

21a REV

This is Friday, the 6th of January, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation. We have come to the threshold of chapter 17.

Let's take a moment as we approach the study of this section of Scripture to clear our minds and prepare our hearts, acknowledge the essential role of God's Holy Spirit in making the Word of God perspicacious to us. Shall we pray? Father, it is a wonderful truth that we have been saved by your grace. We have been entered into your eternal plan and purpose.

We have an everlasting relationship with you through the Lord Jesus Christ. Our future is secure. We are provided for.

We are blessed. We are given so many great potentials. We thank you that in the time that remains to us, you have not left us without resources.

We have the presence of your Spirit. We have the power of your Word and the information contained therein. We pray that as we study it together this evening that our personal path through life will be illuminated, that we can grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Where are we in the great prophetic scheme of things that maps out the last seven years of human history as we know it, or as we sort of know it? The book of Revelation largely concerns itself with the last seven years preceding the millennial kingdom.

They are not the church age. They are the age of Israel. Seventieth week of Daniel.

First three and a half years relatively uneventful, except for the ubiquitous and pseudo-peaceful rule of the Antichrist. But halfway through, everything starts to come unglued. This is ever the way with the false alternatives that are offered by Satan.

One of the first principles we can remind ourselves of this evening is, there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. Why does it seem right? Why is there a way that seems right? Because in the portion of it that we can see with our headlights, everything looks cool, calm, and dry. You have to have been alive in the seventies to appreciate that last remark.

Cool, calm, and dry. But the initial calm is deceptive. The initial peace is false.

And the latter end is like the sting of an adder, and it bites and causes great pain. It is wormwood. You have all kinds of injunctions.

You can read Proverbs about the dangers of looking upon the wine when it is red in the

cup and so on. It seems like such a pleasure. Everybody feels so great when they are sipping away on this metaphorical wine.

But in the end, it bites you and bites you hard. Well, so goes the false peace of the Antichrist. Like so many other satanic counterfeits, it looks good at the beginning, and there is a period of time where people say, see there, I told you so, look how great this is.

But it doesn't last. The first bite that Eve took from the fruit, she was thinking, I should have done this a long time ago. This is great.

And as she felt her soul becoming infused with the knowledge of good and evil, perhaps she had a moment of euphoria. And perhaps there was a moment where she thought, you know, this serpent has really got something on the ball here. And it's only when she gave to Adam, and he ate also, and then they lost their clothing of light, and they lost their innocence, and they lost their relationship with God, and they lost the promise and the blessing, attendant to obedience, and plunged their world into darkness, and placed it under a curse, that God's meaning became clear when he said, in the day that you eat thereof, you will surely die.

Eve bites it, eats it, throws it away, gives some to Adam. He bites it, eats it, throws away the husk or the core or whatever was left over, and they say, hey, we're still here, we didn't die. Yes, they did.

And in God's view, and as far as God is concerned, when a process begins, it is as good as complete. And so we've seen this as we've reviewed this great schema that is represented from an earthly level by the seven seals, angelic level by the seven trumpets, and from God's point of view, by the seven bulls. We've seen how those line up, and where from a human point of view, something devastates a third of the sea, as far as God's concerned, that life, he writes it off, it's dead, it's gone, it is destroyed, nothing living left.

It's a process, but once God starts a process, he knows how it's going to turn out. He turns his attention to other things, as it were. So this is where we concluded in our study of chapter 16, looking at the seventh bull, beginning in verse 17, the seventh angel poured out his bull into the air, and a loud voice, a loud phonē, came out of the temple.

Matt and I were talking earlier this week about the dual use of the Greek word phonē, depending on context, it is sometimes translated sound or noise, other times it's translated voice. Only context will tell you which one it is. You can go through the book of Acts, and when Paul is going through his experience on the Damascus Road in Acts chapter 9, it says that there was a phonē that men heard, as Paul is struck to the ground and struck blind and has a conversation.

It says the men heard a phonē. Well, Paul, when he's recounting this episode in Acts 22.9 says, the men did not hear the phonē of the one speaking. Well now, which is it? Acts 9 says they heard a phonē, Acts 22 says they didn't hear a phonē.

Well, look at the context. Acts 22.9 says they did not hear the phonē of the one speaking. They heard a sound, but they did not distinguish, they did not discern a speaking voice in that sound.

Same word in both places, different meaning, determined by context. No contradiction whatsoever, except for the shallow and pathetic of thought. Those who want to find a contradiction, who aren't interested in coming to an understanding, they will of course say, oh look, it's a contradiction, and then they throw the whole book away.

