

# THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

**David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 18 January 2026**  
**Transcription of recording, slightly edited**

Good morning and welcome to those who are joining us on live stream again, wherever you happen to be around the country or overseas. It is great to be here again continuing the fellowship of the word.

I am going to be continuing from where I finished on Friday so I will just read a couple of key verses again. This is Revelation chapter 22 verse 7. We know that by this stage one of the presbyters was revealing to the apostle John the bride city and Jesus Himself is interjecting with some key statements. He says to John in verse 7, 'Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.' John then is introducing the book of Revelation after he hears Jesus Himself saying this, and Jesus is here concluding the Revelation. John hears this and then introduces it by saying, 'Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keeps those things that are written in it; for the time is near.' Rev 1:5.

As we finished on Friday, we are rejoicing that we have been given the book of Revelation. It is in our hands; we can read it; but then we do need to hear it proclaimed to us. It is proclaimed to us by the Holy Spirit through the messengers of Christ in His right hand, and it is proclaimed in its own day and season when the time for its fulfillment is drawing near. As we hear that word, as we believe it and as we obey it, we are blessed with a participation in the fulfillment of all the things that have been written in the book. That is a marvellous blessing.

Furthermore, Jesus said in Revelation 22 verse 12, 'Behold [same statement], I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to everyone according to his work.' This is the King speaking and He is saying, 'I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me.' In the first case, this is the King coming in judgement. When He says, 'I am coming quickly,' it means He is coming at an hour that we do not expect. And He comes suddenly. As Peter has described to us, He is coming with an army of 20 000 (or as Jude quotes the prophecy of Enoch: 'The Lord comes with 10 000 of His saints to execute judgement on the ungodly.')

In the first case, when Christ says, 'Behold, I am coming quickly', He is coming in judgement. When that is picked up in relation to the seven letters... (because that is where I want to go this morning), ...the primary way that is quoted is when Jesus Himself is personally admonishing the presbytery of each lampstand church - the whole lampstand church - 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' This is the word to everybody. When He is saying, 'Behold, I am coming quickly', He is coming in judgement. What He is spelling out in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are the conditions of peace and how we are to respond to His word with repentance and faith. Otherwise, as He said to the presbytery in Pergamum, 'I am coming quickly, but I am going to make a war with you with the sword that is coming from my mouth.' The other place where this statement is quoted directly is in relation to the church in Thyatira. That is Revelation 2 verse 23, speaking about those who hold the doctrine of Jezebel. He says, 'I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to everyone according to your works.' We know He says to each of the lampstand churches, 'I know your works.' So that is the first application that He is coming in judgement. In that regard, there is a reward for the wicked.

Equally there is a reward for the righteous, and as we are responding to His word with repentance and faith, the promises to the overcomers in each lampstand church describe for us the nature of His reward. It is *His* reward that can equally be translated 'wages'. He is saying 'my wages'. These are the wages that He has earned or accrued. They are the wages of His obedience on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross where He is fulfilling the works of our sonship and He is learning our obedience. It is accruing glory that is being built into His heavenly body. He is coming now to share that reward or inheritance with us as we are joined to the fellowship of that offering. We are doing then the works that He has already accomplished for us. We are talking about two different kinds of works here and two

different kinds of reward. I want to look at it primarily in the positive today.

The Lord said to Abram, 'Do not be afraid. Do not fear. I am your shield [meaning 'I am your faith'], and your exceedingly great reward.' That is where we begin on this subject of reward. We know that Yahweh the Son there was saying to Abram, 'I am going to be your Son. And more than that, I am going to be your Seed in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed.' The blessing of Abraham is the adoption, which, as we have been learning, includes the whole process from when we receive the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of adoption into our spirit, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!'... [He is the seal (or the pledge or the down payment) of our eternal inheritance] ...to that process of adoption continuing for the whole of our life until we receive on the day of resurrection our immortal, incorruptible resurrection body. This body is clothed with the glory of our heavenly body, making it a spiritual body. But as we have heard, that is the penultimate. That is not the ultimate statement of reward.

