

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is one of the most difficult to understand, yet people tend to stake out immovable positions on it (regardless of the source of their beliefs), so there is a good chance you will disagree with some things I share during the class. If that should happen, please extend grace to me. (1Co 13:9 NIV *For we know in part and we prophesy in part*). Rest assured my heart is to uphold the authority and integrity of the word of God above all else. So may we all in a spirit of humility continue to search the scriptures for truth (Acts 17:11 *ala Bereans*), and trust that He will open our minds to understand. [Luk 24:45 NIV *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*]

Personal Reflections

I began to read Revelation [& other books] when first saved - but was exhorted to learn the Bible first

I am bothered by the many failed predictions over the years (the second coming, the end of the world, the rapture or people identified as the antichrist)

- This defames the name of Jesus
- It strengthens the position of an already skeptical world (2 Pet 3:2-3) “where is His coming?”
- It deadens the church toward preparedness

Some of the more recent failed predictions

- **1988** - Edgar Whisenant - 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988
- **1989** - Edgar Whisenant - Rapture report 1989 - predicts the Rapture would occur in 1989
- **1993** - Edgar Whisenant - 23 reasons rapture will occur on Rosh-Hashanah 1993
- **1994** - Edgar Whisenant - The earth's destruction by nuclear bomb fire - prediction for 1994
- **Y2K** - Global chaos and the soon coming of Christ (millennium)
- **2011** - Harold Camping - prediction that the physical rapture would occur on October 21, 2011
- **2012** - The Mayan Calendar Dec 21, 2012 - signifying the end of the world
- **2015** - Mark Biltz - The Blood Moon Prophecies
- **2017** - Total Eclipse - the solar eclipse, known as the Black Moon, on August 21 is believed by some to be a sign that our days on Earth are numbered and the Rapture will soon begin
- **2017** - Sept 23 - a collision between a giant planet Nibiru and earth
- **2017** - Sept 23 - Rev 12 Sign in the Heavens, Woman Clothed with the Sun, Moon Under Her Feet And a Crown of 12 Stars on Her Head!

My approach / rules of interpretation

Historic or Futuristic? -- There are various genres within Scripture, such as (Law, History, Wisdom, Poetry, Narrative, Epistles, Prophecy). The book of Revelation is both a **Prophecy** [Rev 1:1 to show his servants **what must soon take place** & Rev 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this **prophecy**] and an **Epistle** [Rev 1:4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia]. So any interpretation must maintain a delicate balance keeping in mind this is both a contemporary letter written to contemporary first century churches who are called upon to take action in their day, and at the same time a prophetic book - which speaks to the future and has application to the very end of the age.

Exegesis vs Eisegesis - Using **Exegesis** [the process of drawing out the meaning from a text in accordance with the context and discoverable meaning of its author] vs **Eisegesis** where a reader imposes his or her interpretation into and onto the text.

It is difficult to be dogmatic about many of the things described in the book - I tend to avoid "This is that" pronouncements without clear biblical foundation or precedent. Remember the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell, people began to speak in tongues and Peter said...Act 2:16-18 KJV **"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel..."** Without the Holy Spirit's revelation who could have discerned this?

Where possible let scripture interpret scripture & interpret unclear passages in the light of clear passages -- We can compare scriptures in Revelation with other scriptures in the Bible to increase understanding of symbols and verbiage that is used.

- There are hundreds of references or allusions to the OT in the Book of Revelation
- There is imagery that is linked to the tabernacle of Moses in the Book of Revelation

Some symbolism in the book of Revelation is interpreted in the book itself

Example: there is no reason to miss what the stars and the lampstands represent

- Rev 1:13 NIV and among the **lampstands** was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.
- Rev 1:16 NIV In his right hand he held **seven stars**, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.
- Rev 1:20 NIV The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: **The seven stars are** the angels of the seven churches, **and the seven lampstands are** the seven churches.

