

Revelation – The Roaring Lamb

Matthew Vander Els • 2021-10-16 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Revelation 1:4](#) • [Revelation 3:21](#) • [Revelation 5:1](#) • [Revelation 5:5](#) • [Revelation 5:9](#) • [Revelation 5:10](#) • [Revelation 5:12](#) • [Revelation 6:9](#) • [Revelation 19:12](#) • [Revelation 19:16](#) • [Revelation 22:1](#) • [Revelation 22:4](#) • [Daniel 7:1](#) • [Daniel 12:1](#) • [Ezekiel 2:1](#) • [Isaiah 13:1](#) • [Isaiah 24:1](#) • [Jeremiah 1:1](#) • [Malachi 1:1](#) • [Ezra 1:1](#) • [Nehemiah 1:1](#) • [Matthew 5:1](#) • [Matthew 24:1](#) • [Mark 1:14](#) • [Mark 1:15](#) • [Luke 6:27](#) • [John 1:1](#) • [Acts 1:1](#) • [1 Corinthians 10:11](#) • [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) • [Galatians 3:28](#) • [Philippians 3:20](#) • [Hebrews 1:1](#) • [Hebrews 11:1](#) • [Numbers 11:7](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home. Welcome home. I was a little over the top, but I liked it.

Shabbat shalom, everyone. If you're visiting us for the first time today or watching online for the first time, my name is Matthew Vander Els, one of the pastors here at Founded in Truth Fellowship, where we are a Bible-loving, Sabbath-celebrating, Hebraic-emphasizing, eclectic community whose only desire is to orbit our lives around the person of Jesus who we call Yeshua. So welcome to Founded in Truth.

Great to be back together this week. We are continuing our series through the fantastic, explosive, thought-provoking, uncomfortable letter of resistance known as the book of Revelation. And we started the series last week with Hope Revealed, which is also the series title. And we named it that because we believe Revelation is a book meant to encourage believers everywhere to stay faithful to their allegiance to the lordship of King Yeshua. And it's meant to call repentance to those who have compromised their faith and communities by accommodating the ways of the beast, which are the worldly empires that engage in aspects that are against the ethic of God's kingdom. And it's also meant to give hope, hope that God has not abandoned those churches who stand, who resist and subvert the ways of the beast, that justice will be served and God's plan will always be unthwarted.

And we reviewed some of the historical background last week of what was going on in the lives of believers when John wrote these visions down and sent them out to the seven churches in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey today. It wasn't really a popular thing to be a Christian during this time in the Roman Empire, which we'll see. You could lose a lot if you were outed. You could lose your land, you could lose your property, your rights, or you could be exiled like John was, or you could even lose your life. And we're going to talk about why today. But first, who did their homework? Well, you have another opportunity.

The Assignment to Read Revelation

Guys, last week I gave some homework. I tasked everyone who was going to join in this series, both in person and online, with mandatory homework. And that was to read the book of Revelation from front to back in one sitting, preferably out loud. And I believe this is how John intended his primary audience, who he wrote the letters to, the seven churches, to read it. At that time, he would send it out to seven messengers or angels, depending on your translation. And messengers were dispatched to the churches, and whoever arrived with this scroll would unravel it. The fellowship would sit down, and he would read it out loud, just like Paul's letters, just like the gospel accounts. This was the tradition at that time. And he would read it aloud, the entire thing. There was no stopping to say, okay, well, what's that symbolize? What's the strongest concordance number for that word so I can look up where else it was used? None of that. The very first audience to hear Revelation read it all the way through out loud embraced the beauty of it. And so I offer this chance for you, too, to embrace the beauty of this ancient scroll by completing your homework.

The Theme of Witness

So yeah. Today we're going to speak about one of the major themes in Revelation. And of course, we know the main theme of Revelation is Yeshua is King, Jesus the Christ. And this week's theme is witness. And when we speak about the word witness that appears seven times in Revelation, by the way, exactly seven times, it is the Greek word *martis* or martyr. It's martyr. Whenever you see the word witness used in any of the New Testament, it's martyr. And later, this word martyr became associated with someone who was going to die for their faith or convictions or ethics. But during this time, it just meant witness, to bear witness. It wasn't necessarily associated with dying yet.

And we see this in [Revelation 6:9](#). Here it states that when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar... The souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they

had borne. The souls here are not martyrs because they were slain. They are martyrs because they bore witness. And bearing witness is what got them slain.

And in the world of the first century, bearing witness meant you were bearing witness to Yeshua as being Lord and God. The same phrase that was used for Caesar at the time. And when you proclaimed this, both in thought, in speech, and in action, you were seen as being against Rome, as against your neighbors, as against everybody, and were punished. If you were outed, then you were punished. But the punishments were losing property, losing wealth, being exiled, and so on and so forth. There was a lot you could lose if you're going to bear witness to the kingdom of God in opposition to the kingdom of Rome.

