

Proverbs 23-08-16b

We're ready now to resume our study in Proverbs chapter 11, and you will notice that whether we are looking at a true or a deceptive measure or balance, we have to be honest, we have to know what the truth is. If you are considering whether you have justifiable gratification in some accomplishment or some achievement, or it is an overweening pride and arrogance, we have to know what is the truth, what is true and what is not true. Each of these choices in the first nine verses hinges on whether or not we know what is true.

And it boils down to a development in our history that bears on the definition of truth. And I want to briefly review this idea. Let's talk about justice versus injustice, what is fair and what is not.

As an example, and I've alluded to this in the past, the oppressed and the poor are with us always. Jesus said that this would be the case. So the idea of social justice is now prevalent and it is being much discussed in churches.

How can we implement social justice? How can we remedy the problem of the have-nots? Or maybe providing clothing and employment counsel and working with missions and so on isn't enough, maybe we need to do more. And so there are pastors such as the recently late Tim Keller who have argued that if you do not actively and generously share your resources with the poor, you are a robber, you are unjust, you are being unfair, you are being selfish. And he has said to fail to share what you have is not just uncompassionate, it is unfair and it is unjust.

If you've got stuff and somebody else doesn't, your Christian faith demands that you share it. And those of us that were alive long enough ago would say, well, this sounds like communism, take from those that have plenty and give to those that don't have enough. And somebody has got to have enough power to do that because if you don't voluntarily do it, why then we'll do it by coercion? Uncle Ho did this, Mao Zedong did it, Pol Pot did it, Marx and Lenin either advocated for it or did it outright and Stalin, of course.

So this is presented as not an option. You're spiritually and morally deficient if you are not actively shoveling into the deficit of the poor. Well, Jesus said, it is better to give than to receive, quoted by Paul.

So is this a legitimate avenue of fulfilling the truth that is contained here in our section of Proverbs chapter 11? Christians are commanded to help the poor as an expression of God's grace. But if you look carefully at the context of helping the poor and the widows and the orphans, where was that effort concentrated by the apostles in the early church? Where was it concentrated in the Old Testament with regard to the law of Moses, dealing with widows and orphans, the stranger and the poor man among you, where was the

focus? Where was this charity to be practiced? In the Old Testament, it was within the nation of Israel. Israel never ever established a charity for the Hittites or for the Amorites.

They didn't try to love the Moabites or the Ammonites into favor with themselves and God by establishing a mission in Moab or in Ammon or in Philistia. Did the Israelites try to love the Philistines into cooperation and the evangelization and so on? Where was the sphere? Where was the locus of practice for charity? It was basically one another in the nation of Israel, why? Well, you can answer that question by looking at the New Testament. The one and others are within the sphere of the brethren.

Why? Charity is never presented as an evangelization tool anywhere in the New Testament, not by Jesus, not by Peter, not by John, not by Paul. Nowhere does it say love them and they will come into the fold. What does it say? If you do good to your enemy, you'll heap coals of fire on his head.

Well, is that a good thing? Hands up everybody that wants hot coals of fire on your head, not me. I might be delighted if an intransigent and evil enemy ends up with coals on his head, but I don't see this as a benefit. It doesn't say you will invest him with blessing and opportunity and an avenue for the Holy Spirit to come in and drag him kicking and screaming into the kingdom.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you. We can certainly hope and pray, especially when people are in our periphery and in the vicinity of our family and so on, those about whom we are deeply concerned. We can, even when they act as enemies, we can do good even when they are hating us.

But these commands are entirely focused on the community of faith, on the community of the people of God in the Old Testament and the community of brethren in the New Testament. Find me a verse. It says, as to the extent that it is up to you, live peaceably with all men.

Do not let your good be spoken of as evil. Do good to those who are outside. You shouldn't be unjust.

It isn't that because someone is not in the circle of brethren that you're free to abuse, despise, vilify, and persecute them. We should shine as lights and we should not be unjust. We should not be unfair.

We should not be unkind. But to whom are we commanded primarily to be kind? Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. It is in the community of the forgiven, those who are forgiven for Christ's sake.

We have ample opportunities within the circle of faith to practice brotherly love,

forgiveness, kindness, self-sacrificial love, all kinds of opportunities. If someone in our circle is in need of a coat and says, have you got a coat I could wear? We can go in the closet and say, man, I've got a coat and I've got a cloak. Why would someone ask you for a coat? Well, they're cold.

