

02-09-22a Revelation

As we continue our worship this morning, let's take a moment at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and Cultivate within our souls the environment in which God the Holy Spirit can minister. Shall we pray? Father we thank you for this day. We thank you that All across our nation on this day.

There are believers who have assembled to spend time in fellowship and spend time in the study of your word finding comfort and encouragement and strength In the word and also in that which every joint supplies and in the function of every spiritual gift You have made provision for us in so many ways. You know the end from the beginning you know our problems before they arise you provide the solutions and often unexpected and surprising ways and we are Caused to marvel at your faithfulness and your grace and Expressions of your sovereignty and your omnipotence that we see around us. We thank you that we Are here in this fallen world able to avail ourselves of your power and your provision we pray that as we worship together this morning that we will have insight and understanding in the study of your word and that the passages we Examine and the truths that we ascertain there will strengthen us and transform us and equip us For every good work.

We pray for those who are not with us. We pray For those who study with us by means of tape. We ask your blessing on them and that you will bless them with Christian fellowship and with The things that really cannot be provided via tape that we know that there is so much that you give us through The fellowship and and time spent with believers of like mind we pray for our government in these times of trial and challenge and we pray for President Bush that you will continue to rest your hand upon him and strengthen and encourage him and Pursuing a course that is best for our nation and results in the continuation of our freedom and our opportunities Particularly when it comes to our Christian lives, we pray for those in the military and those in law enforcement and all of those who are In positions of authority and all of the various levels of our government We pray that you will continue to grant to us the great privilege.

We enjoy of freedom and privacy and opportunity so that your word can spread and the Power of the gospel can have its effect in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike And we ask your blessing again on us now as we study together. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen For our scripture reading this morning turn with me to Isaiah chapter 30 Isaiah chapter 30 If you had to single out one book in the Bible that is Particularly unique and that would be difficult because you can choose any book and find its uniqueness And it and the reason that God included it in our scriptures, but Isaiah is an impressive book it has 66 chapters just like the Bible has 66 books It has a very obvious Division and break over point right at Isaiah chapter 40 just as the Bible has a very obvious break over point after the first 39 books which comprise the Old Testament and As the Bible does in those first 39 chapters you find detailed the problem of sin The problem of apathy the problem of rebellion the problem of man's corrupt nature and our fallen condition

Exemplified in the problems of the nation of Israel and then beginning in Isaiah chapter 40 with the comfort and encouragement and the foretelling of the coming of the Suffering servant who will bear our iniquities you have the good news and the promise of God's provision Just as the New Testament details the fulfillment of those Prophecies, so there's a great echo In The book of Isaiah of the the structure and the content of the entire Bible And I think that's probably not accidental but for our scripture reading this morning.

We're going to find ourselves in Isaiah chapter 30 That's that's a little double entendre. We're going to find ourselves in Isaiah chapter 30 We often find ourselves pictured or at least aspects of our Lives That's the another of the great unique features of scripture. Is that whatever time whatever situation whatever circumstances? It always Applies for us.

It is always the inspired Word of God that is Living and active and sharp like a sword but in particular Isaiah chapter 30 is going to pertain to The study of the letters to the seven churches on which we embarked Several weeks ago and this morning we find ourselves beginning Revelation chapter 3 with the letter to the church at Sardis Having completed the letters to Ephesus to Smyrna to Pergamos and to Thyatira We now find ourselves at Sardis. There are elements that are common to all of those letters There is always a greeting and a reference to the vision of Christ that John recorded in Revelation chapter 1 there is always an evaluation of the status of the Angel of that church and by extension the believers within that church there is almost always a caution and a warning and a challenge to change And there is a statement of consequence whether it is Negative consequence or in each case there is a promise made to those who overcome ha Nicole to the one who? Conquers to the one who overcomes to the victor I Will grant Jesus says Well, and as we come to Isaiah chapter 30 for our scripture reading we will see God Sending a similar challenge and a similar evaluation to the people of God in Old Testament days And I think you'll see the pertinence of the parallel Here as we read it Isaiah chapter 30 verse 1 Woe to the rebellious children says the Lord who take counsel But not of me and who devise plans, but not of my spirit that they may add sin to sin Now I've taken flack in the past and I'm unrepentant about saying negative things with regard to Christian counseling To the extent that counseling is genuinely Christian. It's great, but if you take counsel not of God It comes under Condemnation cursed is the man who makes flesh his strength And if you're going to look for solutions to your problems particularly problems that God claims as his own Providence the Word of God is the owner's manual for the human soul.

It is the place we go to find The answers that God provides and so for a believer to go to some human Counsel is is Suspect we want to look at it closely But let me just sketch in a very brief background this Chapter was written from God through Isaiah to Israel during a time when the northern ten tribes had already been Conquered had already been taken captive by the Assyrians under Asher Bannipal the remaining southern kingdom the nation of Judah which actually comprised Judah and Benjamin What felt itself threatened and rightfully slow rightfully so I Say slow that's more of my mental state than anything else this morning but the Political leadership

the King Hezekiah and his counselors and so on were facing this threat and deciding what should we do and they recognized that Asher Bannipal had all the cards he had the military strength he could come down there and Conquer them and They thought well, let's fight fire with fire Let's find an ally who is like unto Assyria in military strength, and they look to the south they look to Egypt you had by the Conventional reckoning you had Psalmic the first who was Pharaoh in Egypt during this time He had been increasing in strength and clout and influence in the international realm during this time and so the leaders in Jerusalem were counseling Hezekiah to play some power politics here and if they could pit Egypt against Assyria and Sort of it's sort of like instead of brokering a peace deal this would be brokering a military conflict They could maneuver in such a way as to pit these against each other and let them exhaust their strength They might actually end up ahead of both of them. They might Neutralize both of these powers and come out ahead and this was kind of the thinking Superpower Conflict is what they were after they thought well We'll we'll go down to Egypt and get them in on our side and that'll that will get us out of the hot seat So Isaiah is responding to this idea and in verse 2 he says These who are taking counsel, but not of me who are devising plans, but not from the Spirit of God That they may add sin to sin who walk to go down to Egypt and have not asked my advice To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh and trust in the shadow of Egypt What does it mean to be in the shadow of something? You have that him in the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty the shadow means You're standing next to someone bigger than you and they're your protector. They're your defender They are your refuge and strength and ever-present help in time of trouble so instead of looking to the rock of Their salvation they want to go stand in the shadow of Egypt Well the last time Israel stood in the shadow of Egypt what happened a hundred years later They ended up in enslaved and in bondage God says in verse 3 Therefore the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame and trust in the shadow of Egypt shall be your humiliation For his princes were at Zoan and his ambassadors came to Hades They were all ashamed of a people who could not benefit them or be a help or benefit But a shame and also a reproach The burden against the beasts of the south through a land of trouble and anguish From which came the lioness and lion the viper and fiery flying serpent They will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys and their treasures on the humps of camels To a people who shall not profit for the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose Therefore I have called her Rahab hem Shabbat Which is Rahab sits idle and you know Rahab is one of the names for the deep sea Beast, you know breaking Rahab in pieces and all of that and it's comparing the strength of Egypt to essentially the strength of Satan going to You know, whatever is not of faith is sin and to going to that source of strength.

He says you're going to Go to the place of the viper and the fiery flying serpent the lioness and the lion the pride of lions who are going to make a prey of the gazelle and so forth the whole idea here without getting into the the Verse by verse details is they're going to carry great tribute and riches down to Egypt Which is the abode of Rahab the abode of the serpent? looking for strength they're going In the opposite direction that they should there's a reason why God is pictured as dwelling in the sides of the north and Egypt is to the south God is at the opposite pole from Egypt

as it were when the children of Israel left Egypt. What direction did they head north? Essentially the promised land was north and their wanderings They kept circling around in the wilderness and they never did get north until 40 years later Because it took them that long to get close to God so The Egyptians will help in vain and to no purpose it seems like a good deal. They're going to send tribute They're going to send presence, but they're meeting with these ambassadors in vain now verse 8 now Go write it before them on a tablet and note it on a scroll That it may be for time to come forever and ever That this is a rebellious people lying children children who will not hear the law of the Lord who say to the seers do not see and Say to the prophets do not prophesy to us right things Speak to us smooth things prophesy deceits Get out of the way turn aside from the path cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us Now do people actually say that Is it are these the words that come out of their mouth when you look around today? Are people saying cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us or they're saying don't preach to us? No, it's this is the truth of what they're saying.

This is if you boil away the fluff and Scoop away the whipped Diet topping this is what's really underneath They don't want to hear Paul told Timothy that in the last days men would Not tolerate listening to the truth, but they would have itching ears and want to hear other things And this is written for all time. This is in The 700s BC That Isaiah is writing this so 700 years before Christ These words were spoken and they have been true ever since and not just spoken but written down They say to the seers do not see they say to the prophets do not prophesy to us right things How do people say that today? They say it with their feet. They say it with their money.

They say it with their time Where do people go? on Sunday If they go to someone who is not prophesying the truth if they go to someone who's not teaching the Word of God Is not speaking right things if they go to a place where they hear smooth things If they go to a place where they're hearing deceits the prosperity gospel the Self-indulgent gospel the gospel of God being the big band-aid and the big Excedrin pill that causes the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us because it is the Council of men it is a Psychology gospel. It is a feel-good gospel. It is a let's have a Catharsis let's have a reverent experience.

Let's come into a place of stained glass and praise music or Holy music or a lot of ritual or whatever it might be, but you come away and you have not met the master You have not encountered God the Father you've not been ministered to by God the Holy Spirit Therefore verse 12 thus says the Holy One of Israel because you despise this word Because you trust in oppression and perversity and rely on them Therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall a bulge in a high wall Whose breaking comes suddenly in an instant and he shall break it like the breaking of a potter's vessel Which is broken in pieces He shall not spare so that they're not There shall not be found among its fragments a shard to take fire from the hearth or take water from the cistern You know in the old days Well in these days when they had a lot of pottery and they had these large jugs that they would use for wine and for Water, you remember

the giant the twelve giant jars They had at the wedding feast of Cana if you did break one of those it was still useful you they found uses for large Fragments of it. They could use it as a Notepad and make notes on it. These are called a strata OSTR a CA and For example in the the Fortress of Masada, they found a strata in other places where they've been great battles They have found notes that were sent back and forth between generals or before from the general to his king saying, please send reinforcements We're we're surrounded and we're not going to last long And they find Ancient inscriptionary evidence written on these ostraca on these pottery shards You could also use them like a shovel.

You could use them like a spade You could use them to as it says here to carry fire from the hearth You could carry coals and start a new fire borrow a coal from your neighbor if your fire had gone out or to scoop water some of them would be curved enough that you can get a Cup of water. It's kind of like we use jelly jars and Craft cream cheese jars for juice glasses. Well, they found another purpose for these But he says the shattering is going to be so great that you will find no benefit left over You know, you can break a jar and say well at least I've got a coal carrier here At least I've got a little juice glass.

He says no there will be no benefit. You will not find the smallest Compensating benefit out of this destruction when you shatter the Potter's vessel Crush it to dust. There's not a piece left You can use for thus says the Lord God in verse 15 the Holy One of Israel in returning and In rest you shall be saved.

You shall be delivered in quietness and confidence Shall be your strength But you would not and you said no for we will flee on horses Therefore you shall flee And we will ride on swift horses Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift the very things that you turn to as an alternate form are going to be your undoing You wanted to be swift. You're going to be running away swiftly. You wanted horses for strength.

