

16a REV

This is Friday the 2nd of December 2005. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation. We always take a moment as we approach the Word of God, as we should any time that we prepare to meditate on it, or otherwise attempt to have it be useful and meaningful in our lives, to recognize that it is only through the ministry of God's Holy Spirit that the Word of God can do us any good.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for this evening and for the many ways that you have blessed us and provided for us. We thank you that we can gather and spend time in fellowship in the study of your Word. We ask that your Holy Spirit will illuminate the page and bring to each one of us the food from your Word that will nourish and strengthen our souls and equip us for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Last time, as we looked at the sort of grand picture in Revelation, we took a specific look at the ones who overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

And what is the meaning of the blood of Christ? What is the power that is able to overcome the dragon, overcome the Antichrist, overcome the worst that the empire of evil can throw at believers? And it's like the old hymn, there is power five times in the blood, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb. And it's important for us to understand what that means. And so we spent some time looking at it last time.

If you'll remember, we saw that the blood of Christ is described in Scripture as being pure, precious, necessary, sufficient, final. It has cleansing power. It has conquering power.

It is the means and the basis for our reconciliation, our redemption, our propitiation, justification, sanctification, our fellowship, our victory, and our eternal life. It's a very important subject. And in some areas of Christian faith, which some of us have had contact with, there's been sort of an attempt to diminish the blood of Christ because it had been misunderstood.

And people were taking it literally and thinking that Jesus carried a bowl of His blood up and splashed it around in heaven and so on. But as a term representing the work of Christ on the cross, the blood of Christ is used over and over in Scripture. And it's something that we need to have a good understanding of.

People today talk about pleading the blood in one thing or another. And that's a misunderstanding. We don't have to plead.

It has been pled. The Lord Jesus Christ has made the plea on our behalf. And we are made acceptable in the Beloved.

The work of Christ is finished and complete. He is not still bleeding. In case there's any

doubt, all of this folly roll about transubstantiation and every time somebody has communion, there's some more blood of Christ.

Nonsense. The work of Christ is finished. That's what He said on the cross.

It was finished the same day it was started. Before the sun went down on 14 Nisan of 29 or 30 AD, whenever it was, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, It is finished. It has been finished.

And it's going to stay finished. Tetelestai. His work is complete.

The portion that is incomplete is the application of that work in our lives. That's what's incomplete. No matter how righteous we are, no matter how faithful we are, the work that Jesus does for us on the basis of the cross is incomplete.

None of us are yet ultimately sanctified. We don't yet have our resurrection body. We haven't shed the old man.

We haven't been sown in corruption so that we can be raised incorruptible. That's an ongoing application of that work. But the work itself is finished and complete and acceptable in God's sight.

That's the main thing. Because you say, Well, that's my observation. That's my interpretation.

What is the application of the blood of Christ? I would bet money that most of us went several days this week, if not all of the last two weeks, since before Thanksgiving, and didn't really think much about the blood of Christ. We don't typically stop at 2.30 in the afternoon and say, Whoa, blood of Christ. What does that mean in my life? Or at 9 o'clock in the morning.

Or at 7 o'clock in the evening when our favorite program is about to come on. We don't stop and think, Well, what about the blood of Christ? But we need to pay attention to what Scripture says to us about the blood of Christ. Look at it.

They overcame by the blood of the Lamb. Testimony of His Word. And if we are going to overcome, it's going to be a pretty lame excuse to look around in our life and find areas where we're defeated or we're not making progress or we are in trouble.

And we get to the judgment seat and Jesus says, You know, you had the power of the completed work of the cross at your disposal. Did you not understand it? Did you not think about it? Did you not bring it into play? This is sort of like having your house full of weapons and ammunition and yet being clobbered and carried away by a couple of criminals because you never think to pull the gun out and load it and start pulling the trigger. And what a tragedy for the Lord Jesus Christ to have done so much for us on the

cross to have explained it in His Word and put it at our disposal, put it at the very fingertips.

All it's waiting for is to take it and hand it to the Holy Spirit in our soul. And we miss it. We goof up.

We have all of the wherewithal and we just don't apply it. You think about the Israelites coming up to the edge of the Jordan. The spies come back.