They're not selling them on the black market and give me your coat, I wanna make a profit. This is someone who is in need. And if someone is in need, you want to more than meet that need.

Isn't it wonderful if we have a need and someone more than meets it? God sees our needs and more than meets them. He gives us our cup, not only full, but running over. We are not to be unkind.

We are not to be uncivil. We are not to be disrespectful. We are not to be anything but peaceful with all men.

But the charity commands, the love commands, the forgiveness commands are community commands. And it's just a fact of the word of God. And people who are indiscriminate in their application of those commands and saying you're not a good Christian unless you seek out some poor people.

If you give money to people outside the faith who are hooked on drugs, what do you think you are doing? You're an enabler. You're a facilitator. You are a participant in their evil.

Why are our commands for help, charity, support, encouragement, self-sacrifice aimed at those within the community? Because God's grace and God's power can be at work, both in the heart of the actor and the recipient. And there is mutual benefit. There is mutual edification.

There is the building up of one another in love. You can't do that with unbelievers. This is the difficulty.

People want to take dogs and pigs out of the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus mentions do not give what is holy to the dogs and do not cast your pearls before swine. And, oh, you should see, it amuses me in kind of a sad way to see the contortions that people who want to make the Jesus hermeneutic, the norm for everything. And, you know, well, Jesus never judged anyone.

Jesus never sent anyone to a fiery lake. Jesus never, you know, slew anybody in judgment. All he was was kind and gentle.

And yet Jesus, this is not a suggestion, it's a command. Do not give what is holy to dogs. Do not cast your pearls before swine.

He's clearly talking about people and not actual dogs and pigs. So how could Jesus call certain categories of people pigs and dogs? Well, the gymnastics, the pretzel logic that tries to get around this ignores the obviousities in the passage. These things that we give and the pearls that we are willing to part with are for one another within the community, those for whom it can be a spiritual benefit.

We shouldn't make Christianity odious to those who are outside by being obnoxious. But we should be civil. We should be respectful.

We should let people go their own way. It is wrong to force our moral standards on those who are outside the fold and outside the family by seeking, you know, legislation that is trying to contain moral turpitude and everybody agrees murder ought to be against the law. Everybody agrees.

And where we can find common ground and we can support laws that provide remedy and justice for genuine crimes. But when it comes to what people do behind closed doors and trying to pass laws to regulate and ferret out people because they're doing something, you know, in their private time, this has been the mistake of Christianity trying to legislate morality and legislate spirituality. God lets people go their own way.

As Jesus Christ representatives, Jesus didn't take his disciples and try to shut down houses of prostitution in Jerusalem of which there were many. Jesus didn't take his disciples and try to shut down the slave market in Jerusalem which existed at the time or in Galilee or in elsewhere in Judea or in the Transjordan or up near Tyre and Sidon. Jesus traveled all over that region.

He never picketed or tried to shut down a slave market. And in this day and age, people consider slavery to be the most heinous thing. Jesus never tried to shut it down.

What does the Bible say? Even within the realms and this is another, this is why they want to throw Paul out of the New Testament because Paul says slaves, you know, obey your masters. Masters be kind to your slaves. He doesn't say masters free your slaves.

Slaves run away from your masters. Slavery is inherently evil and heinous and people just can't get past that. And so, well, that can't be Paul or Paul can't be right.

That can't be Bible, that can't be inspired and they've got to find a way to dismiss it. But people want to redefine charity and there's nothing wrong with charity. If there are charities that try to get homeless people, regardless of their spiritual status, an opportunity to become unhomeless or the jobless to get a job or those who are suddenly devastated to get back on their feet.

We can donate to charities that are doing civic good with a clear conscience. We can support that and not say, well, are you giving this money to believers? If there's a halfway house ministry or we can donate clothing and household goods and things,

irrespective of who's eventually going to get them, you say, you know, everybody can use a couch or some clothes or these extra shoes I've got or whatever. We don't have to be nitpicky and say, well, I only want to benefit those who are in the household of faith.

We can practice charity, but here's what is happening in the modern day. Charity is being redefined as justice instead of generosity and an outward looking desire to benefit those who are hard pressed. People are redefining this as well.

These people deserve what you have. Deserve what you have. Now think about the implications of this because our expressions of charity to those who are outside are a reflection, a pale imitation of God's grace in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, right? Grace is undeserved, unmerited benefit, favor, kindness, chesed in the Old Testament, charis in the New Testament.

