

The Glorious Christ and His Suffering Church

Text: Revelation 1

Preamble

Good morning, everyone. It's a genuine joy to be here and a privilege to share what's been on my heart.

No matter our stage in life, it feels like tension is everywhere. There's this undeniable sense of increasing anxiety and conflict. Human history, and our own personal lives, often feel littered with chaos. In some ways, our present time is better, and in others, it seems much worse.

Even if you live in a bubble, untouched by political movements or global headlines, you're still faced with the challenges of sickness, death, and broken relationships. The separation of families, the pressures of work, the simple unfairness of life—these things can leave us feeling helpless and, ultimately, hopeless.

Perhaps you're doing very well. Business is booming, and your family is in great shape. But still, we are all aging. With every passing day, death feels a step closer. We worry about our loved ones and ourselves. And if you're not in that bubble, the anxiety only ratchets up.

So, what are we to do? What can we practically do in the face of all this?

I have been looking at the book of revelation quite a bit this summer and it has, strangely enough, given me a lot of hope. It's helped anchored me, and my anxiety level isn't as bad

For some of you, this book might ignite a great deal of excitement, perhaps bringing to mind prophecy conferences or popular novels. For others, it might evoke a sense of intimidation or even fear, like a mysterious code you're not quite sure how to crack. You might wonder what to do with its rich imagery, its numbers, and its pronouncements.

But what if we've been looking at it all wrong? What if the book of Revelation isn't a cryptic code to be cracked for a timeline of the end times, but a powerful, pastoral letter from Jesus Christ Himself to His suffering church?

- My aim today, and throughout this study, is not to get bogged down in endless speculation or to provide a "secret decoder ring" for future events. Instead, my heart is to help us understand Revelation as **God's inspired Word**, intended to deepen our knowledge of Him and to provide immense pastoral value for His people, particularly those living in times of trial and difficulty.
- I believe that the most fruitful approach to Revelation is to understand it within the broader storyline of the Bible, oriented around **eschatology – the study of ultimate things**. Revelation is not just about "last things" but about God's ultimate goal for His creation, which brings all things into a state of glory and blessedness.

Today, we'll dive into **Revelation chapter 1**, which serves as a powerful introduction, setting the stage for everything that follows.

Historical Context

The Book of Revelation was written by **John**, often identified as **John the Apostle**. He was on the island of **Patmos**, exiled there "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus". Patmos was known as a harsh place of Roman exile and punishment.

The book was likely written in the **'90s AD**, during the reign of **Emperor Domitian**. Domitian was a particularly severe persecutor of Christians, making persecution widespread, unlike earlier, more sporadic instances. This context of **"persecution and trial for the church"** is a defining characteristic for the emergence of apocalyptic literature.

Revelation is addressed to **"the seven churches that are in Asia"**, which were actual historical churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). However, the number **seven** symbolizes **fullness or completeness**, indicating that the message is intended for the **universal church** across all ages. These churches were a "mixed bag"; some were faithful but faced **persecution, poverty, and marginalization** (often for refusing to participate in pagan civic or guild practices), while others were unfaithful yet outwardly prosperous.

The book's genre is primarily **apocalyptic literature**, characterized by heavenly visions, symbolic language, and its emergence in times of suffering. Its core purpose is **pastoral**: **to offer**

hope, encourage perseverance in faithfulness, and call the unfaithful to repentance in the midst of difficult times.

Approaching the Book of Revelation

Before we rush to interpret specific images like locusts or numbers, it is crucial to understand how the entire Bible's storyline fits together, particularly around the theme of **eschatology**.

A. What is Eschatology? The Study of Ultimate Things Eschatology, from the Greek words *escatos* (last) and *logos* (study), traditionally refers to the study of "last things" – such as death, the afterlife, or final judgment. However, biblical eschatology has a broader, more clarifying distinction: it focuses on **ultimate things**. **It reminds us that God's final goal for His creation is an unbroken fellowship/communion between creator and creation.** This overarching plan was in view from the very beginning of creation and embraces all of human history. **This goal, though initially thwarted by Adam's disobedience, was never abandoned by God.**

B. The Right Approach to Reading Revelation Revelation is not just any book; **its genre is primarily apocalyptic literature**. This genre, distinctively Jewish, has its origins in the Old Testament, particularly in books like Daniel (chapters 7-12), Ezekiel, and Zechariah. Understanding this genre is key to unlocking Revelation:

1. **Symbolic Imagery, Numbers, and Colors:** Revelation is "loaded with symbolic imagery" and "symbolic use of numbers". **We should generally "read it symbolically unless there's actually some kind of very compelling reason to read it literally".** The primary way to interpret these symbols is by looking at "how those symbols have been employed in scripture itself," especially the Old Testament.
2. **Heavenly Visions in the midst of affliction:** The message of apocalyptic literature are presented as "heavenly visions", a "veil being pulled back" to show "ultimate things" and "ultimate reality". This gives perspective on our "troubled earthly experience".
3. **Recapitulation:** Rather than a strict linear chronology, Revelation often "retells the story and then they tell the story again from a different perspective". This is like watching a "sports replay from different angles". The world doesn't end "four or five times" sequentially; rather, the same ultimate end is described from different viewpoints to

emphasize various aspects of God's plan. This approach makes the book "simpler and clearer".

4. **Eclectic View of Time:** Revelation has "multiple reference points" in time. It speaks directly to the "first century" Christians, to "church history" throughout the ages, and to "the events of the very end". (Consider the "Day of the Lord" prophecies in the Old Testament, which could refer to an immediate event (e.g., exile), the crucifixion, and the ultimate return of Christ.)
5. **Pastoral Intent:** Revelation is fundamentally a "pastoral literature," a "literature of hope for suffering people". Its aim is to provide "assurance" to **"persecuted Christians in difficult contexts"**. It's not primarily a "secret decoder enterprise" for charts and graphs, but "good news to help beleaguered Christians live in difficult times".
6. **Emphasis on God's Sovereignty, Judgment, and Salvation:** Throughout, Revelation highlights God's "heavy emphasis on the sovereignty of God", His "triumph and ultimate victory over this persecution and difficulty", His "judgment of those who are causing the persecution and difficulty", and His "ultimate triumph and salvation" for His people.

Passage Breakdown

The Glorious Christ and His Suffering Church is a central theme that runs throughout the book of Revelation. Despite what may appear to be chaos in the world and in our personal lives, we must hold fast to these truths:

- **Jesus is sovereign and ultimately triumphs.** He is the one who will have the final victory, no matter how bleak things may seem.
- **Jesus is present with His Church.** He is not absent or blind to our needs, but is actively involved, even in our suffering.

Let's consider these chapter under 4 headings

- A Revelation of Jesus (vs 1-3)
- A Reminder: Behold He is Coming (vs 4-8)
- A Glimpse of the Exalted Christ (vs 9-20)
- Applications and Conclusion

A Revelation of Jesus

Revelation 1:1-3 (ESV) "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near."

A. The Revelation's Nature (v. 1a) The book begins, "The **revelation** of Jesus Christ". It's a revelation **of Jesus, from Jesus, and belonging to Jesus**.

- **Jesus is the content:** He is what is being revealed.
- **Jesus is the source:** The revelation comes from Him.
- **Jesus is the owner:** It is His revelation to impart.

This is crucial because it immediately reframes our approach: Revelation is **fundamentally about Jesus**, not primarily charts, timelines, or abstract predictions.

B. The Revelation's Process (vv. 1b-2) God takes great care to outline the authoritative chain of this message:

- **God the Father** gave it to **Jesus Christ**. **Jesus Christ** made it known by sending **His angel**. The **angel** delivered it to **His servant John**.
- **John**, having received it, "bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw". This message is then intended for **His servants**, the churches.
- This "golden chain" highlights the **highest order of authority and glory** of this vision. What John saw is "the very testimony of Jesus," "the very word of God". **It is not merely human speculation but a divinely authenticated message.**

C. The Revelation's Blessing (v. 3) "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who **keep** what is written in it, for the time is near". This blessing is three-fold:

1. **For those who read aloud:** Emphasizes communal, public reading in the church.
2. **For those who hear:** This implies an active reception in faith, not just physical hearing.
3. **For those who keep/heed:** This is the crucial part – **Revelation calls for obedience**, not just intellectual understanding or decoding. It's a practical word for Christian living.

"For the time is near": This phrase uses the Greek word *kairos*, referring not just to chronological *chronos* (linear time), but an **opportune moment or a time of decision**. Revelation delivers a **sense of urgency**: "The time for you to choose Jesus, the time for you to keep his word is at hand". It's a call to immediate repentance and obedience.