Subverting Roman Society

And when you bore witness, it wasn't just wearing an I love you Jesus t-shirt. No, the Christians were being persecuted because they were breaking all of the structural rules of Roman society. The social structure that establishes classes to rule over others, slaves being at the bottom. The believers were the ones that said, no, slaves can eat at the same table as the wealthy. Who does that? They can. Women don't have those types of rights in the empire. Yeah, they do. Because we're going back to Eden. Where there was no division of slaves or master or Jew or Gentile or male and female, there was no separation and division in those things. Now we're going back to or forward to Eden.

Enemies deserve to die. Enemies of Rome that break the Pax Romana code. They threaten the very peace that Rome has established. You know what? Let's give them food instead. Yeah, let's pray for them instead. Let's help the poor. And helping the poor was something strategic that they did in the first century, specifically politicians and the wealthy, which were mostly the same. They would seek to establish patron-client relationships, which is a reciprocal relationship. I do something for you, and then you're kind of in debt to me, so you kind of reciprocate it back in the way that you say thank you and gratitude. And so you would have patrons giving out lunchboxes every day to the poor, feeding them. You would have patrons that would go into cities and rebuild parts of the cities and modify it. Well, what would this do? And now there is a sense of showing gratitude to them. And how would you do that? Well, I'm running for mayor next month, and since I've been giving you this lunchbox every day and feeding your family, whatever. You see how it was used.

But the believers were like, yeah, no, we don't get anything in return. Subverting the very structure of Rome, they were messing everything up. The Christians were the ones turning

their backs on the temples where sacrifices were brought. A key part of any local economy throughout the provinces of Rome. It'd be like they were literally making the stock market dip. That's a problem. That's the problem. Let's adopt the children that the Romans leave out in the field because they didn't want them. Let them die. Because abortion in the first century, in the Roman Empire, was something that was absolutely seen as amoral. It was not a moral thing to do. No, we don't do that. But a live child that just so happens to be killed by the elements out in the field or by a wild animal, eh, I didn't kill them. The Christians were the ones that ran to the fields and took up the children and adopted them or gave them a proper burial. Let's fill in the gaps of society that people keep falling through. Let's show Rome what mercy and grace of God looks like. Let's do things that are right, but Rome and the people of Rome do not like because it threatens the borders and their security of their nation.

And what would the response be to a movement like this? Well, it was a lot of poor people and discarded people that were experiencing blessing for the first time in their lives, and so they were joining. I mean, this movement was growing like a plague as one governor, Pliny, speaks of. And the wealthy and the powerful, those who did have wealth, were taking over the patron type of responsibilities in the city, but not abusing them, taking that opportunity away from the corrupt. It's not good for Rome. So persecution ensued, oppression ensued. And as a result, there was constant pressure on the believing community.

Rome's Response to Christian Witness

Rome didn't persecute and kill and torture Christians because they were telling people how to get to heaven. No. Believers would resist any aspect of the empire that would go against the ethic of the kingdom they were citizens of. But here's the thing. As I mentioned before, during this time in Rome, Nero was no longer around, and so they weren't actively, systematically hunting down Christians to kill them. It was the locals, the communities that were outing them.

And Pliny here records how to test to see if someone was a Christian or not. If they offer a small sacrifice to the gods of Rome and curse Christ, they're good to go. And so here I have a quote, and bear with me, we're gonna take a time machine back, okay? So this was actually penned about a decade after Revelation is thought to have been written, a little bit over a decade. And here is the lifestyle of what's going on during this time. It says, These examinations made me think it necessary to inquire by torments what the truth really was, which I did to two women that served who were called deaconesses. But still, I discovered no more than they were addicted to a bad and to an extravagant superstition.

Superstition Spreading Like a Contagion

For this superstition is spread like a contagion, not only into the cities and the towns, but into the country villages also." This was written around 112 to the Emperor Trajan from Pliny of Bithynia. It's not a very hopeful letter, is it? The empire was starting to push back, torturing Christians. Two deaconesses were tortured to reveal what he calls superstition. But have no fear, mighty emperor. Despite this spreading like a plague, our temples are starting to be more frequented again in all the provinces. People are coming back, so don't worry, emperor. Sacrifices have picked back up. People are coming back to this. The Christians were beginning to compromise. They're starting to accommodate this, emperor. Don't worry. They're not conquering or overcoming anymore.

Beginning to Compromise

If you noticed when you read—those of you who did your homework—most of these seven churches were critical in their writings. There's very few that were really praised. Most of them? "Okay, man, you're doing a great job in this, but stop this or we're gonna take your crown away." And that gives you a sense, a pulse of how it was. If that kind of reflects the whole empire, churches were beginning to accommodate and facilitate, as this letter attests fifteen years later. In the letter of Laodicea, here's what it says. It talks about being conquerors.

