

Hold On!

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- [0 : 00] Well, I don't know if you like rollercoaster rides or not, but for me, I'm not... I hate them, right? I don't really like them particularly.
- And when I'm on a rollercoaster ride with my daughter, who loves them, I hold on tight. Although perhaps not with as much screaming as this journalist who did a segment for the Today Show a few years back on the rollercoaster ride at Dreamworld called The Buzzsaw.
- We'll take a look. You ready for that? I think we should just do it. Do it? Okay. Very excited about this. Can you hit it up? You're right? Yep. Okay, you feel good about this. Now, apparently the trick is to keep our head back.
- Yep. So this is the wrong morning. Hang on, I'm going to have to hold on. You hold on too. Oh, hang on a second. Oh, no! No! Excellent.
- Oh! Excellent. But you don't Naham, Dani has the brains out of the way, that you need to do with this. AHHHHH! Above! Above! Above! Above!
- [1 : 05] Above! Above! Above! Above! Above! çABC word! adjuster! Every guitar then. Above!
- victor Faulk Couldite Childerman Damage Annual Damageailing from the autoimmel.■iram by naval, Ali art from America listed by NASA. They've since closed the buzzsaw ride.
- I don't think because of him. But apart from the screaming and coughing, I think this guy had the right idea, right? He said at the very start, hold on and you hold on too.
- And that's the command for our church in our passage today. You can see it in verse 11 of your Bibles there. In fact, apart from the usual command at the end to listen in verse 13, hold on is the only command in the whole passage.
- In their rollercoaster ride of the Christian life, they are to hold on. Not onto the rollercoaster, but of course, onto Christ and his word.
- [2 : 15] You see, like the church of Smyrna, this church in Philadelphia was suffering. And so it's understandably weary, which is what suffering does to us, doesn't it?
- It makes you tired and weary and exhausted. Or as verse 8 puts it, it leaves us with little strength. And so Jesus begins with some encouragement for the weary.
- So point one, this will be the longest point by far, because Jesus has lots of encouragement to give. And so I'll pick it up in verse 7. He says, To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David.
- What he opens, no one can shut. And what he shuts, no one can open. Now, of course, this Philadelphia is not the cheesesteak city in the US. It's the ancient city in Turkey.
- It was probably built by a king of Pergamon for his brother, which is why it was called Philadelphia, which means brotherly love. But it was also a gateway to the eastern regions, like Phrygia at the edge of the pink there, or Pisidia below, or Lycia in the yellow, or Pamphylia in the green, and so on.

- [3 : 33] Initially, this was to spread the Greek culture under Alexander the Great. But by the time of the Roman Empire, it was useful for dispersing mail around the Roman Empire.
- You know, posts from Rome would travel through Philadelphia like a postal sorting station, if you like. And this doorway function actually earned the city a nickname.
- The Gateway to the East, it was called. And so perhaps this is why Jesus chooses to describe himself as the one who opens and closes doors.
- For he is the one who is actually in control of this doorway city. And what's more, he is the one who opens or closes doors to God in heaven.
- You see, verse 7 is actually a quote from our first reading, from Isaiah chapter 22, where Shebna was the royal steward during the time of King Hezekiah.
- [4 : 34] And so he was the one who had the key to the palace, to open or close the door for those to see the king. So he controlled who would see the king, kind of like a secretary does, you know, who controls access to the CEO or the boss, if you like.
- But Shebna only cared about himself, as we heard. And so God replaced him with Elakim and said that he will clothe Elakim with your Shebna robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him.
- What authority? Well, I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David, access to the Davidic king, who at that time was Hezekiah.
- What he opens, no one can shut. And what he shuts, no one can open. And so here in Revelation, Jesus is now saying he is the one who holds the key of David, key of David.
- He is now the one who can open or close the door to the heavenly throne room. He is now the one who controls ultimate access, sorry, access to the ultimate king, to God himself.
- [5 : 47] I don't know if you've ever locked your keys in the car. Has anyone done that? Willing to admit to it? Yes, Stephen has, yep. You can't get in unless you break in or you get help to unlock the door or that sort of thing.
- Or if someone leaves a window open and maybe you can kind of get in that way. In fact, I walked into church one day not too long ago and someone was already in the church. This was at Doncaster.
- And he got in through an open window on the side. It's okay, he was supposed to be there. He just forgot his key. Though I did talk to Mark about checking windows after 5pm.
- But generally you need a key, don't you? To get in locked doors. And Jesus is saying that he alone is the one who has that key.
- He is the one who can open or close the door to God in heaven. Because Christ alone is the one who holds that key, as I said. And so verse 8, he says, You see, Jesus holds the key of David and he says, Therefore, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut on you.
- [7 : 15] This is the guarantee of entry to God in heaven. Why? Well, it says, Because I know your deeds. That despite having little strength, Beside being weary from all their suffering, They have kept Christ's word and not denied Christ's name.
- In a city full of pressure to worship false gods And persecution from the Jewish synagogue, Despite their weariness, They have kept his word and not denied his name.
- Wouldn't that be a great thing to be known for? Wouldn't it? I mean, everyone knows. This is old, but he's retired. What's he known for?
- Tennis. What was that? Don't be cheeky, Nathan. Tennis. Yeah. This is even older. What are these guys known for? Music. Yep. And what about you?
- What do you think you are known for? What are we known for? Are we known for our commitment to Christ's word and his name? Philadelphia was.