I am going to one sentence from Vic's paper that we read yesterday, to connect it to that. This is the very first sentence of the second paragraph. I have highlighted this one. 'We see that the wonderful hope, made known through the gospel, is for a believer to be progressively filled with, and a possessor of, the glory of God Himself!' This is the reward that we are talking about, and we are not waiting for the day of resurrection to receive that reward, even though that will be the day of its fullness. The word of faith is being ministered to us today which is 'the substance of things hoped for'. We are receiving now as we are overcoming while we are still in our mortal bodies, the substance of these promises to the seven churches. That is what I want to begin to look at today - making a simple point that all seven promises comprise the reward of Christ which is granting to us a participation in His administration which is suitable for the fullness of times.

The content of the seven letters... (orientating ourselves here as we begin) ...the content of the seven letters has been relevant for all lampstand churches for the entire church age. There have been overcomers in every generation - we know

that. However, the specific application of the seven letters is the restoration of lampstand churches during the reign of the seventh world kingdom before the Father takes His seat to initiate the time of the end.

If you want to look at it in its broadest terms, when Jesus is addressing those lampstand churches at the end of the first century, that was the word of the 'first time' in terms of the church for the whole church age. As those presbyters received that word on that occasion it thrust them into a completely contrary and contradictory circumstance or a season of trial which has then continued for the whole of the church age. We are now in the day when the word is being proclaimed a 'second time' because the time for its fulfilment is near. The same word is proclaimed a second time and that is when you see it established. This is our focus here with the seven letters. There have been many seasons of revival and refreshing since the beginning of the church age.

After Peter and John healed the lame man in the temple, they proclaimed to the crowd that had gathered there in Acts chapter 3 verse 19. Peter is here proclaiming the word of the King in the sense that he is commanding men everywhere to repent. It is a command. He says, 'Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.' We always see seasons of revival springing out of seasons of repentance. There have been many seasons of revival (or refreshing) coming from the presence of the Lord. Verse 20: 'That He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.' I love that - 'all the prophets since the world began' (including Enoch) are all prophesying and focusing toward this time in the end of the age which is 'the day of the restoration of all things' when God's covenant purpose comes to its fruition. 'Heaven must receive Him until the times of restoration of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.' The macro point there is that Jesus Christ will not physically return until after the restoration of all things. We are in that day now, which begins with the

restoration of lampstand churches when the church is in travail to bring forth a manchild administration which is suitable for the fullness of times.

This brings us to an important point when we are looking at the seven letters: There is a progressive restoration of a presbytery. We will add there, and the remnant in a lampstand church - an overcoming remnant. There is a progressive restoration of a presbytery and an overcoming remnant, and a progressive attainment of the promises which comprise the reward of Christ by an overcoming presbytery and an overcoming remnant in a lampstand church. We know that it is a progressive attainment because Jesus promised to give the crown of life to the overcomers in Smyrna. Then He says to the overcomers in Philadelphia, 'See to it that no one takes your crown.' They have already received the substance of the crown of life. I would like to define what that is today for us. But we do see that there is a progressive attainment here. There is a progressive overcoming. There is a progressive receiving of the reward of Christ. Paul says, 'It is not that I have already attained, but I do press on toward the goal.' He was appropriating the level of maturity that he had attained - the level of overcoming.

The pathway of restoration and attainment is from independent fallen stars. Think big picture. All the way from independent fallen stars. 'Remember from where you have fallen.' The pathway of restoration and attainment is from independent fallen stars to one worldwide presbytery that is seated with Christ on 24 thrones around the Father's throne in the heavenly places. That is some pathway of restoration! The first admonition to every presbytery is, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works.' The final promise to every presbytery is 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.' That is Revelation chapter 3 and verse 21. Jesus overcame Satan and all principalities and powers on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. As we are particularly looking at His descending journey, we are

