

God's People in the Midst of Turbulent Times

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[0 : 00] I think so many of us have come to church this morning with something of a somberness, and I know I came with a bit of a heavy heart.

What we need this morning is not just to hear the opinions of man, we're not just here to be inspired or to hear a prep talk, we need to hear God and encounter God.

So let's come before Him in prayer, and I want to encourage you to listen to this prayer that I've written for us, and let's try and make it our own as much as possible, and then we'll listen to the reading of God's Word.

So let's pray. Heavenly Father, loving Lord, we come to you this morning not in strength but in weakness.

Father, we come not confident or self-assured, many of us come conflicted and afflicted and hurting, unsure of ourselves, unsure of how to make sense of the pain in our city, unsure of how to respond to what we see and experience around us.

[1 : 07] Oh Lord, Father, we are broken, God, by the hatred and the anger that we see, and we don't know how to respond, God, to so much of what's going on in our city and of what we are witnessing.

Father, we don't know how it's going to end. God, we come to you this morning stripped of answers, stripped of any semblance of wisdom, stripped of any self-confidence, and Father, we feel like we've been laid low.

How long, oh Lord, how long? As the psalmist tells us, God, we are weary with our groaning. We are worn out with anxiety. We are tired and exhausted, and our fears, God, are overwhelming.

How long, oh Lord, how long? And so, Heavenly Father, we've come to you this morning, because we have nowhere else to turn. We come to you this morning because nothing else will answer our concerns.

God, you have the words of life. Your Spirit speaks our hearts, and because despite everything we see around us, we believe that you, God, are truth, you are light, you are sovereign, and that our lives are in your hands, God.

[2 : 16] Father, as we turn to your word this morning, we long for you to speak to us. We long for you, God, to make sense of what we're struggling to make sense of.

Father, we need you to pour faith into our hearts and to lift our sights onto you. And so, God, we come to you this morning because you are God and we are not. We come to you, God, because you are on your heavenly throne and have not been displaced.

We come to you, God, because in you there is perfect justice. Oh, God, who is there like you? Who else can give our hearts peace like you? Who else will establish justice and righteousness like you?

Who can keep people safe like you? Who can give us true freedom and hope like you? Oh, Lord God, this morning we've come to declare that, Father, despite what we see around us, there is no one and none like you.

And our hearts and our hope are found in you, Lord God. This morning we join with the whole host of heaven, declaring that salvation belongs to our God and that our God reigns.

[3 : 23] Worthy are you, oh, Lord our God, to receive our worship, glory, honor, and praise. Both today in the city of Hong Kong, all around the world, and for all eternity.

We pray these things in your powerful, your glorious, and your trustworthy name. Amen. Amen. Pui and Betty are going to come and read to us.

And this morning we've got a long reading. We are reading two full chapters of the book of Revelation. So I want to encourage you to listen up. There's a lot of interesting terminology and symbolism, but let's listen to God's word being read to us.

The scripture reading comes from Revelation, chapters 6 and 7. Please follow along in your booklets or on the screen. Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a loud voice like thunder, Come.

And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer. When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come.

[4 : 40] And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another. And he was given a great sword. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come.

And I looked, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine.

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, Come. And I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him.

And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with the sword, and with famine, and with pestilence, and by wild beasts of the earth. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, and for the witness they had borne.

They cried out with a loud voice, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

[5 : 59] Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became light blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, and the great ones, and the generals, and the rich, and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves, and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand? After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth, or sea, or against any tree.

Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, Do not harm the earth, or the sea, or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

[7 : 40] And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel. 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed.

12,000 from the tribe of Reuben. 12,000 from the tribe of Gad. 12,000 from the tribe of Asher. 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali. 12,000 from the tribe of Vanessa.

