

Dealing with Today's News

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For Discussion: **What Would Jesus Say?**
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How should we deal with disturbing news reports?

By recognizing that this world sorely needs Jesus Christ to return, and we are getting closer to that day every day.

- As we view pictures of the devastation left by the fires in Southern California, we might consider asking, "What would Jesus say?" about our day.

We have the key points of what the Lord might say today to His redeemed; we find them in His letters to seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

- Even though the substance of each letter varies widely, striking similarities exist in all of them.
- Jesus concludes each one with a reminder of the glories of eternity that await all believers.

How does Jesus encourage our faithfulness in the Revelation letters to the churches?

Regardless of the state of each body of believers, the Lord encourages faithfulness by providing the redeemed with a glimpse of the glory that awaits them in eternity.

What is the relevance of what Jesus tells the churches in Revelation to us today?

- Each of these churches represent the state of churches present in our day.
- There are principles here that apply to us in the church today.

The phrase, "*to the one who conquers (or overcomes),*" occurs at the end of all His letters to the churches. This doesn't refer to a higher level of spirituality, but rather applies to all believers without exception.

1 John 5:4 – *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the Ephesian church?

Rev 2:7 – *To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

The promise to the saints is that of spending forever in "paradise," which is described at the end of Revelation.

- The "tree of life" is in the New Jerusalem (22:1), our eternal dwelling.
- The last chapters of Revelation provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of the reassuring words of hope that He gives us in each letter.

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the church in Smyrna?

Revelation 2:11 – *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.*

To the saints at Smyrna who faced the prospect of martyrdom, Jesus reminded them of His promise of eternal life.

- They wouldn't "*be hurt by the second death,*" which is later described as the White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.
- Instead, they will be among the redeemed who would spend eternity enjoying life to its fullest in paradise. Regardless of the level of persecution we might face, as believers we know we will never be judged for our sins, but we will experience all the wonders of eternal life.

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the church in Pergamos?

Revelation 2:17 – *To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.*

Historical context: There was a Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors in athletic contests. The white stone, inscribed with the athlete's name, served as his ticket to a special awards banquet.

- Thus this "white stone" may be our formal invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:9 – *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."*

When might we receive our white stone?

All believers will stand before Jesus at His Bema Seat rewards ceremony.

- After that, we will joyously celebrate with the Savior at a special banquet in our honor.

What else happens at the Bema Seat judgment?

A better way to think of it as not so much a judgment as a commencement and awards ceremony. Yes, our works will be judged but not for salvation, but for rewards.

What will be the rewards given at the Bema Seat?

There are five crowns that are described in the New Testament. But the Parable of the Talents and Minas indicate that among these will be areas of responsibility to participate in ruling with the Lord doing during the Millennial Kingdom.

- And since the Millennial Kingdom foreshadows the Eternal State in many respects, our rewards extend in to eternity in terms of having a capacity to participate in what our Creator will be doing.

What does the hidden manna represent?

The hidden manna is a symbolic picture of Jesus Christ. As the manna of the Exodus sustained and strengthened the Israelites for the forty years of desert wanderings, so Jesus strengthens and sustains us spiritually.

- Jesus is the “manna” from heaven—the spiritual sustenance we need—and it is promised to us.
- Jesus made the connection between the manna of Moses’ day and His own provision of salvation: “*I am the bread of life...*” (John 6:48–51, 58).

What does it mean that the manna of Christ is hidden?

As a symbol, the hidden manna of Revelation 2:17 is not to be taken literally; in other words, Jesus is not speaking of something we literally eat.

- Rather, the Bread of Life is something we “ingest” in another, non-physical way. We receive the benefits of salvation by faith (John 1:12).
- Christ is hidden in us with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the church in Thyatira?

Rev 2:26-27 – The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

The promise in these verses is that of ruling with Jesus in His kingdom. The reference to Jesus ruling with a “rod of iron,” first recorded in Psalm 2:7, occurs again in John’s account of Jesus’ spectacular return to earth:

Revelation 19:15 – From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.

When Jesus comes to claim His inheritance of the nations, we will not only be with Him, but we will later reign alongside Him in His kingdom.

- Jesus will share His authority over the nations with us. In our immortal and sinless state, we will act as judges (1 Corinthians 6:2) in His realm.

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the church in Sardis?

Revelation 3:5 – The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

The full significance of our “white garments” comes to life later in the book of Revelation. They not only depict the wedding clothes we will wear at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:8), but they also place us with the Lord as He rides triumphantly back to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom:

Revelation 19:14 – And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

We will be with Jesus as He rides back to earth in the most dazzling display of power and glory ever seen.

- Our “fine linen, white and pure” marks our participation in the most dramatic event in all of human history.

What is this *Book of Life*?

It has to be the record of those with eternal life. Paul mentions a book of life in which the names of his fellow workers are written (Philippians 4:3).

- All who have believed in Jesus have their names written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8; 17:8).
- At the Great White Throne Judgment, people are judged according to their deeds recorded in the books, and if their name is not written in the *Book of Life* they are sent to the *lake of fire* (Revelation 20:12–15).

Does blotting out names from the Book of Life mean that a person can lose their salvation?

Nowhere does the Bible say that the names of people written in the book of life can be blotted out. In fact, Jesus said in Revelation 3:5 that He will not erase the names of those who are written in the book.

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the church in Philadelphia?

Revelation 3:12 – *The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*

He's not saying that we will become inanimate marble columns; Christ's words here depict our future stability and permanence.

- It looks like we'll all be getting tattoos: *the name of my God, the name of the city of my God, and my own new name.*
- He assures us of a forever home in the New Jerusalem.
- The writing of His name on us signifies an intimate relationship that will never end.

The New Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21:9-22:5.

- It's the city where Jesus is now preparing a place for us (John 14:2-3).
- The beauty of this glorious city is far beyond any mental image we might have of its splendor.

What does it mean that we will never go out of the temple of my God?

Again, this emphasizes the permanence of our eternal relationship with the Creator. This does not preclude our exploring this vast universe...

John 14:3 – *I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

What is the comforting assurance that Jesus offers to the faithful of the church in Laodicea?

Revelation 3:21 – *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

Jesus again alludes to the fact that we will reign with Him in His kingdom.

- The popular teachings of our day deny the Lord's rule over the nations.
- Those who say there is no such thing as a physical Millennium fail to believe what Jesus clearly says is our destiny. We will share His throne at a time with sin is possible, as well as in eternity (1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 3:21; 5:10, 20:6).

What would Jesus say to His church today?

It's not so much a matter of what Jesus *would* say to His church today, but rather one of what He *continues* to reveal to us as recorded in the New Testament and particularly in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 19:10 – *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

When teachers reinterpret the book of Revelation as fulfilled prophecy, history, allegory, or symbolism, they do a great disservice to the body of Christ contradicting the Lord's own testimony.

What is the encouragement in the Lord's message to the church at the end of the Church Age?

This brief glimpse into the promises of Revelation 2-3 should give us courage to stand up for Bible prophecy since pastors represent it as of lesser importance than other scriptural truths.

- Jesus' words regarding our future glory should also encourage our hearts during these perilous times. The One who verifies the testimony of John recording future things left us with this unfailing promise: Revelation 22:20 – *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."*

What applications do we see from this discussion?

The promises of God to the church at the end of the Age are encouraging... share them!