Another example:

- Rev 17:1 NIV One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, **who sits by many waters**."
- Rev 17:15 NIV Then the angel said to me, "**The waters you saw**, where the prostitute sits, **are** peoples, multitudes, nations and languages."

Based on the above description of waters, it is not a stretch to believe that the river spewed from the serpent's mouth would be speaking of peoples, multitudes, nations and languages coming against the woman

- Rev 12:15 NIV Then from his mouth **the serpent spewed water like a river**, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.

Here is an example where the interpretation is not so clear...We often hear people say, and maybe we have said it also that "1/3 of the angels fell with Satan", and we take it to heart as a biblical truth, when in fact the Bible never says that specifically. Based on the above description of stars it is possible that

1/3 of the stars taken from the sky are people (perhaps a reference to the great falling away (2 Thes 2:3)...**this interpretation puts the event into the future**

- Rev 12:4 NIV **Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky** and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.

By combining Rev 12:4 with Isa 14:12 some draw the conclusion that Satan took 1/3 of the angels with him in his rebellion...**this interpretation puts the event into the past**

- Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

I don't have to understand everything to understand some things

- 1Co 13:9 NIV For we know in part and we prophesy in part

There Are Four Major Schools of Interpretation: (some add **Eclectic** as a 5th)

What is it that has informed your eschatology? A book? A movie? A favorite author or bible teacher? Keep in mind that most people have a leaning toward one of these schools of interpretation, and would therefore make dogmatic statements about one thing or another based on the view. If you don't do your own due diligence you can easily embrace teaching that is not as dogmatic as a particular writer makes it sound (simple example of Satan taking 1/3 of the angels above). If you have a general knowledge of the various schools of interpretation it will become easier to discern the point of view of the teacher or author.

Preterist -- The Preterist view sees everything in Revelation as future from the standpoint of John the writer, but having been fulfilled not long after the author's own time (generally 70 AD), and thus it is history from our standpoint. Within this school there are also some who would be considered "full" preterists who believe **everything** in the book of Revelation is in the past, and there are "partial" preterists who believe the **Judgement of Christ** and generally the things in the last three chapters are still future events even from our vantage point.

Historicist -- The Historicist view sees everything in Revelation as a description of the history of the church age from the end of the first century [when John was writing] until the end of time...therefore it is still in progress.

Spiritualist or Idealist -- The Spiritualist view sees Revelation as a great drama describing the ongoing and epic struggles between good and evil, the saints vs the spirit of antichrist, Christ's victory in the end etc. The fulfillment of things in the book of Revelation could therefore take place at any time in history vs a one-time fulfillment. Thus the prophecies are applicable to Christians in any age.

Futurist -- The Futurist view sees the bulk of Revelation to be future from our perspective. Everything after chapter 4 is usually held to refer to things that will occur in relatively short period of time before and after the return of Christ.

Three Views About the Millennium

PREMILLENNIAL VIEW - Christ's second coming will **precede** a golden age in which the kingdom will be established on the earth for 1,000 years, followed by final judgment & new heaven and earth

Premillennialists fall into 2 camps

- **Historic Premillennialism** - named this because for the first three centuries the majority of the church held to this view. When Christianity became the official religion of Rome, things began to change and **Amillennialism** gained ground after Christianity became a legal religion (3rd to 4th century). Amillennialism was the dominant view of the Protestant Reformers, the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches as well as in the Roman Catholic Church.
- **Dispensational Premillennialism** - is a more recent viewpoint (following the Civil War). This system of Dispensations (epochs or periods when God dealt with man) was put forth by John Darby, and popularized by C.I Scofield. The main differences between Dispensational and Historic Premillennialists:
 - In Dispensational Premillennialism there is a belief that there is a fundamental distinction between Israel and the church, and that God has two plans working in history (one for national Israel and one for the church)
 - The view that the New Testament church is a parenthesis in God's plan which was not foreseen by the Old Testament -- Therefore it seemed necessary for God to remove the church (i.e. Pre-Tribulation Rapture) before proceeding with his final plans for Israel
 - Historic Premillennialists believed the rapture/resurrection would occur at the end of the tribulation, at Christ's second coming. Dispensationalists separated the Rapture (when Christ will come for his saints) from the Second Coming (when he will come with his saints).¹

POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW -- teaches that Christ will return **AFTER** the millennial period. The postmillennial's golden age occurs as the world is gradually won over by the gospel, and is marked by a period of peace before Christ returns. Postmillennialists are often, though not always, inclined toward the preterist view.