The first three verses of Revelation highlight three foundational truths about this powerful book:

- **It's about Christ:** Revelation isn't a timeline of future events but a revelation of *Jesus Christ*. He is the central figure from beginning to end.
- **It's a divinely authenticated message:** This book is a message given by God the Father to Jesus, who then gave it to His angel, who delivered it to the Apostle John. It carries the weight of divine authority.
- **There's a blessing for obedience:** A unique blessing is promised to those who not only read this book but also obey its message. It's an invitation to a transformed life, not just a curious mind.

A Reminder: Behold He is Coming!

Revelation 1:4-8 (ESV) "John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so, Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'"

A. The Triune Greeting (vv. 4-5a) that encourages the Church

The greeting comes from the **Triune God**, and a reminder that **God is with them**

- **"From him who is and who was and who is to come"**: The eternal Father.
- **"From the seven spirits who are before his throne"**: Symbolizing the **fullness and completeness of the Holy Spirit**.
- **"And from Jesus Christ"**: Here, Christ is described with three glorious titles:
 - **"The faithful witness"**: His words are true and reliable.
 - **"The firstborn of the dead"**: He is the first to be raised in resurrection glory, implying others will follow, and signifying His exaltation and highest rank.(psalm 89)
 - **"The ruler of the kings on earth"**: He is the ultimate sovereign, reigning over all earthly powers. **Pastoral Takeaway**: For the suffering churches to whom John writes, this is a word of immense comfort. Our King rules over all, even those "kings that are messing with you right now".

B. Worship and Declaration (vv. 5b-8) This blessing flows into an **ascription of praise** and a **declaration of Christ's ultimate victory**:

- **Praise for Christ's Work**: "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen".
 - In the midst of suffering, Jesus reminds us of His *present love*, *past redemption* (by His blood), and *present identity* for believers (a kingdom of priests). This is "who you are" even when you feel "minuscule" or "trampled down".
- **Declaration of Christ's Return**: "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so, Amen". This echoes Daniel 7 and Jesus' own words. His return will bring both judgment for His enemies and ultimate vindication for His people.

- **"Even so, Amen"**: This is a cry of confident affirmation from believers. Even when He comes to judge the whole world, "It is well with my soul" for those "freed from our sins by his blood".
- **God's Ultimate Sovereignty**: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty". This re-affirms God's absolute control from beginning to end, over all time and power.
- You can trust all that has been said. He will bring it to pass

Pastoral Takeaway (vv. 1-8): In a chaotic world, facing suffering and unfaithfulness, Revelation 1:1-8 grounds us in **Jesus Christ as the central figure of God's redemptive plan**. He is the divine, authoritative source of this message, and His imminent return ensures ultimate justice and salvation. This truth should ignite our **obedience** and fuel our **worship**, knowing God is sovereign and victorious over all.

A Glimpse of the Exalted Christ

Now John describes the vision he received, deepening our understanding of this glorious Christ:

Revelation 1:9-11 (ESV) "I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.'

A. The Seer and the Setting (vv. 9-11)

1. **John's Identity**: John introduces himself as "our **brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance** that are in Jesus".
 - He is not an aloof authority but one who **shares in their suffering** ("tribulation"). This "tribulation" refers to the entire "wilderness pilgrimage" of the church age, from Christ's resurrection to His return.
 - He shares in the **"kingdom"** – the spiritual kingdom Christ has already established, which "cannot be shaken".

- This dual reality (present suffering + present kingdom) leads to the call for **"patient endurance"**.
2. **John's Location:** He is "on the island of Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus". Patmos was a harsh place of Roman exile. John isn't just *talking* about tribulation; he's *experiencing* it for his faithful ministry.
 3. **The Divine Encounter:** John states, "I was **in the Spirit on the Lord's Day**". This signifies a supernatural, ecstatic state where he received a "heavenly vision". He heard a "loud voice like a trumpet", harkening back to God's thundering voice at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19), signifying **divine authority**.
 - The King James Study bible notes that "of the 404 verses in the book (Revelation), 265 verses contain lines that allude to some 550 Old Testament references." - this is about 65% of the book
 4. **The Mandate:** The voice commands him, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the **seven churches**".
 - These were **seven actual churches** in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).
 - The number **seven** is highly symbolic in Revelation, representing **completion, fullness, or perfection**. Thus, this letter to seven specific churches is also a comprehensive letter to the **universal church** throughout history.

Revelation 1:12-16 (ESV) Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun, shining in full strength.

B. The Vision of the Son of Man (vv. 12-16) John then "turned to see the voice that was speaking to me". This is Revelation's unique language of **"seeing the word"**.