You're going to be pursued by horses 1,000 shall flee at the threat of one at the threat of five you shall flee Until you are left as a pole on top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill therefore verse 18 the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you and Therefore he will be exalted that he may have mercy on you for the Lord is a God of justice Blessed are all those who wait for him. This is one of our biggest problems when we get into a challenging Set of circumstances when we face difficult Circumstances we and you know people talk about our culture and instant on and instant gratification and you know, you watch a Program on TV and it's all wrapped up within 30 minutes We have difficulty in waiting. We have difficulty in enduring in unpleasant circumstances or uncomfortable circumstances and Waiting for the deliverance that God provides.

We just can't wait long enough Whenever I think about waiting I think about King Saul getting ready to fight watching his army dwindling away and all of the cowards going over the hill and He saw his army shrinking and shrinking and shrinking and Samuel delayed his coming and he said, you know We're not supposed to start the battle Samuel said don't do anything until he comes

and offers a sacrifice to God Well Saul is looking and he says this just doesn't make any sense If I wait any longer, I will have no army left and he's down to a few hundred soldiers and he Decides he has waited long enough. He can't wait any longer and he goes and offers the sacrifice himself While the smoke is still ascending over the hill comes Samuel and You remember the words that Samuel speaks there? Obedience is better than sacrifice Faithfulness is better than the fat of rams. It's not what you do.

It isn't complete, you know, Saul said I want to please God What is the sacrifice? It's a thing that's supposed to please God and gain his favor so that you can go in battle and succeed And he says he can rationalize it all kinds of ways and say well, but look I'm sacrificing to God I mean won't God be pleased when I offer this sacrifice. Well If he'd had the chance to go back and talk to Cain, he might have gotten an answer to his question It's not that you offer a sacrifice. It is the obedience.

It's the faithfulness is reflected in it and he did not obey the word of the man of God and a terrible consequence ensued And if you think about it that could have been a Gideon story if Saul had patiently waited for Samuel to come It would have been like the 300 men with the torches and the pots who achieved a great victory with small numbers and God was glorified In that situation, but he did not wait. He lost the chance Instead of that day and that battle being a monument to hoopoe Monet To endurance and faithfulness instead. It is a monument to someone who could not wait who got impatient Therefore the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you notice the Lord will wait He will let a situation build up he will let the pressure increase he will let the circumstances mount So that he may be gracious to us.

We have so much more appreciation for the grace of God When we recognize the extremists in which we find ourselves and we know where we would be without his grace If everything came on time You know, we we can often begin to take things for granted because they're always there. They're always Available and we never have any sense of precariousness, we never have any sense of Not knowing you drive down the road in your car 65 or 70 miles an hour, whatever the speed limit allows and you can think about a thousand other things, but if You've ever had your steering wheel come loose from the steering mechanism as I have in my little 57 Volkswagen bug I was driving one time and that model Had a yoke if you can imagine a Y at 90 degrees and another Y at 180 degrees so that they they approach one another at right angles those Four little ends the tips of the Y at nine o'clock twelve o'clock three o'clock and six o'clock Were linked by a leather disc they actually used a leather disc to link these two rods with the Y shaped ends at right angles to each other and That provided a flexible joint because it turns an angle to go down and then move the tie rods Well that car being umpteen years old built in 1957 and having the original leather steering yoke I was driving one day and I turned the wheel and it kind of Felt like something gave and it just spun like the wheel on a ship with no rudder It went This spokes were whipping past and I had no steering control in my car well You suddenly no longer take for granted the fact that you have your car has a steering wheel and then when you say right it Goes

right when you say left it goes left You are suddenly in need of stopping quickly because you have no directional control over your car So you come to a great appreciation and to this day It often crosses my mind when I turn the wheel in any given car that I'm driving I think this is great, and I'm so glad they don't use leather discs anymore in the steering yoke of cars We have power steering we have mechanical linkages, and I think they finally decided maybe that was a bad design Here, why does God wait? Why does God allow us to do without to come up short? When he has promised that he will supply all of our needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus his riches are unlimited the his grace in Christ. Jesus is unlimited.