Nike: The Conqueror

So what's interesting about that word conquer or conquers—it's the Greek word Nike. Basically, it's Nike. Nike means to conquer. Nike. Right? Like your shoes. Conqueror. Overcomer. It was personified as a female goddess who would fly around with wings. She had big wings. Well, I'll tell you what. Go to the next slide. Here's a statue of her. So she would fly around and she would have—what's in her hand? Anyone know what that is? It's a crown. It's a crown. Roman crown of victory. And she would fly over the battlefields and give it to the honored victors, the ones who are overcoming, she would get behind in her presence and so on and so forth. What's the next slide? I think I have another one. This statue is of Nike in Ephesus carrying the crown. So she carries the crown and gives it to those who overcome. So you see the symbology, the way John's divisions are riffing off these parallels in mockery here.

Into the Throne Room

This verse that we just read launches us into chapters four and five of Revelation, which is the throne room scene. It is my absolute favorite scene of Revelation. And Yeshua here is speaking to Laodicea to repent and says that he's already on the throne ruling, whereas we'll see in the throne room scene, he's standing, which is kind of neat. And if they embrace authentic, unwavering faith, they too will sit on the throne and rule. He's going to share his throne. Why is this important? When we look outside, sometimes it doesn't seem like Yeshua's ruling. Anyone else? I mean, sometimes it doesn't look like he's actually ruling. We like to say he's ruling, his last name's King. Like, we'd like to say all these things, but sometimes it doesn't look like it.

The Paradox of the Gospel

It's the paradox of the gospel. When the Jewish people returned from Babylon, they had been sent there because of their unfaithfulness to the covenant. When they came back from exile, five hundred years before Yeshua, they had these expectations and promises that were set forth by the prophets, such as Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Malachi, about a new world that was coming. This final judgment that would take place, this final division of the righteous and the unrighteous. There would be a new temple that would come about, a new creation. There would be a resurrection, a great resurrection.

But after they returned to Judea from exile, things didn't get better. Those promises didn't happen. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah both attest that they were still slaves in their own land and the people were not getting any better. They were still breaking covenant, being unfaithful. And so there was this future expectation and deliverance that is yet to come. That was the expectation. That is why the people were waiting on this messianic king to come that would usher all of this in.

And what took place on the first day of the week, the day of new creation, when the stone was rolled away and Yeshua walked out—according to the apostles—everything that was supposed to happen in this grand prophetic expectation for the entire world happened to one person ahead of everyone else. Instead of a final recreation and resurrection of creation, you have this one person, the Messiah, being resurrected and recreated in our old world. And this begins a concept we've spoken about before, and it's across the New Testament: the here and not yet, the now and what's yet to come.

The Here and Not Yet

The end has already happened on Resurrection Sunday in Shavuot, and the end is still yet to come. And we find ourselves in this period as believers where Yeshua is reigning as king in heaven and earth, given all authority and power, but we still have what Yeshua references in [Matthew 24](#) called the birth pangs of what is to be born. We spoke about this in a message a few weeks back in Rumors of War. In the minds of the early believers, you have this overlap of the old world and the new world and the transition that is taking place of what is now and what is yet to come.

We see Paul alludes to this in [1 Chronicles 10](#), 11. And I love this. He says, "The things happened to them as examples of what were written down as warnings to us, the culmination of the ages." It's like this overlap, this transition of the old age and the age to come. The CEV version, I love it. He says, "Guys, we are living in the end times." We are. We are. We are in the end times right now, just like Paul was two thousand years ago. I think there's someone on YouTube I saw chatting away. He's a messenger of the end times, the last days on there. You are a witness. You are a messenger of the last days, just like Paul and Yeshua were two thousand years ago.

So we have this theme of transition taking place. And when we think about the end times, we always think about it being something negative, right? The end times make us kind of scared. And usually when you see a video on the end times, it plays music just like the one that was in my video—big epic music. End times, when everything bad's gonna happen. But to the first century audience, the end times were a transition to new creation. It's the ending of the old age and the transition into the new creation, right?

[2 Corinthians 5.17](#), Paul makes this declaration, speaking about the overlap. We are still placed in this old world, but Christ has come. And if we're in him, then we are living out and experiencing what is to come now. New creation has come. And so this theme of the here and not yet also prompts action and witness for believers to live out what they know is coming. Live out the way of the new world in the midst of the old one. That's exactly what [Hebrews 11:1](#) defines as faith in a believer. You live out and be the evidence of what is not yet. Does that make sense? Hopefully. That's why the theology of the gospel just being about dying and going to heaven is almost destructive. Because the gospel according to [Mark 1](#), 14 through 15 is that the kingdom of God is near. It's coming. It's emerging over us. It's overlapping us even now. That's the gospel. And we engage in that gospel through repentance and allegiance.