This is an undeserved benefit. And when people receive an undeserved and unmerited benefit to the extent that it comes from us, it is a reminder that there is a God in heaven who gave his only begotten son while we were yet sinners and we were completely undeserving. Now, if you say that Christian charity shouldn't be charity, it is justice.

And it is right and proper. The oppressed and the poor and the left behind deserve what we get. What does that say about salvation? Is there some sense in which we deserve salvation from God? We are poor and oppressed and behind the eight ball and God is required by justice to give us some salvation.

What does it do to grace? If you start changing grace to justice, charity to justice, you blur and foul the whole concept of what it means to be saved by grace through faith. When benefit goes to those who express a desire, who say, I would love to change. I would love to have a home and not be homeless.

If somebody would just give me an opportunity. I would love to clothe my children and get them back in school and not live in the back of a station wagon or a van. If I just had an opportunity, I will take that opportunity and make something of it and not take it and sell it and buy some more crack and leave my kids in the back of the vehicle.

That there is some expression of desire to leave and escape bad circumstances and to take advantage of an opportunity for self-improvement. This is what God does with salvation. We change our minds.

This is why repentance is a part of salvation. A change of mind is essential and our progress in spiritual growth, change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. It's a part of the foundation in Hebrews chapter six, right? Well, the same applies in charity and in society we want to provide benefit to those who will use that benefit constructively.

Use it as a bootstrap, a way out and up the good Samaritan who got the guy out of the

ditch. Do you think if that guy ran back and was flashing his cash and got thrown back in the ditch again as his own fault, do you think the Samaritan is going to keep coming in and taking him to the end, coming back to him and then he's back in the ditch again by his own bad judgment and well, I'm going to take him back to the end and he's back in the ditch because of bad judgment. That's not the pattern.

That's not the picture. This is someone who is in need of help and is going to avail himself of that help, get well and move on to be productive. That's the implication.

It isn't a charity for its own sake and it is not justice. So it is important to make that distinction. How did we get to this place where people want to change concepts by changing terminology? This goes back and I want to remind all of us of the difference between modern and postmodern.

We've talked about this and you say, well, why do I need to know that? Here's why. I'm going to avail myself of an article. This is an excellent article from Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary and it's from July of 2020 and it's written by a guy named Douglas Brown.

It's a really wonderful article and if you want to look it up and read the whole thing for yourself, I'm only going to rein it for a few pungent thoughts but it's called Biblical Hermeneutics and Postmodernism. Essential reading. It's been copied to some other websites but he starts out with a quote from Through the Looking Glass Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland and all of that.

I'm going to skip that but in this piece of dialogue between Alice and Humpty Dumpty, Humpty Dumpty starts making things up and using words and she says, wait a minute, you can't just change the word glory to mean something else. And he says, I can do what I want because whoever can change the definition of words, he's the master. He's the master.

And so he says, Carroll wrote long before the rise of postmodernism, his fictional dialogue anticipated the hermeneutical chaos raised in postmodern thinking. We see Alice's confusion and Humpty Dumpty's disdain. Alice can't wrap her mind around what Humpty Dumpty is saying.

Meanwhile, Humpty Dumpty appears to enjoy the confusion that his semantic wordplay is causing. This is the same kind of confusion that postmodern people champion. This is the kind of confusion you get when you redefine church, when you redefine spirituality, when you redefine charity, when you redefine love, when you redefine Christianity in general as no longer having biblical roots, but only selected passages of scripture roots.

It creates confusion. This confusion is then taken advantage of by those who want to lead people down a path. So this article is designed to help people better understand

postmodernism and how postmodern thinking has affected the interpretation of the Bible.

And he does a great thing here. There are quick definitions because we've had three phases and they're very simply defined. If you ever say, you know, I don't really know the difference between modernism and postmodernism.

This is a very clear presentation. Scholars divide Western thought into three basic eras. Western thought is Europe and America, right? We've had three big moments of history.

The first one is pre-modern, pre-modernism. Now, what is pre-modernism? In the pre-modern worldview, there was a basic belief in God, just universal. Everybody took it for granted.

Remember the days of early science when Galileo and Copernicus and all of these guys believed in God. It was just a given. It was taken for granted, right? And that prevailed for many centuries.

