

17a REV

This is Friday, the 9th of December, 2005. We continue our study in the book of Revelation, picking up toward the end of chapter 14. Let's take a moment, as we always do, to ask the Lord's blessing on our fellowship and on our study.

Shall we pray? Father, we realize as each week passes and we assemble night after night to study your word together that the day is quickly approaching when the Lord Jesus will return. We thank you for the opportunity to study this book that illuminates the future and by way of illustration and application helps us to understand more about your character and more about the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and our place in him and in your plan through him. We pray that as we look at these passages tonight that you will give us insight and understanding.

May each one of us find in your word those resources and truths that will thoroughly equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, we're in chapter 14. Last time I gave you a chart that sort of gives my general understanding of the chronology of the 70th week of Daniel. You know the sequence of events.

We're cooking along here in our daily lives, getting up and going to sleep, getting up and going to sleep, doing stuff in between. And suddenly there is a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God and the dead in Christ rise first. Then we who are alive and remain are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

So shall we ever be with the Lord. Here's a question for you. I can't tell you how many times I've thought about that verse, quoted it, heard it, quoted it, thought about it, read it.

You're pretty familiar with it, right? Remember what it says? It will be, the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Now, there's a lot you can say about all that noise, but here's my question. Why the voice of the archangel? Who is the archangel? Michael.

Michael is the archangel that is revealed to us in scripture. We know him by name. What's his job? He's the national angel for Israel, right? So, think about this.

The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Hey church. We start going up.

Voice of the archangel. Who's he talking to? Crank up the Israel clock. I'm back.

Voice of the archangel. It had never dawned on me until I was musing on all this this week, but I think that's why he shows up. He's got to come back and pick up where he left off at the end of the 69th week, looking over the nation of Israel.

So, the Lord himself says, hey church, come on, we're leaving. Michael says, hey Israel, I'm back. Y'all start figuring out which tribe you're in because we're going to do the mark and have the whole 70th week scenario.

I say that somewhat flippantly, but I think that's the mark of his return to active duty, so to speak, in human history. So, it sort of makes sense with what we've studied. So, we pick up in chapter 14 here.

This chapter began in this interlude. We've already studied the seven seals. We've already studied the seven trumpets.

And we're in the interlude before we get to the bowl judgments. And our mental guide for sorting those out is not that you have seven seals, then seven trumpets, and then seven bowls. And that they stack sequentially like a set of bits in a byte.

Instead, they are running co-terminously. They coincide. They're running parallel to one another.

And that they represent three different views. The seals present the events of mostly the latter part of the 70th week of Daniel from a human perspective. You see the things that are happening on earth.

You've got the horsemen. You've got plagues, famines, death, bloodshed, and the kinds of things that people are going to experience more or less at first hand. Then you rewind.

And you come back and go through the 70th week a second time from a little bit higher perspective. And you see the angels and their involvement. There are angels at the four corners.

There are angels holding back the winds. There are angels who are coming down. There are fallen angels who come in like the locusts with the scorpion stings in their tails and so on.

And you see sort of the angelic involvement. Then we're going to see when we get to the bowls, the vials as it's sometimes translated. These containers of God's wrath.

This is God's perspective. And we're going to see that divine judgment and what God is looking for as He heats up the earth. As He cranks up the pressure, makes the furnace seven times hotter as it were in the divine judgment.

He's watching and He's looking for something. And we will see that mentioned in the course of going through those bowls. Well, we are in the interlude.

There was an interlude between the seals and the trumpets. There's an interlude between the trumpets and the bowls. And in this interlude, we get seven little visions that are sort of disconnected.

They're kind of self-contained. And you don't necessarily say these seven things are all happening in the interlude. This interlude is just a place to stop so that you don't just have this endless litany of seals, trumpets, and bowls.

But the structure of the book is such that you look at it from a human perspective. And then you get these visions. Then you look at it from an angelic perspective.

And then you get these semi-detached visions. Then we'll look at it from God's perspective with the bowls. We'll have some more semi-detached visions.

Then come at the end. In the judgment seat, you have 20 through 22. So that's kind of where we are from a broad perspective.

We're in this gap and we've seen the human and angelic. We've seen the creature perspective on the judgment of the 70th week. Now, we're not going to be there.