The Throne Room Vision

And so we're going to skip over the seven churches for a moment and we're going to dive into the throne room scene. And when you guys did your homework reading through Revelation, you experienced chapter 4. And that's when these apocalyptic visions really ramped up, right? You got all these creatures and they look like, what is that? And all these flashes of lightning and thunder. And John is ushered into the throne room in the heavenly court, the same place where Isaiah and Micah and Daniel and Ezekiel were all exposed to in their visions.

This section is so important because it's from this vision that all of the other visions from chapter 6 to 22 of Revelation birth and flow from. That's why this vision is so important. Like other prophets, John is being commissioned here to go back and communicate God's hidden purpose for his people and what part they play in carrying it out as his people.

The word throne appears seventeen times just within chapters 4 and 5, and twenty-four more times in the remainder of the book. It's emphasizing the sovereignty of God over human history. And you see the creatures that were surrounding the throne, defined in such an apocalyptic manner—these creatures act as judges over the inhabitants of the earth, determining who is actually acknowledging and honoring God's claim to rule over them and who is not. Regardless of how rampant evil runs and inflicts suffering on God's people, they can know that his hand is orchestrating everything for their good and his glory.

It's significant to the churches finding themselves persecuted or oppressed or tempted to compromise their faith by accommodating the politics of empire. Rome goes around brutally conquering and exploiting weaker peoples and enslaving them. But hey, at least abortion is not seen as ethical here. At least some poor people are taken care of. At least Rome takes care of some people. But this is not acceptable for believers who are citizens of a kingdom that is not of this earth, according to [Philippians 3.21](#). We are to be the connection between the old world and the new world. Ambassadors of the latter, here and now. And here's what [Revelation 5.1](#) says.

A Sealed Scroll and the Search for an Opener

In chapter 5, we're presented with a book that's been sealed—a scroll with seals on it. This book, riffing off [Daniel 12](#) or [Ezekiel 2](#), reflects what Daniel was told to seal up: a book of visions containing God's judgments. This book or scroll reflects God's plan of judgment and redemption, which has been set in motion through Yeshua's death. But it hasn't come to its full conclusion yet. It's overlapping.

The angel is searching for someone to open the book, looking in the created world, and he can't find anyone. This book represents the authority to execute the divine plan of judgment and redemption according to verses 9, 10, and 12. And when the seals are broken, we get to see the fuller content of John's visions.

What we see is Yeshua's sovereignty over history, the reign of Yeshua and the saints throughout the course of this age into the new cosmos. We see Yeshua's protection of his people who suffer trial as well as his judgments, both temporal and final on a persecuting world. It reveals the purpose of history despite the present suffering and oppression. This world, which is given over to the promise of evil, stands no more.

The Scroll: Roman Will or Sealed Book?

And there's a debate here on whether John is implying this is an actual scroll or a book. The reason is, if it was a book known as a codex, you could put seals on the chapters. So you could pop a seal and it would reveal certain portions of the book. Makes a lot of sense. Pretty neat.

It could also be a scroll that was sealed by seven witnesses, which was common in Rome. Roman wills had to be sealed by seven witnesses, according to some historical documents. So according to theologian and historian G.K. Beale, these Roman scrolls—the wills—would be broken upon the person's death, and the legal promise of inheritance could then and only then be executed. And a trustworthy executor had to be found to put this will in effect.

It was also common for a summary of the contents of the will to be written on the outside, just a brief summary. That way no one could open it and change it because you already know the contents, right? And it's interesting that we see in the first verse that this scroll was written on both sides. Maybe, right? It's kind of neat.

Some suggest that if it was a scroll—we're just suggesting, right? Don't know. If it was a scroll, what would be written on the outside would be the abbreviated versions of this climactic plan of execution that was given to Daniel, that was given to Ezekiel, right? They didn't have the full clear vision of Yeshua. That's exactly what [Hebrews 1](#), 1 through 4 says, right?

John's Weeping and the Lion's Appearance

And John begins to weep in this vision in chapter 5 because no one is found who can open the seals and execute the divine plan of redemption. No one can open the scroll to execute the judgment. The justice is being held back.

But his despair is short-lived. Because in verse 5 it says this: "And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered Judah. He has become Nike, right? So that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

So he hears about this lion and what has the lion done? The lion has conquered. How does a lion conquer? He has these big old claws and they just rip zebras apart, right? Big old fangs—look at the fangs, right? And this huge monster who is the king of the jungle, right? It's a Genesis reference to the messianic king that would come from Judah. Amazing imagery here. So he hears about the Lion of Judah conquering. And then the next verse says this.

The Slain Lamb Standing in Victory

And when he turns and sees this lamb, the elders fall down and everyone worships: worthy is the lamb. Gosh, did you miss it? I would love to think that there were like steps—boom, boom, boom—behind him. And then he turns and he looks. And there's no lion at all. There's a lamb that's standing in the center of the court with his throat cut.

Let me paint the scene. You have God's throne in the center of the cosmos. I like to picture just the beauty of the heavens surrounding it, at the center of the universe, God's throne. Everything is orbiting it. And at the center of God's throne, there's a bloodied, cut-up lamb standing in victory. All of creation orbiting him. Gosh, this is the Lion of Judah that has conquered. This is how the Lion of Judah conquered Judah. That's just so perplexing but beautiful and uncomfortable.

The image represents a conqueror who was mortally wounded as he defeated the enemy. The seven horns signify power. In Daniel chapter 7, the beast made war with the saints by the power of his horn. And here this little lamb, blood everywhere, has seven horns. Seven representing fullness. He has the fullness of power to defeat the beast, more than the beast ever had.

The Lamb's Worthiness and Victory

And it goes on to say the lamb is worthy to take the scroll. The lamb was slain, which is how he conquered. And because he conquered, he has purchased redemption with his blood for every tribe, language, people, and nation.

The conquering power of the lion of the tribe of Judah is revealed in the text. Now, the words "as slain"—one Greek scholar mentioned that they're both perfect particles, which somehow expresses an ongoing state of reality. Thought that was kind of neat. The lamb continues to

exist as slain and yet standing. It indicates the victorious effect of his redemptive death, as well as the ongoing suffering of believers turned into victory as well. This is why the cross became such a big symbol in Christianity: the slain lamb that was standing.

It's a mockery of the power of the beast. Remember, all of the visions that come after flow from this image. Everything is viewed through the lens of this image—the reality that Yeshua does not conquer by throwing lightning bolts at people. He doesn't conquer by taking a sword and running it through somebody. He doesn't conquer through violence. That is the way of the beast. That is Rome. He conquers through self-sacrificial love, blessing, and mercy.

How True Witnesses Conquer

And what makes that so uncomfortable is that the true witnesses of Yeshua, according to Revelation, are those that conquer like him. It's what we read in [Revelation 3, 21](#): "To the one who conquers, I will give the right to sit with me on the throne, just as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne."

Just as I conquered. The way that Yeshua taught us to respond to the world was by finding an alternative. An alternative to fight or flight. Those were usually the only two options, right? There's a threat, something's wrong, we're gonna run away or fight. And Yeshua teaches in the Sermon on the Mount to look for that third option. Look for that unexpected option. If someone forces you to carry his backpack, you carry it for an extra mile. You face the conflict and you find an alternative way that shows the generosity of God instead of spitting in their face. You give up your underwear along with your jacket if you're sued, showing the humility of God's kingdom instead of lashing out.

You turn the other cheek, showing the power of God's kingdom. You don't bring harm to them. You pray for your enemy. You bless those who persecute you. Doesn't mean getting banned on Facebook or put in timeout on Facebook. You give them food and aid. You show them what they are missing by grasping hold of the promises of evil in the old world and what they could have if they choose to live in the new one.

Bearing Witness and Resisting the Beast

This is how you bear witness to the lordship of Jesus. And you do it at all costs. You disrupt the way the empire teaches you to respond and react. You resist evil. Do not accommodate idolatry, wickedness, sin, the elements of the old world. Resist the ways of the beast. This is how

empires are toppled. This is how you break them—by enduring the birth pangs and being a witness of what is yet to be born.

And so when we come to the seven churches in the chapters before this, chapters 2 and 3, this was the standard by which they were being criticized and praised. It was through the lens of that expectation, the expectation of the Lamb who stands victoriously in the center of the throne room.

The Church of Ephesus: Doctrine Without Love

And so to the church of Ephesus, Yeshua says: You guys are doing an amazing job at protecting doctrine. Fantastic. Great job at testing teachers, prophets, and teachings. Great job finding and calling out false teachings. You're on top of that. You know a lot about that Bible. You're doing a great job.

But here's the thing: you've lost your first love. You're so concerned about maintaining the inward purity of the church—which, again, is good. I mean, you've endured a lot of hardships—but you've lost your focus on the outside world and reciprocating the love of Yeshua and the gospel of the kingdom to it. You are not bearing witness. Repent and do the works that you did when you first fell in love with this slain lamb king. You're not even doing those things anymore. Go back and remember and repent.

The Church of Smyrna: Rich in Suffering

The church of Smyrna: I know you're suffering and you find yourself in poverty, but guess what? You are rich despite the slander you endure, even by those who are supposed to be your family, your communities, your friends. Don't worry. They're not in my flock. Keep enduring and bearing witness. More persecution is going to come. Stay faithful, even to the point of death. And if you do this, I will give you the crown of life, the crown of overcomers.

