

CLW-01 - Christ's Last Words to His Church The Book of Revelation

It's the evening Christ commanded the Lord's Supper. And so, it's gone through history as Maundy. But, what that night is, is a night that we're going to, in our Fellowship Center, have a 1st century atmosphere Passover that we celebrate the Passover and go into communion, just like Christ did.

And I'll be narrating it and explaining what each part of the Passover and why Jesus waited, until three quarters of the way through the meal to institute the Lord's Supper. And the reason I'm announcing this is twofold. One is, In a few weeks, you're going to hear that we're having signups for this meal.

There are only, I think, 464, or 34, or 54 seats, that we can fit in there in these tables because we're actually eating a meal. We have to know how many are coming and actually selling tickets because it's a meal, and we're going to eat a 1st century meal. And a lot of people don't realize in the 1st century, they didn't have forks and knives and spoons.

Do you realize that? They didn't cut their food up, and put the knife down, and then take a bite, they ate the way it says that Jesus, when He instructed. Someone says, hey, which one's betraying you? And Jesus said, the one who dips in the dish with me, the sop, S O P, sop. What is that?

Sopping wet. It's an idea that they took pita bread, and they broke off a piece, and they used it like a little, like a Frito Scoop or whatever you call it, Dorito, I don't know, Tostito, I don't know what they are, but the ones that are like a little bowl and they go like that, and you get salsa in it, well, they would actually take and eat their Passover meal with these little pieces of pita out of a bowl, and they would eat, and that's what we're going to do.

There's going to be no silverware. And so it's a very, wonderful way to go back and to see the setting. It'll be totally candlelight and dark. All the foods will be the foods of the 1st century. And then in the middle of that observance, Jesus elevated the third cup of the Passover meal to the cup of thanks.

And that's where we get Modern times, if you've ever heard of the Holy Eucharist. Eucharisteō means the giving of thanks. Jesus made that third cup the time of thanking God for the sacrifice that He was offering of His body. So, we're going to have a wonderful night. The reason I'm bringing that up is this advertisement in the bulletin says we need about 80 plus volunteers.

30, probably young people, we need to wait on the tables. And they're going to be bringing out this holy, 1st century Holy Land stew stuff. Others are going to be standing at the door. Someone asked me, are we going to wash each other's feet? I said no, but we're going to wash each other's hands.

You're going to walk through a door and these robed people are going to pour water and you're going to wash your hands, because you eat with your hands at a meal like this. And so, all together we need about 80 volunteers, that will... some will be cooking the special recipe, and bringing it in.

Others will be helping us set the tables with the traditional Passover Seder plate. A little version of it that has all the little pieces that we'll use. And if you think of 500 or 400 and some plates with five things on each one, there's hundreds of little duties that need to be done. And that's why we need so many.

Look at the instructions there. If you want to be a part of the cooking, serving, and all that team, Carolyn Schroeder's heading that up. If you want to be a part of the costumed ones at the doors, and some of the other things, Doug Staples is heading that up. If you don't know who to talk to, just... call the office or fill out the little form. And we need about 80 of you to join us for that great night. If you open your Bibles to the end, to the book of Revelation, I can't believe it, 11:01, we get to start what is for me one of my favorite places in all the Bible. The book of the Revelation is not only the motherboard, as it were, of the Bible. It

It is the... I remember my father in law used to work for AT& T, Bonnie's dad, and, there was this little switching station where every telephone in that part of Syracuse, all of them came to this one switching station. And they connected, and that's how calls were made. And that switching station, the motherboard, the heart of the Bible, where all of the parts of the Bible meet, is in the book of the Revelation.

That's why it's so hard to understand this book unless you realize that this is God explaining how everything fits. And basically, we're going to go through this in a moment, but I could give you a thumbnail sketch of the Bible, and it's this, that God has two teams that He is working with. His first team are His chosen people of promise, that He made an unbreakable, eternal, Sovereign election choice of the nation of Israel that if you believe you're going to Heaven in the Church, then you better believe that God is not through with Israel because He made the same eternal promise that He would never, never stop working with them.