That was the pre-modern worldview, basic belief in God. The Bible was accepted as true and trustworthy and therefore authoritative. The Bible is authoritative.

If you want to know about creation, God did it. If you want to know about Israel, God did it. If you want to know about salvation, God did it through Jesus Christ.

The Bible is trustworthy, true, and authoritative. Truth was thought to exist from above. God is the author of truth.

So having said that, what kind of person would you consider yourself to be? Pre-modern, modern, or post-modern? I will tell you, I am pre-modern. I am right there with it. Truth is from above.

The Bible is true, authoritative, and is the source and foundation of, ought to be for all of our guidance. That's the pre-modern world. In the area of hermeneutics, Bible interpretation, there was a variety of approaches toward the Bible.

Pre-modern theologians, however, generally shared a common understanding that the meaning of the text could be uncovered and understood. God gave us His word, and if we look at it and study it, we will come to an understanding. Those understandings may vary and differ, but the truth is somewhere in the word.

And if I look at it, if I pray, ask, seek, and knock, I'll understand it. I am a pre-modern guy, through and through. There was confidence that God's authorial intent in scripture could be discovered through the study of God's word.

If I study His word, I'll know what God means, what He intends. The Enlightenment, you remember from school, the Enlightenment came along, marked the beginning of the

modern era in Western thought, shifting away from pre-modern to modern. With the rise of reason in religion and philosophy, rationalism became the accepted authority.

The supernaturalism of the Bible came under attack. Theologians began to doubt the miraculous. The miracles of the Bible were accounted for or explained away through natural means.

You ever seen these specials on TV where, well, you know, the volcano was erupting and that created all of the plagues in Egypt. And it was the ash in the air that created the darkness. And, you know, this, that, and the other made the flies and the frogs and the, you know, it's all, it was naturally.

This is reason and rationalism. The poor benighted people thought it was God and supernaturalism. It was just the effects of the, you know, Vesuvius or something.

So truth was still thought to be objective and knowable, but instead of coming from God, it was found in the material world. Truth was thought to be discovered primarily through rational and empirical means. The scientific method is the path to truth.

Generally, modernists believe they can investigate and gather data objectively without bias. Hermeneutically, modernism asserted that the meaning of a text can be discovered primarily through historical reconstruction. A guy named Kevin Van Hooser says, while modern historical critics may not view the authors of the Bible as inspired, the original meaning remains the object of interpretation.

And in relation to the Bible, this led to the historical critical method. Historical criticism led to entrenched skepticism and anti-supernaturalism about the Bible's veracity as history. Did it really happen? It's a cultural document.

It was written to bolster the good feeling of the Jews. They made up the Exodus. This makes sense reasonably.

It's historically based. It's skeptical that there was anything supernatural, that there was actually a God, but there is still a truth. And this is what you have in the modern day.

The deconstruction, reconstruction, progressive Christianity says, well, Moses thought he was doing a good thing when he wrote the law. It was his understanding of God. And so it's explained rationally and historically, but God's not really there.

There wasn't really a divine presence on Mount Sinai. This was Moses and he believed in God and God was there, but Moses goofed and Joshua goofed. When he said, let's go in and destroy all the Canaanites, that was Joshua's misconception of what God wanted done.

And God never intended for them to go in and kill babies and wipe out animals and all of

these things that make my hands shake when I think about it. That can't be God. He doesn't meet my standards of goodness and righteousness.

So that can't be God. God has to fit my expectations. Historical critical method.

This is modernism. There is a truth in the text that we can get by studying the text, but it's not a divinely inspired truth. It's a truth about who wrote it, when they wrote it, why they wrote it.

The prophets were shocked at the depravity of people in Israel and so they wrote these screeds and all of these portents of impending judgment and I'll try to scare them back onto the right path with threats of God having you invaded and have your babies ripped apart. And see, this was a misunderstanding. That's not the God of Jesus.

That's the God of, you know, Hosea's imagination or Amos' imagination or whatever. So that's modernism. It began, remember, we've talked about J-E-P-D, the Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly, Redactor and Deuteronomist will explain how the law came to be the way that it is.

This is the Graf Vellhausen theory of pastiche and editors changing the text and there is a meaning in the text and we can explain why it's there. Well, the Deuteronomist wanted to accomplish his purpose. The Priestly Redactor wanted more respect for the priests and the temple and so on and we can explain it all scientifically.

That's modernism. You see this reflected in a society as well. We can solve our problems by scientific analysis.