Thank the Lord. Every time I think that thought, my next thought is, Thank you, God. I'm not going to be here for the 70th week.

Most of humanity will not be there. And yet it is the culmination and the great pinnacle, climactic time of all of human history in terms of resolving sin and resolving judgment. So, why do we get concerned about it if it's not us? That's not my program, not my plan.

This would be like reading the requirements and the marching order and all of the shenanigans that are going to go on at somebody else's graduation. You say, Hey, I don't go to that school. Why do I need to know this? I don't have to go to the rehearsal.

I don't have to march. I don't have to wear a cap and gown. I don't have to know where I sit.

Why do I care? The reason is that, as I've mentioned before, this is Old Testament Scripture. The 70th week of Daniel and everything pertaining to it is Old Testament. And it is just as valuable to us in prospect as it is in retrospect.

We weren't there in the Old Testament, were we? We are removed in time from Moses and Daniel and all of those guys. And we are removed in time from the two witnesses and the 144,000 and the trumpets and seals and bowls. So, it really doesn't matter if we look in history or if we look ahead.

To God, what is future is just as certain as what is past. So, when he tells us about it, you can imagine Daniel. People look at the book of Daniel now and much of what Daniel predicted has come to pass.

The vision of Nebuchadnezzar with the beasts. But when Daniel gave it and it all got written down, the shoulders and arms of silver and the belly and thighs of brass and the legs of iron were future. And people look at that and think, well, now, what on earth will

that be? I can't even imagine what kind of empires are going to be represented by this because they were in the age of Babylon and it looked like Babylon was invincible.

Who could possibly march against these great armies led by Nebuchadnezzar that had, it was like, at the height of Napoleon's power, saying, oh well, Napoleon, he's going to be gone and there's going to be an entirely different empire that's just going to rub him out, push him off the scene. It was just incredible. You know what incredible means, right? Credibility means believability.

And if something is incredible, it means you don't give it any credit. You don't think it's got any truth to it, any possibility. And we say, wow, that's incredible.

And what you're really saying is, there's no credit in that. I can't believe that. We use words and kind of lose their origins.

But now we stand where Daniel stood in terms of looking at a lot of future prophecy that hasn't happened yet. And yet, from God's perspective, it is historical in the same way that we look back at the Medes and the Persians and the Greeks and the Romans and say, well, it's no big thing. I mean, Daniel talks about it and it came to pass.

But when Daniel wrote it, it had not come to pass, just as we're looking at this. So, I say all of that to say this. In chapter 14, we once again get a look at the 144,000.

They're often called witnesses, although the Bible doesn't call them witnesses. The two men of chapter 11 are witnesses. But these 144,000, we saw them way back in chapter 7. I saw four angels.

Do not harm the earth until we seal them. And then you get the 12 tribes. And they're mentioned in verses 5 through 8. And then they disappear.

A lot of people think that the following verses in chapter 7, after these things I looked, a great multitude which no one could number, all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, is the same crowd. It's not. They're totally different.

It's the church. I'm sorry, but everybody that says that the white-robed throng is Israel isn't reading carefully. Because he just got through saying we've sealed 12,000 from each tribe and he says these are from every tongue, people, and nation.

And you have to smush together, you have to be a non-dispensationalist. You have to think, well, the church is latter-day Israel. And I can't tell you the havoc it wreaks.

The Bible will become a hopeless muddle to you if you can't keep Israel and the church straight. And better than half of all the Christians in our country today are in a hopeless muddle because they do not know the very simple thing that you all know, which is there's Israel and there's the church. Israel has a clock.

The church has a clock. Israel has a set of covenant promises. So does the church.

Israel has a relationship with God on a certain foundation. Church has a relationship with God on a different foundation. Our relationship with God is through Christ.

Israel's relationship historically was not through Christ. So, in chapter 14, we look and behold a lamb standing on Mount Zion with Him, 144,000, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the voice of many waters and like the voice of loud thunder.

Anytime you hear the voice of many waters and thunder, this is speaking of power. In the ancient world, they didn't have jets. They didn't have howitzers.

They didn't have jackhammers. They didn't have all the loud stuff that we have today. The loudest thing and the most powerful and completely unopposable force were the forces of nature, lightning and thunder, waterfalls, rushing water as in a storm on the sea.