He temporarily has laid them aside. They weren't doing well as a team. They rejected everything, all of His prophets, all of His word. So, He says, okay, you're going to sit on the bench for about 2,500 years, and you're going to suffer, because you have not been doing what I asked you to do. But because I made an eternal, unbreakable, sovereign covenant with you, I will return after I am through calling out a people for Myself in the Church.

I will return, Acts 15, God said, quoting the prophet Amos, I will return and rebuild again, My plans with the nation Israel. God had team one, and they failed Him. He benched them. He starts team two. That's us. Never forget, you're the second team. We are built, actually, out of the same material. Now I'm quoting from Romans 9, 10, and 11.

God says, the stump is Israel. And the Church has been grafted into that stump. And God said in Romans 11, don't ever forget, that you, Church, are connected to Israel. You are not Israel. You don't become Israel. I am not receiving all the promises to Abraham, and I don't get a land, and my crops aren't going to grow bigger, and etc.

It's Israel those promises were made to. We're grafted in temporarily to be the team that God is working with. Right now, you and I are part of the Church. But when God takes this team, us, team two, off the floor, He starts working again with His first team, and they are going to be the ones He finishes the game with.

If you don't understand that, this does not make a lot of sense, and you just, you go, Whoa, I can't figure out, all those promises in the Old Testament. Is that for the Church? Am I supposed to drive a Hummer, and be healthy all the time? Kind of like what you hear on, some of that television, where they're trying to extrapolate the promises of physical blessing to Israel and put that onto the Church.

Two teams here. The book of Revelation explains the connection, the timing, the purpose, and exactly what the Lord is doing today. This morning, as you look at Revelation, and look with me at verse 1 and the first word. You are looking at the only book exclusively devoted to introducing to us what our Master and Savior, the owner of the team, Jesus Christ, what He's doing this very moment.

It's really hard for a lot of people. They read the Bible and they see that the Bible says in the beginning that Jesus created all things from nothing. He spoke everything into existence. By Him, all things were created. By Him, all things exist. And so, they see Jesus as God the Son creating the universe in Genesis 1.

Then He disappears. He shows up here and there as the Angel of the Lord. And we wonder what He's doing with all of His time. And all of a sudden, He's born and comes to Earth in a human body and that's Christmas. But then He's gone again until He's about 12 and He shows up and He's in the temple.

And then He's gone again. He's not there until He's 30. And then He starts this fantastic three year ministry and He's gone. And there's, that's the Bible. And He leaves everybody, and they do their work in the Epistles. But what is He doing right now? Where did He go? What is He up to? The book of the Revelation, chapter 1, reveals that.

It reveals where Jesus is and what He's doing. And what we find if we read is that Jesus Christ is actually revealed to us. See what it says? We're opening to the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Actually, that word revelation the second word in your Bible, the revelation, is one Greek word. Apocalypse.

Now you've heard of the word apocalypse. You've heard apocalyptic. Actually, this is the word that those two English words come from. Apocalypse means something that was covered or hidden is exposed. So it's, the word means to be uncovered or to be, manifested and shown or to be unveiled, you know how they have the Detroit Auto Show and they have the newest, whatever, 80,000 car and they have a sheet over it and they pull it off and you see it for the first time, that's this word.

And so, it's pulling off the covering of Jesus Christ to see Him. So that's what this book is about. Revelation completes the revelation of God. Revealing Himself to humanity through Jesus Christ. God's image. God is seen. The exact representation of God is Jesus Christ. He's the image of the invisible God and the ultimate revelation of who He is, is right here.

In Genesis, the Creator, God, the Son, walks and talks with Adam and Eve, the first two humans to ever exist. They are created from the hand of God, but God does not stay walking and talking to them. Because they sinned, He banishes them from the paradise He made for them. And thus begins all the sorrows and woes that have been the last thousands of years of human history.

But you notice that the Creator Himself created two human beings, He gave them names, and He said the very first man to ever exist in this world is Adam. And the very first woman is Eve, and the Creator Himself said that. When He walked the Earth in chapter 19 of Matthew, He said the ones I created in the Garden of Eden, the ones at the beginning of the creation of the universe, the first two human beings there ever were, are Adam and Eve.

So immediately we, who believe the Bible, have kind of a very clear understanding of our origins. We did not come from primordial slime and soup in a mud puddle somewhere. We did not wiggle and

jiggle and crawl ourselves out of a mud puddle and evolve upward to where we are today. That's why the people that believe that, that's why so many of them act like a reptile.