Well, here the seventh angel, when he pours this bowl into the air, notice the elements of the universe, the elements that have been recognized since time immemorial. What did we have, who was the group, earth, wind and fire? Well, you've got earth, gay, you have the sea, you have the air. I mean, that's pretty much the universe as primitive man knows it.

You've got the ground, you've got the water, and you've got the air, the stuff you breathe. The waters have been judged, they've all turned to blood, the seas and the rivers and the fountains. The land is judged, it's scorched, plant life is destroyed, animal life consequently suffers, mankind is crying out.

Now this bowl is poured into the air, this loud voice comes out of the temple from the throne saying, as soon as you have the word saying, you know what phonet means, and this is always the case, all you have to do is look at context. It is done. And we think, well, that sounds an awful lot like it is finished, and we talked about this last week.

Jesus said, tetelestai, which is from teleo. Teleo means to be complete, to be perfect, to be fulfilled. This is not that word, this is genomai, and this means to become, something comes into being.

Tetelestai has more of the idea, something that has already been started and underway is now complete and finished. It is the end of some sort of a process. Gaganen here, the perfect from genomai, has the idea, something has come into being, something has begun.

It's the difference between ending a thing and starting a thing. And it's really not a very good translation, in my opinion, to say it is done. I would offer you the thought, it has come into being.

It has arrived. It's here. That's a better translation.

It has become. That's the literal translation. At this point, there are, in verse 18, phonai,

the plural of phonai, noises and thunderings and lightnings, and a great earthquake.

Do you think these are voices or sounds? It doesn't say anything about words or any sort of communication, so this is the more general use of phonai to mean a noise. Noises, thunderings and lightnings, and a great earthquake, a great earthquake. As I've said many times, this is the thumbtack, this is the pushpin that goes through.

If you have a strip of the seals, a paper strip of the trumpets and a paper strip of the bowls, you can thumbtack them all to the end of the seven-year period with this great earthquake. It is the common denominator that tells you that they overlap. There is only one great earthquake, and this is it.

Such a mighty and great earthquake as has not occurred since men were on the earth. Now, there have been some pretty significant earthquakes over time. They go down to the Yucatan Peninsula and say, look, we had an acid.

Do you think there was an earthquake when that thing impacted and created that huge deal? May have been related to the flood. You look at the different craters and impact marks on the surface of the earth. But since men have been on the earth, this is the biggest earthquake ever.

Now, what happens when there's a big earthquake? What is one of the consequences of a big earthquake? Especially, let's say, if it's underwater, under the sea. Tsunami. Everybody knows this Japanese word now, don't they? The big washing away of countless thousands of square mile of coastal human habitation and human life and anything else that lives and breathes on the surface of the earth all turns into what we saw not long ago in New Orleans.

A mighty and great earthquake such as not occurred since men were on the earth. Now, the great city was divided into three parts. What is the great city, verse 19? Anytime you see an otherwise unidentified great city, you can be sure that this is Jerusalem.

And we know from Revelation 14 and verse 8 that Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. So, we say, well, if Babylon is the great city and this is the same city and it's divided into three parts, then is Jerusalem the Babylon that's spoken of in Revelation as falling and so on? And the answer is no. Just like the word phone, context is everything.

You can't just grab a term in one chapter, grab a term in another chapter or even in a separate verse and say this is the same term so it signifies the same thing. You see what I'm saying? My illustration is phone. My application here of the principle is great city.

The great city is divided into three parts and the cities of the nation fell. What city do we know is going to divide as the result of a great earthquake and yet survive? Jerusalem. But Jerusalem is not the great city Babylon that's utterly destroyed and goes up in smoke

and people stand to fall off in ships watching the wailing and so on.

Totally different thing. So, just because two things are called the great city doesn't mean they equate. Same thing here.

The timing of this earthquake corresponds with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, planting of His feet on the Mount of Olives and when that mountain splits and makes this huge gap, that is this earthquake. So, we know where we are. We're at the very end.

We're at the consummation of this 70th week at this point. Revelation 16, 18. The great city divides into three parts.

Cities of the nations fell. This gives us another clue because the cities of the nations are the polis, you know, polis like Minneapolis and polis is the Greek word for city. This is the plural.

The cities of the ethnoi. The ethnoi are the Gentiles. In Hebrew, this would be the goi, the goyim, the non-Israelites.