12,000 from the tribe of Simeon. 12,000 from the tribe of Levi. 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed After this I looked And behold, a great multitude that no one could number From every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages Standing before the throne And before the Lamb clothed in white robes With palm branches in their hands And crying out with a loud voice Salvation belongs to our God Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb And all the angels were standing around the throne And around the elders and the four living creatures And they fell on their faces before the throne And worshipped God, saying Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving And honor and power And might be to our God forever and ever Amen Then one of the elders addressed me, saying

Who are these, clothed in white robes? And from where have they come? I said to him, Sir, you know And he said to me These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation They have washed their robes and made them white In the blood of the Lamb Therefore they are before the throne of God And serve Him day and night in His temple And He who sits on the throne Will shelter them with His presence They shall hunger no more Neither first no more The sun shall not strike them Nor any scorching heat For the Lamb in the midst of the throne Will be their shepherd And He will guide them to springs of living water And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes This is the word of God Great, thank you Betty and Pui For that long reading And thanks so much Well, we If you're new to Watermark We are working our way through the book of Revelation And I heard recently that somebody said

They did some research in the U.S. And the book of Revelation is one of the books of the Bible That most Christians want taught to them and explained And it's the one book of the Bible That most pastors don't want to go anywhere near And I can understand why This week I said to Oscar I said, why on earth did we choose Revelation?

[10 : 30] It's this passage has beaten me up this week And we're starting to get to the interesting parts of it With interesting symbolism And so let's see if we can try and make sense of it today There's a lot in here And so let's go for it This week and next week Are going to be particularly challenging And for two reasons One, because the symbolism is so strange There are these strange horsemen And all sorts of things And moons that are turning blood and stuff And so that's challenging But then secondly When we actually try and understand it The message itself is challenging It's a hard message to receive And so I really do pray and trust That God will use His word to speak to us To both encourage us And to challenge us Now if you look back on the history of the world And especially the last century You'll see that our world has In the last century Had great moments Of wonderful moments Of human achievement Technological advancement

Scientific Medicinal discoveries That have benefited human life But at the same time If we're honest And look back In the same period of time Many of those scientific discoveries And technological advances Have also been used To bring great harm And destruction On the world And so we think of even just For instance The invention of the airplane What a great benefit that's been But at the same time How that was used In so many wars To bring about great heartache And destruction We think of the World War I And World War II In the last century Think of the Holocaust We think of Pol Pot And his regime In Cambodia In the 1970s Two million Cambodians Were killed We think of the terrors In Africa The many many civil wars The Rwandan genocide We think of the chaos In the Middle East The famine in Oman At the moment As a result of war And if we who live in Hong Kong Ever felt

Oh we are fortunate To live in the safe And secure society The last three months itself Has challenged that idea That actually we do live In a broken world And our world is full of tears And heartache Now for the Christians In first century Rome Their story was very similar Because the Roman Empire Was one that promised Great blessing The Pax Romana Promised relative stability And peace Throughout the Roman Empire Rome had secured Relative financial prosperity For its citizens There was infrastructural discoveries Like the highways And the aqueducts And so for the Roman Empire There was much blessing For those that enjoyed it But at the same time There was an ugly underbelly To the Roman Empire Because as their hunger For expansion grew So did the consequences of that Slavery Injustice Corruption Death And destruction And so the story Of the first century

And the church That Jesus writes to In Revelation Is very Or not too dissimilar From actually our own world We see this Growth And development But at the same time This brokenness In our world Now if we were to ask An artist To paint us An impression Of the last century I wonder how He would do that What would an artist's Impression Of the last century Of all that we've described Look like Well actually There's an artist That did that And his name is Pablo Picasso In 1939 He painted a very famous Painting Called Granica I think that's how you say it And we've got a picture of it Somewhere up here And the story behind this Is that two years previously In 1937 There's a Spanish war going on And German bombers Came and flew over The Spanish town of Granica Bombing its citizens And the streets of Granica But what was happening Was actually A lot of the Hitler and his Military strategists

Were actually practicing Their military strategy For what they would then Employ in the world war That was coming up And so what happened was The citizens of this town The fighter jets Come and bomb the town They all run And take cover They stay under cover For 15-20 minutes Or so An hour And as they come back Into the streets When they think It's calm again The planes come a second time Around And bomb them again And thousands of people Die in the Spanish town And so Pablo Picasso Paints this picture Called Granica It's a gross picture That's full of catastrophe And chaos And body parts Now Picasso's picture Doesn't represent history Like a photograph does Or like a newspaper report But it does convey Something of the horror And the chaos That took place In this town Just a few years before In a similar way This is what the passage In the book of Revelation Is like Jesus through The apostle John

[15 : 34] Is trying to give us A picture An artist's impression Of the story Of the world But he's not giving us A newspaper account Or he's not giving us A history book account It's this artistic impression That's full of imagery And strange symbols And chaos And destruction And moons that are Turning to blood And the stars are falling It's an artist's impression That conveys the story Of the world And is meant to elicit Our emotions To understand What God is trying to say Now as we get into The next couple of chapters The book of Revelation Has this series of sevens In chapter 6 and 7 That we look at today There are seven seals On this parchment In chapter 8 and 9 There are seven trumpets That are blown In chapter 11 We see seven thunders And chapter 15 and 16 There are seven bowls That are poured out With these seven plagues Okay Now John is not trying To predict the future He's not a fortune teller He's not trying to give us Chronological account Of the world And so some people say Okay what are the seven seals

You know this is Nero And then this is This event And then we go to the trumpet And then chronological That's not what's happening What John is saying Is he's saying The story of the world Remember God's trying To peel back the curtain So we can see the world From heaven's perspective He's saying The story of the world It's a bit like this But it's also a bit like this And it's also a little bit like this In other words All the series of seven Are the same story of the world From a different angle It's like as Chris explained A few weeks ago You're watching a sports game Your team scores a try Or scores a goal And there's this camera angle That shows it from this angle And then they show The same event from this angle And then they show The same event from this angle This action replay That's what the book of Revelation Is really about It's going to show us The story of the world From all these different angles So that we can see it From heaven's perspective And so today We get to the first of these Seven These series of sevens

And the images of a parchment Or a scroll That's been rolled up And in the ancient time When a scroll was rolled up It had these wax seals put upon it To keep it from prying eyes And from those that weren't meant To look inside And so there's this scroll And each time a seal Jesus breaks open One of these wax seals Some cataclysmic event Happens on the earth And so that's the background Behind our passage Now last bit of introduction Before we get to the passage today In order to really understand This section We need to follow The flow of thought Through the book of Revelation And so very briefly I'm going to recap Remember Chapter 1 We see this vision Of Jesus in all his glory We sang about it earlier Jesus with eyes like fire Burnished bronze feet Voice like rushing waters And Jesus in all his glory Chapter 2 and chapter 3 Jesus then writes these letters Or a letter To these seven churches In Revelation And the reason is

Because these churches Same as our church today Are facing two challenges The one challenge Is to become Just like the culture In which it finds itself To become syncretistic Or to accommodate the culture To be seduced by the power And the prestige And the glamour of Rome And to try and find Their hope and confidence In the culture In which they find themselves But the other challenge The churches were facing Was to say No we're not going to Compromise like that We're going to stand firm But the church was so small It felt insignificant And how was the church Ever going to stand up Against the power And the machine Of the Roman Empire And so Jesus writes them And he says Don't be overwhelmed Or over seduced By the culture In which you find yourselves But also don't be overwhelmed With fear By the power of Rome Stay faithful to me Keep your eyes fixed On me I am your hope And Jesus At the end of each letter He says this This one refrain To the one who overcomes

To those that endure To the end To those who conquer I promise life And blessing And reward And so Jesus Writes these letters To saying Stay faithful In the midst of the culture And the midst of fear And anxiety Keep your eyes fixed On me And then chapter 4 We saw this Vision of Jesus Of God And all his glory On the throne All creation All angels Bowing down to him Worshipping him Not for what he's done But simply for who he is And then chapter 5 Colin brought to us Two weeks ago Not only God On the throne But Jesus Is there right next to him And Jesus is worthy Of all worship And all honor And all glory Not only because Of who he is But because of What he's done Because he died On the cross To save you and I And so As the church In Asia Minor Reads this revelation Of God on the throne And Jesus is there Next to him The thought that Must have come To their mind Was come on

[20 : 37] What's there to worry about We've got this thing If this God Who is on the throne Of all the universe Is on our side And we're on his side We're indestructible Like This is a done deal Right What's there to worry about And Jesus now Writes to his church To show them That just because He's on the throne Doesn't mean That there's not Going to be any Difficulty in the world In which they live Because Jesus Writes them To show them That although His kingdom Has already come It hasn't yet Fully come In all its fulfillment Jesus is saying I came And I brought My kingdom It's already here But I haven't yet come When I come A second time It will be Fully established Jesus hasn't Fully Overthrown All his enemies Yet Now that day is coming When he returns But we live As Christians

In this weird overlap Of the already And the not yet His kingdom has come But it hasn't yet Fully come And so we find ourselves In this Interesting stage In redemptive history Where Jesus Is on the throne But there's still Difficulty and chaos And trouble In our world Does that make sense?