Then he says to the one who conquers will never be harmed by the second death. You guys keep it up and keep being faithful. The church of Pergamum: I know where you live. It's Satan's throne.

Like, if there was a city that you would call Satan's throne in the U.S., I've heard it done — that's where Satan lives. There's so much speculation about what John is talking about here. But Pergamum was the first city in Asia, the Roman province, to have a temple built for emperor

worship. They were the first. It was known as the emperor's warden, which it took pride in itself with that name.

It was also the center of the cult for Asclepius, the god of medicine. They had the symbol of the serpent, which is what transpired through Greek philosophy and so on to become our medical symbol today. That's kind of neat — that's the connection here. But it was the center of that cult there. And finally, there was a cone-shaped hill behind the city that was a prominent site for various sacrifices and offerings. This was a place that was dedicated to worshiping and honoring gods and Caesar every day.

As Revelation proceeds, we see how the dragon, Satan, gives the political system, the beast, its power to persecute the people of God. And it was no doubt occurring here against Christians who were not going to participate in idolatry.

Satan's Throne

And he says: You are holding onto my name and did not deny faith in me, even though Antipas was killed because of his witness. But I hold this against you. You hold to the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

Balaam was a false prophet that led Israel away in numbers. His name means the one who consumes or rules over people — Baal, Lord, right? And Nicolaus, or Nicholas, comes from the word Nike, and it means to consume or rule over people. And he specifically associates that with eating meat sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. See, they were tolerating a mixture in these communities. They were tolerating a mixture of the ways of the beast and society with the ways of Yeshua in the kingdom to come. And this overlap is supposed to create a distinction, not a merging. You understand? The overlap of heaven and earth is supposed to create a distinction, not a merging.

And he says, stop tolerating that. He says, you too can conquer and overcome this. And if they do, they will receive the hidden manna, which is likely a reference to the feasting at the marriage supper of the Lamb. And they will receive a white stone with a hidden name on it. Kind of neat.

The White Stone

The white stone could be connected to manna because in [Numbers 11](#), the manna is described as bedellium — it's white stones. That's what it's described as looking like. But in the Jewish

context during this era, white stones were used as votes of acquittal in a legal case. You got a black stone if you were guilty, and white stones — no, you're voting — no, they're innocent.

Stones were also used as tokens of admittance to special events. So now we have little invitations. You have a stone that would be your admittance. This is, I'm here, I got an invitation. The world has labeled believers as guilty of participating in its ways, and here Yeshua gives them a white stone, overturning the verdict and admitting them to the great supper that is to come. And the new name we see on the stones refers to Yeshua's victorious kingly name that no one knows except himself. That's mentioned and clarified in chapters 19, 12 through 16, and [Revelation 22](#). And [Revelation 22](#) goes on to say that his name will be placed where? On our foreheads. This new name, this new status of being intimately united with the presence of the Messiah.

Thyatira, that church: your works have only become greater, but you tolerate the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophet but deceives others and is not a true believer. I'm going to punish her and all that support her.

Stop Tolerating the Mixture

Stop tolerating the ways of the empire and stop tolerating teachers that blend the ways of the beast with the message of Yeshua. Stop tolerating teachings that blend what is acceptable in Rome with the kingdom of God. Stop tolerating mixing those social politics and the ways of the beast of life with the teachings of Yeshua. Overcome and wait on me.

Sardis, you have a reputation for living out righteousness, but being alive, you are actually dead. You've allowed yourself to compromise, possibly out of fear, the bold witness of Yeshua. Keep going and conquer.

Philadelphia, you have little power, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I know you've been persecuted by those who are supposed to be family, those pretending to act religious and faithful but are backbiting liars and attempt to turn people against you. Their judgment is coming swiftly. You have kept my command to endure. I am coming soon. See that no one takes your crown of victory.

Laodicea, you are neither hot nor cold. See, Laodicea had two neighbors: Hierapolis and Colossae. Hierapolis had these hot springs, hot water. And so the people there — like the doTERRA people back in the first century, the Romans — they considered hot water to be this medicinal thing, homeopathic. You drink hot water and it's medical, it's good, right?

And on the other side, in Colossae, they had cold water, cold springs. It was fresh, right? And the view was: well, cold water is healthy for you. It's good. Laodicea didn't have a pure water source. They had to get it pumped in. And so it often arrived dirty and lukewarm, only fit to spit out.

So in the first century, cold water, hot water, and wine were the three things that everyone thought were the healthiest things to drink — not lukewarm water. The faith of the Laodiceans, much like the lukewarm water that didn't benefit anyone's health, was not healthy and did not have a healthy effect on the people that lived around them. Just didn't. Lukewarm.