City of God, possibly the epicenter of this earthquake, splits into three parts and is not utterly destroyed, but the cities of the nations fall. How is this possible? Well, A, you've got the tsunami effect. B, what does it mean for a city to fall? Does it mean that it is utterly ruined and destroyed sometimes? Does it mean that its power is removed? Jerusalem fell when Nebuchadnezzar attacked it.

The city wasn't wiped out, but its meaning as a capital and as a political power and a regional power was erased when it became subject to empire. Now the great city was divided. The cities of the nations fell and great Babylon was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

More about great Babylon coming up in the next chapter. Then every island fled away. Why would that be? Great earthquake, great tsunami.

Do you want to be on an island in a tsunami? Preferably not. Swept away, fled away, and the mountains were not found. If you raise sea level to a sufficient height, what used to be a mountain is just a moderate elevation.

Every island fled away and the mountains were not found. This is also, remember, double entendre. There is metaphorical communication at work here.

While this is going to be true at a physical level, it's also true metaphorically. Where do people flee when they're trying to get away from destruction? Let's go to the mountain where we're up above it. Let's go to an island where we're isolated from it.

And there is no place of isolation and there is no elevation to which man can flee and escape this cup of the wrath of God. So this is talking about refuge. This is talking about

a place to flee.

Not found. Great hail fell from heaven upon men about the weight of a talent. I mentioned last time that these are big hailstones.

I looked up a talent. There were two measures for talents and giras and shekels and so on in the ancient world. The royal, which is about roughly double the light version.

The light version of a talent in the ancient world weighed in at about 30 kilograms. 2.2 pounds per kilogram, 66 pounds. That's the light weight.

The heavy weight is double that. These would be 125, 130 pound hailstones. Even the light version, 60, 70 pound hailstones coming down, you can see why men might be blaspheming as these come down essentially as meteorites on everything that managed to survive the tsunami and the drought and the darkness and the heat and the disease and everything else.

If there's anything left, it's pummeled into jelly by these hailstones. So, rather than submitting and saying, Oh Lord, save me. These people are standing in the boat, shaking their fist at the only possible refuge.

There is no mountain. There is no island. There's only God.

They won't choose God. They would rather be squashed and they essentially are going to get their wish. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail since that plague was exceedingly great.

This is one of the massive understatements of Scripture. 60 to 120 pound hailstones raining down on all mankind is an exceedingly great plague. Well, I would think so.

Unless you can manage to get into some deep bunker system, this is going to essentially be pretty much the end of life as you know it. This brings us to chapter 17. And once again, we're doing a rewind.

Remember, when we get to the end of the seals, we do a rewind and we have a series of seven visions. When we get to the end of the trumpets, we do a rewind and we get a series of seven visions. Now we're at the end of the bulls, we're doing a rewind and we're going to get some more information.

So, chapter 17 is where we formally pick up this evening. Then, one of the seven angels who had the seven bulls, seven and seven, what does this tell us? You are at the culmination. This is the fait accompli.

This is the finish. It is summed up. You don't get any bigger judgment than this until you get to the great white throne and the lake of fire.

Seven angels, seven bulls. One of those seven angels. Now, why is it one of these angels and not some other angel leaning up against the post watching all this take place? There's a plethora of angels available.

You've got Michael the archangel who gave John the scroll. You've got plumb line angels. You've got wind angels.

You've got all kinds of angels. Of all of the myriads of available angels, who comes and talks with John? A bull angel. Where did this bull angel come from? Where has he been? What do we know about these angels? Came forth out of the temple, didn't they? How close to actually coming face-to-face with God and getting the message can you possibly be? But one of the last angels to be in the temple with God before the glory filled it up and nobody could get back in is this angel.

And he comes and talks with John. He's dumped out his bull. He's got an empty bull in his hand.

He walks over and says, Hey, John. And John says, Hello, bull angel. And the angel says, Come here.

Follow me. And John says, Well, where are you going? You got anything left in that bull? And he says, Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. Now, this angel poured out a bull of God's judgment and he says, Now, come with me and I'll show you some details of this judgment.

This is the forever and a day Hebrew way of thinking. I'll tell you what I'm going to tell you. Then I'm going to tell it to you again.

And ultimately, I'll tell you what I told you. People that don't understand this think the Bible is repetitive or is somehow a patchwork of different accounts that have been imperfectly and amateurly sewn together. Amateurly is not a word, but you know what I mean.

In an amateur fashion. A bad editor just kind of cut and pasted a bunch of stuff and the seams show. Utter and total nonsense.

