are all just one glorious body of believers. Flawed though we may be, we are all recipients of God's grace and God's love because Jesus Christ has taken our condemnation for us and we are free.

[55 : 48] But if you have not made that decision, your name is still in the book of life, that it won't always be there.

If you exit this life without having made that decision, God will have no alternative. And the reason he'll have no alternative is because he values the work and the accomplishment of his son.

And he'll have no alternative but to block your name out. It's about as sober as it gets, is it not?

Would you pray with me? Father, we're eager to admit there's much about what we've talked about that we don't fully understand nearly as well as we would like.

But we understand enough to be able to be responsible to it. And our prayer is that each and every person here, whatever their background, whatever their foibles, whatever their faults, whatever their sins, will be able to understand.

That when Jesus Christ died on that cross, he did a complete work and he took their sin upon them, all of them, past, present, and future. And that all we need to do to appropriate that truth and to receive the benefits thereof is to acknowledge our sin, admit we are flawed, failed human beings, just like all the rest of the human race.

[57 : 23] And that because of that, our punishment would be just, be separated from you forever. But because you have an incredible love for humanity that did not love you, you sent your son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

And we don't understand that love, but we do want the benefits of it. And as best as we know how right now, for anyone who hasn't made that decision, would you be willing to say, Lord Jesus, I believe what the Bible says, it was for me, as well as everyone else, but it was for me as an individual, that you went to that cross and paid the price of suffering and shame and death. And I don't understand how the merits of what you accomplish can be applied to me, but that's what I want.

And if that's what you died to provide, then I certainly want to receive it. So with all my questions and doubts and fears and everything else, as best as I know, I want to admit my weakness, acknowledge my sin, and embrace Jesus Christ as my personal sin bearer.

And thank you for loving me in that way that you were willing to give him. And thank you, Jesus, for being willing to be given. Dear friend, if you've made that your prayer, I can assure you God heard you with great delight and will welcome you with open arms.

[59 : 03] Be sure to tell someone else about your decision so that they can be of encouragement to you. Thank you, Father, for this time that we've shared this morning. We recognize that there is so much that is still to be understood that escapes us, but we want to be diligent students of the word to the extent of our ability.

Search out these things like Bereans and see whether they be so. Thank you for the gracious revelation that you've given us. Thank you for the will, for the volition you have extended to us that enables us to respond to it.

In Christ's wonderful name. Amen. Can we take just maybe five minutes for Q&A; if anybody's got questions?

And if you don't have any questions, I do. Anyone, real quick? In the back, Terry and Gary, in the back row back there.

Okay. Well, speak loudly, Gary. Like I say, good help is so hard to find.

[60 : 47] Okay. got it static and all. Let's go. You said that everybody that's ever born or will be born is written in the book of life.

So can we assume that as soon as that last person is born, we're really, really close to being raptured out of here? Well, the book of life will have an end to it.

You know, I mean, there will be, as incredible as it sounds, there will be a last name that is written in that book of life.

In the same way that there was a first name. And it would have been Cain. And think of it. The first name entered into the book of life was a murderer.

Isn't that something? Tells you something about the human race, doesn't it? Gary? That explanation this morning about one will be, two will be working in the field and one will be gone and the other will remain.

[61 : 52] This explains that that's not the rapture at that point. That's a great explanation for that. Yeah, well, thank you. But that is the common interpretation. And you can see how people arrive at that, very honestly, because it sounds like the rapture, really.

But if you look at the whole context, the whole context is judgment. It's not rescue. It's judgment. Terry, I think you had a comment or question. Well, this piggybacks on what we spoke of in Sunday school.

I'm in Revelations 20, verse 13. It says, And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. Is there a distinction?

I thought that if you were not saved, you went to Hades. But why is it talking about the sea gave up the dead which were in it? And making a distinction of that.

Well, I think the sea and Hades giving up the dead which are in them, these are all unbelievers. This is the great white throne judgment. And there will be no Christians at the great white throne judgment.

[62 : 57] These are all unbelievers. And they will constitute the majority of humanity from all times. We just can't imagine how many people will be talking about it.

We are not talking about millions. We're talking about billions. I can't fathom that. I can't even fathom the number, a billion. I mean, a lot of people think they can.

I know Congress thinks they can because they spend like that all the time. But a billion, I mean, a million is a lot. And a billion is a thousand million.

You're talking about a lot. And I have no idea how this is going to be logistically, how this is all going to be arranged. But I'll tell you what, God is not stumped by it.

He is fully in control. And all of the people who are here are going to be judged on the basis of their works. And the text says anyone's name is not found written in the book of life.

[64 : 00] And that is, it's not written there because it's been blotted out. And verse 13 tells us that they were judged, every one of them, according to their deeds.

And these are the deeds of unsaved people, some of which have been, humanly speaking, commendable. people. And some will be absolutely heinous.

Some will be of the Hitler-Stalin variety, and some will be of the good guy who would give you the shirt off his back, but he had no use for Jesus Christ.

All of these people are going to be judged and evaluated with the all-seeing, absolutely perfect, just eye of God himself.

And as we were talking in the Sunday school class this morning at nine o'clock, God isn't going to ask anybody anything. He isn't going to say, now, back in June 1974, you did this and so, why did you do that?

[65 : 09] And then God's going to sit back and listen to your story. There isn't going to be any of that. Nobody is going to offer any excuses, any explanations. God isn't going to ask any questions.

The text will tell us that every mouth will be closed. God's got your number. He not only knows you, he knows you better than you know you.

And he knows what motives were, and he knows what extenuating circumstances were, and he knows what your excuses were, and he knew what your potential was. He knows all that.

He doesn't ask any questions. And when he, when he brings down his judgment, it will be absolutely, perfectly, just, and true.

And no one will ever go away from the judgment seat of God and say, I got a raw deal. I wasn't treated fairly.

[66 : 10] Everyone will know inherently that he got exactly, precisely what was deserved. And we call that justice. And if you don't want anything to do with the justice of God, and trust me, you don't.

Because Jesus Christ already answered to God's justice. You want nothing to do with the justice of God. That means you get exactly what you deserve.

God's grace. And none of us who are flawed, failing creatures are going to be able to withstand the all-wise, scrutinizing eye of a just and righteous God.

So, if you want nothing to do with his justice, and I don't, your only option is to flee to God's mercy and God's grace. I've often said that God cannot do less.

He cannot do less than dispense perfect justice. God owes justice at a minimum to every human being.

[67 : 24] And while he cannot do less than that, he can do more. And that's called grace. And when you witness to someone and give them the gospel of the grace of God, you are attempting to rescue them from the justice of God.

That's a pretty sobering thought. Do you care enough about people to see them rescued from the justice of God? And you know, most unsaved people are so ignorant and so arrogant and so unknowing, they think they would fare quite well with God's justice.

Oh, I'm as good as anybody else. I'm better than most people. They have a tremendously inaccurate estimation of what justice really requires.

And when I say you want nothing to do with God's justice, you don't. You don't. You want God's mercy and God's grace.

And God is eager. God is eager to provide it. But he will not and cannot provide it to the one who refuses to acknowledge his need or his unworthiness.

[68 : 52] repentance. And that's where repentance comes in. You change your mind. It's an amazing concept. A very simple one. But so amazing.

So wonderful. I tell you, I didn't. Would you stand, please? Thank you, Father, for this time that we have shared together.

Cannot say that we've enjoyed much of it, but it is truth and the truth will not return unto you void, but it shall accomplish that which you please and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto you send it.

We bless you for it and we pray for insight and understanding as we continue on through this amazing and marvelous book that you inspired John to write.
We bless you and thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen.