

The Book of Revelation - Mystery or Illumination? (Part 1)

by Shane Idleman

The Book of Revelation is a complex and open-to-interpretation book that requires caution, humility, and a willingness to seek God's heart and will.

Duration: 1:10:36

Scripture: Lamentations 3:22-23, Matthew 24:36, Romans 8:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 10:36, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:8-9, Revelation 1:3, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Eschatology", "Endurance in Faith"

Description

Shane Idleman explores the complexities of the Book of Revelation, emphasizing that it is both a mystery and a source of illumination. He discusses the historical context of eschatology, the importance of endurance and perseverance in faith, and the dangers of deception in understanding biblical prophecy. Idleman encourages believers to hold their eschatological views loosely, recognizing the diversity of interpretations while affirming the certainty of Christ's return and the need for spiritual readiness. He concludes by urging the church to seek God earnestly and prepare for potential trials ahead.

Transcript

Thank you so much for joining us for our part one series on the book of Revelation, mystery or illumination. And I will tell you up front that I would need about eight months to truly unpack the book of Revelation. Any of you who've taught before, you know that you can't just, you know, put some paint on this old house and hopefully it all is painted.

It's a project of sanding and getting things ready and prepping. And it's the same with the book of Revelation. There's so much here.

But I will tell you this, that there is much speculation out there, especially people now are saying, you know, I'm watching the news to find out what book of Revelation we're in. And we know that the book of Revelation talks about cataclysmic events. And here's what we also know, that as history goes by, I believe that the more and more history that goes by, the more our theological view of eschatology, eschatology is the end times, the study of the end times, that we will actually be more in tune with what God is doing.

For example, if you go to the fourth century or so, the 300s and St. Augustine and what he wrote in origin and what he wrote, Justin Martyr and what he wrote. And then the early church fathers coming up all the way to the Reformation. What did Calvin and Luther think of the Antichrist? And the possibility of Israel becoming a nation again was not even on the radar.

So now we are here in 2020 and we see that the nation of Israel was rebuilt. We see that the what could never have occurred before with a one world type government and a one world monetary system and everybody seeing these witnesses in Revelation. And that just seemed impossible even 50 years ago.

So the more we learn through history and being in history and living into the future, the more I believe we will be able to grasp this book of Revelation. And I want to just remind you of a couple of things that Revelation, the book of Revelation also talks about endurance and perseverance and deception. Those are the three things I'm going to concentrate on towards the end.

And hopefully you'll join us for a little bit of worship at the end where we just need to take some time and seek God and seek his heart for what's going on. But endurance, what does that mean? It's physically enduring something. Perseverance is mentally enduring something.

And then deception means getting the right information from the right people from God's word. And I talked about that the last few weeks. So I'm not going to talk about that again.

If you did not catch the message from last week, go ahead and tune in on false prophets and getting the right information. And I'm also going to not speak on chapters one, two and three, because I talked about the churches, the seven churches in Revelation. If you go to our website, I think it was a few years ago now, you can search for that and those messages should come up.

I'm also not going to go through chapter by chapter, verse by verse, because I don't believe it's a it's a unfolding in that order. And to understand the book of Revelation, you really want to look at Old Testament imagery. What did Jesus riding on the clouds mean in the Old Testament? Well, Jesus was mentioned, technically in the Old Testament, as far as that goes, but riding on the clouds and the clouding the clouds of God's judgment and the darkness and the wrath of God and you john will use Old Testament imagery for for for connection there.

So example, for example, I don't think Jesus is going to be riding back on a cloud like he would ride a horse. We don't think the devil is going to be bound to a physical chain. He's a spiritual being.

So that's why it gets tricky because some things are allegory. Some things are metaphor, some things are literal. And let me just tell you right up front, here's the issue.

Great men and women of God are divided on exactly what is going to happen when it's going to happen how it's going to happen. And people change things later on. They embrace a different view later on as they start to better understand certain things.

And so I'm not going to give you a concrete view. This is how it's all going to break down because I know I actually don't know other than what Scripture says. So that's why we want to look at Scripture.

And my concern with embracing one view wholeheartedly is this, let's say we teach without a shadow of a doubt without a shadow of a doubt, the church is going to be raptured going to be taken away before it gets difficult. And I used to have people tell me this I haven't recently probably because they see what's

really going on. But they used to say, man, Brother Shane, don't worry before it gets real difficult.

We're out of here. And they tell their kids that, you know, just enjoy America. Enjoy good food and enjoy our nice home and enjoy vacation.

And don't worry, as soon as it gets tough, look, we're out of here. And I believe that can be very dangerous. Because what about if you're not out of here? What about if you have to go through some serious tribulation, and I think we need to prepare our kids and our family for the reality that we might face severe persecution, just like the early church did.

Now, do I find joy in saying that? Absolutely not. I prefer not to face any of that. But even now, look what what is happening.

I mean, just the persecution that has come against me. And this church has probably magnified over the last year, and different, you know, security concerns that churches have to take and it's intensifying. And so that's my concern with with gravitating towards one view and holding that as an essential, such as Jesus's death on the cross, His resurrection, the inerrancy of Scripture, the triune nature of God, these things that are foundational, I think we need to be careful in eschatology, because there are good men and women divided on this issue.

And I think it's also hard for this very reason. We want to know what is going to happen. We want to know where it's going to happen.

We want to know when it's going to happen, why it's going to happen and how it's going to happen. And I've learned throughout my life that God often doesn't show me all those things. He wants me to step out in faith.

Had I known how, when, why, where and all the intricate details of planting this church, I might have never jumped into it. Because we want to jump ahead of God, we want to know everything now and a part of living in a life of faith is not knowing these things. So I can look at the book of Revelation, I can read different authors and different views, and say, Lord, I don't know, I'm stepping out in faith.

A few things we do know. And I'm going to talk about that in a minute. But what I don't know is how this is all going to play out.

We do see persecution coming, we do see the movement towards a system that will govern one world leader and different things. So that's kind of a long introduction on where my thought is with this. I don't embrace one view strongly over others, even though I would lean towards, well, let me let me explain that as I go through because it might be too much up front to, to, you know, unpack because I want to unpack it with each point.

But I'm considered if you've heard, you know, mid tribulation, you're out of here midway through the tribulation, if you think the tribulation is taught, that is the future, mid trip, post trip that you're out of here after, after the tribulation, pre tribulation, which you're out of here before the wrath of God is poured out and pre millennial, post millennial, all millennial and all these different terms. What I consider myself is a pan trib. I'm pan trip, p a n, pan trip.

And I will explain it to you right now, I'm going to see how it all pans out. And I'm sure many of you have heard that before. But isn't that the truth? Because I read some sections of Revelation, I read some

authors and, and it makes sense.

And then I read other portions of Scripture in the Old Testament with with with John's writings. And I don't know this, this seems to be relevant here. And it's, it's, it's difficult.

And I had a lot of questions growing up. For example, I love Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel Ministries. I listened actually listened to his entire tape series took about a year I was stuck in a John Deere 310 skid steer loader.

I'll never forget that air conditioning and heating and I would I would sit on that thing and I would dig for for hours and hours everything from power lines to water lines to leech lines to block wall footings and foundations and and I would just absorb the Word of God and and I love that ministry but he would often say when teaching like in Revelation three, he's talking to the church churches in Revelation one, two and three, but he's not the church isn't mentioned anymore after that. So that is a proof text for the rapture they would teach and, and I just, I just can't embrace that I don't see that as a proof text. Now, I'm not doubting the rapture that's taught in Scripture.

But so I started to have a lot of questions. Another question I had was and still have is this millennial reign of Christ and, and the rebuilding of the temple and why is there sacrifices? Again, why are you sacrificing to me that seems like total blasphemy and, and people say, well, it's a memorial. Well, that's not a good memorial.

That's a bad memorial. So I and all these questions about the mark of the beast and, and 666 and the number of man and then I read Josephus works. Josephus was an early Jewish historian.

And a lot of what he wrote when he talked about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Well, it actually was 70 AD, I believe 70 AD. It was a three and a half year siege.

Interesting how the book, Daniel talks about three and a half years. And so Josephus talking about that cataclysmic event, really paralleled some of what's in Revelation, even though I don't gravitate towards that view necessarily. So I just had a lot of questions from every side and every angle.

And that's why many of you do so I would just caution you. Hold your eschatology loosely in the palm of your hand, because it could be wrong in certain areas. What is what is right that we all know, and I might talk about that again, in a little bit is this Jesus is coming again.

Are you prepared? Are you ready, the kingdom of God, I believe is here in this sense that Jesus said the kingdom of God is within you when a person believes in Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit of God, the kingdom of God is within you. However, I don't believe it's at its fullness yet there the key he still will rule and reign and govern the affairs of man he is coming again, we know that there is a taking away in Thessalonians and we'll talk about that there's a catching up and, and the church believers will be caught up to Jesus Christ. Is that a rapture? And is that different than his second coming? Or is it one event? Well, welcome to the world of biblical discussions on end times.

There's a lot of questions out there as you can tell. And so what I want to do instead of just teaching one view, and I mean, I respect you know, if you follow Calvary Chapel, Jack Hibbs, of course, and Pastor David Jeremiah, that we have on our radio network, and then Alistair Begg is different, of course, and John MacArthur, I've read a lot of his material, and also Greg Laurie. And so there's different views out there.

But I want to share with you the four main views. And usually you'll see those in the reformed theology, Westminster, Westminster Theological Seminary, I believe in Pennsylvania, Peter Lyle back was a president there, I had talked to him many years ago, and they would break embrace a different view of the end times. And, and so you do see a teaching of the end times go up with a certain denomination.

So this denomination teaches this, and this movement teaches this and this. And so it's kind of hard to find that middle ground. But I want to share with you the four different views that are primary.

So you know, I just think it's good there. And this is by Pat, I don't mind sharing other views. So people are well aware of what is out there.

And this is by Patrick Zucker, Zucker and he's the executive director of evidence and answers. And he talks about number one, the allegorical approach, the allegorical approach, meaning allegory. And I should clarify, this doesn't mean that these people think everything is allegory.

And allegory is kind of a typology. And they use symbols and things to mean certain things. And in my opinion, it's a little dangerous, because your interpretation is left up to how you read into that allegory.

So I don't necessarily embrace this. But it was prominent by Augustine, I believe it was origin, who, who brought it to light at the beginning and the symbols in Revelation, they would say are not tied to specific events. But they point to themes throughout church history, the battles in Revelation are wars in general, that have occurred in history, and the beast from the sea may be identified as the satanically inspired political oppression to the church in any age.

And the beast on the land represents pagan or corrupt religion to Christianity. So there, that would be their view, the allegorical view. And some people do embrace that.

And it is challenging, because you have this beast coming out of the water, you have the beast on the land, and you have this, this Antichrist, which is interesting, the word, and you can just look, just check this out. I don't believe the word Antichrist, this person, this Antichrist is mentioned in Revelation, it's, it's, it's the beast, the false prophet and words like that. And so it's interesting, to say the least.

And then obviously, many of you know about the second view, which is called preterist. And that means past and it's derived from the the Latin word, it means past. And technically speaking, it means the two major views of preterists are full preterism and partial preterism.

And both of these views believe that when Jesus was talking in Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, that he was he was talking to that generation. And the same thing with Revelation that it was all fulfilled in AD 70, really 66 AD 70, when Titus, the Roman captain, the some momentum is because there is some truth in that, what Jesus said, when you see, you see these great temple, this great temple, and all these things, I tell you, all of these stones will come tumbling down, there will not be one upon another. And that did happen, that was literally fulfilled.

And Jesus said, I tell you the truth, this generation will see these things. So I'm type of person who would believe in reading the Scriptures that Matthew 24, you know, is relevant to us today, we are going to see various earthquakes and famines and civil wars. And so is it possible that it could have dual, dual meaning dual, dual emphasis on it was applicable then, and it's going to happen now, all these things that Jesus talked about, Matthew 24, just didn't happen in AD 70.

And now, well, now we're good. No, we could see the same things fulfilled. And if again, if you read Josephus's works, you will see that a lot of things happened in AD 70, that fulfilled some of these things.

And again, it would take a half hour to just look at Matthew 24. When Jesus said, you know, these, the disciples said, when is this going to happen? When is the sign of the age? When is the end coming? And they viewed it as all one event, where some would view it as different events throughout time. And that's why it gets a little complicated.

But it's interesting, because you have to look at Matthew 24, you have to look at Matthew 23. And Jesus rebukes the religious leaders. That's when he said, you brood of vipers, you kill the prophets who are sent to you and you stone those who God has sent to you to give you my word, you kill the righteous people, and the blood of Abel all the way to Zechariah, son of Barqiah, you killed all these people and their blood is going to be required of you, of this generation.

And that's what I believe Jesus was talking about. I don't think in that particular moment, he was talking about us 2000 years later, it was a judgment, he was calling on the religious leaders of his day, and they were judged. They were judged some 40 years later when Jerusalem fell.

He said, this blood will be required on you. And that's when he goes into that famous discord. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you stone your messengers, you kill your messengers, not unlike America today.

Amen. The voice that needs to be heard in America is being suppressed. And Jesus said, Oh, I wish I would I would wish I could gather you as a mother hen gathers her chicks, but you were not willing you have rejected your Messiah, you have rejected me, you have killed the innocent, and the judgment of God will fall upon you this generation.

So you have to look at Matthew 23, to really understand Matthew 24. But then he does go into things that I just don't see how they could have been fulfilled. All in 8070 and must, in my opinion, must be partial fulfillment then and even future fulfillment going forward.

In the war of the Jews, Josephus described events, I believe it was November 67 ad. And he said that they were coming against one another, there was an opposition to one another civil war in every city, barbarians. And this lines up well with John's vision of people killing one another in the land.

So that's why some people think revelation could have been fulfilled, because there was civil war, everything Jesus said just about everything Jesus said until you get the lat to the latter part of Matthew 24, with various earthquakes and different things. A lot of those things you do see happened. And in 8070, if you read the works of Josephus and find out really what happened.

However, when Jesus talks about all these things in Matthew 24, there's some cataclysmic events. And when he says, nothing like this has ever happened in the past. And nothing like this is going to ever happen again in the future.

It makes it seem like he is not referring to 8070. In that situation now, so you can see why it gets confusing. Welcome to my world.

Revelation gives me a headache sometimes. And also in John's vision, remember John's vision in Revelation, he saw a great sword. And numerous times Josephus spoke of the zealots killing others with with swords and cutting their throats.

So could it be that beheading that John is talking about in Revelation again? I don't think so. But that's where some people come from. And you can look this up the numerical value of Caesar of Caesar is 666.

That is very interesting, to say the least. And John, they say was warning the people of Caesar Nero, the number of a man 666. But then you start to tie in, you know, you can't buy or sell without the mark.

And then is when it really doesn't seem to fit anymore in 8070. So it very interesting things. And I believe that's another interesting point is the numerous references and revelation to a three and a half years fit very well between 66 and 70 ad when Rome late siege see, Jerusalem didn't didn't just fall in 70 ad within a month.

It was a period of three and a half years from 66 ad to 70 ad. And when Daniel when they talk about the three and a lot of teachings about three and a half years, three and a half years, it fits that perfect that narrative perfectly. So on that side, I say, Wow, that is a really good point.

And I mean, I pray, I pray revelation happened already in 70 ad, I pray that the right and the Christianization of America is coming and the gospel is going to spread and we're going to become we're going to actually become better and more godly and instead of more depraved. I wish that was true. But obviously, I don't see that.

And I don't sense that. But you should know the gospel is going out big time in Iraq. And in the underground church in China, Brazil, what's happening there, God is awakening.

So sometimes we get this view of, of Oh, my goodness, you know, everything is falling apart, the sky's falling in. And God is losing the battle. He's not God will never lose the battle.

He brings revival wherever he wants. The Holy Spirit goes wherever he wants. And God will bring revival, God renew his people, he'll bring them up in Iraq and Iran and Syria and the underground church in China.

And there there is a there is a gospel call going out there are hundreds of 1000s being saved per year, if not more. And so we do see that happening. We do see the gospel going out.

And, and I believe this is why I'm not giving up in America, and why I'm not cashing in my chips and, and just giving up and throwing in the towel. Because when God brings revival, he often brings it at the darkest times when America gets to her knees and cries out to God, you might experience tremendous financial upheaval, and God might use these things to to bring us to our knees more civil unrest, more killings, more mayhem, but God is still on the throne, and we need to continue to look to him. So I'm not giving up.

I'm looking up. I don't like what's happening. But I also know that God with a blink of an eye with a with a with a just a word he can turn the course of this nation.

And so looking at this book of Revelation, the Old Testament, I'm going to give you some what I mean by Old Testament imagery, Revelation 17, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls. And it's interesting when you talk about the seven bowls, the seven trumpets, the seven seals, some people look at this as 21 different events. Some people say they there's, there are seven different events.

But what's interesting is you do see God, there's a seals, seals that are broken, and judgment comes, and then the cups are poured out and judgment comes, and then the trumpets are sounded and judgment comes. So this could be a time of God judging the world as well. But anyway, one of the seven angels in

Revelation 17 said this, come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute who sits by many waters with her the kings of the earth have committed adultery in the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.

Then the angel carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and 10 horns. I want you to think about this for a minute.

What have we been told over the years? Who is this? Is that the revised Roman Empire? Is that is that what this is? So therefore, I saw the woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and 10 horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet. I think that's significant.

Why would he mention what the woman is wearing and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand filled with abominable things and filth of her adulteries. The name written on her forehead was a mystery.

Babylon, the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth. Here's the thing, though. How do we know that he could not, he might be referencing Israel and not Rome? Hear me out.

Purple, scarlet, gold and jewels and pearls are almost identically tied to Israel's high priest. That's what they wore. That that's exactly what is described is what the high priest garments look like.

And this is what I mean by Old Testament imagery. John's looking to the Old Testament for imagery. The Old Testament prophets consistently spoke of Israel's spiritual harlotry.

Why would Rome be committing spiritual harlotry when Rome is already not part of God's kingdom? They are Gentiles. And so all these things just make you think. Jeremiah 3.3 says, you have the forehead of a whore talking to Israel.

Revelation 18.24, in her was found the blood of the prophets and the saints. So it doesn't necessarily sound like Rome. And that's again, we're reading over the years kind of being confused in these areas.

What is this? Again, we don't know. Time will tell. And we will all know at some point.

I'm convinced of that. But this beast that we're making out to be, I'm sorry. So the beast could be Rome, and it destroys the harlot Jerusalem.

So that would not be a coming beast. That would have been what happened in 8070, according to this view. So very interesting things.

In regards to that portion, I can see what they're talking about. Because to me, this describes what the priest wore, it describes Israel's harlotry, and that she was judged by Rome. Now here's where the challenge gets.

Interesting. It really has to do with the date of Revelation. If the book of Revelation was written, like many of us believe, AD 90-95, right in there, 25 years after the fall of Jerusalem, then obviously Revelation, no portion of Revelation is talking about AD 70, without a shadow of a doubt.

However, if the book of Revelation was written, you know, in the 60s, 60 ADs, then it could be talking about 70 AD, the fall of Jerusalem, where this terrible million Jews were slaughtered, the blood ran down the streets, Josephus talks about. And so that is interesting, to say the least. I know that the main reason, the main way they date the book of Revelation is by one of the early church fathers.

He talked about it being after the reign of, well, let me just read, I think I wrote it down here. Let's see here. Oh, yeah.

Irenaeus, in his work against heresies, said that John wrote Revelation at the end of Emperor Domitian's reign, which ended about 96 AD. And Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John. So that's really where they use his quote to say, okay, it must be a later date.

And maybe it could, I don't know. I know it's confusing. I know for most of you, if you're not a Bible scholar, this is over your head, doesn't make a lot of sense.

But don't worry, I'm getting somewhere right here at the end, shortly. And so here's some troubles I have, though, with AD 70, Revelation being filled in AD 70. Number one, why would John, okay, let me flesh this out for a minute.

John is writing to the seven churches in the first three chapters of Revelation. He's writing to the churches, we understand that. However, those churches are not in Israel, in Jerusalem, where Titus came and conquered.

They are actually 400 to 600 miles north. Smyrna, Ephesus, Laodicea, all those churches are way, so why would John be warning these churches of something that's going to happen 600 miles away in Jerusalem, when it really didn't affect them? Granted, they were persecuted. They were killed for the faith, many of them.

And so that's one way I don't see, it's not like the church is in Jerusalem and he's warning the church. Also, when you read Revelation, you see cataclysmic and cosmic events, the stars falling and different things. And now, granted, if you use Old Testament imagery of the stars falling and God bringing mountains low and valleys, mountains like valleys and bringing them down low, it's often a sign of his judgment, of his power, of his authority.

So maybe not necessarily stars will be falling and mountains crumbling. We know there is a lot of imagery there. So my thought is, and all of this is, that's why you have to hold this loosely.

Very interesting, very interesting thing. But when you see the cataclysmic events unfolding in Revelation, to me, and the cosmic events, to me, that would mean that this is something yet to come. So I would be probably considered a futurist, that these things are coming, but at the same time, I'm not fully convinced on that argument.

I lean towards some of these other aspects. And so it's kind of like, okay, well, I know things are going to get tough. Are you prepared? I know that Jesus is coming again.

Are you ready? I know that there could be a one-world government, and we're going to talk about that going forward, the mark of the beast and all these different things. But I would probably be that futuristic-type revelation is going to come in the near future, if I were to lean in any direction. However, there are a lot of questions with that scenario too, and I'll get to that in just a minute.

And I think we also need to be careful. This is a biggie. I've noticed that pride is deadly in the life of a Christian.

And what I mean by pride is, a lot of times we don't want to be challenged. We don't want our views to be challenged. We've held these views for many years, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years.

I read Hal Lindsey's book, and this is what I believe. And I love the Left Behind series, and this is what I believe. And this teacher taught me this, and this is what I believe.

And pride gets in there, so we're not as open and teachable to maybe other things that are out there. So I just want to encourage you to be open, be teachable. And many of you are probably wondering, how can I get more information? Well, they're big, thick books, and I've just about read them both.

I want to recommend The End. It's called The End, A Complete Overview of Bible Prophecy and the End Days by Mark Hitchcock. He would be the futurist, premillennial, dispensational, probably kind of view.

And then there's the other side of it, and Kingdom Come. The book is titled Kingdom Come by Sam Storm. He would take the all-millennial position, and some of what I talked about being already fulfilled.

But we do need to be careful, because when you hear the word all-millennial, it really shouldn't be called all-millennial. What they mean by, if you say, I'm all-political, it means I'm not political. If you put an A in front of it, it means you're not that.

So these people really are not all-millennials. What they believe is the millennial reign, many times, is here and now. That Christ is ruling and reigning on the throne now.

Now, I have issues with that, like I'm sure some of you do listening as well, but they would embrace a millennial. So it's not like they are not millennials. They don't believe in any millennial reign.

It's just somehow they've been given that title. And so again, I believe in dual fulfillment. Christ said He would return, and He will return.

Now the third view is interesting. It's called the historical approach. This view teaches that Revelation is a symbolic representation that presents the course of history from the Apostle's life through the end of the age.

The symbols in the book of Revelation correspond with events in history. And most interpreters place the events of their day in the later chapters of Revelation. Many adherents to this position view chapters one and three as the seven periods of church history.

And I actually heard David Jeremiah teach on this about 10 years ago. Very interesting. A lot of great points.

Not sure I embrace it, but so they would say, you know, this view, they would say we're actually in the Laodicean view of church history, meaning when Jesus is talking to the church in Laodicea that you are lukewarm, wasn't talking to a specific church, but a period of time. And that we are in that now. And Smyrna, and the different churches.

And that when the church was persecuted, when they went through the early persecution, and when the missionaries went out in the 1800s, that they were, that was the era of the Philadelphia church. And so it's

interesting. The connections are pretty cool, but I'm not a historical approach guy.

And they would say the breaking of the seals in chapters four and seven symbolize the fall of the Roman Empire. And the trumpet judgments in chapters eight and 10 represent other invasions. Among Protestants of the Reformation, the Antichrist in Revelation was believed to be the papacy.

So I don't know of how many of you are aware of that, but the Reformers, you have John Calvin, of course, you know, many of you are not know him, but you know, read his works in Geneva there. And you have John Knox, who was in Scotland, you have Ulrich Zwingli, who was in Switzerland, Martin Luther, who was in Germany, there translating the Bible into the German language. And these Reformers would actually refer to the papacy, to the Pope as the Antichrist, because what they saw him doing, and they would read Scripture, definitely, there are some definite parallels.

And that's why they would, they would, Hitler, Antichrist, you know, so you can attribute it to certain things. Now, I'm going to get into this a little bit later. There's so much to this, but the Antichrist, you have to remember, we'll read the Scriptures when I talk about this, but there's a spirit of Antichrist.

So whether it's a one world leader rising up, which I think we will see someday, but there is an Antichrist spirit. So all these people are waiting, waiting, waiting. Let me tell you, the Antichrist spirit is here.

It's been there a long time throughout history. The Antichrist spirit in America is alive and well. Antichrist against God.

You can pray in every other name, just don't pray in Jesus. We're going to slaughter children even at nine months, but we're going to walk around and acting like we are so spiritual, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. And you see this anti-God movement, and it is Antichrist, it is demonic at its core.

So the Antichrist spirit is here, alive and ready, and it's influencing millions of people. And then of course, probably the most famous, I should say, view is that of the futurist. And really, you wouldn't see a lot of the futurist back hundreds of years ago.

A lot of these things shift with having more information and seeing more things fulfilled. One of the key elements in this debate, particularly between preterists and futurists, is the date of the writing of Revelation. That's why I already talked with you.

So the futurist would say that these events in Revelation are coming. They have not already occurred. And I don't want to get into a lot of that, because we know the view on this, the general view is that there will be a one world leader who will rise up, and I wish I had time to go to Daniel right now, and this one world leader will rise up, and he will begin to persecute the church, and you won't be able to buy or sell anything without this mark, forehead, arm, and we see that then we are pre-tribulation.

And I believe that before God pours out His wrath, His actual wrath, He would remove His people, I believe. Now if He doesn't, He can, and friends of mine believe that we go through the tribulation, He can persevere, He can not persevere, He can preserve His people, just like you see when the death angel went over the entire land of the Egyptians, He spared the children of Israel, their Goshen, when they were in Goshen there. And you also see that God would spare His people in times of judgment.

Jeremiah, when Israel, Jerusalem fell, and Jeremiah was taken captive, but then released, and you see Daniel, and so we know that when God pours out His wrath, that God's people will not have to absorb His wrath. That's a no-brainer to me. If God's bringing out His wrath, it's not going to fall on His people.

That just, it goes against His nature, it goes against the Word. However, could we be in the midst of that, but be exempt from it? I don't know, that's a very interesting topic as well. And I should encourage some of you, there's so much, and there is a lot of fear out there, and you have to be careful, don't read the media, don't listen to media too much.

The media right now, the most effective media, the most most effective devil, I forget the other ones, influencing America, something like that. And be careful who you listen to, because some media groups, and I'll just point out, for example, the Drudge Report, or others, it's just doom and gloom. Bash our president, approval ratings are down, America's failing, financial crisis, the death rate is climbing, 70,000 infections in a day.

Oh my goodness, what is happening? There is a political agenda, and you need to be aware. If this was a different administration that favored their narrative, they would be painting a much more pleasant picture. All you have to do is look at when Obama was leading us through H1N1.

Just go look, you wouldn't have any of this garbage. So be careful who you're listening to. They're planting fear, and they're planting doubt in your minds about many things.

Just look to God's Word. If you need to get a little news information, that's okay, but look to God's Word, because many of those things are not only being used to mislead you and create fear, I should say, they are actually false information. It's lies that they are perpetrating.

This whole COVID-19 that is a legitimate disease, I don't believe it's a conspiracy theory. And we have to remember, though, if it's true, it's not a conspiracy theory, so be careful, some of you. It's a virus, we got it, but the death rate is minimal, point whatever percent, and people are, you'll get sick, just like you get the flu, and we don't want people to get sick.

We want people to be healthy and different things, but it's like they're taking this and running with it, mask and shutdown. They're doing things that does not need to be done if you let a virus run its full course. Now, again, I'm not for just having no boundaries and just a free-for-all.

I think, you know, great, use precautions. A year ago, if somebody said, hey, my whole family has the flu, hey, I'll stand outside your house and pray for you. I don't want to go inside.

I think that's just wise, so of course, we need to have precautions. But to shut down the economy, to try to get mail-in ballots, and for this to be a political weapon, listen, I need to give a message to some of these governors that are Democrats. You are destroying the nation by trying to kill the economy.

You hate our president so bad and so much that you'll do whatever you can to destroy the 2020 November election, and you just, people just need to call it out. That was a rabbit trail from Revelation, and I do not apologize because that's the problem. Can you imagine if pastors would just grow a backbone and call it out and say, this is wrong.

You are destroying our economy. You are destroying our families. You are creating a suicide epidemic.

You are lying to the people. You are falsifying numbers. You are doctoring numbers.

You are skewing things. You are giving out misinformation, and it needs to be told. Can you imagine? Can you imagine what would happen? Because people are looking to pastors right now, and my heart breaks because one of the number one emails we receive, I mean, it's daily that people are saying, my pastor, our church is not saying anything, nothing, nothing.

Now, they're either scared. I don't know. They don't want, I don't really know.

Maybe they don't know, but it is very frustrating because people are looking. Millions and millions of Christians are looking to the pulpit. Tell us something according to God's Word.

Tell us something. What is going on? We need encouragement. We need to be built up, and we need to hear relevant issues with our times.

Listen, it's fine to spend a month in the book of Leviticus from time to time, but sometimes you need to come and talk about what is actually going on right now. So, the mark of the beast, what I was saying in all that before the rabbit trail, is some of you are worrying too much. Listen, I don't like the idea of a vaccine.

They don't work. I can go into the neurotoxins that are in them. I can go into the fall rate of them.

I can talk about just the ludicrous of the flu vaccine, how it does it, different things. Okay, I'm not for that. I'm not anti-vaccine.

Actually, I'm whatever works, and if there's a healthy alternative, if these things prove to work, that's a whole different thing. So, the new tagline is anti-vaccine, anti-vax. You're against helping.

No, we're not. Give me something that works, and we'll be for it, but not agendas and billion-dollar industries and different things. So, taking me a while to get to this point, but here I go.

They're not going to be able to slip slip the mark of the beast into you, and like, oh, I didn't even know. Now, I can never, never know Jesus. Oh, Lord, I'm sorry.

I took the mark of this, whatever it is, and personally, it might be, it might not, I mean, it might be a mark, you know, somehow mark, but it could be a just like in the Bible, the Old Testament too, or even that they are marked by God. Doesn't mean they have a big mark on their forehead. They are marked by God.

They're called of God. They're God's children. So, this mark of the beast could be a clear, it is a clear rejection of God.

So, somehow, some way, I believe if this is still coming, which I believe it is, that there will be a clear line of demarcation drawn in the sand. Churches that are pro-homosexual, pro-LGBT agenda, pro-probably pedophiles. That's where it's all going to fit in at some point.

Pro, you know, God's word is not inerrant, inspired. Jesus is one of many ways. This group is going to be with the world system, but the others that say, no, I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't bow my knee to that type of mindset.

I can't, I can't embrace the anti-Christ spirit agenda. There's, I'm marked by God. So, therefore, I can't take on your mark.

I can't look like you. So, they could say, Shane, because of that, then you'll be punished. What you're saying is hate speech, and we will, we will take away your ability to buy and to sell, probably if it's going to be through a charge card or different things.

So, I'm not a fan of chip implants. I don't think it's, I mean, I have concerns like you, but if you were to happen to, if that was to happen in order to, you know, transact certain things, just that in and of itself is not going to lead to the mark of the beast. It's a clear rejection of God.

So, you will not be caught off guard. You will not say, I didn't know. How did that happen? It will be a time, and that's why we're sensing this spiritual upheaval.

Lines are being drawn. It's being drawn very clear, and if you get the, that's why I just need to lovingly confront some of you who don't think this November election is important. You're too worried about our president's past.

You're too worried about if he has a woman as a spiritual advisor. You're too, man, America is going to hell in a handbasket, and you need to wake up. The clear lines of demarcation are being drawn.

Let me tell you what this looks like. You get the wrong person in office in November. You can kiss the American church goodbye.

You can kiss your liberties and your freedoms goodbye. There is communism and Marxism and totalitarian forms of government that will be pushed. So, this is a fight for biblical freedom, I believe, and we need to speak that truth, and so there will be a clear mark.

I reject God's word and all this hate speech that this is a sin and this is wrong, and I embrace this godly love system, and that is the mark. You're rejecting God. Now, John MacArthur caught a lot of heat a while back because he said he believes that people who get the mark of the beast, you can google this, I'm sure some of you will, that they can still be saved in the end, and people are like, oh, he's a false prophet.

No, no, no, no, no. Here's what he, now I probably wouldn't have said that, but here's the question. If an unbeliever takes this mark or whatever it is, bows their knee to the world system, is all hope of redemption lost for them? Have they ever given the chance? What about if they hear the gospel after they've taken this allegiance to Satan? So, the Bible is not crystal clear on once you do this, once you do this, there is no repentance for you.

It does say those who have taken the mark will follow the beast and their destiny is judgment. It does say that, but there's not clarity there on whether the person, now I wouldn't try to find this out, don't try to find this out, but there isn't clarity on if a person, you know, a year into this realizes that Jesus is the Lord and Savior and repents, but now they have this mark, they'll probably have to be killed because if they reject. So, that's why he said that.

So, I don't know if I'd necessarily say that because it gives people the wrong impression, but we're not, there's no certainty. You cannot say with certainty that once you take that mark, you will never be able to repent of your sin. Now, I don't want to play that game.

I don't want people to play that game. It could be, it could be that at that point, once you decide, you know, you're following the anti-Christ system and you take a mark and you can't buy or sell without this mark. Once you take that, your conscience could be seared and your destiny is sealed.

That's possible, but that's why he said that. So, let's get grounded for a minute, if your head's still spinning, and I'm going to talk more next week about what looks like the mark of the beast, the rapture, different things, different points. I just want to, you know, give you an idea or give you different views.

There's a person I also like to follow, Amir Safari. Many of you know Amir Safari through Jack Hibbs and different things. He's actually Israeli, was in the Israeli military and has some good points on the Bible prophecy.

And, you know, I hear some things, I'm like, ah, I don't know about that, you know, but overall, very good stuff. So, if you want to look to him, Dr. Michael Brown has an interesting perspective on end times. Sam Storm has podcasts on it that are different.

John Piper, you can look at even D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. His view is interesting. He was actually an all-millennial.

Many of those in the Reformed faith were. So, my point is, we have to be gracious to one another. There's too much brother shooting brother, too many bantering and calling false prophet just because you don't believe or agree with your end times theology.

That's ridiculous. It really shows the immaturity of your heart when you do that. You need to be able to embrace people in different views as long as they do not differ from the essential.

So, let's get grounded. What's every, all these things we can agree on. Again, part two next week.

Don't miss that. God is sovereign. Amen? God is sovereign.

You need to post that all over your house with post-it notes or a dry erase board and your Bible. God is sovereign. God sits on the throne.

China has to bow their knee to God. Russia cannot do anything without God's permission. Iran, North Korea cannot do anything without God's permission.

The next election coming up will be under his sovereign control. So, the American church needs to get back to prayer and fasting and seeking the sovereignty of God and praying and say, oh God, would you stay your hand of judgment and have mercy on my children, have mercy on my family. Lord, you are sovereign.

You still reign. You are on the throne. You are glorious.

You are a conqueror. You are our king. You are our help in times of need.

God is sovereign. We all agree on that. But within his sovereignty, he allows certain things to happen.

And we all agree. And when I say all, I'm sure there's some out there that don't. But we all agree on the second coming of Jesus Christ.

That has not come yet. At least what I see. We're still waiting for him to come back.

And there's always an immediate, or they call it the amnesty of Christ. The amnesty of Christ meaning his immediate return. The early church felt it.

The church in the 400, 500, 600s felt it. In the medieval times, they felt it. The true believers and the Anabaptists and the early church, I'm sorry, the early reformers and Whitecliffe and Huss and William Tyndale.

And they're always waiting, waiting, waiting for his return. And that's very healthy. That's good.

That's why the Bible is living. And it relates to us in the early church era and it relates to us now. But the second coming of Jesus Christ, it does beg the question, are you ready? Are you ready for his return? Well, Shane, how do I know? When I say that, does fear grip your heart and you say, I don't know if I can stand before my judge? Or does your heart bow in humble submission and say, King Jesus, would you return? Would you come back and put your staff down and sit and rule and reign on the throne? I am ready for your return.

Or are you fearful for his return? If you're fearful, you need to repent. You need to repent and believe in the gospel. And then number three, we all believe in the resurrection from the dead.

There will be a resurrection. The dead in Christ will rise. Those who went before us, the resurrection to this, and maybe that would be a whole nother series on heaven and what that looks like in the resurrected bodies and what we'll be able to do.

And I know some people get negative. They're like, I just don't want to, I just don't want to sit on clouds and sing all day. Let me tell you, eternity with Jesus Christ will be better than anything you've ever experienced.

And the dead in Christ will be raised up in this glorious body that my, where my back doesn't hurt. Praise God, huh? My back doesn't hurt. And my knee almost gives out and my shoulder.

And boy, you can feel this aging body and the resurrected bodies will be raised with Christ again. This is what the word of God says. And the word of God is inerrant.

It does not fail. Not one word from God fails. When God says something, it comes to pass.

Thus saith the Lord, who will question my word? Who will question my sovereignty? When I speak, I speak truth and I speak life. And we all agree that there is a future judgment. There is a judgment that is coming.

And I believe that's a portion of revelation that God will judge. And many people don't understand that. How can a loving God? But you have to understand something.

A perfect God, a loving God that has created us to love him or reject him. There has to be a judgment. You have to be judged for what you do.

Accept or reject. Without the judgment, there is no engagement of the will to love God, to truly love God. And number five, genuine Christianity will be tested.

Genuine Christianity will be tested. Let me just throw this out there. Pastor, preacher, teacher, actually anyone listening, this is a good point for all of us to recognize.

If the world's mindset, Hollywood, liberal media, if they're not upset by what you're saying, you might be on the wrong side. True biblical preaching stirs the heart. It convicts the heart of the world.

So let me give you a final point. How to persevere through a pandemic. How to persevere through a pandemic.

Revelation talks consistently about endurance and perseverance. And I told you this earlier. Isn't this interesting? Endurance.

Endurance. He who endures till the end will be saved. And you might say, what's the difference between these words? Well, there's a big difference.

Endurance is strength while you're abiding under this load. Anybody filling a load right now or is it just me? You're filling this load. And so the enemy wants you to cave in and fall down and crumble and be done, whether it's committing suicide, whether it's giving up on God, whether it's throwing in the towel, whatever it is.

This weight, this load is bearing down. It's holding down on you. But the Bible says, get up and endure.

Endure this. Endure the cross. Endure the load.

Endure the onslaught of attacks that's coming against you. Having done all, stand. Stand therefore with your loins girt about with truth, enduring the weight of the pressure.

But remember, you can always endure the weight of the pressure when the strength in the inside is greater than the pressure on the outside. So when the grace of God and the strength of God and the Holy Spirit of God is strengthening and strengthening, that's what pushes up. That's how you endure.

This is a physical endurance. Those who endure physically to the end shall be saved. So your body, your body will be ravaged from the warfare.

There's a struggle. There's a load. And I'm not talking about the load of sin that is lifted.

It's actually funny. I just thought of this. I was on a conference call this week, a Zoom call, and Roger Stone popped on.

The guy who Trump acquitted or whatever they call that technical term that escaped my mind. He came on and Jesus has changed his life. Now, I don't think this is a jailhouse conversion, right, where they say, I don't know.

Time will tell. But it was a genuine Jesus. And what he said is, it's like a load has been lifted.

This huge, this weight, this backpack has been lifted from me and I now feel free. And that's what you can experience. If you're carrying the weight of sin and depression, let Christ take it off of your back and experience the freedom that comes with him.

And then now as a believer, fill with the Spirit of God, I'm fighting against the world. So there's an endurance that takes place. I'm enduring this.

I'm holding it up. And what you need for a physical battle, for those who can, you need a healthy body. This is one reason why I'm a big fan of fasting and eating the right things, eating God-given food.

And these foods and these chemicals affect us. And so many people are gaining weight during this pandemic and feeling depression. They're loading up on sugar and alcohol and caffeine and all these

things that really hurt you physically.

And if you're not in shape physically, it's harder to carry that load. You keep crumbling under the pressure. So I'm a big fan of fasting.

We're actually starting a corporate fast here at the church again on Monday. If you'd like to join us, even if you hear this late, start starving the flesh and saying, I need to hear from God. That's what the church needs to say again.

I need to hear from God. I'm starving all other voices. I'm starving all other influences.

I'm starving the flesh because Almighty God, we need to hear from you. And need I remind you that in times of desperation, they always called a fast. Nehemiah called a fast.

Ezra said, how are we going to go forward without fasting for God's protection? Esther said, call a fast for I don't know if I've been called for such a time as this. And David fasted. And Joel said, sound the alarm, consecrate a fast, call the sacred assembly, call the leaders into the house of God and cry out to him.

Fasting says, I want it so bad, God, that you are the priority. I'm going to starve these fleshly appetites for a season. So if you want to endure, you want to endure.