And so now The next ten chapters Of Revelation Jesus is writing To show his church And to give them hope In the midst Of this season In which they find themselves The midst of the already And the not yet Okay And so let's go to Revelation chapter 6 Verse 1 John looks And this is what he says Now I watched And when the lamb The lamb is Jesus Okay Jesus who died And came alive again When the lamb Opened one of the seals I heard one of the Four living creatures Saying with a loud Voice like thunder Come And I looked And behold A white horse Its rider had a bow And a crown was given to him And he came out Conquering And to conquest And John looks And he sees These four horses Okay He sees again Another Jesus Opening the seal And there's another Horse comes A red horse Which is symbolism Of blood And war And armies

And conquest He sees another There's another seal Is opened And another horse Comes It's a black horse It's a picture of famine And economic injustice And inequality Interesting look here There's a voice In verse 6 It says A quarter of wheat For a denarius Three quarters of barley For a denarius But do not touch The oil and the wine Do you know What's going on there When war comes What happens There's famine Right And so The price of staple foods Goes through the roof And so the two staple foods here Wheat and barley The price has just Exponentially gone through the roof It's like 15 or 20 fold What it normally is And so the people The staple foods The prices have just Gone through the roof But someone says Don't touch the price Of the oil and the wine Why not The oil and the wine Are commodities That the upper class The aristocrats Get And so the price Of that the poor And the marginalized Have to eat The staple foods

Has gone through the roof But somehow Those that are in power And control Are controlling the prices Of the high end The caviar And the champagne So that their income Isn't affected But the income Of the poor And the marginalized Is affected It's a picture Of inequality And injustice And then a fourth horse Comes And it's a pale horse And it's a picture Of death And disease And destruction Now straight away When we read this One of the things That should impact us Is who is the one That's bringing this about Who is the one That's allowing this to happen It's Jesus Right Jesus is the one That's opening the seals And it's one of the creatures Around his throne That is calling this forth What on earth Is happening Why is it that God Allows this to happen Isn't God's job Just to keep peace On earth And to rid the world Of problems Isn't God The big guy in the sky And his job Is to make sure There's no difficulty In the world And just Everything is happy And fine

[24 : 59] Well friends That understanding Of God Is a very simplistic Or shallow reading Of the scriptures God is working All things Not just simply To bring peace And comfort And happiness In the world God is working All things For his purposes And his purpose Is not simply World peace Or my happiness Or your convenience His purpose Is establishing His kingdom And putting his glory On display And that's why It's confusing And as challenging As it may be Part of the reason Why we're in this Already and not yet Stage in the history Of the world Is God is strategically Working all things To bring his purposes To pass Not simply our comfort And our convenience Remember at the end Of Jesus' life He's about to go to heaven And his disciples Say to him Jesus are you going To now restore The kingdom to Israel You've died And you've risen again Now's a good time To vanquish your enemies

And to restore all things And Jesus' answer Is It is not for you To know the times And the season That my father Has fixed by his own Authority Jesus is saying That until he returns We are still living In this ambiguous season When his kingdom Has come But it hasn't fully come And when he rules But he doesn't fully rule As he one day will Remember how Jesus Said this just To his disciples Before he went To the cross He said You will hear Rumors of wars And wars coming See that you are Not alarmed This must take place But the end Has not yet come Nation will rise Up against nation Kingdom will rise Up against kingdom There will be famines There will be earthquakes There will be destruction In various places All these things Are just the beginning Of the birth pains And this is exactly What John sees In chapter 6 Jesus is telling The church in Asia Minor What he taught His disciples In this world You will have trouble In this world There will be difficulty He has not yet

Utterly removed Wickedness and evil But says Jesus Do not fear This world Is not your home In verse 13 He says The one who endures To the end Will be saved And that's exactly What Jesus says To the seven churches He's calling them And he's calling us To neither compromise By finding our hope In the systems Of this world Nor to cower away In fear Thinking that all Is lost But to keep our eyes Fixed on him Who is on the throne In this world You will have trouble Says Jesus But take heart I have overcome The world Your life Is found In me Okay So that's the first Four of these seals John looks again And he sees A fifth seal Broken open And look at what happens John sees What he says Of the souls In verse 9 Of those that have Been killed They are martyrs Because they've held On to the word of God And the testimony That Jesus is