These were completely incontestable. People were helpless in the face of them. And they were made afraid by the noise.

That's what God's voice does. And so, when you hear this voice of many waters and the voice of loud thunder, this is not just God speaking, but it's God speaking with power. Now, let me ask you this.

What's the difference? Why does it need to tell us that this was a big, booming, thunderous, crashing waters voice? Why doesn't it just say, I heard a voice? Why all of this reinforcement in terms of power? Symbolically speaking, this is emphasizing to us that when God says something, it is irrevocable. It is immovable, unshakable. You might as well try swimming up a waterfall.

You might as well try stopping the thunder. You see lightning and you say, you hold out your hand, and you say, no thunder, or let me put my fingers in my ears, and I won't hear the thunder. You cannot escape thunder from nearby lightning.

It shakes your bones. You can hear it through the same thing when you used to put your pencil on your teeth, and you can hear something far away by conducting it through your bones. You can't get away.

Even deaf people can hear thunder. They can feel the vibrations in their bones. When God speaks, it is to utter powerful, immovable, unchangeable things, and that's why you have this description.

If God piped up with a little squeaky voice, I mean it would have a completely different effect, wouldn't it? If it said, and there was a thin nasal voice in heaven that said, okay,

save them now. Well, I don't mean to be facetious, but I mean think about why this is in here. You have to ask yourself the question, why is any of this in here? If it's there, it has to mean something.

And so why is God's voice like thunder? Well, what does it do? It convinces you. If you hear thunder, you are convinced that there is power in the area. And nobody questions it.

Nobody doubts it. Nobody refutes it. Nobody argues against it.

Nobody says, well, you know, that might have been like a heavy bird landing. That might have been like a turkey falling on my roof from the sky or something. No, it's unquestioned.

It's a force of nature. And this is the representation of God's voice. And it's important here because God speaks first.

Look at what's happening here at the beginning of verse 14, because I'm going to make a point of application from this here in a second. Lamb standing on Mount Zion. With him are the 144,000 that have his Father's name written on their foreheads.

This voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters and like the voice of loud thunder, that's the voice of God the Father. He speaks. Then, harpists play their harps.

And they sing this song before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. Now, these people that smooch things together, I reminded you in chapter 7 that people do that.

They say, well, the white-robed throng and the 144,000 are the same group. Two different descriptions. Well, let's think about this.

You've got God and the Lamb and the 144,000 and they're going to sing a song and nobody else can learn it. If they are the white-robed throng, there isn't anybody else to learn it. Who's going to hear the song? I mean, the angels? The angels don't sing.

The idea here is the white-robed throng is standing around there. They sang a song earlier, waving their branches, and they gave forth with praise to God. And the 144,000 weren't up there saying anything.

They weren't even there yet. Now, the 144,000 have come up and it's their turn to praise God. Are you with me now? Church got there first.

White-robed throng got there first, praised God first. Now, you have the 144,000, which is a symbolic, I think, representation of all Israel. Are there exactly 144,000 in the Tribulation? I say yes.

God says there's 12,000 from each tribe. I say there's 12,000 from each tribe and I defy anybody to argue with it. 12 is 12, 1,000 is 1,000, 12,000 is 12,000, 144,000, it says it, that's what it is, until somebody can prove different.

But they represent, in the same way that the 24 elders speak of, the cream of the crop of the white-robed throng. You know, you have two different aspects of the church there. Big throng, 24 elders.

Israel, the Old Testament saints, who at this point are not yet raised, but you do have the cream of the crop, Tribulational group here, who represent all the faithful of Israel. They are the, sort of the second generation, you know, you had the Exodus generation that came out of Egypt and they dropped into the wilderness and their children went in and their children represented Israel at that point. There were a bunch of people that had been Israel that didn't go in, but the people that went in, God says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I am the God that brought you out of the land of Egypt. And he says this to each succeeding generation. It is the living at the time that stand in and represent for the nation and all the people that have died before.

Well, these people are the living Israelites and they stand in for all the ones that are going to wake up and join the party here shortly. So, they are the vanguard. They are the guide on bearers.

They are the ones that are going to go up and do the same thing that the 24 elders did before the white-robed throng ever showed up. Who praised God first? Who cast their crowns at his feet? 24 elders. They did the first worshipping of God.