looking at the journey of the conquering King taking captivity captive. He is conquering on His offering journey and He is overcoming. At the end of His offering journey, He says, 'It is finished.' He commits His Spirit into the hands of the Father. And while His physical body remained on the cross and was then placed in the tomb for three days and three nights, His Spirit ascended and returned to the bosom of the Father and the throne of the Father. That is outside of time and eternity. While His body is lying in the tomb in time, for three days and three nights, Jesus himself, in His Spirit and soul, (for there is no separation between spirit and soul in death), He is with the Father and seated with the Father in the Father's throne. We know that because when the soldier pierced His side and blood, water and the Spirit of grace and supplication flowed from His side, that was the river of the water of life which is flowing from the throne of God, through the physical body of Christ while it still hung on the cross. And that river will continue to flow for eternity. Then on the day of Christ's resurrection, He returns and He steps back into His physical body, which had already been made immortal and incorruptible. It is clothed with the glory of His heavenly body. It is now a spiritual body, and He ascended to the Father's throne again in His spiritual body. He said to Mary when she wanted to hug Him at the tomb, 'Do not cling to Me now, for I have not yet ascended to My Father and your Father and to My God and your God. As the first Man in the image and likeness of God, Jesus Christ then ascended again to the throne of the Father in His immortal, incorruptible, spiritual body as the Firstfruits of all those who sleep. We know He did ascend there because when He is back the next time, and the women encounter Him as they are rushing back to tell the disciples about what happened, they were able to fall at His feet and worship Him and hold Him by His feet. For 40 days He is in and out, in and out, in time for 40 days - back to the throne outside of time and eternity; in and out. The spiritual body is not confined by time and space that belongs to this creation. At the end of 40 days, He then ascends in His physical body, and He takes His seat at the right hand of God in the third heaven. That is where He is seated now. He is ministering to us (as our Great High Priest) a participation in His

finished offering. Then He is addressing lampstand churches here, still as the King, because He is seated as King. This is the word of the King then to lampstand churches so that we are able to overcome.

In the first case, the overcoming presbyters are seated on thrones around the Son's throne at the right hand of God. 'You will sit with Me on My throne.' Then the Father takes His throne, and He takes it from outside of time and eternity. This is the most amazing thing. He takes His throne from outside of time and eternity and He places it in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem on the top of Mount Zion so that the tabernacle of God is with men in time. That changes the course of time and eternity in as great a way as when the Son came and when the Word came and tabernacled among us in flesh and was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary.

So the Father will take His seat. Then Christ stands up and is presented before the Father to begin opening the seals and those 24 thrones are revealed around the Father's throne. That is what we see in Revelation chapter 4. The transition from Revelation chapter 3 to Revelation chapter 4 is that the Father takes His seat. What John sees then is a throne set in heaven and One sitting on the throne. That initiates all the events that belong to the time of the end.

In terms of the church's overcoming, it is a seamless transition from Revelation chapter 3 to Revelation chapter 4. There is a seamless transition between the fulfillment of the promise to the overcomers in Laodicea and John's vision of the administration that is suitable for the fullness of times. This is recorded in chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Revelation. Immediately after Jesus finished the admonition to Laodicea, John testified. This is Revelation chapter 4 verse 1: 'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ' This open door in heaven (just to show the integration) is exactly the same open door that Jesus spoke of to the presbytery in Philadelphia. 'Behold, I set before you an open door which no man can shut.' John then sees in verse 4, 'Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the

thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.' Where did they get their robes? Where did they get their crowns? Where did they get their thrones?

We have just said where they get the thrones from. That is the fulfillment of the promise to the presbytery in Laodicea. 'You will be seated with Me on My throne, as I overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.' That is where the thrones come from. In relation to the white robes, that is the fulfillment of the promise to the presbytery in Sardis. Jesus says, 'He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments. They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy.' We have already referred to the golden crowns and their first promise to the presbytery in Smyrna, and we know that they are also possessed by the presbytery in Philadelphia. All seven churches are appropriating all the promises. I am not putting them in too hard of a sequence, but there is something of a progression in terms of their appropriation.

The seven promises which comprise the reward of Christ (I want to make a big point here) are made to the presbytery, but they are also received by the overcoming remnant in lampstand churches. These then become the 144 000 who are sent by the presbytery to look for worthy houses. As we have been learning, the Lord is sealing the 144 000 now. Jesus is specifically addressing the presbytery of each lampstand church — 'To the angel of the church in Ephesus...' 'To the angel of the church in Smyrna...' etc. We know that. But the promises are equally received by the 144 000 and I have said here 'in fellowship with the presbytery'. Then also by the great multitude of worthy houses that receive the word of the 144 000 and then that should be appropriated by the great harvest which is the fruit of the evangelistic ministry of all those worthy houses. We will see where Jesus explains this implicitly to us. Matthew chapter 10 verses 40 and 41 is part of Christ's command to the twelve when He first sent them to look for worthy houses. He says to them in verse 40, 'He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.' He is sending out the twelve and every house that receives them is receiving Christ, and they are also receiving the Father who sent

Christ. Then He says in verse 41, 'He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.'