Caleb and Joshua say, It's a good land. We can take it. God will give it to us.

Look at these grapes. And all the people weep and wail. Oh, no.

Grasshoppers in their sight. They'll squash us like bugs. What was the result? Forty wasted years.

A new generation had to come up who was willing to cross the land. And you remember that little afterthought where after some weeping and wailing, then a bunch of people say, after Moses says, Well, God sees that you have no faith so you're going to wander for 40 years. And they say, Oh, no.

I think we will go in the land after all. And the door has been shut. And they try to go.

They try to cross. And they get their noses bloodied because that opportunity was missed because they weren't ready to claim God's grace at the time. This is what the blood of Christ ought to mean to us.

We have to get it off the pages of Scripture and out of the realms of sort of idle spiritual thought and down where the rubber meets the road. It ought to be something that is motivational and powerful and that makes a difference day by day by day. So the question I ask myself is, well, how does that happen? I mean, I wake up in a new day every morning and start doing my same old thing I always do.

It's really hard for us to shift our patterns of thinking, isn't it? It's just hard. And left to ourselves, it's almost impossible. This is the difference.

And I've been talking to my daughters here this past week about the uniqueness of Christian faith, the uniqueness of trust in God and what God gives us. People will come to you and say, oh yeah, you're a Christian, well, there's lots of religions and no one religion's better than another. Whatever floats your boat, whatever turns your windmill, that's great.

But you can't prove that it's any different or any better than anything else. What a tragic thing if that's true. What if our Christianity doesn't do us any more good than a Buddhist gets out of Buddhism or a Confucianist gets out of Confucianism or a Hindu gets out of being a Hindu or a Moslem gets out of being a Moslem or a JW or a Mormon or anybody

else, Wicca or Scientology, heaven forbid.

If we don't get something out of our Christianity, we are wasting our time. If it is not superior, if it is not unique and standalone in the world as the place where the power of God is manifest, what are we doing? Why are we bothering? Throw it over, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, I say. It either has to make a difference or it's not worth doing.

Being a lip service Christian, you might as well be a Buddhist. So, this subject of the blood of Christ, I emphasize it because we have to have a faith that makes a difference. Otherwise, the Lord Jesus Christ wasted his time dying on the cross for us because we are not doing anything with it.

He has handed us a gift and we are just dropping it in the mud and walking away. It has to make a difference. These people in the tribulation are going to really have to make a decision because they are not going to have a lot of idle time.

They are not going to have a lot of sort of options. It's going to be live or die, life or death. And you find in persecuted countries, I am corresponding with a man named Dr. Eddie Peter Perunto.

He is the pastor of a church in Banten province, Indonesia. Banten is in West Java. And in West Java in Indonesia, that is the seat and the heart of Islamic extremism in that region.

And they are shutting churches down and they are kidnapping and executing Christians in that country. And Dr. Eddie found the Criswell website and he knows enough English, he can understand Dr. Criswell. And he listened to his sermons about missions and about the gospel and the power of the word of God.

And he wanted to bring that information to his church and to the seminary that he has started in his church. He has the Philadelphia Theological Seminary over there. And he has got a little website, sttip.org, which is an Indonesian abbreviation for Systematic Theology something Philadelphia.

But sttip.org. But they really need prayer. His wife bakes cakes and sells them. And he teaches at two or three different universities to get up the money that they need each year to rent their facilities for their church and for their seminary.

And their students are too poor to charge tuition. So whatever books and whatever materials they can scratch together just comes out of what Dr. Eddie and his wife can make and can contribute. But they have endured a tremendous amount of opposition and persecution.

We don't face anything like that here. We get up in the morning, we have not a care. We go to bed at night and we have not a care.

And there are people who are living out their faith and trying to shine the light of Christ in dark places. And you can bet they know what the blood of Christ means. Dr. Eddie knows what it means.

And he is down on his knees thanking God that he has got internet access and he can get to materials and good Bible teaching to share with the people in his church and in his seminary. And what an awful thing if we were to take for granted the great things that God has given us. The blood of Christ has power.

And the power has been given to us for a reason. It's transforming power. It's cleansing power.

It is conquering power. And we want to be those overcomers that God can look at and say, well done, good and faithful servant. It has to make a difference.