Then the white-robed throng showed up. Now you have 144,000 as elders in Israel, so to speak. And then you are going to have the rest of that crowd do the same thing the white-robed throng did.

But notice, here is my point. Here is my point of application. God speaks first.

The voice of many waters, voice like thunder, that is God. God initiates, creatures respond. God is not sitting there daydreaming and somebody starts praising him.

God initiates, God speaks something. You have the voice of God represented as thunder many times. When Saul of Tarsus got struck down on the Damascus road, he heard Jesus speaking, everybody else heard thunder.

When Jesus was baptized and the Spirit descended, the Father spoke, people thought it had thundered. On the mountain at Sinai, when God came down and spoke to Moses, there were lightnings and thunders and thick smoke and so on. They didn't hear the voice of God, but Moses did.

So this is the voice of God. But notice, God initiates, man responds. God initiates, creatures respond.

So what about you and me? We are expected to respond. We are expected to acknowledge. We are expected to react, to produce a response.

And for us to do that, what do we have to be able to hear? We have to hear the voice of God. You can't respond if you don't hear the voice like thunder. These people can't avoid it.

The thunder and the power and all that, when God speaks, it's better than Merrill Lynch, everybody listens. But for us, we're still in the age of grace. We're in the age where God is mediating His relationship with us through the Lord Jesus Christ, who comes in meek and lowly and riding on the foal of an ass.

And His yoke is easy and His burden is light. And we have not come, remember in Hebrews, we've not come to the mountain that's smoking and quaking like Israel did, where God came down and thundered and quaked. We bypass all of the thunder and lightning and we have this still small voice, as it were.

So we have to recognize our responsibility to hear the voice of God. God is not going to come down and thunder in our head. God is not going to come down and take the top off a mountain or set it on fire and do the things that He did for Israel.

We have a different relationship with God, founded on new and better promises. It's through the Lord Jesus Christ. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man cometh through the Father but by me, Jesus said. And we are the first to experience that new and living way through the veil. All of that we saw in Hebrews.

What this means is, though, we have an easier time of it. We're not trudging in the wilderness. We're not under the law.

We're not slaughtering animals. We're not slogging around picking up manna and doing all the things that Israel had to do in the wilderness and later in the land. We have a great program.

However, we have the same responsibility to hear the voice of God. Think about this thunder, the voice from heaven like the voice of many waters and like the voice of a loud thunder. We have an obligation to hear that voice and respond appropriately, to respond accordingly.

This is Israel. This is 144,000. This is God's way of dealing with them.

He comes down and mountains quake and smoke and you get all that in the poetic passages of the Old Testament. Keep your finger in 14 and turn back to where we first

see the 24 elders in chapter 4. There's a throne set in heaven. One sits on the throne.

One sits there like a jasper on a sardius stone. Rainbow around the throne. This is the first part of chapter 4. Around the throne were 24 thrones.

On the thrones, 24 elders, clothed in white robes, crowns of gold. From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, the seven spirits of God.

Then you have the 24 elders down in verse 11 after the angels respond to the thunderings and voices saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come. Then you have the 24 elders. They get the thunders and lightnings and then they respond.

You are worthy, O Lord. This is what you and I are supposed to be doing when we hear the voice of God. And how do we hear His voice today? It's not thunder and lightning.

It's not earthquakes and sounds of rushing water. How do we hear God's voice? You and me. Well, we're looking at it right here, aren't we? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

We get the soft words. We have the words from the Comforter. We have the words from the Spirit of Truth, from the Word of God spoken to our souls.

But it ought to produce this same response. And what is the response? You are worthy, O Lord. You remember, we haven't talked about this in a while.

You remember when we talked about the elements of subjectivity? Subjectivity versus objectivity. If you're objective, you're seeing things as they really are. When you're subjective, you're seeing things from a warped perspective.

What are the three kinds of subjectivity that we are all prey to? Eyes on self, eyes on people, and eyes on circumstances. Objectivity, eyes on the Lord. Eyes on the goal.

Eyes on the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. So, we can do a quick gut check. How am I doing? What am I thinking? Am I on mission? Am I on target? What am I doing here? Well, what are my eyes on? What's my priority at the moment? Am I looking at myself? Am I worrying about myself? Am I worrying about people? Or am I all tangled up in circumstances and issues and situations? If that's what's consuming my clock cycles in my little computer brain, if I'm spending all of my MIPS, all of my processor time, trying to figure out I'm in one place and I need to be in another, that person is really great and I can't stop thinking about her.