[8 : 28] Jesus knows them as those who have kept his word and not denied his name. In other words, they've continued to cling to Christ. And so he has set before them this open door, This guarantee to heaven, Which is like a bright light at the end of a dark tunnel, Encouraging them to hold on.

As does verse 9. He says, I will make those who are of a synagogue of Satan, Who claim to be Jews, though they are not, but are liars, I will make them come and fall down at your feet, And acknowledge that I have loved you.

Here it seems, Some Jews who claim to be true people of God, That is true Israel, true Jews, But Jesus says they're actually liars.

They belong to the synagogue of Satan, Because Satan is a liar. For they have rejected Jesus as the Messiah, Who back in verse 7 says he is the holy and true one.

He is the true Messiah, the king. But they lie and say he's not. They lie and say they are true Jews, When they've rejected God's Messiah.

[9 : 44] And they've probably also lied to the Christians, Saying that they've not been loved by Jesus, Because look at your suffering. Either way, these Jews persecuted these Christians, But Jesus promises to vindicate these Christians, To turn the tables.

He says, I will make those Jews fall down at your feet, And know that despite their lies, I have loved you. The word for down here in verse 9, Is the same word used for to bow down in worship.

And so this is a picture of judgment day, Where after we appear before Christ, We will then judge the world with Christ. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, Do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world?

Did you know that? We will. With Christ. And so those who've persecuted us, They will fall down before us, And know that we were right.

We were loved by Christ, Even when it looked like, We were abandoned by Christ. One of my Bible study groups, Last year we were lamenting the persecution, Of Christians in the state of Manipur, In India.

[11 : 01] Last year more than 200 churches were destroyed, And hundreds of Christians were killed by Hindu extremists, While other Christians were tortured, And raped, And the like.

A video last year went viral actually, Of two women being paraded naked through the streets, After they were sexually assaulted. And one of the people in my group is from India, And she went back to visit her sister last year, And stayed for a number of months, And so she got some insight, Into what was happening there.

And she said that the Indian Prime Minister, Was seeking to get rid of, All Christians and Muslims, Every other religion apart from Hinduism, From the country. And he was just re-elected this year.

And so these Christians in Manipur, Could very much feel like, Jesus does not love them, Couldn't they? Or closer to home, I remember one of our members, From the nine o'clock congregation at Doncaster, Was in very poor health, And was bed bound.

And her non-Christian kids, Would actually mock her faith. They even said to her, If God loves you, Why doesn't he heal you? He mustn't love you that much.

[12 : 13] Can you imagine your own kids, Saying that to you? But Jesus says, I will vindicate you. I will show them, That you were right.

For on the last day, I will make those who mock you, Fall before you, And they will know, That I have indeed loved you.

This promise of vindication, Would have given great encouragement, To hold on. Knowing that Christ, Will put all things right, And will keep us, Until he does.

Verse 10. Since you have kept my command, To endure patiently, I will also keep you, From the hour of trial, That is coming, Going to come, On the whole world, To test the inhabitants, Of the earth.

Now this verse, Is a little bit tricky, I found it a bit tricky, Some people think that, It's referring to, A rapture of the church, Before the hour of trial, Or the great tribulation, So that's how he will keep, The Philadelphians, From that trial, But the Philadelphian church, Is long since gone, And we're still here, Aren't we?

[13 : 28] And so, I don't think, That works, Plus it says, It's going to come, Or literally about to come, On the whole world, So it's not talking about, Some distant, Far off time, And even more than that, Jesus said in John 17, My prayer is not, God, That you take them, Out of the world, But that you protect them, From the evil one, And so I suspect, The promise here in Revelation, Is about being kept, From spiritual harm, During this trial, That's what's on view, I think, You see this, Hour or trial, Is about to come, On the whole world, And so it could refer, To a specific thing, Like an ancient COVID, Which came on the whole world, Or famine, Or something like that, Or perhaps more likely, It's symbolically, As symbolic of the last days, You know, The days before Christ returns, Either way, This hour of trial, Is to test the inhabitants, Of the earth, It says, And in Revelation,

That phrase, Inhabitants of the earth, Always refers to non-Christians, And from Revelation chapter 6, Onward God uses things, That happen all over our world, Like wars, Disaster, Diseases, To test non-Christians, To see if they'll, Either turn to Christ, Or often, More often sadly, Harden them against Christ, Now we Christians, Still experience, The physical side, Of those, You know, Wars and disease, And so on, We still get COVID, Right?