So how could we ever possibly come up short? It says the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you And the implication is here so that you'll recognize his graciousness so that you'll appreciate his graciousness So that when he is gracious it makes an impression and it makes an indelible Mark in your soul. We recognize that we have capacity to understand it and Therefore he will be exalted That he may have mercy on you for the Lord is a God of justice blessed are all those who wait for him He's waiting for us To reach the place where we can wait for him And so it's a waiting game, and if we learn to wait on the Lord He waits for us to learn that lesson when we learn to wait on him then He will be gracious to us He says in verse 19 for the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem You shall weep no more the big fear was that they would be overrun like the northern kingdoms and carried away He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry when he hears it He will answer you and though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore But your eyes shall see your teachers your ears shall hear a word behind you saying this is the way walk in it There's nothing like recognizing what's at stake seeing adversity seeing difficulty Encountering challenge and pressure to make you appreciate what God provides. Where is the power of God for believers? It's in his word and in his spirit, and what is the sword of the Spirit? It's the Word of God How does the Holy Spirit speak to us and lead us and guide us? It's through the word.

We have to see our teachers We have to hear our teachers we have to that's a metaphor for the the intake and the reflection on the Word of God and We are much more alert Believe me after I got my steering wheel fixed. I was very sensitive to how my car drove ever after I never knew because I had to go to the junkyard and get another leather yoke and put in there And I was always aware of the fact that I might lose that at any time And so I was always I had a sixth of course You can't drive a Volkswagen without having a sixth sense you have to smell and listen and it's a sort of a mechanics car But you ever after appreciate every time you turn the wheel and it turns and You're always watching for the next time that that there might be a challenge in that area Your ears will hear your eyes will see and the teachers will not not be moved into a corner I would submit to you that in our day and age Teachers of the Word of God had been moved into a corner They're not in the center. They're not The focus the bulk of Christians in our country the bulk of Christians in the world today That are visible are Listening to other things they're listening to things that Titillate they're listening to things that entertain they're listening to things that make great promises the same kind of people who dial 900 numbers the same kind of people who

follow get-rich-quick schemes and the same kind of people who watch the home shopping network and are just looking for the next big bargain are We've got a home shopping network mentality about Christianity.

Look at the Trinity broadcasting network It is the largest Christian network. Look at the programming that's on it How do you think they've stayed on the air all these years? They've been on over 20 years now Where did all that money come from for all those satellites and all of those towers and all of that broadcast time? it came from people who look at it like it and want to pay for it and the amount of Biblical teaching and biblical viewpoint that you get on that channel can easily be contained in a very small cup And there's a little bit if you want to get on in the middle of the night And you can occasionally see somebody that teaches something from the Word of God, but most of it is fluff. Most of it is not edifying Though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore.

Your eyes will see your teacher Sometimes we have to eat the bread of affliction. We have to or the bread of adversity We have to drink the water of affliction because we recognize the manna from God's Word when it comes Your ears will hear a word behind you saying this is the way walk in it Isn't this the goal how many people have have bought books on divine guidance and knowing the will of God and Finding the way to pray so that you can have God's will accomplished in your life Your ears will hear a word behind you. You know why it's behind them because they've been facing the wrong direction They've been you know, if you hear something behind you You weren't looking in the right direction Revelation chapter 1 John was praying.

It was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day He heard a voice behind him right and he had to turn to see the the vision of the Lord Jesus Christ When you cast your pearls before swine and they don't like them It says they will turn and trample you to pieces because they were headed the other direction They were already facing another way. Your ears will hear a word behind you saying this is the way Walk in it whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left and The actual image here is kind of like an ox that's being driven down a road you know you they used to have G and ha for mules that were pulling loads and G would turn them one direction and ha would turn them to the other and they didn't even have to use reins They just were back there with a stick The stick says go forward and G and ha would tell them to go left or to go, right? They use the same terms with the dog sleds, you know, the lead dog on a dog team when they're running the Iditarod or whatever it is up there in Alaska the lead dog is way too far to reach with any kind of Strap control and so the the musher there the guy riding the dog sled directs the lead dog with From behind he hears a voice behind him saying go to the left or go to the right if he's going the wrong direction He corrects him and he listens for that voice As he faces the things that are ahead and it's comforting to know that you have that guidance They can see even where you cannot You will also defile the covering of your images of silver and the ornament of your molded images of gold You will throw them away as an unclean thing things that you have used as substitutes For divine provision for divine guidance for worship of the Word of God You will throw