And shame on us if it doesn't. Well, that's my preaching section for tonight. Now, as we move forward, we are about to cross into the third great section of Revelation where after looking at the seals, after looking at the trumpets, we begin to see the vial or bowl judgments.

We have already seen the imagery of the dragon and how he goes after the woman and the symbolism of Israel. She gives birth to this child who's caught up to heaven and asks the Lord Jesus. It's a historical review.

And beginning in chapter 13, we've already seen the dragon was enraged and went to make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Jesus told the disciples before he left, in this world ye shall have tribulation. If you shine the light of Christ, if they hate the master, they will hate the servants.

The more Christ-like we are, the more we can expect to come into opposition. And we ought to recognize that this is not necessarily a bad thing. The power of God is made manifest where? God says in weakness, His strength is made manifest.

It's when we are weakest that we are strongest because that's when we're relying on the power of God. We're not trying to operate in our own strength. And that's where God is glorified.

So you can expect that Satan, pictured here as the dragon, is roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour. And devour doesn't necessarily mean some sort of violent fate. It can be deception.

He can lead people astray with philosophy. He can lead people astray with false solutions to problems, false ideas about how to view the world. Let's view the world in terms of secular humanism.

Let's view the world in terms of philosophy. Let's view the world in terms of politics and social change. Let's view the world in terms of human ideas of good, human ideas of power, human ideas of influence, human ideas of accomplishment.

And to the extent that he can sow those tares in our soul and raise this unproductive plant, to that extent, the good seed of the Word is choked. And we wind up with thorns and thistles and briars instead of a 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold field. There's only one field in our soul.

And it's either going to be sown with the seed of the Word of God or we're going to be sowing other things into it. Human ideas, human viewpoint, human solutions, human predictions, human fancies, and the human scorn for the Word of God that you see all around us. You see what Jerry Falwell is calling the battle for Christmas or whatever.

How in the marketplace of ideas in the world of our society, they're trying to say, well, it's not a Christmas tree. It's a holiday tree. It's not Christmas vacation.

It's winter vacation. It was actually, somebody saw a sign in a store somewhere that actually said, Happy Winter. Happy Winter.

Good grief. We have to look around us and realize that there is opposition to the Word of God. There's opposition to the presence of God in our country, in the Christian foundations of our nation, in our Christian traditions.

And there's nothing wrong with standing up and speaking out when somebody tries to subvert those. Despite what people may think and despite the impression that you get in the media, still, according to the most recent three or four polls taken this year, better than 80% of people in the United States claim to be Christians. Better than half claim to believe the biblical account of creation.

The latest poll, 54% believe that man was created by God directly, just like the Bible says. There was another 30 odd percent that said, well, God used evolution to bring human beings onto the planet. And there was only 12% or so that were hardcore saying man evolved and God had nothing to do with it.

And that really is kind of surprising. It surprised me. But that's a poll of over 1,000 people and that was not a Christian poll.

That was CNN, USA Today, Gallup took that poll. And I bet you won't hear about it much on the news because they didn't like the results. But more than half the people in the United States, according to that poll, still think the Bible is right about how we got here.

So it's encouraging. And if there's more than half of us that believe the biblical account of creation and if 8 out of every 10 adults in the United States have a belief in God and claim a belief in Christ, then why are we letting this noisy minority try to run everything

and drive God out of public life? It's ridiculous. And a lot of people are starting to speak up.

Well, the blood of Jesus Christ. There is power. There is perception.

There is discernment. And we will know when to speak up and when to make our voices heard and maintain the Christian values and the Christian traditions of our nation. There's no reason to sit and be silent and let somebody run away with our public life.

Chapter 13. I stood on the sand of the sea. Remember, John has already done the scroll thing.

He saw Michael standing on the sand and on the sea. And he got the scroll. He ate it.

He was the witness. All those things took place. Now, John is back on the sand of the seas at the beach.

A little interlude here. John goes to the beach. If I was going to title this, I'd put that on the label.

John goes to the beach. I stood on the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rising up out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns. So much for a sunny, mild day at the beach.

Just when you think it's going to be a relaxing afternoon in Galveston, seven heads and ten horns rise up out of the sea. On his horns, ten crowns. His heads have a blasphemous name.