Think of when the centurion comes to Jesus with the sick child. He is recognising that the word of Jesus has authority because He is not the source of His own word. He is proclaiming the word of the Father. The man says to Him, 'I also am a man under authority... I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes I say to one, 'Come,' and he comes. He is illuminated to the fact that Christ's word has authority and he says, 'Just say the word and I know that my servant will be healed.' And Jesus says, 'I have never seen such great faith in all Israel.'

The principle here is that the 12 and then the 72 are sent by Christ and the word that they are proclaiming has authority. It has authority over demons and unclean spirits because they are ministering in the name of Christ. That does not mean that they are invoking the name of Christ. They are in relationship with Him and they are ministering in obedience to Him, and they are proclaiming His word. That word has authority then to deliver and to heal. Jesus is saying here then (picking up that principle), 'He who receives a prophet...' I want to liken that to the prophetic ministry that now belongs to the presbytery of a lampstand church. The presbytery is not the source of that word. The presbytery is ministering in the name of Christ - in the name of *the* Prophet, the Prophet who is the source of the Elijah ministry. Those who receive a prophet (or receive that prophetic ministry) in the name of the Prophet shall also receive a prophet's reward. Everything that Jesus is saying to the presbytery of each lampstand church in terms of that reward, as the presbytery ministers the word of Christ in obedience to Christ (or in His name), by the Holy Spirit, then every household that receives their ministry receives the same reward. This is like the 72. It is their peace and they are proclaiming to a house the blessing of peace and there is a fellowship in the same reward. That gathers everybody up into the principle of what we are going to look at in terms of these promises to the seven churches.

We will come to Revelation chapter 2 verse 1 where Jesus is speaking to the presbytery in Ephesus. 'To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, "These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. "'

Christ is physically seated at the right hand of God, but He is nonetheless walking among His lampstand churches through the seven stars that He has in His right hand. He is addressing Ephesus here. The apostle Paul established all the lampstand churches in Asia from Ephesus. He went to Ephesus and he spent three years there. Of the three years, he spent two years in the school of Tyrannus, discipling believers from worthy houses so that he could send them as messengers. He was sending them then to look for worthy houses. Then those worthy houses needed to be discipled so that they could then become centres for evangelism. They also could be sent so they could find other worthy houses. You did not only have a lampstand church growing in Ephesus, but you also had seven lampstand churches growing in all of Asia. All of Asia heard the word through this principle. Jesus commended the presbytery in Ephesus for a number of things. We have to give them a big tick to start with here. He commended them for their commitment to sanctification. Jesus said, 'You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. And you cannot bear those who are evil.' They had a commitment to sanctified Christian living. And they had the ability to test false apostles, too. We know that. They also were persevering in the work of the ministry. It is interesting that Jesus says, 'You laboured for my namesake and you did not become weary.' That is very interesting. There were evidently men there who were engaged in the work of the ministry according to the sanctification of their name. There was actually grace coming and things were working.

' "...But nonetheless" Jesus says to them, "I have this against you, that you have left your first love."' That is Revelation 2 verse 4. We know that first love is the fellowship of Yahweh. It is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one Spirit. I want to pick up this statement and say that I am progressively coming to be completely reorientated in relation to what this means for me, and its application then to all of

us. 'I have this against you that you have left your first love.' The first love is the fellowship of Yahweh. I have always read that Scripture and believed that I have understood something of what that means. But I have always been considering it from the perspective of the fellowship of a presbytery and how that works. Jesus is talking to presbyters, and He was addressing the fellowship of their presbytery, but He was firstly addressing the fellowship of their marriages and households. If we really want to get clear on it, He was saying to every individual presbyter, 'You have fallen from first love.' I think we are beginning to understand exactly what that means for all of us through the course of this year from an individual perspective. What that means to me ('You have fallen from first love.') is I need to be disciplined in terms of what it means to abide in the fellowship of the name of the Father, and the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. There is an individual application for every son of God where we are illuminated to see that we have fallen from that fellowship. We need to be disciplined in relation to what it means to abide in that fellowship.