So we have psychology and we have psychiatry and we have various things that we can use from science to address people's mental issues, right? Modernism. So postmodernism arose in the second half of the 20th century, 1950 to 2000. It's the logical outcome of modernism.

Postmodernism is a reaction or perhaps more appropriately, a disillusioned response to modernism's failed promise of using human reason alone to make mankind's situation better and make the world better. Science was supposed to solve hunger, supposed to solve poverty, supposed to solve disease, supposed to cure cancer, supposed to make people happy, healthy, productive, educated, equal opportunity for all, solve racism, solve sexism, solve short people not getting their due and tall people ducking under the doorways and everybody will be happy in the scientifically conditioned world. We can do it through science.

Well, it failed. And in churches, this modernistic approach to interpreting the Bible eviscerated the power out of the word of God by treating it as uninspired and just a book of homilies and suggestions and sort of Aesop fable aphoristic wisdom, it robbed it of its power. It wasn't presented as the authoritative word of God.

And so churches began to function at a shallow superficial level. When the sun came, the shallowly planted seeds withered and died and there was no life in the churches. So people began to leave the churches and post-modernism is characterized by this progressive Christianity.

I've got to deconstruct my faith. My faith didn't work. So I've got to demolish it and rebuild it in some other fashion.

The problem is instead of going back to the rock, instead of going back to a pre-modern approach and treating the Bible as authoritative and treating God as the God of the supernatural, the God of creation, the God who is the father of the Lord Jesus Christ, they have gone a different direction. They've gone past modernism into post-modernism. What is post-modernism? Well, post-modernism as a reaction finds its roots in existential philosophy.

If you want to get it summed up, the foremost proponent of post-modernism is a guy named Martin Heidegger. You might've heard of him. He's a philosophy guy.

Martin Heidegger, you can look him up on Wikipedia and get the short answer and links to longer answers. One of the defining goals of post-modernism is the disavowal of objective truth. We're not going back to the rock from which we were hewn and the pit from which we were digged.

We're not going back to God in heaven and the authority of his word. We're saying, you know, science couldn't find truth. Modernism couldn't solve problems with all of this objective investigation.

So there is no truth. We're just gonna change the game. We're no longer gonna even look for truth because it doesn't exist.

Do you see this in politics? Do you see this in social policy? There is no such thing as a truth of your gender. There is no such thing as a truth of your race. There is no such thing as a truth of your opportunities or your limitations.

Truth is now relative. Truth is not something to be found or discovered. This type of pursuit is impossible for a couple of reasons.

First, truth cannot be discovered because every interpreter is laden with a pre-understanding and biases that prevent him from seeing outside his own situation. Critical race theory. You can't know the truth because you're too white, you're too old, you're too this, you're too that.

Interestingly, it only seems to be white people who can't come to the truth. Anybody else, Native Americans, people of color, people of any other rainbow stripe or whatever, they can find a truth. It's only, you know, wasps who can't seem to see it.

Now, white privilege has hopelessly blinded us. We can never find the truth. But most postmodernists, if they're serious about it, they'll say everybody is trapped in their preconceptions.

I'm a victim of my birth, my upbringing, my past. I can't be objective. I can't find objective truth.

So secondly, postmoderns reject the existence of universal overarching principles, what they call a metanarrative. What our metanarrative is, God created the world. He sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are here to glorify God, to exploit our salvation, to represent the Lord Jesus Christ and look to the future for service and function in the kingdoms that are to come. That's the overarching narrative. And you can fill in as many ribs and other bones on that as you want.

But the metanarrative is there is a God in heaven who has planned human history. And at the center of that plan is the Lord Jesus Christ. At the beginning is creation, and at the end is the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness is at home and where hopefully we will be at home.

That's the overarching narrative. Well, they say there is no such thing as an overarching metanarrative. Absolute truths don't exist.

Instead, postmodernism sees truth as relative and subjective. So each interpreter creates his or her own truth. What is true for one may not be true for another.

For me, maybe two plus two equals three. For Patty, two plus two equals five, and that's okay. That's your truth.

You just go with that. You let me have my truth, I'll let you have your truth. So if I wake up tomorrow and think that I'm a duck and I wanna quack and get a little pool out here in the yard and just paddle around in it, well, that's my truth, and it should be respected.