The beast, which I saw, was like a leopard. His feet were like the feet of a bear and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

This is the Antichrist. He is satanically inspired. He is satanically controlled.

He incorporates a lot of great attributes from empires of the past in his government. It says he is like a leopard. This is his overall aspect.

What is the outstanding characteristic of a leopard? Graceful, powerful. Have you ever seen National Geographic films of a leopard? Tigers look good. Lions look good.

But when you look at a leopard and you see their feline stalking grace, they just catch the eye with the combination of power and grace and very instant ferocity. They can be just walking along looking cat-like and graceful and the next thing you know they have sprung 20 yards and killed something. This is what the Antichrist is going to be like.

He is going to be impressive. He is going to have charisma like the Beatles and Elvis Presley and Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt all rolled into one. Everybody in

the world is going to say this is the unique individual of history.

We have never seen anybody like him. He is Alexander. He is Caesar.

He is Napoleon. He is Nelson. He is everybody all rolled up into one.

He is just the most amazing person we have ever seen because the guardian cherub who covers the masquerading angel of light is going to be behind him and is going to infuse him with power and beauty and cunning. Remember that bracket effect that we see in history? The serpent was more cunning, more crafty, more Arum in Genesis than any beast of the field. And that is what this Antichrist is going to have.

He is going to absolutely dominate any room that he walks into, any group that he speaks to, any person that he sits down and talks with. They are going to be enchanted. They are going to be captivated.

They are going to be won over. It will seem as though he can do no wrong. He is like a leopard.

His feet are like the feet of a bear. What is the deal on the feet of a bear? Have you ever seen somebody trying to come up and push a bear off his feet? Great stability. Great bulk and mass.

His feet are like the feet of a bear. When he plants them, they are not going to move. You don't move the feet of a bear.

Now you would think, why did he say he has feet like the feet of a goat? Well, that is footing in high tricky places, right? A bear plants his feet on solid ground and he just stands there and he sort of dares you to do anything about it. So he is going to have a stability. He is going to be unshakable and immovable as far as the foundation of his government.

His mouth is like the mouth of a lion. When he speaks, when he roars, everything else in the jungle kind of shuts up. When a lion roars, all the birds stop twittering, everybody goes silent.

It is intimidating. It is dominating. So all of these are suggestive and are poetic in their description of just how powerful and just how influential this single individual is going to be.

And everything you have ever heard and read and thought about people who sell their soul to the devil, well, it is going to be true of this guy because he just literally has. He has sold his soul to Satan. And Satan is indwelling him, anti-Christ.

You know, we are supposed to be Christ-like. Well, this guy is going to be devil-like and he is going to be very, very attractive, very deceptive, very alluring. The dragon gives

him his power, his throne, and great authority.

Remember, Satan offered the throne of the world to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his to give. He is the prince of the power of the air.

He is the God of this world. The God of this world. Small g. But when it comes to this world, he has got a lot of authority and a lot of control.

And he is going to give that control. All of the dark angels who are around the world manipulating evil governments and evil dictators, evil leadership, they are all going to be in cahoots and they are all going to come together and it is going to be this false peace. It is a confederacy of evil.

I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. Now, how many heads has he got? He has got seven heads and he has got ten horns.

One of his heads is mortally wounded, but it miraculously recovers. Now, all of these heads belong to the beast. And people say, well, this is sort of the picture of all of the great empires of history.

The seven heads are sort of like the seven great kingdoms. We have seen Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel where you have Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire, and that is five. Well, don't forget that before Nebuchadnezzar had that dream, there had been two great world empires which were Egypt and Assyria.

And that rounds out the total at seven. Well, which one of these heads do you think is mortally wounded and then is healed? I think it is head number seven. And it looks as though, just as when he is coming to power, he receives a mortal wound, whether this is an actual physical wound that is healed or whether these heads represent government power and government authority.

And maybe six out of the seven great regions of the world or six of the seven great empires or whatever this represents, either politically or physically, he sustains what everybody thinks is a deadly wound. And well, he is over. He is done with.

He has had it. And he is going to come back from that in a miraculous way. And that is going to just drop the jaw of everybody in the world.