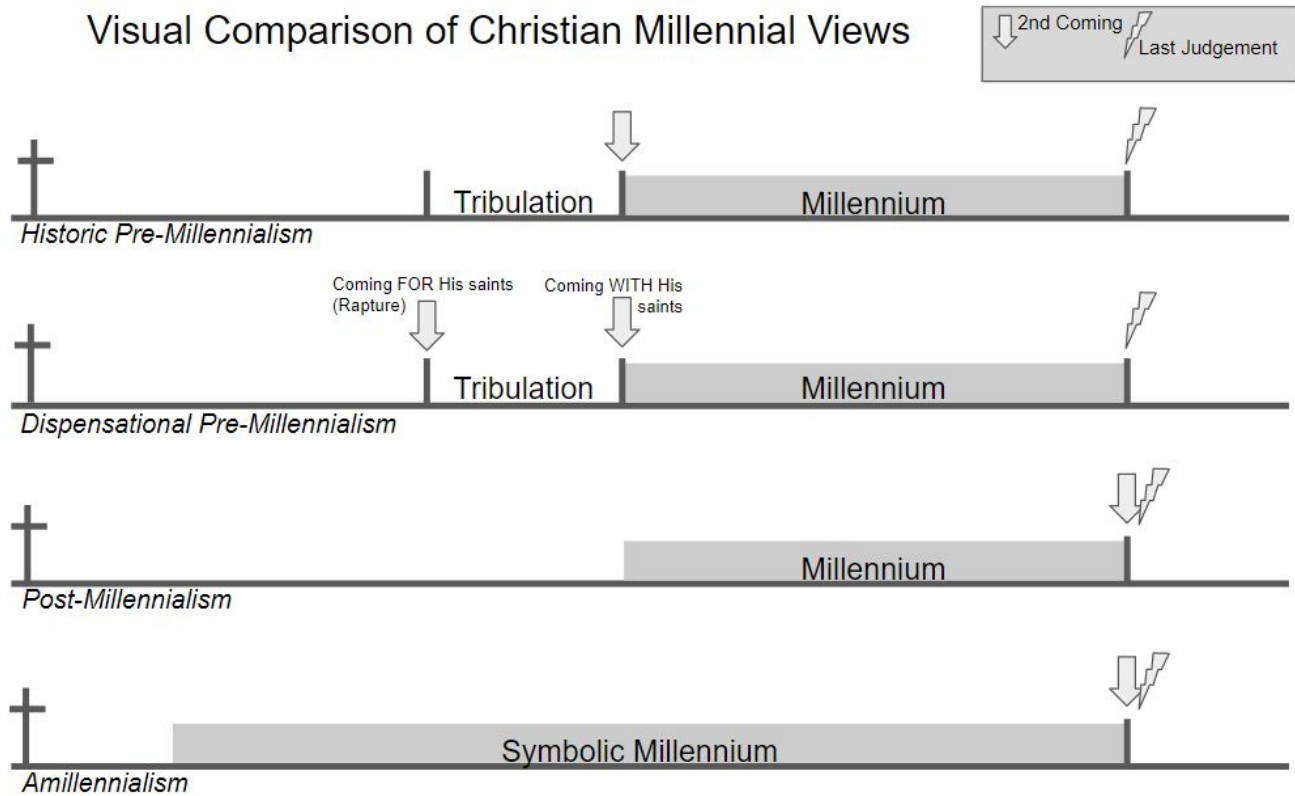
AMILLENNIALISM - The amillennialist believes there is no literal 1000-year reign of Christ on earth as understood by the other views, but rather that the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 corresponds to the entire span of time from the first coming of Christ until His second coming, and most aspects of Revelation are held to be symbolic.² They believe that Christ is now sitting on the throne of David and that this present church age is the kingdom over which Christ reigns.³

¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-61/dispensational-premillennialism-dispensationalist-era.html>

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/postmillennialism.html>

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/amillennialism.html>

Visual Comparison of Christian Millennial Views



Views Concerning the End Times

CATEGORIES	AMILLENNIALISM	POSTMILLENNIALISM	HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM	DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM
Second Coming of Christ	Single event; no distinction between Rapture and Second Coming; introduces eternal state.	Single event; no distinction between Rapture and Second Coming; Christ returns after Millennium.	Rapture and Second Coming simultaneous; Christ returns to reign on earth.	Second Coming in two phases: Rapture for church; Second Coming to earth seven years later.
Resurrection	General Resurrection of believers and unbelievers at Second Coming of Christ.	General resurrection of believers and unbelievers at Second Coming of Christ.	Resurrection of believers at beginning of Millennium; resurrection of unbelievers at end of Millennium	Distinction in resurrections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Church at Rapture ● Old Testament/Tribulation saints at Second Coming ● Unbelievers at end of Millennium
Judgments	General judgment of all people.	General judgment of all people.	Judgment at Second Coming; judgment at end of Tribulation.	Distinctions in judgment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Believers' works at rapture. ● Jews/Gentiles at end of Tribulation. ● Unbelievers at end of Millennium.
Tribulation	Tribulation is experienced in this present age.	Tribulation is experienced in this present age.	Posttrib view: church goes through the future Tribulation.	Pretrib view: church is raptured prior to Tribulation.
Millennium	No literal Millennium on earth after Second Coming; kingdom present in church age.	Present age blends into Millennium because of progress of the gospel.	Millennium is both present and future; Christ is reigning in heaven; Millennium not necessarily 1,000 years.	At Second Coming, Christ inaugurates literal 1,000-year Millennium on earth.
Israel and the Church	Church is the new Israel; no distinction between Israel and church.	Church is the new Israel; no distinction between Israel and church.	Some distinction between Israel and church; future for Israel, but church is spiritual Israel.	Complete distinction between Israel and church; distinct program for each.
Adherents	L. Berkhof; O. T. Allis G. C. Berkhouwer	Charles Hodge; B. B. Warfield; W. G. T. Shedd; A. H. Strong	G. E. Ladd; A. Reese; M. J. Erickson	L. S. Chafer; J. D. Pentecost; C. C. Ryrie; J. F. Walvoord

Introductory Insights

Even with its inherent difficulty Revelation is not a book to be ignored...we can continue to study and learn..... we can continue to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches [*note: He is still speaking today as He was to the seven churches of Asia Minor*].....and we can still receive the blessing that comes to those who read, hear and keep what is written Rev 1:3.

There is a blessing promised to those who read, hear and do

- Rev 1:3 NIV Blessed is the one who ***reads aloud the words*** of this prophecy, and blessed are those ***who hear it*** and ***take to heart*** what is written in it, because the time is near.

There is a constant exhortation to ***hear*** what the Spirit says to the churches

- Rev_2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13 & 3:22 -- Whoever has ears, ***let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***
- Frankly this is what I focus upon most - what is it that the Spirit is saying to ACC - at the end of the day that was how Jesus approached the seven churches. That is what I am accountable, and as part of a local church that is what you are accountable for.

When I teach about the last days I tend to simplify and stay close to those things we are most certain about...Obviously that approach does not cover the entire book of Revelation, and does not take in all the bells and whistles and juicy tidbits that people like to talk about...So this study is my attempt at gaining further understanding of the truths found in this book.

Here is a basic outline of how I typically approach the topic of the 2nd Coming.