They compromised in idolatry. They allowed their witness and faith to become ineffective. They had become rich by aligning themselves with the local economic forces that were linked to idolatry and immorality. Poverty is not endorsed here, but the theme is handling carefully what God has given to you. And if you don't manage the blessings and the wealth that God has given to you, it will consume you. It will consume you and it will overcome you. And when you're overtaken by the things that you don't manage well, that God has given to you, then it leads to idolatry. He says, be zealous and repent. Turn, I'm knocking at the door.

The Choice to Blend In

See, during this time, as we saw with the quote from Pliny, systematic persecution was not widespread, okay? You had people that were outed, and they would come interrogate you. And if you didn't curse Christ, they would take away land or exile you or maybe kill you, but they weren't actively going door to door. You could easily fly under the radar as a believer during this time. Easily. Just don't get noticed. Just blend in. Just like everyone else.

When everyone also remains silent about injustice, just blend in. When everyone else cheers the victories of the beast system, just blend in. When everyone else supports the political system and fights and bites and name calls and turns mortal figures into pseudo-gods, just blend in. It's easier to accommodate. And I think that's the most convicting thing about knowing what's going on when these churches were read these letters or written these letters.

These churches had a choice to blend in, just like we have a choice to blend in today. We can easily fly under the radar. Absolutely. We stay in that closet. We don't — we can easily do it and not make our life and pursuit and zeal about the king who is ruling and is overtaking the world. We can totally just be like everyone else and be known for something else, be known for putting our zeal and energy in something else.

See, one thing you notice: Revelation was not written to Babylon. It was not written to Rome. It was not written to the United States of America. It was written to seven assemblies. The letter wasn't concerned about the empires as much as it was concerned about the believers that dwelled in them and how they were responding and acting and being witnesses of the here and not yet.

This message was not meant to save empires because all of them are part of the beast system. These letters were sent to these churches so they could audit their involvement in civil religion of the empire they found themselves in, call out idolatry — which took many, many, many forms in the empire — calling out the empire's desire to coerce believers in accommodating sexual immorality, to accommodate a system where there are people who benefit from it but also people who do not, accommodate the feelings of justifying violence and war for a sense of security and freedom, to accommodate satisfying the ever-growing appetite of the beast.

And it comes in so many different forms, doesn't it? Idolatry, different forms.

What's Holding Back Your Witness

What is holding back your witness today? And this is twofold because it could be things we struggle with internally, right? Things we struggle with internally but hide from the world like the church's artists. Maybe you struggle with lust and conquering your heart's desire to objectify people for your own pleasure and your own mind.

Maybe you struggle with envy internally, looking at the world through the lens of what you don't have instead of the blessings that God has given to you. That's one of the top 10.

Maybe you struggle with bitterness of others, hatred that expresses itself in forms of gossip — not gospel, in forms of gossip and backbiting, turning your back and backstabbing, bitterness and hatred. Such a slow growing monster, isn't it? Maybe you are just like the congregation or synagogue of Satan. That's what they were doing. They're not one of you. Don't worry how they persecute you and try to turn others against you.

Remember Your First Love

Maybe you find yourself today realizing your witness to resist the beast actively isn't so bold or zealous after all. You're just blending in, and it's very comfortable here. Then repent and remember your first love. What does it look like to love these people? Are you known for being that type of witness?

As we navigate these end times, as Paul puts it, this overlap of the old world and new creation. We grow and we act and participate in the coming new Jerusalem of a world rid of evil and wickedness, of a time when all nations receive healing from the tree of life. And we do that by overcoming now, by conquering now.

We are citizens of the new world. We've been born again into a new citizenship, despite finding ourselves living in the old.

Recognize the Beast and Stand as Witness

A great example of someone who truly embodied the message of Revelation was Martin Luther King Jr. In his writings and speeches, he recognized the tribulation, the birth pangs of his generation. He recognized the Babylon of his generation.

Just like Isaiah recognized Babylon for what it was in his generation and wrote about its destruction in [Isaiah 13](#) and 24, just like Yeshua recognized the Babylon of his generation when he looked at Jerusalem and quoted [Isaiah 13](#) of Babylon's fall and destruction, just like John and the seven churches recognized Babylon in their generation, Dr. King recognized the beast before him. And he stood as an active witness to resist—resist—to subvert Babylon in a way that didn't look like the world.

He didn't call for people to get guns and go shoot all the white cops that were oppressing them. No, nonviolent. Why did he do that? Because he understood the message. He understood that we are to be witnesses of the world to come, not advocates for the ways of the empire.

We will stand. We will agitate the beast. We will subvert and we will stand in courage and resist. And no matter what the beast throws at us, it cannot defeat us because it didn't defeat Christ.

Every Generation's Call

Every generation is called to find itself in the book of Revelation, to recognize the beast and Babylon before them and to stand as witnesses of the lordship of Yeshua and ambassadors of what is coming—the future of a new heaven and new earth.