They act like something that crawled out of a mud puddle because they don't realize that they came originally in the image of God. And by the way, I'm not doing an evangelistic service here, but if I was, I would say that one of the problems every human on the planet has is that they are in the image of God.

You know what the problem is? Anything that's in the image of God lasts forever. Every human that's ever existed on this planet will never cease to exist. And there's only one doorway into the Eternal Life, and that's Jesus Christ. And every human that refuses the doorway of Jesus Christ will consciously exist forever in a place of separation from the presence of God, a place of suffering, the place Jesus talked most about, called Hell.

He talked more about that than Heaven, but people don't understand where they came from and we have a very clear understanding of our origins and that creator who came has come to Earth again. And He reveals to us that He came as the Redeemer, that He died on the cross to open the way for all to pay the price for sins. And then He ascended back into Heaven and that's where the story gets a little bit vague to us.

Because we think, huh, He left us this script, this plan, and we're trying to do it. We're not doing very well, and we're here doing it all alone. Revelation 1 says no, no, no, no. You're not doing it alone. I'm here. And the owner of your body, the Creator of your life, is also the coach of your life. If you acknowledge what Revelation tells us, that He is physically, spiritually, really present this moment with us.

Let's listen to His voice, because much like a coach on the floor with His team, Jesus Christ, it tells us in Revelation 1, is walking around and watching us play our positions that He gave us to play. And that's probably the most arresting truth in all the Bible for us. We are not alone. The Coach, the Creator, is personally wanting to help us get done what He left us alive to do on Earth. So, Revelation 1, we're going to read verses 1 through 8 and verse 19. Let's stand together with your Bibles and you follow along in your Bibles while I read these verses and then we'll pray. Revelation 1, verse 1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must "Tacos," rapidly, take place.

And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John. So, the people that are in God's family, have Eternal Life, are called servants. Sadly, actually the word is slaves. Remember I told you the reformers didn't like the slavery, it was kind of a hot issue even back then, so they expunged it from the record.

This is the word slave. This is good slavery. You and I were bought to be eternal slaves to God. And so, he bore witness, verse 2, to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ to all things that he saw. This is John writing what he saw. Now look at this, verse 3, Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy.

It's the only portion of the Word of God that says, if you just listen to it or read it, you get blessed. Amazing. But it doesn't end with just reading. It says, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near. Verse 4, John, to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who were before His

throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler over the kings of the Earth, to Him who loved us and washed us or loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Verse 7, Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the Earth will mourn because of Him, even so, amen. Verse 8, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Now zip down in your... with your eyes to verse 19, almost the end of first chapter. This is what Jesus said to John, verse 19. Write, number one, the things which you have seen. And, here's a second thing to write, John, the things which are. And, here's a third thing to write, John, the things which will take place after this. So, what we're holding in our hand, God ask us to have for John to write down and for him to get copied and sent to the furthest ends of the Earth so that we could hear from God. Let's bow before Him in prayer.

Dear Lord, I pray as we look into Your Word today, that Your Spirit will open the truth that You have revealed for us through Your Word to our hearts. And may we not be forgetful hearers, but what we hear today from Your Word, may we become those who are blessed because we do it. And in all things we pray that Jesus Christ will be unveiled for us, revealed and uncovered in a new and a powerful, in a very enduring and changing way to our lives. We ask that in the name that's above every name, Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

You may be seated. As you're seated, I mentioned while I was reading, but I want you to see what I was talking about. Look at verse 1 because it's very interesting.

People have read the book of Revelation. In fact, this is probably the most, fascinating of all the Bible books, but it's also the least understood. There came a point in his expositions though when both John Calvin and Martin Luther both said they were preaching through the whole Bible and they both said we're not going to preach through that one.

It is too confusing. We're going to leave that one alone. And what's amazing is that which explains what God is doing and what God has done and what God is going to do and the blessing attached with that, slowly became removed from the Church so that the majority of churches, even to this day, either only look at this book as something to hype up everybody so that they get a little extra grain and buy some gold and silver and get ready for the end or make a chart and figure out whether it's Tony Blair that's going to be the next Anti-christ.