- **Amidst the Lampstands:** John saw "seven golden lampstands," and "in the midst of the lampstands, **one like a son of man**". The lampstands, as confirmed later in verse 20,

represent the **seven churches**. This means **Jesus Christ is present and active "in the midst" of His churches** - Emmanuel

- **Symbolic Description of Christ:** The ensuing description is not a literal physical portrait, but a rich symbolic portrayal of **what Jesus is like**. Each image draws from Old Testament texts to convey His divine attributes:
 - **"One like a son of man":** This title comes directly from Daniel 7, where a divine figure is given "dominion and glory and a kingdom". It emphasizes Jesus' **divine kingship and authority**.
 - **"Clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest":** This imagery points to a **priestly garment** (like the high priest).
 - **"Hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow":** This is a direct echo of the "Ancient of Days" in Daniel 7, signifying **divinity, eternity, and wisdom**. It effectively merges the identity of the Son of Man with God Himself.
 - **"His eyes were like a flame of fire":** Represents **omniscience, penetrating judgment**, and a gaze that sees everything. He "knows you're not going to get away with anything".
 - **"His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace":** Evokes divine glory (Ezekiel 1), **purity, unwavering stability**, and judgment.
 - **"His voice was like the roar of many waters":** Like God's voice at Sinai or in Ezekiel 43, it conveys **immense power and authority**.
 - **"In his right hand he held seven stars":** These stars, as clarified in verse 20, are the **"angels of the seven churches"**. This shows Christ's **sovereign authority** over these spiritual guardians or messengers, and by extension, over the churches themselves.
 - **"From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword":** This symbolizes the **power and judgment of God's Word**. It strikes down the wicked (Hosea 6:5, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12).
 - **"His face was like the sun, shining in full strength":** A reference to Jesus' **transfiguration**, signifying His ultimate **glory** and divine radiance.

Pastoral Takeaway: This detailed vision of Jesus is meant to reveal His **true character**: He is a powerful, divine King and High Priest, all-knowing, all-powerful, **present in His church**, and wielding the authoritative Word of God.

Revelation 1:17-20 (ESV) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.'

C. The Comfort and Command (vv. 17-20)

1. **John's Reaction:** Upon seeing such overwhelming glory, John "fell at his feet as though dead". This is a common, humble, and appropriate response to encountering God's holiness and glory in Scripture (e.g., Isaiah 6).
2. **Christ's Comfort:** But Jesus "laid his right hand on me, saying, '**Fear not!**'". This is followed by powerful declarations of who Jesus is - this is meant to encourage the church:
 - **"I am the first and the last"**: Reaffirming His divinity and eternal nature, echoing the Father's declaration in verse 8.
 - **"And the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore"**: His **death and resurrection** are the foundation of his redeeming work and it reminds us that death is not the final word. There is a life beyond death
 - **"And I have the keys of Death and Hades"**: Jesus' triumph over death and hell grants Him **absolute sovereignty and authority**. And this should encourage us. This again reminds us that death has been subdued and even if face death, we shall stand victorious on the other side
3. **The Prophetic Command:** Jesus then commissions John: "Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this". This underscores the **enduring relevance** of Revelation for all times.
 - But it is also for us to read this and be encouraged by the word

4. **Interpretation of Symbols Confirmed:** Jesus explicitly identifies the symbols: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches".
 - This solidifies that **Christ holds His churches securely in His hand.**

Pastoral Application & Conclusion

Revelation 1 sets the stage for the entire book, grounding us in the reality that **Jesus wins**. The Glorious Christ is present with his Suffering Church

Having being encouraged multiple times that

- Christ is sovereign and ultimately victorious
- Christ is present with his Church. He holds his church securely in his hands
- We face this dual reality (present suffering + present kingdom), which leads to the call for "patient endurance".

What then are some practical takeaways for us

1. **Perseverance in Tribulation:** Like John, we are "partners in the tribulation". Whether facing political, economic, social, or personal trials, Revelation encourages us to **persevere in faithfulness**. No matter what happens in the world, "Revelation 1 is true". Christ is the exalted God, King, and Priest, who has defeated death, rules in power and glory, and is actively "in the midst of his churches," holding them securely in His hand. This provides a "firm foundation" and a confident "Fear not".
 - a. **For the Anxious Family:** The news is filled with stories of political and social division, creating a constant sense of anxiety. Revelation reminds us that even when it feels like the world is crumbling, **Christ is the King** who holds all things together. He is the ultimate ruler, and His power is not determined by the stock market or political polls.
 - b. **For the Grieving:**
 - i. Consider a single mother facing a terminal illness. Her greatest fear isn't her own death, but what will happen to her children. She feels helpless and alone, and her faith is being tested. Revelation speaks directly to her.