The future of a new heaven and new earth forces itself into our present circumstances, into our struggles. It awakens hope and strengthens our faith and love and the expectation that there is always more that God wants to give us here and now and to bring forward here and now. God is always ahead of us, always creating the new, always opening new situations and possibilities.

And we as believers—and people mock us—but we're not awakening a false expectation of what is coming. It's not some fairy tale of what is coming. No, we are proclaiming that there is always more that God wants to do in the overlap of heaven and earth.

And hope is important because the moment that you begin to lose hope, you begin to accept things as they are instead of racing to receive the more of what is in store and coming.

The Arc Bends Toward Justice

And here's a quote by Dr. King. He says this: "And that arc of the moral universe, although long, is bending towards justice. We have lived under the agony and darkness of Good Friday with the conviction that one day the heightened glow of Easter would emerge on the horizon. We have seen truth crucified and goodness buried, but we have kept going with the conviction that truth crushed to the ground will rise again."

It's revelation. It's revelation. They're resisting because they know the trajectory. The arc of the moral universe is bending because we're showing the reality of the world to come now. We're impacting the old world with the good news of the new world. And despite how much the old world rejects it, despite how we are pushed to the ground, it's okay. Yeshua was pushed to the ground. And guess what? He rose.

Our hope and conviction is that with strength, God would allow us to stand publicly as witnesses of the lordship of Yeshua and his kingdom. And it always flies in the face of reality because it's based on the faithfulness of our God who surprises us in different ways that ends up enabling us, in the end, in the midst of it all, to say that we know who our king is.

Be Freed by the Blood of the Lamb

So guys, you can set up for worship as we conclude service, and I'd ask you to stand. The scene of the throne room gives us a glimpse of who our God is and how we are to be witnesses of him.

Because if you're struggling today, I want to tell you something. I want to tell you that even though sometimes it feels like the world has a grasp on you, I'm here to tell you that you can be freed, and those grasps and those shackles can be broken by the blood of the lamb.

Have hope in times of despair. Turn away from the things that you have attached yourself with. If you find yourself giving in to the promise of evil, repent. Turn away. If you recognize that

you're accommodating the blending in of culture and politics and the empire into the message of the kingdom of God, repent, stand strong, overcome, be a witness and live the hope out now.

And if you have something that you believe that you found or an awakening, or if the spirit convicts you of something, guys, you can leave that here today because there's hope in the future. And our God is a God of mercies. And our God is a God of grace. And our God is a God that represents himself through self-sacrificial love as a slain lamb standing in victory in the center of the throne room of God.

And when we choose to bear witness to the lordship of Yeshua through resisting the beast, no matter how unpopular, that is when we hear the roar of the lamb.

Where Is Your Witness?

Alvina Malkinu, our father, our king. Father, we thank you for this time together. As we approach your word, we thank you for this hope that you've given to us. We thank you for revealing yourself in the lamb that overcomes. And we thank you for the honor of being invited in to that witness to overcome just as he has.

Father, I ask in the name of Yeshua that the spirit within us that was given to us by Yeshua would continue to convict, continue to give clarity, continue to give power to overcome the things in our life that so tempt us to accommodate, that so tempt us to compromise our witness of his kingship in this old world. We thank you, Father. We thank you in the name of Yeshua, we pray.

Guys, during this time, I invite you to engage in worship and meditate during this time. I love this time of meditation, to reflect and focus on what is your witness? How is your witness? You see what the witness was in the first century, how the accommodating, compromising attitude took its effect on the kingdom's witness to the world. Where are you? What's holding you back?

And if you need prayer today, there's a prayer team on either side of the room. I invite you to bring whatever is on your heart before the Father. And we've dedicated this space as a type of synthetic altar to God. If you want to leave something on it today, symbolically, you can do that as well. It doesn't have to be taken home today.

Reflect, repent, and be witnesses of our King.

You are a God, they each may reign. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance to you and bring you peace. Shalom. Shabbat Shalom. Shalom.

I'm Matthew Vanderells, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Found in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we invite you to take part in making sure the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach others. To make sure this happens, you can donate through our online giving portal at foundinatruth.com/give or by texting any amount to 704-275-0752.

Don't forget to like and subscribe for new content every single week. And we thank you for your continued support. And we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at Foundedintruth.com EMAIL: Info@foundedintruth.com FACEBOOK: facebook.com/foundedintruth WEBSITE: <https://www.foundinatruth.com> Google: <https://g.co/kgs/az3iPeM>

Watch or listen: foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/revelation-the-roaring-lamb/

This automated transcript has been lightly edited for readability; scripture quotations appear as spoken. For the authoritative teaching, watch the video. • Founded in Truth Fellowship, Rock Hill SC • Saturdays 11:00 AM • Your giving keeps every teaching free: foundedintruth.com/give