It just seems like either it's nothing, and we're talking about mainline denominational churches, and the Catholic Church, and Orthodox Church, and all those. Either it's nothing, rarely mentioned, or it's hyped up to the point that everybody goes, oh, no, what's it going to be today? It's not either one.

This is the circuitry that connects all the pieces of the Bible. Each prophet that was giving his little on the spot report is one piece that is woven together into this tapestry of what God has wanted, and planned, and prepared to do through this Earth, as a part of His redemption. But when does it happen?

It says in verse 1, that must shortly look how it puts that, gave to His servants the things which must shortly take place. It sounds like this was supposed to take place while John was writing it. And that is one of the whole errors that have crept into the Church. And there's a whole view that says John was writing about something that happened in A.D. 70. If this happened in A. D. 70, then the Lord is a terrible exaggerator. Because He says that half of all the people on the Earth are going to die. And

actually, only about a million died in A. D. 70. And that wasn't anywhere near half. And then they say, well, this is a flash forward through the Middle Ages and the Black Death and all that stuff.

Really? If that's true, then why aren't we in paradise now? Because right after all that happened, it's supposed to kick in the paradise part. So, if it happened in AD 70, what's the problem? If it happened in the Middle Ages, in the bubonic black death stalking the Europeans, why aren't we there yet?

Because it shortly doesn't mean it's going to happen soon. That word shortly is not soon. In fact, the Greek word tachinos means speedy, swiftly, done quickly, speedily, in a brief space of time, hastily, quickly, shortly, or speedily. Did you get the message? It's like why you hail a taxi.

That's where the word comes from. It comes from the word tachometer or a taxi cab. A taxi cab is a quicker way to get there. It's speedy. A tachometer measures speed. He sees, He said, these things are going to speedily happen when they happen. It's not going to be ages and ages of problems. It's going to be a compressed time of the most horrific experience any human has ever gone through.

As every other one is going to die in a horrible way in a short period of time where everyone's going to remember who's dying and who hasn't and what happened. It's all going to happen in a short amount of time, not soon, quickly. So, quickly, this is going to happen. But, so why did He give it to us? Why did He send this?

Now go to verse 19 because, remember, God is orchestrating His book. The Bible was supernaturally engineered by God to be a complete, cohesive message to us. God guided every one of the 40 authors, that's what we call inspiration, to write down exactly and flawlessly what He wanted us to know. Now sometimes, God includes an outline.

Isn't it nice when at the front of the book, you have this outline so you know what's coming. The book of Acts has one of those. Acts chapter 1 verse 8, but you shall be My witnesses in, remember the verse? Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the outermost parts of the Earth. Do you know what happens?

In Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost happens, and the Gospel permeates Jerusalem. Thousands are saved. That's chapter 2. By the time we get to chapter 3, Judea starts getting involved. All the people on the outside, and they're coming and going, and they're hearing all these wonderful things, and the place is moving.

By the time we get to chapter 4, there is starting to be a persecution, and people are getting driven out, and they start moving up, and by the time we have Saul, the persecutor, they drive them out to Samaria. And so, the Gospel by chapter 8 is following the outline of Acts 1. It's in Jerusalem, then it goes to Judea, then it goes to Samaria.

And by the time Paul gets converted in chapter 9, it goes to the furthest ends of the Earth. So, you can map the book of Acts around the outline. Look at verse 19. Here's the outline of Revelation. It says three things: the things you have seen, that's Revelation chapter 1. That's the, the vision of Christ walking around His Church.

The things that are right in the middle of verse 19, that's chapters 2 and 3. That's Christ's warnings about the challenges that would face individual, local, geographic bodies of believers. And He writes,

Jesus writes seven little postcards. Jesus actually wrote letters. He dictated them to John. And John wrote them down and sent them off to these churches.

So, Jesus wrote His last words to the Church. Amazing to think about. That's the chapters 2 and 3. Then, if you look at verse 19, the things you've seen, that's chapter 1. The things that are, that's chapter 2 and 3. Then we have the things that will be after those things, that's chapter 4 through 22.

That's the whole end of everything. So, the purpose of this book is threefold. To show His servants, look what it says in verse 1, God wants to show His servants several powerful truths that can change the way we live. Number one, He wants to show us where Jesus is. Have you thought about what chapter 1 means?