If you study ancient Semitic literature, whether it's Akkadian or Sumerian or Aramaic, you see that in a verbal land where people don't have books, you do this reinforcement thing. You give them a big picture, such as Genesis 1 on the sixth day. God created man.

In the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them. Having told you this, he backs up in chapter 2 and says, Now, let me give you some details.

Come with me and let me show you how man was made. Here's God scooping up the dirt into Adam and breathing into his nostrils the Neshama. And here he is reaching into Adam and pulling out some structural portions and fashioning the woman to be a help meat for him after he's wandering around bumping into things.

And he says, you know, you need some help. And so he makes a help meat for him. I could give you countless examples of repetition.

Deuteronomy, the second law. Why do we have that? Because we're given the broad brush in Exodus. The giving of the essentials of the law at Sinai.

And then Deuteronomy is the reiteration, the fleshing out, the details. Well, same thing here. It's chapter 16.

We saw these bowls being poured out here in chapter 17. One of the seven bowls, we're going to get an expanded view. We're going to go back and put the magnifying glass on it.

Come, I will show you the judgment of the great heart. We've already seen that Babylon's gone. So, he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness.

What does this remind you of? Being carried away by the spirit. Who's the guy that is always getting carried away by the spirit? Ezekiel. Snatched up by the hair of his head.

Dropped in the temple. Snatched up. Dropped back in the midst of the people by the river Kabar.

Does a little prophesying. Gets snatched up and carried away in the spirit. Taken back to Jerusalem.

Picked up. Carried back to the river Kabar. Speaks some more.

Knocked down by a vision. And so forth. So, John has an Ezekiel son of man experience here.

Carried away in the spirit into the wilderness. Into the wilderness. What is the wilderness? Why is it the wilderness? Well, this is the Eremon or Eremos in Greek.

And this is the word that is often translated the desert. It is isolated. It is called... Have you ever thought about the word desert? Why is something called desert? It means deserted.

They're both the same. If something is deserted, it means there's nothing there. And so you call that kind of place a desert.

It's deserted. It's deserted of life. Deserted of things that are amenable to human

existence.

As a perception. Obviously there's life in the desert. But this is the Eremos.

He carried me away in Numati. In spirit. This doesn't necessarily mean spirit with a capital S. Once again, context determines what Numatos means.

This is in Numati. In spirit. This is in vision.

John doesn't claim to have actually been evacuated from Patmos and taken somewhere. And I would submit to you that this... You can cross out the word the and put a small s on spirit. It would be a little bit odd that after 16 chapters, we would suddenly need help from the Holy Spirit.

This is in vision form. Spiritually speaking, he's carried away to the Eremos. To the desert.

Wilderness we think of as the forest in Kentucky or something. Daniel Boone. No.

Desert. In the desert, he sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. You skip down and look at your text in verse 5. Mystery.

Babylon the Great. Now, what does Babylon represent in chapter 17 of Revelation? Well, the first clue is he takes me to the desert. The desert.

A generally lifeless place. And in the desert, there's a woman sitting on a scarlet beast. What does the color scarlet represent? Blood.

If a beast is scarlet, we don't have any generally... I mean, you can talk about roan and red hair and that kind of thing. But a beast that is truly scarlet, we don't really have that many blood-colored beasts. Why would a beast be blood-colored? If he is a carnivore, if he is a bloody beast, if he's basically so carnivorous that he's spattered with blood, covered in blood, caked in blood.

Scarlet beast. You get the idea just from the connotation here that this is a very violent and death-producing beast. And the woman is riding this beast.

Now, if you ride a beast, what do you do? You control it. You're dominating it. You're sitting on top of it.

You have it under some sort of control. The beast isn't reaching around and biting your leg off or killing you in some fashion. You're sitting on the beast, and the beast is somehow bending to your will.

So, in this area of lifelessness, we have two forms of life. We have this blood-colored

beast and the woman sitting astride it. The beast is full of names of blasphemy, seven heads and ten horns.

Now, as soon as you see seven heads and ten horns, we know who this beast is, don't we? What is the beast with seven heads and ten horns? A little horn coming up from between the three mouth and eyes, speaking pompous words and so on. This is the beast out of the sea. Antichrist.

This is not the false prophet, and it's not Satan. It is the Antichrist. He is the seven-headed, ten-horned beast.

Sometimes he is personified by the horn and so on, but essentially, he is this beast. And the beast in general represents his empire, his hegemony, his government, his false Christ-ship, if you will. Now, this woman is sitting on top of the beast, controlling this beast, directing the beast it would seem.