And nobody should come and tell me I'm not a duck. Nobody should come and tell me two plus two doesn't equal three because my truth should be respected. The ultimate authority is not found in God, as in premodernism, or the world, modernism, but in the individual.

D.A. Carson, and he's a wonderful commentator, I've got several commentaries he's written in, and he's a very insightful, intelligent guy, says this, postmodernism is an outlook that depends not a little on what are perceived to be fundamental limitations on the power of interpretation. That is, since interpretation can never be more than my interpretation or our interpretation, there is no purely objective stance that's even possible. Nobody can find an objective truth.

It's just gonna be our interpretation or your interpretation. Truth is merely how each individual perceives it. The ramifications of postmodernism have been catastrophic, not only in hermeneutics, but across society.

Morally, people have abandoned absolutes and opted for radical relativism. Radical relativism. Right is now wrong, and wrong is right.

Culturally, society has plunged headlong into radical pluralism. It is no longer acceptable to hold exclusive beliefs. You're not allowed to believe that you're right and everybody else is wrong.

In fact, you are expected to approve other people's beliefs. Tolerance is now society's greatest virtue. Do you hear what he's saying? Tolerance, if you have a belief and you believe you're right and everybody else is wrong, you're intolerant, and that is a mortal sin.

Intolerance is verboten. In relation to religion, postmodernism leads ultimately to universalism. Hermeneutically, it has led to the abandonment of truth and the absence of meaning.

As an absolute, postmodernism espouses the untenable conundrum that no one can claim the truth. Postmodernism says the only thing that's true is nobody knows the truth, but that itself is an absolute, and they don't believe in absolutes, but they believe absolutely nobody can know the truth. So there's a guy named Abdu Murray, and his quote is, our culture is now post-truth.

We're not just postmodern, we're post-truth. Truth doesn't really exist anymore. The Oxford Dictionary selected post-truth as its 2016 Word of the Year, defining it as, quote, relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

Let me read that again. Think about the news over this last decade. Oxford Dictionary, post-truth, 2016 Word of the Year, defines it as relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

In post-truth thinking, facts are subordinated to preferences. Facts are subordinate to preferences. Well, the rest of that article is quite fascinating.

Once again, you can find it at faith.edu. The title of the article is Biblical Hermeneutics and Postmodernism. It is by Douglas Brown, every word of it is worth reading and reflecting on. It explains everything you see going on around us, spiritually, socially, morally, and that's why the truth that we are gleaning from Proverbs on Wednesday nights and in Timothy, both Paul in 1 Timothy 1 and Solomon here in Proverbs 11 are extolling the necessary truths that reflect God's truth in our lives.

And it is so important for us to stop and think about what we're doing. Do you know who is outside the new Jerusalem looking at their inheritance, bobbing in the lake of fire? Those who love and practice a lie. And they are believers.

This is after the great white throne. Those who are outside the city, you know, fornicators, deceivers, this, that, and the other, and those who love and practice a lie. That defines our entire society on almost every different side philosophically, conservative, quote, unquote, liberal, quote, unquote, left, right, centrist, moderates.

We are saturated with falsehoods and warped and subjective interpretations of facts. Evidence and facts no longer define public opinion. It is preference.

It is personal belief. And we have to lash ourselves to the bastion. We have to stand and build our house on the solid rock of truth.

Jesus Christ said, I am the truth. He is the rock of our salvation. He is the rock on which we build our lives.

And there is, in the pre-modern sense, absolute truth. And it is in the scriptures and nowhere else. It takes the Holy Spirit, as we have seen, to guide us into it, to lead us into it, to keep us in it, to help us to see it, practice it, apply it.

But this is our calling. This is why we are here. And when we leave at the rapture, that is the reason the seals start breaking and judgment starts falling, because that which inhibits will be taken out of the way.

We are representatives of the truth. And when that truth and the spirit that guides and enables and empowers through that truth, when those things are taken out of the way, that's your tribulation period. That is the 70th week.

That is the apocalypse. Well, we will resume our study in Proverbs, picking up at verse 10 next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the clarity, the simplicity, the beauty of the truth that you communicate to us in your word. Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, without whom we could not understand, grasp, benefit from and apply these truths. We pray that as we reflect on them, that you will bless us with insight and understanding and help us to recognize the opportunities to put these principles into application as we face points of choice, to choose rightly, to choose the way of justice, of integrity, of character, of a reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ and of that truth that defines us and that saves us.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.