It has to be a physical. There's a physical price to pay. And again, I'm talking for those who can do this.

I know there's people in wheelchairs or paraplegics, quadriplegic, listen to this message. People in hospitals. I'm not talking to those groups.

I'm praying for those groups. But I'm talking to those who can make a difference. Get your temple, the Holy Spirit back into health and start walking and working out and exercising and preparing.

When I'm exercising, gone are the days of trying to look like a model, right? I just want to get and feel better and strengthen myself. So physically, this word endurance, it's enduring on our physical body. And I found the better you take care of your body physically, the more you'll be able to endure spiritually.

Trust me. And then the last word here, perseverance. So he who endures till the end, but then he says he who perseveres to the end.

Now this word perseverance is not physical, right? It's not physical. What is it? It is mental. He who perseveres mentally.

In other words, he keeps his sights fixed on Christ. When all hell is breaking loose, he keeps his sights fixed on Christ. When I was a young teenager, actually, I wasn't a teenager yet.

I think I was 12 years old. In California, I shot trap. You stand back and you shoot at clay birds.

And I was in the amateur trap shooting association and did very well for a season. And my dad taught me when that bird, when that clay bird would fly out, you'll keep the shotgun right on it. I could hear dogs barking.

I could hear my little, you know, friends throwing rocks at me. I could hear people taunting me. You're going to miss it.

But I kept my eyes right on it. I pulled the trigger no matter what was going around, all kinds of things, noise, cars, honking their horns, people trying to distract you, all things. But you kept your sights focused on the target.

And Christians, you've got to get back to that. Get your mind out of Facebook for a season, out of Twitter, out of social media, and plant your face in the word of God. The only way to persevere mentally is to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind and let the power of God and the presence of God consume you so that you persevere till the end.

Because God is your anchor. God is holding you. A few months ago, I reminded you about a scripture in Lamentations.

Lamentations comes from the word lament. And Jeremiah was lamenting over the fall of Jerusalem. It's sad to see.

Can you imagine seeing, you know, for example, the Statue of Liberty down in the harbor there in the ocean? And you look at these monuments and they're destroyed. You look at the flag and it's desecrated. And you see that there's no hope for your children.

That's what he was experiencing. Lamentations. He actually said, I believe it's in the opening verses there in Lamentations, that the city that was once full of people is now empty.

Jerusalem is like a widow with no hope, with no direction. She was the prince. She was the king among princesses, but now she's a mocking voice or she's a scorn to all people.

And how great has she fallen. And Jeremiah is lamenting. It's a very sad book of the Bible, but I love this verse.

It pops out every time I read it. He said, this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. See, we're not where he's at yet, and I don't want to get there, but we can quote this.

This I recall. Jeremiah, you can imagine he's sitting there and he wasn't taken captive, I believe, to Babylon. I believe they left him there.

And the poor, they actually, they left the poor there as well to just have at it, I guess. So Jeremiah is there. He's sitting there.

He says, I recall this to my mind, therefore I have hope through the Lord's mercies. The Lord's mercies are not consumed. God's mercies are not gone.

They're not consumed. Be encouraged, because His compassion will never fail. They are renewed every morning.

Great is your faithfulness, O God. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. In other words, God is everything to me.

He is my consuming fire. He is my alpha, my omega, the beginning, the end. He is my Sabbath rest.

He is everything to me. I hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait on Him, to the soul who seeks after God.

He will never fail them. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of our Lord. I'm just going to remind you as we close.

Isn't it interesting, you read the parables, I don't know if you've read this, but the parables of the virgins who were prepared, and the parables of the virgins who are not prepared. And when they come, Jesus says something interesting. He says, I can't let you in.

I don't know you. And then in Matthew 7, Jesus says, many will come to me in that day. And they'll say, we did these things.

And Jesus will say, I never knew you. So it does beg the question, as you're listening to this, does Jesus Christ truly know you? Not who you are, but does He have a relationship with you? And a relationship is a mutual agreement and responsibility. When I say, Jesus, I need your sacrifice.

I need the cross to save me. I need to be set free. I need to repent of my sin.

And once I repent of my sin, Jesus bridges that gap. And I call out to God Almighty, and Jesus bridges that gap. And now I have a relationship with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

Now I have that relationship, and the Holy Spirit within me cries, Abba, Father. And there's no way that will be cast out, because Jesus says, now I know you. You've repented of my sin.

My sheep hear my voice. A stranger they will not follow. Come to me, all who are weak and heavy laden.

I will give you rest. I will hold you up. But to others, He will say, I don't know you.

Depart from me. It's very dangerous to know about Jesus, but not know Him. And you need to change that, if that's you.

Lord, I just give you this message. Work through my frailty, my knowledge, my limited knowledge of the end times. And I pray it would inspire and encourage and convict.

Lord, I pray for our nation. God, we love what you did in America. We hate the sin that crept in, but we love what you did for America.

We pray for our president and our elected leaders. Lord, I even pray for our governor here in California. I pray that Gavin Newsom would come to know you.

God, would you show him your love? Lord, would you show his wife and their children your love? Please, God, please. I pray for Nancy Pelosi. Oh, God, would you save them? If they're involved in witchcraft and all kinds of things, Lord, we come against it in Jesus' name.

Lord, we need to stop being so angry at our leaders and start praying for them. God, would you bring a revival, a sense of spiritual awakening in Sacramento? Those congressmen that do not know you, Lord, they're voting for ungodly, ungodly legislation. It's because it's the Antichrist spirit working through them.

And Lord, we give you this request. I pray, Lord, I pray for our president that he would come to know you. That Mike Pence, Lord, would be strengthened.

And Pompeo would be strengthened in his role. And the press secretary, Lord, I pray for her right now, our press secretary. She is just attacked by the media on a daily basis.

Would you strengthen her? Strengthen her and her husband, her family? Lord, build them up, encourage them. I pray you America comes united. The blacks and whites would be drawn together in unity, seeing we are one blood.

We are one blood. We are together in this. And we are allowing a satanic force to divide us and draw us apart.

Lord, I pray for unity in our nation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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