The beast is full of names of blasphemy. What would a name of blasphemy mean? What is blasphemy? Blasphemy is something that is an insult to the true God of heaven. If there is not some relation to the God in heaven, there is no such thing as blasphemy.

It specifically relates to claiming something that belongs to God. That's blasphemy. So, this beast has set itself up in the place of God, Antichrist, instead of Christ, covered with these blasphemous names.

So, we've got a pretty good picture of who this is. Now it says in verse 4, the woman is arrayed in purple and scarlet. Purple, color of royalty, rulership, top of the heap in the beast world, the kingdom of the Antichrist, and scarlet, the color of blood.

Once again, purple, scarlet beast, scarlet adornment on the woman. Adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. Wealth.

Many people have seen in this woman the Catholic Church. Why? What is the universal symbol? You can be leaping through an old Bible and you find a faded little picture and you say, wait a minute, some Catholic has had this Bible. Why? It's a picture of the Virgin dished behind her head.

It's a woman symbol that immediately says Catholic. Virgin Mary. They're all about the Virgin Mary.

They're elevating her to be an equal with Christ as official dogma of the Catholic Church. She's the co-redemptrix and so on. And if you take Christ away and you have the Catholics remaining because there's a huge complement of unsaved people in the Catholic Church when the rapture takes place, what do you think will happen to the Catholic Church? Will it disappear? I think emphatically not.

I think it is going to be free to foist its false religion even more firmly and conjoinedly with the Antichrist who will cooperate with its power and its worldwide... Have you ever seen the Popemobile go to some country? Have you ever seen the uncounted throngs of people that greet that thing? Somebody splashes paint or burns toast or takes a picture of a building at a certain angle of light and Our Lady has appeared and there are millions of people who think this is the real deal. Are these people in general saved? Generally not. Are they gullible and deceivable and trainable to conform? Will they send their money? Will the woman be adorned in gold and pearls? I think you get the picture here.

This is the Christless, godless Catholic Church. This is not by the way Islam, surprisingly. You think Islam will just take over the world when the Christians leave.

Is there any way, shape or form in which Islamic fundamentalism is pictured by a woman? Only if you put her in a bag and stick her in a room and tell her she can't do anything. That's woman in Islam. Put her in whatever they call those bags they make them wear and stick them someplace.

This woman is not in a bag. She's not in a sack. She's not in that whatever they call it.

If this woman was completely invisible inside some garment, then you could say, hey, this is Islam. But that's not it. This is a woman in control.

This is the false and twisted ephemera of the Virgin Mary. Arrayed in purple and scarlet. Just look at a bishop.

Look at a pope. Look at a cardinal. What's the color for a cardinal? Scarlet.

Gold and precious stones. This has been going on from time immemorial. Look at the pillaging of South America, the pillaging of Mexico, the pillaging of California.

Where did all that stuff go? You can still find all of that. Pizarro and all the rest of those guys. Where did all that gold go? It is still sitting in the coffers of the Catholic Church.

It's been going on for hundreds of years. Having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. This is the prostitution of Christianity.

It has been prostituted to greed. It has been prostituted to power. It has been prostituted to the lie.

And it has ever been thus. Go back as far as you want in the history of the Catholic Church. You can try to claim it goes back earlier as they do.

But essentially, the modern Catholic Church as we know it goes all the way back to about 600 A.D. to right about the time when you started having the popes knocking one another off and all of the corruption that there unto pertains. So, if you ask me, that's what this is. In case I haven't been clear.

Full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication, on her forehead a name is written, Mystery Babylon the Great. What does the word mystery connote? Where do we get this term mysterion? Paul talks about the mystery, doesn't he? And he defines the mystery. What is the mystery? It's the church, right? Babylon the Great.

Now, Babylon is the capital city of Nebuchadnezzar. It is the head of gold in Daniel's vision. And what does it represent? The height of attainment of power and civilization in a godless manner.

It's the head of gold. I make an image of gold and I want you to worship it. I put you in the fiery furnace if you don't.

Gold. Babylon. Where is Babylon? You know the modern day country in which ancient Babylon is located.

How would you characterize that geography? If you spoke Greek. Eremos. It is in the desert.

It is in the middle of the desert. Babylon is evermore an oasis in the midst of a desert. It is human construction in the midst of desert.

That's what this is. Mystery. Babylon the Great.

