1Thess #16

Keep your focus on Christ not the Rapture!

We will open up in Revelation chapter two and we will be jumping around in Revelation 2 into chapter 3 for the whole message today.

/The Rapture is imminent, no one really knows when it will occur. In the meantime, the Royal Family of God lives in this dispensation of historical trends, with our dependence on BD (mind of Christ). We are called to understand mystery doctrine and grow in God’s grace and knowledge. Over emphasis on end time events is the same as neglect of end time events, it can lead to confusion and wrong priorities.\

There is a balance in everything in life and we especially need to be alert about our priorities as growing Bels.

The Rapture of the Church is the next prophetical event to occur in history. We know this, we study the principles and doctrines about this yet it can not become all consuming.

Our recent study in Titus gives us the right attitude about the Rapture.

/Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, **bringing salvation to all people,** 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and **worldly desires and to live sensibly,** righteously, and in a godly manner **in the present age**, 13 **looking for the blessed hope** and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,\

Titus is speaking about living in the here and now, in the CA dispensation, with a view toward the Rapture.

The blessed hope means that which is to come…meeting our Lord in the clouds of the air, resurrection bodies and a wedding ceremony.

We need to have a controlled and calm anticipation. SM Bels wait through thinking; you wait with patience, which is the application of doctrine.

You know the Rapture is coming. It may not occur in your lifetime, but you still know it’s coming.

You continue to study and apply BD, you are occupied with the person of Jesus Christ more so than the end time events.

Your true divine happiness unfolds because you have real contentment.

Going into Revelation chapters two and three we need to fully understand something related to Bels and church bodies in general.

/The seven churches of Revelation 2 & 3 point to a multifaceted lesson. The lesson points to Bels, the attitudes and lifestyle of Bels. The lesson also points out congregations (bodies of Bels) in what direction they lean toward. There is some theology that points in the direction of dispensations as well. The important principle is the trends in which it highlights. \

What we will do today is get an overview of what category most Bels fall under.

We will look at all 7 churches in relation to the trends they represent. Each us should think where we fall in line with the trends of each church.

/Rev 2:2 ‘I know your deeds and **your labor and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people**, and you have put those who call themselves apostles to the test, and they are not, and **you found them *to be* false**;

The Ephesus Bel begins strong and holds ground in the area of seeking truth. The Gnostic teachers can’t gain ground with the Ephesus Bel.\

The Ephesus Bel has gained levels of maturity and they held ground with endurance for a long period of time.

Most of what they achieved was done in the power of God the HS and has given them blessings and rewards in the temporal and in eternity.

The qualities related to an Ephesus Bel are admirable and highly regarded.

 /[Rev 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/3/s_1169003) and you have **perseverance** (*hypomonē*)**and have endured** (*bastazō*)on account of My name, and have not become weary. 4‘But I have this against you, **that you have left your first love**.

You have a patient enduring attitude, sustaining, perseverance. You have the ability to carry a burden or load.\

HOOP-OH-MAIN-AH, speaks to a mature level of patient endurance.

BASS-STODS-OH, points to an inner strength to carry a load or to sustain during a burden or problem period.

Rev 2:4 ‘Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

This points to the sin unto death.

When a Bel begins to steadily go backward inside the plan of God at some point they may have their lampstand put out (light of their soul).

The issue for the Ephesus type of Bel is that they fail to go the distance. After hitting levels of maturity, they began to get distracted from their first love.

Many times, the testing in life has caused a frustration. The momentum in their spiritual walk begins to break up and they lose sight of their relationship with Christ.

This is what I meant when I opened today warning not to get overly excited about the Rapture – be educated, yet not distracted from your relationship with Christ.

The next trend is the church of Smyrna;

/Rev 2:9 **‘I know your tribulation and your poverty** (but you are rich), and the slander by those who say **they are Jews,** **and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan**.

There is always a threat of false brethren and false doctrine and every Bel can face this style of attack or distraction.\

The region of Smyrna which is part of what we call modern day Turkey today, in fact all 7 churches were on a popular trade road running through that region. Smyrna was under consistent attacks from the 1st century right up into the 3rd century.

Especially under corrupt governing bodies from each Roman leader who came into office.