Jesus is the owner of the team. He calls the team His Church, and Jesus is right now on the ground walking through life with us as His Church. How do we know that? Look at chapter 1, verse 12. We didn't read this, but it says that John heard this sound behind him. He's on the island of Patmos, and verse 12 says, I turned to see the voice that spoke with me, and having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands, this person described by nine different descriptors is walking around among these lamp holders.

Now, right away, now you see why Luther and Calvin says let's not read this. This is confusing. What is that? Lamp stands? Somebody with white hair and sun in their eyes? What is this? Look at verse 20. He says the seven, look at the very last line of verse 20. The seven lamp stands, which you saw, are the seven churches.

Chapter one, the most important message, it's the very first message, it's the first thing that, that God wants His servants to know. The first thing He wants them to know is that the owner, the creator, the one who bought us, and when we were bought, we become a part of His Church, that is God's team in the world today.

And, those churches gather, We find, like little lampstands, there are groupings of people in a geographic place that shine like little representations of Christ for a community. These are local, chapter 2 and 3, they're geographic, and they are so much a community that Jesus knew if He wrote a letter, and had someone deliver the letter, that letter would get to a group of people that met in one place, and if it was read, all the people, a part of that church would hear it. You know what that means? He's not talking about the universal Church. The Church that meets in every dorm room, and every bunk, and on every soccer field around America, as the Church scatters to go there on Sundays.

No. This means God is an advocate of the local gathering, of a community of believers in a geographically recognizable place where when God speaks through His word, they all hear the same thing. You see, Jesus is right now on the ground. It says in chapter 1, He's walking through His Church. He is actually here this morning.

Now, I get notes all the time when people move, or get transferred or graduate from Western, and they move to here and there, and they say, I need to find a good church. And you know what I tell them? You should go to a church that Jesus would attend. Because Jesus attends the geographic gatherings of the places that are the proclaimers of the truth of the Word of God.

So, if they don't use one of these things there, probably you shouldn't attend it. If they don't ever talk about the fact the way you get into the Church is through the new birth, through being saved, just like little Ashley we dedicated that was born a sinner and needs to be born a second time. If they never mention that, I wouldn't go there, because that's not a church where Jesus attends.

He attends places where His Word is proclaimed, and He is watching us this morning and every other member of every other local church with His eyes, that it talks about in verse 13 and verse 14, His eyes are like a flame of fire. He is looking with these piercing eyes to see everything about us.

He is walking through life to see whether we are doing our part on His team. His Church is His team and He's called us to do something and to be something and Jesus is here. And then chapters 2 and 3 are His report of what He finds in the church. And He's warning about the challenges that will face local churches.

He says, these are the things that the people, I've walked around and looked at everybody in the church at Ephesus and Smyrna and Pergamos Sardis and Philadelphia and Laodicea. And He says, and you know what I found? I found all these problems. I found what is keeping them from doing what I left them to do.

And so those little letters were to be read to the churches to correct or to encourage them. Correct them to stop doing things they shouldn't do, to encourage them to continue and keep up faithfully what they were doing for the Lord. As our coach, He explains what makes some team members displeasing to their master and owner.

He warns us what to do, how to avoid the traps that render team members useless to their master. The church in Ephesus is an example. That church was huge. It was successful. It was vibrant. It was active. And you know what happened? Everyone lost the priority that they were to have to the Lord.

And He just became one of many priorities of their life. And then finally the last chapters of this book is talking about the Lord taking His team two off the floor. And saying to the bench, it's time. It's time. And from Israel comes the greatest collection of missionaries the world has ever seen.

We call them the 144,000. They preach the Gospel to every... tribe, tongue, and nation. And they preach so effectively that those people are killed because of their witness for Christ. Not the witnesses, but the converts. And an innumerable number of people come before the throne of God because of the work of team one.

That begins this greatest outflow of evangelism the world has ever seen. So, the whole Tribulation is not about trying to figure out whether those locusts are drones. Like Boeing just announced this week, the new Phantom drone. Is it the locusts? That doesn't matter. God is in charge of the locusts.

What we're in charge of is what we're supposed to be doing, and we aren't here during that time. We're supposed to focus on the game we're in. Not be watching the game over there and totally miss our part. But we will look at what's going to go on. That's probably the most fascinating part.