As we are coming to understand what it means to abide in the name of the Father, it does have all its implications concerning our marriages. We are recognising that the covenant of marriage belongs to the Father. It is His holy institution. But we have taken it to ourselves and we believed that the covenant belongs to us, because we chose to get married. There has to be a manifestation of the fellowship of first love (or the fellowship of Yahweh) in every marriage which is completely unique. That is why Yahweh wrote His name into the names of Abram and Sarai. It is the Father who gives the portion of the seven Spirits of God (or the remnant of the Spirit) so that a couple can be one. We are being illuminated then to see the heights from which we have fallen, so we can see the depths in relation to us as individual disciples, in relation to us as married couples and then in terms of our houses.

Christ is to be the Head of every house. I have highlighted this point as well from the other little booklet (*Hear what the Spirit is saying*) that we received. I have not noted where I pulled this from, but I am just quoting from it. You will get the point when you read it. I am reading this, and

it is having quite an impact on me. This is the fruit of headship in the marriage and in the house. We know there are two dimensions of headship: the man is the head of the woman in the marriage; Christ is to be the Head of every individual in a house. The fruit of headship in the marriage and in the house is that that house becomes an expression of the fellowship of Yahweh. When we read that, I am a bit reticent to stick my hand up and say, 'Yeah, that is a pretty good description of my house.' In fact, as we are illuminated to see the heights, we are illuminated to see the depths from where we have fallen. But at the same time, when we read that (or when we hear that), we are receiving that as a word of faith. It is bringing illumination to the reality, but it is also faith to believe that we can be that. Each and every one of our houses can be that as we are responding to the word. There is a recovery to first love. This was relevant for every presbyter in relation to himself; in relation to his own marriage; in relation to his own house; and then it could be manifest in the presbytery. This is a major reorientation.

There was a paper presented to the presbytery at the beginning of November, and it was addressing a lot of the issues about fellowship in a presbytery. That same paper included a lot of content on marriage reformation and the sanctification of a house. There were a lot of iterations to the paper as it was progressively developed. All the content on the presbytery was first and then it ran onto the other issues. Just before it was presented, Vic said, 'We need to turn the whole paper around and all the content on marriage and house needs to be first.' That solidified for me the major reorientation that I needed in my thinking. It was to get clear that marriage and house are first. If I am not finding reformation there, then the fellowship of the presbytery will always be limping. It will always be collegial or some other thing. Hopefully we are all becoming reorientated on this concerning what first love looks like.

Jesus says, 'Remember from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works.' When He is saying, 'Remember', He is not talking about our cognition or an exercise of the mind. He is talking about our spirit being illuminated to what our calling is. 'Do you see your calling brethren' to what was foreknown for us from before the

foundation of the world that we have never known before? We are remembering that – ‘from where you have fallen’. We have fallen from the heights of Zion and He is saying, ‘Repent,’ meaning turn from all the modes of the flesh to the mode of the Spirit - to walking after the Spirit. When the word of the King commands us to repent, that very same word is imbued with the faith and the power and the capacity to believe and to do that.

There are first works then that are relevant for us all as individuals. So there is an application of return to first love for every son of God, and there is a repentance, and then there is a first work, which I think is discipleship. Then you apply that to a house, and you say every marriage needs to be recovered to first love. There are first works that are the fruit of repentance that will be manifest in every marriage - the first works that belong to a husband and the first works that belong to a wife. The same thing is true in relation to a house. What are the first works of a father? What are the first works of a mother? What are the first works of children as they are being recovered to first love?

Then we can look at what the first works of a presbytery is - which is what we have noted in the book. But I am now recognising there are all these other points that need to be made first. But the first works for the presbytery in Ephesus was to begin to walk. They needed to stop enjoying being a local pastor with a local congregation and then relating together in a collegial mode. They needed to walk with Christ among all the congregations that belonged to that lampstand church. Then there are first works that belong to a congregation. That is devotion to the apostles’ doctrine, devotion to fellowship, devotion to the breaking of bread and devotion to prayer. We can apply this statement here in all those contexts. I hope that is broadening it out for us as we are interfacing with this.