Or that person is awful and they need to quit. Or I'm all tangled up in circumstances. I've got a problem.

I've got a need. What's going to happen? Oh my, here comes the train. I'm tied to the track.

Help, help, help. That's subjectivity. Objectivity is eyes on the Lord.

Now look, thunders and lightnings and voices and lamps and all kinds of stuff going on around the throne. What do the 24 elders do? You know why they're elders? Because they are objective. Look at their response to the thunders and voices and lightning around the throne.

You are worthy, O Lord. That's the proper response. They don't say, Gracious sakes, you scared me to death with that thunder.

I'm sitting here with my back to the throne here and you fire off the lightning. What's the matter with you? You're turning me prematurely gray. You know, it's all about me.

What's happening to me? Lightning and thunder. It's too loud. I'm sensitive.

None of that, right? No, I'm serious. You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. They are focused on God.

He is the source. He is like the electric company. And you take your plug and you plug into the wall and say, Give me that juice.

That's the power. That's the source. My clock doesn't run.

My blanket doesn't heat. My house doesn't light up if I am not connected to that power. You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.

For you created all things. The only reason I exist to even begin to think about myself, the only reason these other people exist for me to think about them, and the only reason there are any circumstances, is because you created all things. And by your will, they exist.

By your will, they were created. Now, when you and I hear the voice of God, what should our response be? You are worthy, O Lord, to receive praise. Don't wait for the thunder and lightning.

This is the voice of God. You've got it in your hands. You're holding it in your lap.

And what should our response always be? You are worthy, O Lord. Objectivity. Eyes on God.

Eyes on the plan. Eyes on the goal. That is what keeps us in the light so that we have fellowship, the blood of Christ cleanses us, the power of sin runs off us like water off a raincoat.

It's there, but it doesn't penetrate. It's there, but it doesn't persist. It's there, but it doesn't change us and make us soggy.

We are sinful. We are in a sinful world. We surround ourselves and we are surrounding other people as sinful creatures.

It's like a rainstorm. But the power of God insulates us and protects us. And as long as we're walking in the light, and as long as every new situation, every new test, every new challenge, produces from us the response, you are worthy, O Lord, to receive praise.

That's the way to fulfill the plan and purpose of God. That's our niche. That's our function.

Wouldn't it be great to be number 23 of the 24 elders? There's my seat, number 23. Walk all the way down to the end, but I'm not dead last, 23. Get to sit there and your mission in life is when God speaks, you get to respond.

You get to give the refrain. God speaks and you say, you hear what he says, you digest it, you realize the content of it, and it just excites you. And you say, that's why you're God.

That's why angels praise you. That's why the other 23 elders and me praise you. Because you're worthy.

Listen to what God just said. It's great. What a great God.

By your will everything has been created. By your will everything exists. You put this together in your perfection and in your wisdom and in your grace and in your mercy and in your love.

And when you hear the content of what God says, it's not just like a pavlov bell. You hear the bell, your mouth waters. That's a knee-jerk response.

That's, by the way, what ritual does in religion. You go to a Catholic church, they wave the smoke, they play the organ, they chant in Latin, and you have a response. It's like pavlov.

This is not that. The elders hear what God says when his voice issues forth from the throne. And God says, here's the next phase of the plan.

This is what we're going to do next. They hear it. They understand it.

They comprehend it. It makes sense. And they say, isn't that great? Have you ever heard something, like heard a good speech, a politician that you voted for and you're in sympathy with and you think he's a great guy, could be local, could be national, but he gives a speech and you just want to stand up and shake your fist in the air and say, right

on.

Everybody ought to stop in the streets. They ought to broadcast this thing over the emergency sirens. And everybody in the whole swinging country ought to be hearing this speech because he is saying it.

That is the truth. That is right on. That's what needs to happen.

Everybody else, shut up and listen to this guy. I'm just trying to give you a sense of what's going on in heaven here. This is not a tableau.

It's not a frieze. It's not a bas-relief carved in granite somewhere. Did you ever see, what was that movie they made about Jesus, where the Swiss guy was Jesus with the long face? What's his name? Max von Sydow was Jesus.