Everybody loves that part of Revelation. But let's conclude this morning by how do we apply Revelation 1? Look back down at Revelation 1. Jesus wants us to know one thing. He is walking

among us. That's what verse 12 says. He is walking around among us. The simple message is Jesus Christ has said, My highest priority is I gather with my local church.

Did you catch that? Do you know what Jesus could be doing? The Hubble Telescope has found out that there are elements of our universe that are so distant and so beautiful. In fact, the New York Times was just publishing the latest downloads of some of these stellar bodies of stars that are just beyond, they don't look real.

They're so beautiful, the coloring and the texture of those star systems. Did you know the Lord could be out jet skiing one of those this morning? He could be. He could be out there star skiing and going over the supernovas. Do you know what He's doing? Revelation 1 says He's here. This is His priority.

This is His focus. He those parts of the universe out there, they're fine. He's holding them together. His priority is the Church. He wants us to know that. He wants us to know that He's right now walking around His gathered Church. Notice He's walking around local churches. It doesn't say that He walked in the light.

It says He walked among, if you look at verse 12, Lamp stands, and there are seven of them, and they're named in chapters 2 and 3 as geographic representations of a local community of believers that could gather to hear His voice read. So, Jesus said, my priority, where I go, what I do, where I'm at work in the world today, my highest priority is the local church, the local manifestation of my body.

Wherever it gathers, whether it's a little home group in a little apartment block in China, where they're getting baptized in bathtubs, or whether it's some mega church in one of the large metropolitan areas of South America or Southeast Asia or here in America, He is walking in His gathered Church.

Now, what's neat is that Jesus is with each of us individually wherever we are. But the context of Revelation 1 is where He operates most distinctly is when the Church gathers. It's amazing. Someone came to me last week, and they said, I have a real quandary. They said, I blew all day yesterday with my friends, and on Monday, I've got a big test at Western, and I've got a problem.

Do you think I should go to church? It's kind of boring, same stuff every week. Or should I study and get ready for Monday? You know what I told him? Jesus goes to the gathered church, so should you. And you should blow Saturday studying, rather than with your buddies, if Jesus and you share the same priorities.

That's the problem. We don't share His priorities. For a moment, ask yourself a question. If the local church is Christ's highest priority, is it also mine? Or have I ignored Christ's obviously displayed priority of His assembling with believers and said, Well, there are other things that are my priorities, and I just have to make choices between the priority of my work, and the priority of my school, and the priority of my sports, and the priority of my rest, and everything else.

In other words, instead of the highest priority meaning that we do first, we seek first what is most important to God. What we say is I'll mix in a little of that, Christianity in the church becomes like a spice. It's on the shelf and, we get a little of it when we need it. That's what a lot of churches are doing.

Did you know in most churches today, the Bible has become like salt? They have their whole plan in their sermon. They salt it with a little Bible now and then. That's not God's plan. God's plan is: the meal is the Word, and that Jesus is the central focus of all we do. And that's what Revelation 1 is all about. Revelation 2 and 3 is.

Really quickly, and I just want to go through this with you. This is Jesus talking about what keeps people from that priority. And we're going to have an awful wonderful time looking at these seven diagnostics. And it's like you pull your car into the dealership and they plug that computer cable in, and it analyzes how much is worn out in every part of the engine and all the connections.

That's what Revelation 2 and 3 is. The cable is connected to the churches. And the Lord says, wow, you got some problems here. Some of us are like the believers in Ephesus. We've declined from that first love we had for Jesus. Like them, we had a great start, but now we seem to lack that initial consuming love.

I mean, we laugh about it. I see couples and I say to them after they've been married a while, I say to the boy, are you working as hard to keep that young lady as you did to get her? You would do anything for her. You would listen to her talk for hours. You'd read everything she wrote. You'd come at her beck and call.

Do you still act that way? And it's not just in marriage that we wane. In our relationship with the Lord, the church in Ephesus waned. At first, they couldn't get enough of Him. Everything Jesus said, they hung on every word, carried pictures of Him everywhere. Now, hey, church is over, put that Bible away, till next week, if we make it.