The presbytery in Ephesus had fallen from the right hand of Christ. This means that they had lost their connection to the five ministry graces of Christ. Christ was reaching out His right hand to lay a hold of them. He does reach out His hand to lay hold of a messenger to re-establish this. The presbytery in Ephesus had fallen from the right hand of Christ. This means that they had

lost their connection to the five ministry graces of Christ which comprise His apostolic administration. The presbytery in Ephesus had lost their capacity to proclaim the word of present truth as the provision for the *agape* meal in their lampstand church. So Jesus said to them (we have read the first part of this verse already) in verse 5, ‘Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.’

This raises a very interesting question. What is the place of a lampstand? I do not think He is referring to the tabernacle of old and where it sat in the tabernacle of Moses. The place of a lampstand and the whole lampstand church must be in the right hand of Christ. That is what we are being recovered to.

Verse 7: ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes [this is our first promise] I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.’ The tree of life is Christ. The fruit of the tree of life is the bread of life which comes down from heaven. Later in the book of Revelation, the apostle John described the tree of life by saying that it ‘brings forth fruit for every month of the year’. The evidence that a presbytery has been given the right to the tree of life is that it will have the capacity to proclaim the word of present truth to a lampstand church in every season as the provision for the *agape* meal. Can you rejoice that we are (and we have been for many, many, many years) receiving a word of present truth in season and that we are finding the testimony that ‘man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ as it is proclaimed to us in its season? This is the first element of reward, and it is foundational to all the other elements.

Let us continue. This is to the church in Smyrna. Revelation chapter 2 verse 8. Jesus says, ‘And to the angel of the church in Smyrna, “These things says the First and the Last.”’. He is talking here as the Pioneer - the Author and Finisher of our faith, who was dead and came to life. This is the same way He addressed Martha. We will look at that. ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’ He is ministering faith for this. He is ministering faith for *exanastasis*. It is interesting that when Jesus

said that to Martha ('I am the resurrection and the life'), He said very specifically, 'Do you believe this?' Question mark. She responds, 'Yes, Lord, I believe You are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world.' She just gives this generic statement on what she had historically believed. This, for her, was the statement of an old gospel. Jesus was talking to her very specifically and saying, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?'

Jesus is addressing the presbytery in Smyrna in exactly the same way. 'I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this? This is what I am going to establish among you so that you believe this.' Verse 9: 'I know your works, tribulation and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy [that is the evil speaking] of those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan.' We have looked at what the synagogue of Satan is. Verse 10: 'Do not fear... [every time he says, 'Do not fear,' He is ministering faith] ...Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.' 'Do not fear' - He was giving them a word of faith. They were thrust into a very contrary and trying situation and circumstance, and for this particular presbytery here, the devil was about to throw some of them into prison. We are talking about captivity. This is one specific element of the plight of the messengers of Christ for 2 300 years. The Lord said through Daniel in Daniel 11 verse 33, 'And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days... [and this is true for the whole 2 300 years] ...for many days they will fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering.' He is particularly talking to Smyrna about captivity here — that is just one element. Daniel 11 verse 34: 'Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help.'

The other day, Peter was saying that it is very generous odds to say that Christ is coming with 20 000 and we have 10 000. This is another example here where I think it is a massive understatement - this 'little help' - because it is help from two very good Helpers. The first Helper is Christ, who is fully identified with us and is fallen and trampled with us. He is helping us by

joining us so that we can then join Him. As we join the fellowship of His death, we are receiving His resurrection life. That is a good bit of 'little help'. We also have a second Helper who is the Holy Spirit who is ministering to us the power of the seven Spirits of God to be able to walk with Christ and join the fellowship of that offering. That is a pretty good 'little help'. We are aided with a little help.

When Jesus said that you may be tested, He was referring to the trial of faith. The trial of faith is initiated by the word. It is an affliction because of the word. Concerning Joseph, the psalmist said 'until His word came to pass, it tried him. It tested him.' It is affliction because of the word. That affliction is for the purpose of producing something so that faith is becoming our faith and it is more precious than gold. At the same time, in every trial (in every season) there is a testing. There is also a temptation. The temptation is to draw back in unbelief. That is where we do need to overcome and continue to receive the word of faith and the word of Christ's perseverance because, for those who believe, the trial is the refining process that produces the virtue of Christ in our life.