Who he said he is Which tells us That Christians Are not immune From the wickedness And the Destruction In our world Jesus tells us That standing for righteousness For truth For justice It may invite wickedness To come your way And that's the whole challenge That these seven churches Kept on facing This was the constant challenge Will they avoid difficulty Will they avoid suffering By just assimilating Into the culture By trusting in Rome By becoming just like The citizens of its city Will they assimilate Into it And avoid difficulty Or Will they cower away And hide And try and preserve Their lives And Jesus says That by declaring That Jesus is Lord Not the mission Not Rome Not the emperor That Jesus Lord Will invite difficulty Into your life It will cost you something That to be faithful Even to death Will Jesus says Will you be faithful Or will you shrink back And preserve yourself

Friends Is it any different In our age Of course not Jesus asks us The same question today Will we assimilate Into our culture And become just like The citizens of our city And avoid persecution Or will we shrink back And quieten our voice Or will we stick to the truth That Christ is Lord And stand for him Even though It may cost us Dearly Look at verse 10 They say here Oh sovereign Lord Holy and true How long before you will judge How long will you avenge our blood Of those who dwell on the earth In other words Jesus how long must we wait Until you bring justice Until you crush your enemies Until you establish justice On the earth How long until you hold wickedness To account How long oh Lord Must we wait You see what's happening To the Christians here Is that justice has been denied To them on earth They know that in the courts of heaven The only courts that really count That in the end of the day Justice will come The injustice that they experience on earth

[30 : 04] For standing for truth Will be overturned And justice will be done And are they defeated? Yes on earth they're defeated Their lives are taken from there But in heaven They are given the victory Look at verse 11 They are given white robes A symbol of victory And vindication And life Because what appears Like their lives Have been cut short And wasted Is actually Their victory And so what is God's answer To their question How long?

They are told To wait a little longer Until the number Of their fellow servants And their brothers Should be complete Now that doesn't mean That Jesus in heaven Has this KPI Of how many martyrs He needs to reach Right?

Until the end of the age Jesus doesn't have a target That he's waiting for And saying The number hasn't got there What Jesus is saying is this My purposes And my plans Are still rolling forward And they will not be delayed But they will not be brought forward I will accomplish my purposes In my time And in my plan There is still more room For martyrs To lose their life That happened in first century Rome And friends It's still happening Today The time has not yet come Now that may seem Like such a waste These men These women Losing their lives For the gospel But John says Their lives are not wasted Because what may appear Like their lives Have simply been taken from them Like in some senseless murder That's actually not the case Look Where does John see these lives?

Where are they in heaven? Look at verse 9 He says They are standing They are right by the altar Which means their lives Have been offered up to God As an offering of sacrifice They are an offering There's something beautiful about it John Piper In one of his talks Many years ago He very famously told the story It's a true story He said Two ladies Single ladies In their 70s Foreign missionaries In a foreign land And one day They're going about their business And some catastrophe happens And they both lose their life They're driving their car On this mountain ridge To get to a village To go and share the gospel The brakes in their car fail They go over the edge And both of these ladies In their 70s Die Is that a tragedy?

Asks John Piper And the answer is A resounding no What a way to go to glory What a way to spend your life To offer up your life For the cause of Christ John Piper then says Two people retire At the age of 60 And they spend The best decades Of their life Taking walks On the seashore And collecting seashells Is that a tragedy?

[32 : 58] And the answer Is a resounding yes What a way to spend The finest last decades Of your life Taking walks On the seashore Collecting seashells And drinking Skinny cafe lattes What better way To spend your life Than to pour it out As an offering To God Here are these martyrs That have been killed For the cause of Christ Their lives have been Taken to them And it's not a waste For all eternity Their lives will count Because they've offered Them up to God I wasn't going to Tell the story But let me just Tell the story 1555 Two men Two bishops In London Are arrested For preaching the gospel A man called Nicholas Ridley And Bishop Latimer And as they tied To the stake There are Some hay Is put around Their feet And they're about

To be lit The hay bales Are lit And Bishop Latimer Turns to the young man Master Ridley Nicholas Ridley Is fearful He's in his 40s He's about to lose His life And Bishop Ridley Says to him Be of good cheer Master Ridley Play the man This very day We shall light A candle In England As I hope By God's grace Shall never Be put out Friends What kind of man As the flames Are starting to End his life And burn his legs Can say Be of good cheer It's somebody Who knows That he's not Wasting his life As he lays it down For the cause Of Christ That brings us To the sixth seal In this one chapter On the one hand We're told That we are living The already And the not yet We're being told That there will Still be more martyrs The time But we're also told That the time Of Christ's judgment Has not yet fully come But on the other hand