Just as Christ was "dead and behold I am alive forevermore" (Revelation 1:18), He has conquered death itself. He is not a distant ruler; He is **"in the midst of his churches,"** actively present with her. This provides a deep and abiding comfort—a confidence that even if her body fails, her hope in Christ is secure.

- ii. When facing terminal illness or the death of a loved one, we can find deep comfort in Christ who was "dead and behold I am alive forevermore." He is not a distant ruler but is actively present with us, providing a hope that transcends the grave.

2. **Repentance from Unfaithfulness:** For those not walking with the Lord or compromised by the world, Revelation is a clear call to **repentance**. Christ "sees, he knows", and His coming judgment is certain for those who oppose Him.

- a. **For the Compromised Professional:** Picture a young professional who started their career with high ideals but, over time, has compromised their integrity to climb the corporate ladder. They've begun to engage in gossip, cut corners on projects, or misrepresent facts to get ahead. They might feel like these small compromises are harmless, but Revelation's message is that Christ **"sees, he knows."** He is the one with "eyes like a flame of fire" (Revelation 1:14). This is a call to a serious, clear-eyed look at one's life—not a call to fear, but a loving invitation to turn away from these compromises before they lead to a full-blown spiritual crisis.

- b. **For the Drifting Believer:** Think of someone who has drifted away from their faith. They may still believe in God, but they've stopped attending church, praying, and reading their Bible. Their life is full of distractions and pursuits that don't honor God. Revelation warns that Christ's coming judgment is certain for those who oppose Him, but this isn't just about a future event. It's a present reality. The call to repentance is an urgent and gracious appeal to return to the only one who can offer true life and security.

3. **See the Unseen Reality:** Revelation pulls back the veil of earthly chaos to show us "the unseen" eternal realities. We are called to "set our vision on what is unseen, not on what is seen because that which is seen is passing away but that which is unseen is eternal".

This heavenly perspective enables us to walk in patient endurance.

- a. **For the Identity-Driven:** Consider a person whose entire identity is wrapped up in their job, their possessions, or their social status. Their happiness rises and falls with their career success or the number of likes on their social media posts. Revelation pulls back the curtain to show them that all these things—the "seen" realities of this world—are **"passing away."** Their expensive car will rust, their job will eventually end, and their social status is temporary. True peace comes from grounding your identity and ultimate value in Christ, which is eternal and unchanging.
 - b. **For the Grieving:** Imagine someone grieving the loss of a loved one. The pain is raw and overwhelming, and it feels like the world has stopped. **Revelation helps them see that death is not the final word.** It shows them a vision of a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more sorrow, pain, or crying (Revelation 21:4). This **heavenly perspective** doesn't erase the pain, but it enables them to walk in **patient endurance**, trusting that their loved one is in the presence of the Lord and that a glorious reunion awaits them both.
4. **Worship the Worthy One:** The overwhelming glory of Christ, His power, His redemption, and His ultimate victory should ignite our **worship**. We have the privilege of participating in the "great eternal activity of heaven" through our worship today. There is "no refuge from him. There is only refuge in him".
- a. **For the Anxious:** It is easy to be overwhelmed by anxiety and fear. We try everything to find peace—meditation, self-help books, even distracting themselves with entertainment—but nothing works. Revelation reveals that there is **"no refuge from him,"** but that **"there is only refuge in him."** **Our worship becomes a practical act of turning from our anxieties and fears and running into the arms of the one who is truly in control.**
 - b. **For the Church:** Think of a church community gathered on a Sunday morning. The world outside is filled with political division, economic uncertainty, and personal struggles. But as the Church sings hymns and praises God, Revelation reminds them that they are not just singing to a silent room. They are **"participating in the great eternal activity of heaven"** (Revelation 4:8-11). Their small act of worship on earth joins the chorus of countless angels and redeemed saints who are already praising the Lamb who was slain. This provides

a deep sense of purpose and connection, knowing that our worship is not just a Sunday ritual but an eternal, cosmic reality.

A final Word: Think of Revelation as a constantly open window to heaven. From our earthly vantage point, we see chaos, suffering, and confusion. But when we look through this window, we see Christ on His throne, actively, powerfully, and perfectly executing God's plan. This heavenly vision doesn't erase the earthly struggles, but it illuminates them with divine purpose, giving us unwavering hope and courage to live faithfully until He returns.