It's like, that first consuming love is gone. You know what Jesus message was to them? Love Me most, come back to Me. Smyrna was in great persecution. They were standing fast through it. And they discovered that Jesus would strengthen them. And by faith, they remained faithful no matter what price they had to pay.

And to them, Jesus said, trust Me to the end. The same grace that saved you is the grace that will keep you to your last breath, even through the fire. Just trust Me to the end. And there are people today, they're saying, whoa, I'm a believer, but it's getting harder and harder, and I'm getting sicker and sicker, and I love the Lord and serve the Lord, and I don't even have the strength anymore.

In fact, I can't even work. I don't even have the money. I just... the Lord says, hey, as faithful as I was to save you, I'm faithful to keep you to the end. The church in Pergamos was drowning in worldliness. Wait till we get to that church. And true believers, we're to resist worldliness. Today, in every church, there are these Pergamite Christians.

Pergamites are wed to the world. Pergamites have worldly standards, not Godly ones. They have a focus and a grip on their money, their cars, their job, their looks. They only do what is socially acceptable. They don't want to be left behind by the crowd. Pergamites are compromising the absolutes of Scripture, and they're more concerned with fashion than holiness.

Whatever the unsaved immoral designers of clothes of this world pick out, that's for them. They just go with the flow of the culture rather than with what their Master wants, the owner of the team. In Christ's message to the Pergamites and to us today is stay separated from these evil practices.

Don't follow false doctrine that itches your ears, that scratches your itching ears, that tells you what you want to hear. Don't listen to that. Listen to what I say that you don't want to hear the Lord says. And Thyatira was seduced by the false teacher Jezebel, and they were to resist her evil teaching, her evil lifestyle that led to immorality.

Some of the Thyatirans were following her social Gospel not the divine new life that Christ gave, and to that group, Christ's message was, stay pure, live for Me, make sure you're living for Me. Sardis had a big name but no life. They were all talk and there was no reality there. And they were as dead as last week's cut flowers.

They were cold and lifeless. They were in a spiritual stupor. And the Lord says, why don't you live this abundant life that I offer you? Live it for Me. Let a river of life flow out of you. And then the Philadelphians they were... they had no warnings given to them. They were just so active everywhere they went, telling people about the Lord.

You know what the Lord says? Keep going through those open doors, keep sharing the Gospel. And finally, the Laodiceans, they were counterfeit, they were sickening to Christ, they thrive in the materialism of the world, they're rich, they're increased in goods, and their goods are keeping them so busy that they don't need the Lord.

Nor do they have time for Him. They've got to, keep that boat in the water. They've got to keep those, snowmobiles going. They've got to keep the cabin cobwebs out of it. They've got to keep their golf swing up. And they've got so much increase, they don't have time for the other church.

And the Lord says to them, sacrifice for Me. Invest your most precious commodity, your time, in Me, rather than in yourself, and your pursuits, and your hobbies, and your activities, and your gadgets. Before we go, the last section, are seven clear indicators given by Christ. Revelation 4 to 22, Jesus tells us what the world looks like just before He comes back.

Now He starts it in chapter 4 around the throne, and that's really the emphasis. We're supposed to think about the Tribulation from God's perspective, not for the gore and the mess on Earth. But what's interesting is Jesus says the same thing He said in Matthew 24. He says in Revelation 4 to 22. Same author, so the same message.

And what He says is, that the world when the Tribulation hits looks like this. It's a world described in the book of Revelation that people are crisscrossing it, traveling endlessly, that information is available to everyone. Everyone. Information explodes to the furthest reaches of the planet.

That's why this could not have happened in A. D. 70. There were tribes down in little valleys in Irian Jaya, and there were Aborigines, Aborigines living in Australia that didn't even know there were other people around. That no longer is true. We've mapped every centimeter of this planet's surface.

Now we're working on every centimeter of the underwater world. And there is such an explosion of knowledge right now that the new, 22 micron nanostrips that Intel just built a plant in Israel to start producing are going to reduce down to our cell phones what the military's paid millions of dollars for a decade ago.

And there is an explosion of information and travel. And Revelation says, the world that has that, I'm coming to, and there's going to be global death, weapons of mass destruction, that's Revelation 6, a fourth die. Boom. There's going to be global communications. It says in Revelation 11, everyone can see stuff.