Not only was there corruption and attacks to the Bels in Smyrna there was consistent false teachers designed to root out true Christianity.

When Christianity did get a foothold it began to become corrupted under religion and involvement within government as well.

Meaning there was no separation between church and state.

/Rev 2:10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, so that **you will be tested**, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

The Smyrna type Bel can endure under pressure. That momentum testing will result in the crown of life, an extreme high honor of growth under attacks.\

Some Bels like the Smyrna type, may have to endure in an environment that is very oppressive. Perhaps it is a town or city, a state or nation that is very oppressive.

 Perhaps even a marriage or a family system riddled with corruption and false doctrine or pressure & stumbling blocks.

 REPEAT

Now the Bel of Pergamum have some similarities with Smyrna but they are more accepting of the false doctrine.

/Rev 2:13 ‘I know where **you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold firmly to My name**, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Temples of Zeus or Jupiter, Athene, Apollo and Aesculapius were erected here. The Greek city was in Mysia, today it’s also part of Turkey along the Aegean Sea board.\

Both Apollo and especially his son AS-CUP-ULUS, represent medicine.

Pharmacia’ - which is related to dark arts and witchcraft.

The medical staff with the serpents wrapped around it come from a religious system following the god of medicine – Aesculapius, which was part of an ancient serpent culture. This is a study in evil for another day.

Interesting that it is called the throne of Satan. That which Americans rely so heavily on today – medicine, began as an evil serpent culture under gods like Apollo and his son.

Antipas was a positive Bel and teacher of the gospel of Christ.

He was sacrificed and killed by the temple priest of the serpent culture of Aesculapius.

The fact that a great Bel like Antipas and his congregation could go forward in the midst of such evil was incredible.

/[Rev 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/14/s_1169014) ‘But I have a few things against you, because **you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak**to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things **sacrificed to idols** and to **commit sexual immorality**.

The early formation of organized religion has roots in many of these regions, the phallic cult, dark arts and religion were blended in Pergamos.\

This was a hot bed of demonic teaching and practices.

The birth of the Roman Catholic Church came forth, from many of these exact types of religious movements backed by the popular Gnostics.

That is why the reference to Balaam is so important. He was a Bel, a gifted prophet who for the love of money became a willing pawn for enemy of the Jews - King Balak.

/[Rev 2:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/15/s_1169015) ‘So you too, have **some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans**. 16 ‘Therefore **repent**; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will wage war against them with the sword of My mouth.

Nicolaitans were a highly respected group of Gnostics who brought forth false doctrine to the churches.\

The Pergamum Bel is surrounded by the cosmic system, lies and false doctrine and they begin to fall for the doctrines of demons. They fall for the religious nonsense.

Or they are the type of Bel who indulges in cosmic theology and maintain they are walking in the plan of God when really they represent Satan’s system.

 REPEAT

Now we come to the Bels of Thyatira;

Rev 2:19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith, and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

/[Rev 2:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/20/s_1169020) ‘But I have *this* against you, that **you tolerate the woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that **they commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.**

Thyatira Bels willingly fellowship with the cosmic system. Jezebel represents the allure of lustful pleasures.\

Written in the Greek, present tense, you keep on accepting and going along with the Jezebel religion.

King Ahab was a good leader and solid military man.

Yet once he fell for the allure of Jezebel and her phallic cult he lost his authority to her sexual dominance.

We have Thyatira Bels today who have turned from the truth of what God teaches about Christian marriage, gender roles and sexual pleasures and have willingly accepted false doctrines related to all those subject matters.

 REPEAT

Thyatira was situated between Sardis and Pergamos on the river Lycus, it was predominantly Greek culture. The influence of Pergamum was really strong in this region. We are surrounded today by a Pergamum culture.

This speaks to the churches and Bels who fly rainbow flags off their houses and church buildings because they want to fit into the popular culture.

/Christian tolerance does not mean Christian acceptance as a new form of truth. There is a right way to tolerate with impersonal, unconditional love without giving up your values. And the wrong type of tolerance that opens the gateway of your soul to accept false doctrines and evil disguised as virtue.\

I’m not sure when it happened - but somewhere in the last 20 years it became uncomfortable or unpopular for Christians to have healthy disagreements with people.