We're now shown That those who do Spend their lives For Christ That those who Experience the injustice Of this world That those who Don't fight back And try and preserve Their lives But offer it to God In the face of Wickedness and oppression And who offer up Their lives as an offering Justice is coming And the reason is Because God's Final judgment day Is coming And that's what The sixth seal Is all about Let's look at it Together Look at Verse 13 With me There's this strange Language of The son The moon Becoming like blood The stars Falling from the sky And the sun Turning black Now That refers to Two things On the one hand It refers to The false gods And the idols That were being Worshipped in the Ancient world In the ancient world What were the Gods of creation That loved to be Worshipped It was the sun The moon And the stars Right Jesus says In the final account

At the end of the ages What's going to happen To those things That the ancients Loved to worship They're going to Be swept aside And so will those Who trust in them They will be exposed Nothing left To show for it Tim Chester makes The point where he says Today the sun Moon and stars Have been replaced By money Sex and power In humanity's list Of favored deities But one day These two Will be swept aside And friends All those who trust In them Will be exposed But the other thing That this refers to Is that in the Old Testament This graphic language Of the sun And the moon And the stars Falling Was symbolic Of empires And kingdoms Being brought to an end And especially God bringing These empires And these kingdoms To an end And Jesus Is showing John Yes it looks like Rome is all powerful Yes it looks like Martyrs are never Going to be vindicated Yes it looks like The church is Insignificant And poor And powerless Against the machine Of the Roman Empire But just wait

That's not how The story ends Ultimately No kingdom No dynasty No empire Will last forever There is coming a day Where every empire Will be brought To its knees And so what happens In the end When Christ Establishes his kingdom All those who look Invincible Kings and premiers And emperors And governors And military leaders All the way down To slaves And former slaves All people Everywhere Will cower And flee In terror Before the awesomeness And the majesty And the glory That is God Look at verse 15 Then the kings Of the earth And the great ones The generals The rich The powerful But also slaves And the free Hid themselves In the caves And amongst the rocks Of the mountains Calling on the mountains And the rocks Fall on us And hide us From the face of him Who is seated On the throne And from the wrath Of the lamb For the great day

[38 : 01] Of his wrath Has come And who can stand And friends That is the momentous question In the face Of final judgment When every emperor And empire When every president And every premier Will fit In the most awesome In the face Of the most awesome And terrifying Authority of the world In the face Of God Will run For their lives The question Is this Who can stand Who can stand Now before we get To the final seal In chapter 8 There is an interlude And chapter 7 Answers the question Of who can stand Let's look at Verse 1 together Verse 1 of chapter 7 And after this John says I saw four angels Standing at the four Corners of the earth Then I saw another Angel ascending With the seal Of God And he called

In a loud voice Saying do not Harm the earth Or the sea Or the trees Until we have Sealed the servants Of our God On their foreheads Who can stand Those that have Been sealed With the seal Of God It's a picture Of remember In Exodus God comes And he's Delivering his people He's going to Save his people By the blood Of the lamb But at the same Time he's Bringing judgment The angel of death Is going to Come to Egypt And bring judgment On the nation Of Egypt But his people Are going to Be saved How are they Going to be saved?

By the blood Of the lamb That's been painted On the doorpost Of their house They've painted As it were A seal on their house So that when the Angel of death Comes It passes over Because they've got A seal over there John is saying The same thing He's saying Who in the day Of final judgment Who can stand When God's judgment Comes upon the earth Who will stand?

Those that have been Sealed By their God And now for the second Time in Revelation John hears one thing And as he turns around He sees something different Remember in chapter 5 John preached it Two weeks ago John hears The lion of Judah And as he turns To look at the lion He doesn't see a lion He sees a lamb Well the same thing Happens here John hears a voice And saying Those that are sealed Will stand in the day Of great judgment The 144,000 Now what's 144,000?