Daniel 11 verse 35: 'And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.' Every messenger must endure the trial of faith before they can be entrusted with the gospel of God.

I want to connect this to receiving the crown of life. Paul says in 1Thessalonians 2 verse 4, 'But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.' The trial here is sifting our motives to see if we are motivated by faith or some other agenda. He is saying we are approved by God and then able to be entrusted with the gospel. Jesus said to the presbytery in Smyrna, 'Be faithful unto death.' We know He is talking *His* death there. This is being conformed to Christ's death. 'Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.' James 1 verse 12: 'Blessed is the man who endures temptation [or trial]; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love

Him.' It is also called the crown of glory. '...the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him [or those who obey Him]. The crown of life is our share in Christ's kingship and priesthood which we receive through the power of His resurrection life. Jesus concluded His admonition to the presbytery in Smyrna by saying in Revelation 2 verse 11, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'

This really highlights to us the heaven and hell nature of receiving what the Lord is saying to us because He is saying here that 'he who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.' There is a very clear and obvious implication for those who are not overcoming and those who are rejecting what the Lord is saying to them. He says here, 'He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.' The second death describes the eternal judgement of God in the lake of fire. In relation to the promise of not being hurt by the second death, the companion passage in the book of Revelation is Revelation 20 verse 6. This makes it clear what He is saying to Smyrna. 'Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.' This is talking about rulership — kingship - a share in Christ's kingship. 'They will reign with Christ with Him a thousand years.' That is talking about the Millennium.

The final manifestation of the crown of life will be revealed on the day of resurrection when we inherit our spiritual body. However, the crown of life also describes the power of Christ's resurrection life, which we receive in our mortality here and now, as we are conformed to the death of Christ in the fellowship of His seven wounding events. We are receiving the crown of life now - and particularly then, as we receive that crown of life and we have a testimony of overcoming. Then we are enabled to proclaim the gospel of God to others. That gospel is imbued with power to believe the word of faith. I am highlighting something of the progression, but all these lessons need to be learned.

Having been recovered to the right hand of Christ, the next step on the pathway of

restoration for a presbytery is to learn how to minister in weakness. Think of the testimony of the apostle Paul. The Lord first reached out His right hand, and He laid hold of him. Paul was joined then to the fellowship of the right hand of Christ and then he was sent by Christ to be a messenger in the right hand. That was the first point of restoration or recovery. The very next lesson started pretty quickly. The Lord was pretty clear when He first laid hold of him that this was going to be the nature of his pathway. The very first lesson then, that was put to Paul was to learn how to minister in weakness. This was the first lesson that the apostle Paul had to learn after Christ reached out His right hand to lay hold of him. Paul testified to the Corinthians concerning Christ. This is 2 Corinthians 13 verse 4. 'For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.' As Paul is joined to the fellowship of Christ's death and His overcoming and His suffering and all that persecution, he is receiving the resurrection life of Christ. It is enabling him to minister the word of faith to his hearers and that word was power. It was imbued with power for them to believe and that then is the power of salvation. '...but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.'

The evidence that a presbytery is receiving the crown of life (and we will keep adding to this) - a presbytery *and* an overcoming remnant in fellowship with the presbytery - will be the capacity to proclaim the gospel of God. We have had to really become clear on what the gospel is; but we need to know more than the content. When we share it by testimony, it needs to be imbued with power. The evidence that a presbytery is receiving the crown of life will be the capacity to proclaim the gospel of God and direct the power of God for salvation to a lampstand church through weakness. Then it is directed from the houses that belong to a lampstand church, beyond them into the community with the same capacity for faith.

We will finish here. I want to read one other statement again quoting from Vic's paper to connect it to what we heard yesterday. This to me is what the crown of life looks like. It is the statement on page 2 under 'The declaration of God's glory'. I will read the second part of the

paragraph here to finish. 'The word of faith that speaks to us through His messengers is a word that is alive and powerful. Even though it is spoken in weakness [and *must* be spoken in weakness], it is nevertheless, the word of the King. It is an expression of His majesty as our Lord and King. The word comes to us with all the authority of a command. It carries within itself the power to accomplish what Christ is asking us to believe and to do.' That is what belongs to the crown of life as we receive it. It is the capacity to also then minister that word. I will leave it there for today.