They are going to say, this guy is just too much. Who can help but follow him? Who can help but go along with his plan and program? Because look at him. Nobody could have done, nobody could have pulled off what this guy just did.

And I can't tell, and I can't tell you whether this is a political wound or a physical wound,

but whatever it is, it is considered by the world to be miraculous that he recovers from it. His deadly wound is healed. All the world marveled and followed the beast.

If I had to guess, I would lean toward a political wound. I think this guy is kind of an up-and-comer. He is getting everybody together in a great confederacy.

And then either there is an assassination attempt or there is a coup or somebody breaks away and tries to make war or whatever. And he miraculously survives this and succeeds in bringing this one world government into being against all expectation. Maybe kind of a combination of the two where there is a last-minute coup or assassination attempt that he survives.

But everybody is going to follow him after that. And they worship the dragon who gives authority to the beast. Now get this.

This is worship of Satan. Is it going to be called Satan worship? Are they going to have pentagrams and that kind of thing? Probably not. I think this will be an unwitting worship of Satan just as it has always been.

He masquerades as an angel of light. And this may be a sort of secular philosophy type of religion. It may be an outgrowth of the secular humanism and secular materialism that is already in the world.

But this worship is going to ultimately be directed at Satan himself. They worship the beast saying who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him? So this dragon worship is going to essentially be manifested in beast worship. And this is sort of like the deification of the Caesars.

Most great leaders of empires in days gone by have claimed some sort of deification. Go back and look at history. And you would think, well, nobody would seriously claim that in the modern day.

Well, he's going to. And he's going to get away with it. He's going to be worshipped.

People are going to treat him like God. He is given a mouth. Notice he is given a mouth speaking great things.

There are so many pseudos. There are so many substitute, falsified, counterfeit aspects. Who is it that made men's mouths? Who can be with someone's mouth and teach them what they will say? Remember Sinai in the burning bush? Moses says, I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

God says, I will be with your mouth. I will teach you what you will say. I will give Aaron your brother and he'll be your mouthpiece.

Jesus told the disciples when you come up before kings and princes, don't worry about

what you're going to say. I will be with you in that hour. It will be given to you what you will say.

Well, Satan is going to do the same thing. He's going to give the words, give the policy, give the ideas to the beast, to the Antichrist. And he's going to speak these forth.

And it's going to be an angelic level of wisdom that surpasses the wisdom of men. And seems like just the highest, greatest thing anyone has ever heard. And it's just going to continue for 42 months.

Forty-two months. Thirty-six months is three years. Forty-two months, three and a half years.

First half of the 70th week. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God. To blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

How did he get the agreement of the Jews? How did he get the agreement of those who dwell in Israel? And those who worship at the Tribulational Temple? Well, he has not said anything that they can't take. He has not made any claim that they can't go along with and agree with. And so he made a covenant, as Daniel says, in 946, I think it is.

943, along in there. He will make a covenant with the many for one week. But then halfway through the week, he will break that covenant.

And it's going to cause a great rift after three and a half years. Because he is going to claim what even these secular Jews can no longer abide. And that is he is going to claim to be God.

He is going to blaspheme the God of Israel. He is going to blaspheme God's name. He is going to blaspheme God's tabernacle.

He is going to blaspheme those who dwell in heaven. He doesn't do that until halfway through. He made a seven year covenant at the beginning.

And sort of drew everyone into his web. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. Now, I ask myself, who is doing this granting? Who grants him victory over the saints? It's not Satan, because Satan has no ability to overcome saints.

So, who grants this? Has to be God. So, we ask ourselves, why on earth would God grant the Antichrist the ability to make war with the saints and to overcome them? Well, we've already asked and answered this question, haven't we? A couple of chapters back. What about the two witnesses? They are going to prophesy exactly as long as God wants them to.

And then they are going to die. They are going to be overcome and slain. And they are

going to lay in the street for three and a half days.

And that three and a half days sort of represents the three and a half years. They are going to be overcome. They are going to drink the cup that Jesus drank.

They are going to be baptized with the baptism that Jesus Christ was baptized with. This is the same issue back 29 A.D. Why did God allow the Lord Jesus to be taken in the hands of men and crucified? That was a victory of evil over the Son of God. It was a victory of evil to all appearances.