What does it mean? Well remember In the book of Revelation The symbol 12 The number 12 Is symbolic The 12 apostles Of the New Testament The 12 tribes In the Old Testament Times a thousand In other words The 144,000 Those that are sealed The complete number Of God's people Will stand In the day of judgment Not one will be missing Friends you may be here A follower of Jesus Maybe you've sinned tragically Maybe you've done Some dumb thing And you feel so guilty And you feel like God will kick me Out of his kingdom In that final day I will be destroyed by God No Not 139,999 Not one will be missing Because your eternal destiny Doesn't depend On your righteousness It depends on Are you sealed By the blood of the Lamb On that great day Every single one Of God's people Not one will be missing Will stand Before the throne John hears this number

[41 : 32] God's people sealed And then when he turns around To look at this crowd Of 144,000 What does he see? He sees a multitude A multitude That is so vast It cannot be numbered He sees a multitude Of people From every tribe And every language group And every people group And every ethnicity And every culture In other words The greatest form Of diversity You can imagine From all over the globe And they are unified Together Before the throne Of the Lamb There before the throne You have Hong Konger And mainland Chinese Black White Chinese Rich And poor Educated And uneducated Friends Can I say On the great day Before the throne Of God There may be Policemen

And protesters Standing shoulder To shoulder Before the Lamb Of God Before the throne Crying out Salvation Belongs To our God Who sits on the throne And to the Lamb There will be There will be A great multitude Of every person From every people group Those that have Trusted in Christ And how did they Get there?

Some of them Are there Because of the martyrs Some of them Are there Because they did not Love their lives And they were willing To speak the truth Of the gospel They were there Because they Because the martyrs Went out And so here's The big idea Of this whole Two chapter passage It's taken us 30 minutes To get here The big idea Of this In this world Friends We will have trouble There's going to be Wars And rumors of wars There's going to be Destruction And wickedness There's going to be Injustice And inequality There's going to be Heartache And there's going to be Pain Even as we witness What's going on In our city At this time But that's not The end of it We live in a Broken world And we've contributed To brokenness And if you're a follower Of Jesus The temptation May be to make peace With the systems Of this world In order to preserve Our lives Or to maximize Our own security Or to avoid Discomfort But the systems

Of this world Are failing They are absolutely Failing And every single system Every political system Every economic system Every civil system Every educational system Even every religious system That is not centered On he who is on the throne Is going to end up In self destruction Absolutely failing It's absolutely going to Come to an end And one day Every one of those systems Will be shown For what they are And what's more Is that they're going to be Held accountable To the judge of all the earth And so will those Who trust in them But there is another way There is another way And that's to trust The one who is on the throne To live our lives By his story To be centered on him And to give our lives To him Even as it costs us Dearly The only way to stand In the day of great judgment And the only way For the things That we give ourselves To not end In self destruction Is to be centered On he who is at the center

Of all creation And so finally Look at verse 13 It says One of the elders Addressed me and said this Who are those clothed In white robes And from where do they come I said sir you know He said those are the ones Coming out of the great tribulation Tribulation means difficulty And they've washed their robes And made them white In the blood of the lamb Friends on the final day When all wickedness Is held accountable When every bit of evil Is finally and fully Held to account When perfect justice Will be meted out Who will stand Who will stand in that day Well the bible actually gives us Two answers And the first answer It gives us Is no one will stand Not you Not me Not the pope Not mother Teresa Not the most moral Upright person You can imagine No one will stand Before the awesomeness Of our God No one should stand Friends if you New to church this morning One of the things

[46 : 01] You'll quickly discover About this church Is that we are made up Of 100% sinners Every one of us From the pastors And the elders To everyone else None of us Can stand Before the awesomeness Of our God But that's not the answer That is given here In Revelation The answer that's given here Is that those who stand The great day of God's judgment Are those who are gathered Around the throne And are standing In robes of white They're not there Because of their Religious devotion That doesn't save anyone They're not there Because they're more moral Than anyone else That doesn't save anyone They're not there Because they gave money To the church That doesn't save anyone They're not there Because they are nicer Or kinder Or generally better people Than anyone else That doesn't save anyone They are there Because they've been washed In the blood Of Jesus The lamb That was slain For them Remember Psalm 130 If you are Lord Should mark our iniquities Who are God could stand But with you

There is forgiveness That you may be feared Friends This is our only hope If it's not for the blood Of Jesus None of us could stand None of us could be accepted None of us could be welcomed If it's not for the blood Of Jesus You and I would stand Fully accountable Before the throne of God And be held accountable For every word That we've said Every thought That we've thought Every action we've done And in action That we haven't done But for those who come to him Who put their hope in him We are washed Cleansed Justified Sanctified In the blood Of the lamb Who can stand Those that have come Through the great tribulation Those who've been washed In the blood of the lamb And finally in chapter 8 We see The seventh seal is open And when the seventh seal is open There is silence In heaven Absolute silence And it's a picture Of how God's justice Is finally there Peace has finally