There's going to be global commerce. They are sending things. They're not just having things. They're sending stuff to every peoples and probably they're all prime members of Amazon and it's free, they can ship it everywhere. There's going to be a global currency with digitalized money, Revelation 13 says, and there's going to be global weather going wild.

There's going to be solar flares that are scorching people, then it's going to be so dark that they don't know what's going on, they're gnawing at their tongues, and there's going to be a change in the whole hydrological cycle so that plants can't live and fish are dying, and there are going to be forest fires filling the whole place, like Russia's last year did.

In the days ahead, those trends, the Bible says that when you see all of them, you know that the PDF is loaded, and the screen is crystal clear. And you know you're at the end. So, we'll look at that. But before we go, ask yourself one question. If the local church is Christ's highest priority, and if the owner of this team that we're on is actually here this morning, And He's looking through everything on your mind and seeing what you're thinking about for the week ahead.

He's looking through everything you're processing from the week behind and He's looking at all of that and saying, Now where am I in that? Wow, they're here in body, their mind isn't even here. He's examining us. If this is His priority, And if Jesus is the Word of God, and the way that you hear His voice is through this book, shouldn't our priority be to let His Word fill us, and when we gather as the gathered local body of Christ, to absolutely present ourselves to Him and say, what is it You want me to do?

How do you want me to be for You in life? And that's why we gather. And we gather locally in a community so that when this local body, something's communicated to them, we all hear it and respond. Is that your priority before the Lord today? It's time to close and let's stand. And the reason I'm stopping four minutes early is, not only did we have the video thing with Dan, which was so funny, and not only do we have the wonderful baby dedication, but the elders this week, on Thursday met and we, every month when we meet, we consider how we can best serve the body of Christ at Calvary and this local body.

And what we found is so many of you, saints and sheep of this flock say, I just need to pray with somebody. I just want to talk to someone. To find my elder, I have to walk up to that life group there, and they're already around him like bees in a hive, and I just don't have access.

And so, we've thought about it for a long time. We thought, can we put all the elders in the prayer room? You could come see him. Or, could we have some night of the week that you could all just drop by if you want to talk to him? We thought, no, you know what? You're all here, and they're all here.

Because we've gathered as a church and so what we decided is we'll start a tradition at the end of the service as I close in prayer. The elders, in fact, you can start coming, any second service elders. We had almost all of them go to first service. But whoever's here in second service, come on and join me in the front, and I'm going to be down here with you.

But they're going to be at the front. If you need to pray with someone these are your elders. There's Steve and everybody's coming. Norm is coming. Ron is coming. Rod is coming. There's Phil, the chairman. They're going to be here. And if you want to pray with someone, it was the neatest thing to see in first service.

There were people up here. They couldn't believe that someone would pray with them about the operation they're facing this week, or the job that they just lost this week, or the wife that just left them this week. And they just came, or maybe you just have a question, maybe you're not sure you're on the team.

You want to... pray with someone, say, I'm not even sure I'm saved, or whatever it is. It doesn't have to be Earth shaking. It just can be you have a need. The elders will be here at the end of each service. Now where I'm going is, I'm going to where I've always supposed to be, the visitor reception. If you're brand new at Calvary, or if you've been here for three years, and I still never met you.

You're still brand new. The visitor reception's in the fellowship center every Sunday after this service. And that's where I go to meet all of you newcomers and everybody I've never met. And so that's where I'm going to be. If you want to pray with an elder, they'll be here. If you want to come to visitor reception, I'll be there. But never forget, Revelation unveils Christ. He said, I want you to know, this is most important to Me in the universe. Let's bow before Him in prayer.

Father, I thank you for Your Word, and that we've been able to come and gather, and I pray that You would just watch over this fellowship as we seek to do Your will, that we seek to live sanctified lives, that we seek to offer ourselves every time we gather in obedience to Your Word. And I pray for any needs in this body, that You would meet them by Your Spirit, and for those who need the comfort of sharing a burden, that need the power of prayer, and of someone bearing that burden with them, that they would realize that the called and gifted elders of Christ's Church in this local place are here to serve them. And I pray that You would bless us as we live in these last days for Your glory. In the precious name of Jesus we pray, and all of God's people said, Amen.