Did you ever see that? Everybody just strikes a pose and the camera cruises across him and they're just standing there thinking, am I looking holy or should I look holier? They pan across the village and nobody's moving. They've just struck an attitude. We're a Bible village.

Nobody move. I'm Jesus. I will stand and speak in round.

You know how it is. It's not real. It has no fabric.

It has no texture. It's a mock-up. It's a fake.

Well, listen. This is really going on in heaven. And when God speaks, everybody listens.

And when they hear what he has to say, they just bust out in praise. They can't help themselves. You are a great God.

You're worthy to be praised. Well, listen. God is speaking to you and to me in his word and we ought to be having that same response.

If you're really hearing the voice of God, if I'm doing even a mediocre job of getting some of the word of God out of the page and out here where you can take it into your soul, that ought to be our response. What a great God. He's worthy to be praised.

He's worthy to receive glory. He's worthy to receive honor. He's worthy to receive power.

Now, how does God receive power if he's the power station? Why do they say that? You are worthy to receive power. What does that mean? That's our power. When God enables, you shall receive power.

After that, the Holy Ghost has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me, Jesus said to the disciples. This is the Romans 12, 1 and 2 thing.

We offer ourselves a living sacrifice to whatever comes within our bursting radius. I can't help it, I think, in terms of artillery shells, but if you're a 155 millimeter howitzer shell, you can kill at least half of the people within a 50 meter radius when you burst. That's what you do.

That's why you exist. You impact, you go off, and the kill ratio is 50% or greater within 50 meters. It's real easy to remember.

50 meter bursting radius, half or more casualties. That's the plan. That's the goal.

That's the level of fragmentation. That's your sphere of influence. You can't blow up something 200 meters away.

You can't blow up something 1,000 meters away. You influence what's in your bursting radius. And that's what we want to do.

That's our power. God is worthy to receive our power. Now, let's say you don't have that response.

God speaks, voices, lightnings, thunders, and you're sitting there in the number 23 chair, and you're thinking about something else. You know, this chair is not quite high enough. My knees are aching.

I'm sitting here. This chair needs some padding. This chair looks like everybody else's chair.

I'd like it to be unique. I'd like it to be a little different. I'd like to stand here.

I'm number 23. Nobody even looks at me. They say there's 24.

They don't even pay attention to 23. And you start getting subjective, right? Voices, lightnings, and thunders. And you don't digest.

You don't listen. You don't pay attention. And you don't have that soul response.

You're worthy to receive glory. You're worthy to receive honor. And you know what happens? What is your power going to be directed toward? What are your efforts and your life force going to be expended upon? I'm sure there's a chair cushion around here somewhere.

Somebody got a caster or something I can put on here and raise this thing up so I'm more comfortable. Seriously, you expend your power on yourself. And guess what? There's a little spring in the bottom of number 23 and you sail across heaven and somebody else sits down there that will sing the song and throw the crowns and do what they're supposed to do as the 23rd elder.

So, this is what's on the line. Now, I'm being a little bit casual about this, but seriously, what is God looking for from us? What does a mature believer do by way of response when God speaks? Appreciates God. And devotes His power to God.

If we don't do that, we have missed our great opportunity. And a lot of the work that the Lord Jesus Christ did for us has been wasted. Parents hope that when they invest themselves in their children, when they care for them and keep them alive through the night, little babies, you know, it just seems like they're so fragile and you're just watching over them.

And you spring awake in the middle of the night, rush in to make sure they haven't got their head stuck through the rails. You change their diapers just endlessly and spoon pabulum into them endlessly and clean up messes endlessly and follow them around and try to make sure they don't get run over and don't get electrocuted and don't get cut and don't get burned. You just worry and sweat over them and you just pour yourself into them and you invest your emotional life into them when they're small.

And you work and pray for the day that they will be self-sustaining, self-functioning, independent little human beings and they can go off and do all that stuff for themselves. And how tragic is it when you do that and then they don't take advantage of all of that that you've tried to give them. They don't appreciate it.

They don't avail themselves of it. You've trained them and taught them, you know, this is how to be organized, this is how to get your bills paid, this is how to drive, you know, all of these things that you've just killed yourself trying to infuse into their little sinful souls. And they just go high and right.