God works all things together for good. There is a reason for allowing this defeat. I'll tell you one thing.

These saints that are overcome and killed don't have to worry about everything that is coming up in the second half of the week, do they? They are going to be up under the altar saying, Hey, Lord, how long? And they won't be trying to sustain themselves. In some ways, it will be a blessing that they check out and are removed. They'll go out under dying grace.

And they'll just come right back at the resurrection and they'll read about the last three and a half years of the tribulation period in the first few years of the millennium. This is not a setback for these saints. It's a promotion.

It is not a retreat. It's an advance. It's not a defeat.

It's a victory. Only God can grant this circumstance. And God does.

From a human point of view, it looks bad. But in God's perfect program, this is a good thing. And it's a reminder.

And our point of application for our first lesson tonight is things may look bad. They may look like a defeat. Patty went to a funeral this week for a young man who was only 22 years old.

Came from a Christian family. Had just really kind of gotten his act together and realized the importance of the Word of God. Was becoming active in his church.

And unexpectedly, out of nowhere, his life ended. Shock to his family. Shock to his friends.

Shock to his church. But it's a part of God's plan. It's a part of God's purpose.

And it works together for blessing. Doesn't make sense, often, from a human point of view. But in God's point of view, it's perfect timing.

Couldn't be better. Wouldn't be as good if he had lived one minute longer than he did. It

was a perfect time.

A perfect way. A perfect confluence of circumstances. Because God's ways are higher than our ways.

And his thoughts are higher than our thoughts. And eye is not seen. Ear is not heard.

It hasn't entered into the heart of man. The things that God has prepared for those who love him. And sometimes he says, you know, it's time for you to move into the eternal future.

You don't need to waste any more time here in this life. What you needed to learn has been learned. And you don't know what would have happened if a person who leaves early had stayed.

You don't know what the consequences would be. But God does. And that's why we trust God.

He knows things that we don't know. And in the what-ifs, we'll have an eternal future to ask God all of the what-ifs. And he can explain to us, well, you know what would have happened if that person had stayed around? Look at this, and look at this, and look at this.

And yet, because I took them out when I did, now look at the great results. And it'll make sense to us as we learn and grow in the eternal future, where it's very difficult to comprehend now. So these saints are defeated.

They're killed by the beast and his forces. It's granted to him by God. It's God's will that they get defeated and die.

Just like it was God's will that John the Baptist be beheaded. Just like it was God's will that the Apostle Paul be executed. Just like every other saint in history has gone out at a time and place of God's choosing.

And, of course, it would be nuts for us to try to second-guess God and say, well, you know, I've really got a better plan, Lord, if you'll just let me explain. I think I can tell you how this would have worked out better. It would be ludicrous.

So we don't need to question this either. It is granted to the beast to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given to him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

All who dwell on the earth will worship him whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Can you imagine trying to live through the tribulation when everybody else is worshipping the beast and worshipping the dragon and is trying to hunt you down and kill you? And you're living in

constant fear and constant looking over your shoulder and trying to stay hidden and trying to stay out of sight? Only the toughest and strongest believers are going to survive this period and are going to glorify God as they continue to live. But many of these other believers, it's a blessing of God that they're taken out of that environment.

They check out and they go home to be with the Lord. And it's a blessing. Many of them may be children.

Many of them may be ones who couldn't sustain themselves and couldn't cope. It's all in the providences of God. If anyone hears, if anyone has an ear, let him hear.

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity. He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

This is sort of a cryptic saying, isn't it? Anytime you get this sort of wake-up call, you're going along, you're getting the substance of what John saw in his vision. And he says, All who dwell on the earth will worship him whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Now, there's been some debate about how to parse out the ideas in that sentence.

Was Jesus slain from the foundation of the world? Or were the names written in the book from the foundation of the world? In Greek, the phrases are all just kind of stacked. And you have to kind of piece them together and figure out what modifies what. So, a little pop quiz here, if you've been paying attention.

You take a look at verse 8. What do you think from the foundation of the world modifies, just based on what you know? All who dwell on the earth will worship him whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. So, what do you think? Well, I'll tell you what I think. It is the writing of the names that took place at the foundation of the world.