The mother of God? No. What does God say? What does the bowl angel say? You see this name written? It's not Mary, mother of God. It is Babylon, mother of harlots.

It is the absolute antithesis of everything it claims to be. The mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth. What is most of the flack that we as Christians take from atheists and others who historically review the success of New Testament Christianity? What do we get blamed for? The Inquisition.

The oppression involved in the Crusades. The rape, pillage, and plunder in the name of God that has gone on in places like Mexico and South America. Who perpetrated all of this? Where did it all go? It's not Gregor Mendel breeding peas.

It's the Catholic Church. The manifest corruption, perversion, and distortion of New Testament Christianity into a power grab, into a system of satisfying someone's greed. Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots.

There's a reason why this mother language is in here. It's like, hey, in case you didn't catch any of my previous allusions here, the mother of harlots and the mother of the abominations of the earth. It is the opposite of being the mother of the humanity of Christ, which Mary, the great woman of faith presented in the Gospels, is.

Did you ever notice how Peter and Paul and John and James never once allude to Mary? And yet, you can't spend ten minutes looking at Catholicism without getting enough

Mary to kill you three times over. It's just total distortion. They have taken a legitimate woman of great faith and turned her into the mother of harlots and the abomination of the earth.

The Mary that you see in these icons and so on has no connection whatsoever to Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus in the Bible. None whatsoever. I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints.

Take a look at the Reformation if you want to find out. Ask John Wycliffe if you want to find out. Ask any of the other fathers of the Bible in our own language who were slain in the name of the church for trying to put forth the Word of God.

I mean, is that being drunk with the blood of the saints? And does it continue to the present day in other forms? It manifestly does. Drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

John, looking down the corridors of time, says, how can you start with the New Testament and end up with this? How can you start with Jesus riding on the foal of a donkey with Mary at the foot of the cross and end up with the Popemobile and these pointy hats, swinging chain containers full of smoke, coffers full of gold, and vast systematic oppression, robbery, and murder in the name of God? I marveled with great amazement. All you have to do is look at the history of the Catholic Church and you too can marvel with John with great amazement. What is the meaning of the woman and the beast? Well, we'll come to that in our second session, but what is our point of interpretation and application as we look at these half a dozen verses in Revelation 17? Possessing the Word of God, claiming to know the Word of God, is no guarantee of being right, being pleasing in the sight of God, or having a life of fruitfulness and blessing.

The Catholic Church claims to have the Word of God, claims to have authority from God, and they are an abomination and have taken... I mean, try to wrap your mind around this. How do you think Jesus feels about what people have done to His mother? Most people who are immune to other kinds of insults, if you start talking about their mother, you will have a fight on your hands. The first time I ever punched a guy in the nose was over an insult related to my mother.

And, you know, there is a level of loyalty one feels to his maternal ancestor that can get quite emotional. Well, you think about the Lord Jesus, you think about what the Catholic Church has done in perverting His mother and using her as an excuse to do all these heinous things, and you can imagine the kind of judgment that is likely to fall should someone wind up actually being a believer and yet perpetrating this. Well, drunk with the blood of the saints, drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

How do we interpret and apply this? Do not think because you own a Bible, do not think because you know the Word of God that you are in the clear and everything you do is golden and full of grace. We have to rightly divide the Word of Truth. And the first prerequisite for being teachable and being susceptible to growth and to understanding in the Word of God is humility.

Humility is essentially teachability. We have to be teachable. We have to be pliable.

We have to put ourselves in God's hands and say, Lord, teach me. I am ready to learn. I don't think I know the answer.

I don't think I've got it figured out. I don't have a better plan. I am ready to learn.

Teach me, Lord, Your way. This is David's great attribute. He made a lot of mistakes, but when you look at the life of David and you read the Psalms, read Psalm 119.

How many times does he ask God to teach him, to illuminate his Word? The Catholic Church, the Catholic structure is not characterized by this. Ask a priest any question about the text of Scripture and you're likely to get referred elsewhere because that system is not about the Word of God. It's not about understanding the way that goes through the narrow gate to life.

It's about the system. It's about anything but. So if we want to be successful, if we want to be pleasing in God's sight, if we want to have a life eternal, in the qualitative sense, we have to be teachable.

It's the first great prerequisite. If we are not teachable, all is lost. These people who wind up with the 66 pounds of hailstones, no matter what God does to them, they won't learn.

They won't listen. If you won't listen to that, you're done. And they certainly aren't.

Okay, we'll pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up at verse 7.