them away as an unclean thing. You will say to them get away And what this really tells you is that there are people involved here You don't just speak to an image and it leaps up on its feet and walks away these images of silver and ornaments of Gold are part of a culture They're part of a type of thinking that involves other people and you will tell those people get away these false counselors these false guides and What is the result then? he will give the rain for your seed which you will with which you sow the ground and The increase of the earth it will be fat and plentiful Notice you've got seed to sow in the ground, but without the rain It isn't going to come to fruition and there are a lot of us these people in Israel knew the Word of God You know Jesus in the parable of the soil He said the seed is the word and we can have the word and we can be thinking that we're applying it and we're sowing it but It isn't just having the seed and it's not even planting the seed.

It's like Paul said I planted a polis watered God gives the increase and This rain that God gives that blesses. The word is Based on what are we thinking? What are we looking to? Are we appreciating God? Are we listening for that voice that tells us to turn to the left or to the right? It is not enough just possessing the seed. It's not even enough to plant the seed It's whether or not God is going to give the increase and that is based on something.

It's based on our faith It's based on whether or not we're looking to Egypt We're looking to stand in the shadow of human strength Or if we are looking to God if we are willing to wait even in the face of adversity You know things kept getting worse and worse for Hezekiah. Just like they kept getting worse and worse for King Saul He will give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground and bread of the increase of the earth They will be fat and plentiful in that day. Your cattle will feed in large pastures Likewise the oxen and the young Young donkeys that work the ground will eat cured fodder, which has been winnowed with the shovel and fan This is these are signs of prosperity When you when you're not having to feed stalks and Leavings to your animals this says you're going to have so much increase that you'll be able to feed Even seed grain and even the kind of grain that you would grind for flour instead of just stalks and stems You'll be feeding your animals rich luscious grain because you will have a super abundance There will be on every high mountain and on every high hill Rivers and streams of water in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall And these of course are the the towers of the enemy The light of the moon will be as the light of the Sun and the light of the Sun will be sevenfold as the light Of seven days in the day that the Lord binds up the bruise of his people and heals the stroke of their wound well Yeah, there's a lot more that could be said about that You might take particular note of verse 26 That the light of the Sun will be sevenfold as the light of seven days In the day that the Lord binds up the bruise of his people now from a pure pure physics standpoint We would not want sevenfold light But it is this is a symbolic reference.

This is the idea of Brightness and day meaning prosperity like Peter said when the day star rises in your hearts and When even in the nighttime isn't dark anymore the light of the moon is like the light of the Sun you can see clearly You have prosperity the sunlight is what helps your crops to

grow and in this agricultural metaphor for prosperity He says you're going to have sevenfold light from heaven, which is going to make everything Underneath the Sun that's sevenfold more prosperous Well, let's turn now back to Revelation chapter 3 and take a look at our next letter. I Am constantly seeing things in the previous letters that I want to go back and cover But then uh, you know, we'll never get to the end. So At some point I would love to talk more about the morning star I would love to talk more about Ruling with a rod of iron and being dashed in pieces like the potter's vessel, but you can see that in Isaiah chapter 30 You can see the crushing that leaves no benefit behind for those who refuse to turn well here in chapter 3 we have our Letter to Sardis To the angel of the church and Sardis right these things says he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars I know your works that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die for I have not found your works perfect before God Remember therefore how you have received and heard hold fast and repent Therefore if you will not watch I will come upon you as a thief and you will not know what hour I will come upon you You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life But I will confess his name before my father and before his angels He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches Well, you can see just by reading that there are some fascinating Aspects of what Jesus says to the church in Sardis Let's pause here and take our break When we come back, we'll examine these phrases and these images in detail