Luke 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: **for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.**

Things That Happen ***Before He Comes***

1) **The gospel shall be preached in the whole world** - Evangelistic

- Matt 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

2) **There Will Be Times of Difficulty** - Perilous

- 2 Tim 3:1-5 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

3) **The Mountain of the Lord's house shall be established** - Victorious Church

- Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

4) **The pouring out of God's Spirit** - Spirit-Filled Church

- Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

These spiritual gifts - continuous since the day of Pentecost

- 1Co 1:4-7 KJV I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; 5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; 6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: 7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

5) **There will be a falling away first**, Apostasy

- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 ESV (1) Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion [KJV Falling Away] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is

revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Rebellion =G646 falling away apostasia - defection from truth

- **same word used here** Act 21:21 NIV They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.

Apostasia comes from the root word that means writing of divorcement G647

- Mat 5:31 KJV It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

These words stem from G868 - to remove, that is, (actively) instigate to revolt; usually (reflexively) to desist, desert, etc.:

- 1Ti 4:1 NIV The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will **abandon** the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Things that Happen *At His Coming*

1) The resurrection of believers

- 1Th 4:13-18 NIV Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.
 - The living WILL NOT PRECEDE the dead in Christ in the resurrection
 - It will be with a loud command, voice of the archangel and trump of God

Note: There are two resurrections

- Dan 12:2-3 NIV Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: **some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.** 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.
- John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; **they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.**
- Acts 24:14-15 KJV But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: (15) And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be **a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.**

Their timing is like bookends on each side of the 1000 years

- Revelation 20:4-6 KJV And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (5) But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [what he just described - emphasis mine] is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

2) Vengeance or Punishment

- 2Th 1:6-12 NIV **God is just:** He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will **punish** those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed...
 - vs 6 God is just - God's judgement must be seen as a righteous thing [there is resurrection and there is eternal judgement]
 - vs 8 punish = take vengeance - same word used here
 - Act 7:24 KJV And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:
 - Rom 12:19 KJV Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
 - 1Pe 2:13-14 KJV Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

The final judgement of man rests upon whether they know God and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ

- Punish those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Everlasting destruction (some think this means annihilation)
 - everlasting means perpetual
 - same word that means eternal life (Matt 25:46)
- Shut out from seeing his face and the glory of his power
 - Rev 7:9-10 KJV After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

What Kind of People Ought We to Be? Or How Should We Live In Light of the 2nd Coming

2Pe 3:10-11 NIV **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.** The heavens will disappear with a

roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, **what kind of people ought you to be?** You ought to live holy and godly lives

Continue in Him

- 1Jn 2:28-29 NIV And now, dear children, ***continue in him***, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

NOTE: 1 John mentions abiding or continuing 23 times in the book of 1 John

So Many Start But Do Not Continue - What Are Some Factors?

False Doctrine

- Galatians 5:7 NIV *You were running a good race.* Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

Love of the world

- 2 Timothy 4:10 KJV For *Demas hath forsaken me*, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

Unbelief - and a heart hardened through deceitfulness of sin

- Hebrews 3:12-14 KJV Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in *departing from the living God.* (13) But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* (14) For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

Love growing cold because of abounding iniquity

- Matthew 24:12-13 KJV And because iniquity shall abound, *the love of many shall wax cold.* (13) But he that shall **endure unto the end**, the same shall be saved.

Make it our goal to please Him

- 2 Cor 5:6-10 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.
 - Live by faith - without faith it is impossible to please Him

A pursuit of godliness

- 1 John 3:2-3 KJV Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, **when he shall appear**, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Meet together & encourage one another (see 1 Thes 4:18 & 5:11 also)

- Heb 10:24-27 KJV And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but

exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Allow God to work in me - What is He after?

1) Increase in love, strengthen heart for holiness

- 1Th 3:12-13 NIV May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father **when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.**

God takes us through the process of sanctification

- 1Th 5:23-24 NIV May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept **blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

A walk worthy of His calling

- 2 Thes 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 **on the day he comes to be glorified** in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. 11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 22:20-21 NIV (20) He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (21) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.