But we will be kept, Along with the Philadelphians, From that hardening, Of hearts against Christ, In other words, It's spiritual protection, That's on view, I think, In fact, God even, Grows our faith in Christ, During those trials, Doesn't he?

It's why a Christian, And a non-Christian, Can go through the same suffering, But have different responses, You know, The non-Christian's, Heart is hearted more, Against God, And they say things like, Well look, If God was real, Why doesn't he end, All the suffering in the world?

While the Christian's, Faith grows more, In God, You know, Saying things like, Well God sees the bigger picture, And through Christ, Guarantees me life, In a perfect world to come, So I'll keep trusting in him, Same suffering, Two different responses, And I've seen it happen, That lady I mentioned before, Whose kids, Mocked her faith, Their hour of trial, Was her physical suffering, Which, Tested her non-Christian kids, And it, Meant that their hearts, Were hearted even more so, God mustn't love you that much, Surely he'd heal you, I'm not going to, Follow your God, But her faith, Actually grew more, And you'd think, It'd be the other way around, Because she was the one, Who was literally suffering, But her kids hearts, Were hearted, And her faith, Grew through that hour, Of trial, The point is, God will keep us, From the spiritual, Hardening of our hearts, During this hour of trial, But when we suffer,

[16 : 36] It can feel like, It takes forever, Kind of, And so Jesus adds, Even more encouragement, In verse 11, He says, Four words, I am coming soon, Now I realise, He said this, Some 2000 years ago, Which doesn't seem like, Soon to us, Does it?

But we need to remember, That we view time, Differently to the way God does, We think in terms of life spans, God thinks in terms of eternity, That's a little bit different, Isn't it?

It's kind of like, When you were little, The year would go really slow, You know, When you're leading up to Christmas, Or Chinese New Year, Or whatever it is, It would take forever to get here, Your birthday, When's my birthday going to come?

And then as you get older, Time seems to move quicker, Holidays always go like that, Don't they? Or when your kids go for car trips, You know, Can you remember what they always say?

Are we there yet? But, As I said, As you get older, We see that time goes faster, We view time differently, And so does we in God, Us in God.

[17 : 45] But soon does mean, It's the very next big thing, On God's to-do list. Create the world, Done, Call ethnic Israel, Done, Send son to save, Done, Grow true Israel, In progress, As the world goes out, Next big ticket item, On his to-do list, Send son to judge, And reward, To put things right, Soon means, It's the next big thing, On God's to-do list, And there'll be no delay, No heavenly traffic jams, No cancelled flights, God won't wait, One second longer, Than he has planned, Before he sends his son, To return, And so Jesus says, Since I have set an open door, To heaven before you, Since I have, I will vindicate you, Since I will keep you, And since I am coming soon, To you, Then point to, Hold on, Verse 11, I'm coming soon, Hold on, To what you have, So that no one, Will take your crown,

As I said at the start, Apart from the usual command, At the end of the reading, About those who have ears, Let them hear, This is the only command, In the passage, They're to hold on, Hold on to what they have, And what do they have?

Well the same things, That they've already been keeping, Back in verse 8, They kept Christ's word, And Christ's name, And so they keep holding on to, Christ's word, And Christ's name, That's what they keep holding on to, So that no one, Will take their crown, What is their crown?

Well early in chapter 2, It's the crown of life, Life eternal, And the only way they can lose it, Is if they let go of Christ, In 1932, The US Navy launched, A massive helium filled airship, To carry planes, It was the world's first, Purpose built, Flying aircraft carrier, I didn't even know this, Until I found it online, But on the 11th of May, 1932, While at Camp Kearney, In California, For refuelling, A tragedy, Struck, The sailors, Cannot hold on, To the guide ropes, So you can see the ropes, Just going up, That was going up, To the hot air balloon, So they're all kind of, Being pulled together, Because it's floating up, And they can't keep it down, And sadly, Three sailors, Kept holding on, And were lifted up, Into the air, Two of them, Let go, And died,

But the third, Hold on, Held on for dear life, And was pulled up, To safety, Here he is, 19 year old, Bud Cowart, And when interviewed, He expressed sadness, At the loss of his, Fellow sailors, But he also said, Being safe, In that airship, Was a grand, And glorious feeling, Where to, Hold on to Christ, Just like Bud, Held on to that rope, For life, That Christ may bring us up, And enjoy that crown of life, In the world to come, Which will be, Much more grand, And glorious, Won't it?