Come to the earth Every tear Has been wiped away Every bit of wickedness Has been destroyed Every bit of evil Has been done away with Everything that is wrong With our world Has been done undone Finally Utter peace Has come To creation As we close Tim Chester In his book He tells the story He says that In Rome In the first century There was this Quasi-military Fire service Okay Fire brigade service And There has A monument Survives today That has a list Of the thousand names That were part Of this Fire brigade service And on this monument Has the list Of these thousand names And it's got the names Of the ten centurions Remember Centurion is somebody That looked after A hundred Soldiers And so it's got The list Of these thousand Soldiers The ten centurions But also Where the ten centurions Came from In the Roman Empire

And as you read This list You see that These centurions Came from all over Europe Modern day Bulgaria Slovenia Venice Hungary All over Europe These people Flocked to Rome And joined The military service Rome was a city In the ancient world Which was constantly Attracting immigrants To come to it And part of the reason Was because More people Died in Rome Than were born in Rome And so if Rome The city Didn't constantly Fill up its population With immigrants The population Would dwindle And would die out And so Rome Was constantly Filling up its population With these immigrants But the problem was Rome Was also susceptible To malaria And all sorts of diseases And so people Would come from Other parts Of the Roman Empire They didn't have Immunity from these diseases And they would die Within a short few years And so one historian Mary Beard Put it like this She says Rome Simply swallows

People up It's a city Which consumes people And spews them out dead Here is the greatest City of the world In its time The most powerful City of the world The leader Of the Roman Empire It's the city That everybody Flocks to To find work And safety And security It's a city That swallows people up It consumes them And spews them out dead Much like many Of the modern cities Of our world Tim Chester says In the book of Revelation We come across Another city Another empire And it's also a city Which draws people From every single nation Black White Chinese Rich and poor But around the throne Of the Lamb These people Find Life Friends The cities And the systems Of our world Are going to Self-destruct It doesn't matter What system you trust in

[51 : 04] If it's not the system The city of the Lamb It's going to Self-destruct But here we see In the book of Revelation There is another empire And it's attracting people From all over the world And in this empire In this city Its citizens Find life That's the great challenge And the invitation Of Revelation For all of us today Which kingdom Are we a part of?

Which kingdom Are we giving ourselves to? Jesus and John Invite us To come and center Our lives To offer up our lives Yes as a sacrifice Yes it will cost us But also in great joy To the one who is worthy To the Lamb who is slain Who lives forever and ever That in his presence We may find life Let's come to him Now Let's come and pray Let's pray together And I want to invite the band To come and lead us And as the band come I want to invite us If you want prayer for anything There will be a prayer team That would love to come And pray with you The elders Maybe you can make yourselves Available to come And be at the front If anyone would like prayer Please do come at the front We'd love to pray for you Last Saturday night At our retreat We had an amazing time Of just praying together And it was such a rich time Of just being in God's presence And standing as brothers and sisters

Praying for one another Friends if you This morning you feel Anxious You feel weary You feel fearful You feel overwhelmed Come we'd love to pray with you Father we come to you this morning We acknowledge God That the temptation That the church has felt In the first century Is the same temptation we feel God to either Shrink into our culture And to Try and preserve ourselves By becoming just like our culture Or to try and preserve ourselves By shrinking back And fearfully Not declaring the truth of the gospel God God you call us In days like today In times in which we find ourselves

To fix our eyes on you And so we come to you God We come to you now Father you've shown us this morning That Yes this world is full of Wickedness and evil still Yes this world There's wars and rumors of wars There's kingdom rising against kingdom And destruction But God in the end You and your people Will stand Oh Christ Help us to trust you We pray Father open our eyes To see you And to trust you We pray Lord Father

Father want you help us to see That our lives are not in our own hands But they are in your hands That God we are part of an eternal kingdom Father help us to trust you We pray This week God As we are As we go to work As we encounter the difficulties That our city is going through We pray God That we'll trust you Lord Help us oh Lord Where our faith is failing Where we feel overwhelmed by fear Help us to trust you God Help us to keep our eyes fixed on you Come and have you away We pray these things in your name Amen Amen Amen We're ■ by

[55 : 39] Amen