They just ricochet off of some hard object and pew, and they're off and you think, oh, 18 years I've killed myself and look at this, it's a disaster. Well, I mean, in imagination, most of us are not in that position, but in imagination you think about that and then you think about this. The Lord Jesus Christ did that to an infinite degree for us on the cross.

He has given us the Holy Spirit. He's given us the inspired word. He sits at the Father's right hand interceding for us.

He has set up this elaborate support plan, all of these promises, all of this truth, all of this potential, all of this power available for us. And what if we miss it? And we just ignore it and we're oblivious to it and we're just like a child who pays no attention to everything their parents taught them and just spins off into a strange direction. How do you think that affects the Lord Jesus? How do you think it affects the Father who sent His Son to die, to give us this life, to enable us to walk in the light, to enable us to be one of these elders who can reflect the glory of God, who can implement the plan of God, who can move forward the agenda of God, who can make a difference.

People are always saying, well, I'd like my life to count for something. I'd like to make a difference. I'll send money to Africa and some little kid will get a bowl of oatmeal and he'll get a little water thing and he'll get clean water and sanitation and I'll send the United Christian Children's Fund or whatever it is.

I want to make a difference. I want to leave a mark. Listen, there is no mark you can leave like the mark you can make in eternity.

This is what the Bible calls laying up for yourself treasure in heaven. Our life right now can make a difference because when God speaks and we listen and we say, You are worthy, O Lord, that fulfills God's plan and purpose. We are a reflective surface off of which His glory bounces.

Well, now, we've seen this in Revelation 4. Now look back at Revelation chapter 14. That's the church. That's us.

That's our application point. Here in chapter 14, I looked and the Lamb is standing on Mount Zion and with Him 144,000 having His Father's name written on their foreheads, I heard the voice, voice of many waters, the voice of loud thunder. Now, what do we expect when this voice of loud thunder hits? Somebody needs to respond.

Somebody needs to do something. This is the way the plan of God works. God speaks and His creatures do something, right? It's just like when parents speak, the kids are supposed to do something.

Yes, Dad, and it happens. That's how it's supposed to work. Yes, Dad, and they begin to disappear.

That's how it's supposed to work, right? Well, when God speaks, something is supposed to happen. And it does here in heaven. Look at the 144,000.

The harpists start playing their harps. They respond from their soul with music. They sing this new song before the throne, before the living creatures and before the elders.

No one can learn that song except the 144,000. The elders can't learn this song. This is Israel.

This is what God has done specifically for Israel. God speaks a plan for Israel. It's unique.

It doesn't apply to the elders. It doesn't apply to the church. Even if you're the swingiest, most faithful, apostolic, great guy in the church, sitting on chair number 23, you don't get to sing this song because this is what God does for Israel.

And this produces a response from Israel. And they sing this song. Those who are redeemed from the earth.

They have not defiled themselves with women. They are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

And this is all symbolic language. It has nothing to do with their marital status or whether or not they father children or anything else. This has to do with purity.

You can malfunction in a lot of ways. And you can do what David did in Psalm 51. Pray to God.

Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. It doesn't matter what kind of fornication you have committed.

You can be a virgin in the eyes of God. These people have all sinned. They didn't go through life sinlessly perfect.

They soiled themselves. They, as it were, committed spiritual fornication. Yet the Bible says they are virgins.

They haven't defiled themselves with women. Do you know what that means? It means that any defilement that they picked up and any malfunction that they committed, they fixed it. They availed themselves of the cleansing grace of God.

The hyssop and the water. David murdered Uriah. Committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Ran around acting like an insane man. Ran away from Saul. Did all kinds of terrible things.

Yet he said, I stand before you, my God, in mine integrity. If you purge me with hyssop, I will be clean. If you wash me, I will be whiter than snow.

There is cleansing grace available from God. This is part of the power. This is part of what he speaks with that thundering voice.

We have to hear it. We have to avail ourselves of it. Then we can respond.

We can say, you are worthy, O Lord, to receive honor and glory and power. The effort of my life. The strength of my years to reflect your glory.

We are going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we are going to move forward in chapter 14. And see what it is that is going on in heaven here with the manifestation of the 144,000.

The proclamation of the angels and the reaping of the earth's harvest. What is being reaped? What part of the 70th week does this represent? That is what we will see when we come back.