[21 : 04] Of course, It can be hard, To hold on, Can't it? Again, Especially when we're, Weary from suffering, Just like those sailors, Were weary from holding on, And so too let go, And so since it's a matter, Of eternal life, Or death, Jesus encourages them, Again, Point three, Verse 12, He says, To the one who is victorious, I will make a pillar, In the temple of my God, Never again, Will they leave, Here he says, The one who is victorious, That he's the one who holds on, To Christ, And his word, God will make a pillar, In the temple, Or the house, Of God, This is a symbol, Of permanence, Isn't it?

You've heard the expression, They've, You know, They've been so long, Here, That they're part of the furniture, You know, That expression indicates, That they've been permanent, For so long, Or to be made a pillar, Part of the temple furniture, If you like, Means that we'll be there, For so long, In fact, The rest of the verse tells us, Never again, Will they leave it, It's a picture of permanence, In God's house, And this would have, Really hit home, For those in Philadelphia, Because it was prone, To earthquakes, And so they often, Had to leave their homes, But if they hold on to Jesus, They will never have to leave, God's home, And to understand, How good a promise this is, We need to remember, How good God's house is, Like the psalmist, Who's saying, How lovely is your dwelling place, His temple, The house of the Lord, He says, Verse 2, My soul yearns, Even faints, For the courts, Of the Lord, The temple courts for the Lord,

Better is one day, In your courts, Than a thousand elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper, A lowly doorkeeper, In the house of my God, Than dwell in the tents, Of the wicked, How good must God's house be, If one day there, Is better than a thousand days, In Fiji, Or Japan, Or Singapore, Or wherever people are going, These days, I don't know what, The best place you can think of, Escape to the country, My wife loves that show, Escape to the country, Whatever it is for you guys, How good must God's house be, If his soul yearns, Even faints, To be there, You see, God's house, Is the place to be, And Jesus says, To the one who holds on, To him and his word, You'll have a permanent place, In that place to be, In God's house, And secondly, The rest of verse 12, Jesus goes on to say,

I will write on them, The name of my God, And the name of the city of my God, The new Jerusalem, Which is coming down, Out of heaven from my God, And I will also write on them, My new name, Here they'll be given new, Or some names, Which, Again, Would have carried special significance, For Philadelphia, Which went through, Several different names, Often after different emperors, Only here, They're given the name, The names of God, The new Jerusalem, And Jesus' own new name, To name something shows, It belongs to you, Doesn't it?

It's why when you're little, At primary school, You had to put your name, On everything, You know, Your pencil case, And your bag, And jumper, And so on, Because, You know, You lost it, Then it would come back to you, Theoretically, Because it belonged to you, Well Jesus says, He will write the name of God on us, To show that, We belong to him, Not to some emperor, Or to some ruler, But to God himself, As his precious people, And the name of the new Jerusalem, Shows that we belong there, As its citizens, It's our true home, Where there'll be no more suffering, Or mourning, Or pain, And Jesus will write, His new name on us, It's not new, In terms of it being different, But in terms of it being, A new status, He's still going to be called Jesus, But before he was Jesus, Who walked on earth, Now he's Jesus raised, And glorified in heaven, And so writing the new name on us,

[25 : 31] Shows that we belong to Jesus, And his new status, That we too will be raised, And glorified, And this is what was promised, Back in Isaiah 62, For example, Where God's people, Will be given a new name, And the nations will see, Not just our righteousness, But our glory, And so on the last day, When Jesus raises us too, He will write, His new name on us, To show that we belong to him, As his glorified brothers, And sisters, And all will see it, At the moment, At the back, Is earthly Ricky, He's pretty cool, Just leaning against the wall there, But on the last day, It will be glorified Ricky, Even cooler, Because he'll have Jesus' new name, Or status written on him, As it were, And so here's, The encouragement to hold on, I have set an open door before you, I will vindicate you, I will keep you,

I am coming soon to you, Plus, I will give you a permanent place, In God's house, The best place to be, I will write these names on you, God's, New Jerusalem's, And Jesus' glorified name, I mean, Do you need any more encouragement, To hold on?

In the rollercoaster ride of life, When we have little strength, Because of suffering,
Remember, All this encouragement is ours, So that we might keep holding on to him, Let's
pray, Heavenly Father, We thank you for your word to us, Please help us to remember, All
this encouragement that we have, That we might continue to hold on to Christ, And his
word in life, In his name we pray, Amen.