It tells us God gave Jezebel and the followers of Jezebel time to repent and when they don’t HE brings in the sickness and discipline.

Rev 2:23 ‘And I will kill her children with plague, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

/[Rev 2:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/24/s_1169024) ‘But I say to you, **the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching**, who have not known the **deep things of Satan**, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.

This is the WORD of God – the Jezebel spirit (sexual immorality) is a deep doctrine of Satan!\

[Rev 2:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/25/s_1169025) ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold firmly until I come.

God recognizes the evil around us and how we stand strong under peer pressure and political correctness.

[Rev 2:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/2/26/s_1169026) ‘The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations;

Now the other city close to Pergamum was Sardis;

/Rev 3:2 Be constantly alert, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; **for I have not found your deeds completed** in the sight of My God.

This was a region of wealth and coins were originally minted in this city. So, it had strong desires of materialism attached to its culture.\

This city was a mix culture of Persians, Romans and Greeks from very diverse backgrounds.

[Rev 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/3/s_1170003) ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it,* and repent. Then if you are not alert, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

The call is to get distracted Bels back on track. The popularity and wealth of the city was a huge distraction.

/[Rev 3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/4/s_1170004) ‘But **you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments**; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

There were some of the Bels who had not been distracted by the details of life and wealth. This is a reference to rank and authority in heaven.\

Positive Bels who reach maturity through the filling power of God the HS and BD are the ones who are being referenced.

This speaks to receiving a uniform of glory and the crown of life, this is beyond a uniform of honor.

[Rev 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/5/s_1170005) ‘The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Every person who comes to believe upon TLJC overcomes the lies and counterfeits of the cosmic system they will be adorned in white – a uniform of honor.

There is a distinct hint to authority and privilege within the uniform of white (garments – plural). Meaning those who can have greater authority or intimacy within the heavens have a uniform of glory not just a uniform of honor.

This also points us to the fact that rewards or blessings once secured remain that way in the heavenly records section.

Unbels are erased from the records of heaven at some point after the Great White Throne Judgement.

Sardis Bels do not get distracted by the details of life. They receive rewards and crowns.

The church in Philadelphia brings us to the Bels of brotherly love. This was a positive group of Bels about 40 miles away from Sardis who may have not had the opportunities of some of the other cities but they made the best of what GOD gave them.

/Rev 3:8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, **I have put before you an open door** which **no one can shut**, because **you have a little power**, and have followed My word, and have not denied My name.

God has given you the opportunities and HE is the one holding the doors open for you. Even though you are not as large or powerful as other congregations.\

Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews (Bels) and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you.

/[Rev 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/10/s_1170010) ‘Because **you have kept MY word of perseverance**, **I also will keep you from the hour of the testing**, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who live on the earth.

The small, but powerful group of Bels all seem to be positive and moving forward even under attacks.\

They are given a promise as all BELS are that they are not forgotten, they will not be left behind when the Rapture occurs.

The Bels of Philadelphia took whatever GOD put in front of them and made the best of it.

They grew under pressure, lies and attacks and even though it appears they were not a powerful group, recognized or respected - they may have been one of the most positive of the whole bunch!

The church in Laodicea is an example of the couch potato Christians who never gain any momentum in the plan of God.

/Rev 3:15 ‘I know your deeds, that **you are neither cold nor hot**; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 ‘So because **you are lukewarm,** and neither hot nor cold**, I will vomit you out of My mouth**.

This is how God views the lazy Bels who never take their time, talent and treasure God gives them to make a difference in the plan of God.\

Laodicea was a popular and wealthy city as far as jobs and industry. It was really not in need of anything.

It had a popular reputation and strong economy.

[Rev 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/17/s_1170017) ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have no need of anything,” and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked,

All the wealth and popularity mean nothing if we are separated from God.

/[Rev 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/18/s_1170018) I advise you to **buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments** so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to apply to your eyes so that you may see.

We buy knowledge from BD with our time, talent and treasure and as we grow the eyes of our soul are healed and we have greater discernment. \

[Rev 3:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/rev/3/19/s_1170019) ‘Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

Each of these 7 churches are trends and personalities with the Christian community.

Each teach us a lesson on distractions and testing in the cosmic system.