How do I know this? Well, this is the answer to Reformed theology and Calvinism. They claim that God predestined people to salvation and picked them out in eternity past. To know, know, know is to love, love, love.

And so they say, well, God knew, therefore he loved, which is nonsense. But what is true is that God's foreknowledge, God knows the end from the beginning, right? That's scripture. God knows the end.

He knows what's going to happen all the way through the end of history before history ever begins. God can walk all around history. It reminds me of a long conference table.

Pick one end of the table and that's the beginning of human history, the head of the table. Go down to the foot of the table and that's the end of human history. Lay out all the events of history on this long conference table in some big room someplace.

And then you just walk around. You can walk up to the beginning, walk down to the end, look at any part along the way, and you can just take your time. You can sidle back and forth.

Go back and look at the beginning. God knows the end from the beginning. To him, human history is all laid out on the table.

It's done. It's complete. He's already heard every prayer.

He's already seen every circumstance. He already knows every test. He has already put in place the solution.

How could God ensure that the gospel would come to you when you were curious if God didn't already know that you were going to be positive and be asking the question? Does God wait for things to blow up in his face and then figure out an answer? Is God a poor planner? I told you about my two battery commanders. And my second battery commander couldn't plan ahead because he was too busy doing crisis management at the moment. God is not a crisis manager.

There's this whole process theology thing that says that God is kind of in process and he's sort of learning as he goes along and he can regret things. It's nuts. But listen, it's widespread.

Theological journals all over the world are printing articles and it's being taught in seminaries that God is kind of figuring it out as he goes. Nonsense. That's just nuts.

That's squeezing God down into time and saying that God can't be ahead in time. Well, he is. And he already knows.

And God knew at the foundation of the world who was going to accept his son. And God put in place the provision to get the gospel at the right time, to get the food of the word of God at the right time, to make his geographic will and his provision will, his logistical will in place. God orchestrated everything before history ever got underway.

And then it just unfolds. It plays like a needle through a record because God figured it all out ahead of time. That's why before we ask, he can answer.

How can he answer before we ask? Unless he already knows. I mean, this process thing just drives me nuts. I want to just go up and thump somebody on the head and say, wake up.

Read your Bible. What kind of a God do you think we serve? He's not a little God squeezed into the confines of space and time. He's an enormous God, bigger than the universe.

And the universe is just a snow ornament on his desk. And he can just pick it up and look

at it from one end to the other. He knows the end from the beginning.

I say all that to say, when you get to verse 9, if anyone has an ear, let him hear. We've got two ears, so we ought to pay doubly close attention. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity.

He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. What is this? This is a statement of the justice of God. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you is not just sort of a nice little aphorism.

This is the nature of God's justice. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. With the judgment with which you judge others, you will be judged, Jesus says.

There is justice in the universe. And if people get led into captivity, they are going to suffer captivity. If they kill with the sword, they are going to be killed with the sword.

And you think it's the most awful thing. You see these terrible crimes that are committed against children and against the innocent and the helpless and the widows and the orphans. And you think there's just no... Executing these people is not good enough.

Well, you're right. And God is going to execute judgment and justice. I don't know what form it's going to take.

I don't believe in hot spots in hell because I don't think people burn in hell for all eternity. But I will tell you this. God says that he who leads into captivity shall go into captivity.

He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. And God is going to mete out justice. And God is going to level the scales.

Whatever wrong has been done in history, God is going to right it. This is the patience and faith of the saints. You and I ought to base our patience and establish our faith on that principle.

Don't worry if things seem unfair. Don't worry if it doesn't seem like things are the way they should be. Our patience and our faith is in the righteousness and justice of God.

Leave it in God's hands. Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord.

He is going to pour out the bowl of his wrath on the earth and on all of the people living and dead that have sinned against him. We have our hands full making sure that when judgment time comes we have nothing on the negative side of our slate. Because we have claimed what? The blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin.

We are removed from the place of judgment. We are removed from this principle of balancing of the scales because we have the precious blood of Christ. It's the most valuable substance in the universe.

It's the most powerful principle in the universe. And we as believers have to remember that and have to avail ourselves of it. It's like nothing else.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up in verse 11 of chapter 13.