

23a REV

This is the 20th of January, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation, picking up in chapter 18. Let's take a moment as we approach the study of the Word of God to recognize that the work of God's Holy Spirit in our souls is essential to help us to understand, remember and make good use of the truth that is in God's Word.

And there's no more important time of His ministry than when we are trying to discern exactly what the Word of God teaches. So we'll take a moment at this point to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, it is a privilege, it is always exciting and interesting to look at the truth of Your Word, whether in the Old Testament or in the New.

We know that there are pieces of information that are revealed through Your Word that are obtainable in no other way. It is not just intellectual information. It is vital to the nourishment and the strengthening of our souls.

We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf in making a new and living way through the veil, so that we have the privilege of approaching You and representing ourselves before You, bringing our thanksgiving and our requests to You and seeking to live our lives in a way that is pleasing in Your sight. We pray that our study this evening will contribute to that goal and that each of us will find in Your Word meaningful truths that will make a difference and will make us more Christ-like and will equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, last time in Revelation chapter 18, we saw the fall of Babylon the Great. We have come a great distance.

We are 18 chapters into a 22-chapter book now. In the first three chapters, we saw the letters to the seven churches and the direct words of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only place in the New Testament where you have Jesus Christ specifically speaking to New Testament churches. He's got a lot of red ink in the Gospels, but He's not talking to the church, is He? He's talking to Israel.

What does He tell the woman who pleads for her daughter's health? He says, I am sent only to whom? The lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus came presenting the gospel of the kingdom, the possibility of the advent of the kingdom and recognition of Himself as King. He was rejected.

John 1 tells us He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. For that reason, the Apostle Paul explains to us, the time changed. Israel was set aside, those branches in the vine were broken out because of unbelief and new wild branches were grafted in.

And this became the age of the church. It started at Pentecost, it's been going for 2,000

years. And we are rapidly approaching the end of it.

Revelation 4, verse 1, the voice in heaven tells John, come up here. And we see this symbolically representing the transfer of the church off the surface of the earth. And everything that we see from chapter 4, verse 2 on, depicts the nation of Israel.

How many different clues to this have we had? The 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe. The restoration of sacrifice and offering at the temple. Things happening in and around Jerusalem.

The instruction of Jesus in Matthew 24, when you see the abomination of desolation, flee to the hills. These are the hills of Judea, of Israel. Everything revolves around Israel.

You have the woman who is pursued by the dragon who spews out the water and she has to flee into the hills to be preserved for a time, times and half a time. Israel, Israel, Israel, Israel, Israel, all the way through. Why? The church is not here.

People who come to faith in that seven year period are assigned in their salvation to the Old Testament promises, the Old Testament covenants. This is why when the Lord Jesus returns in what we fondly call the second advent, first advent, his first earthly appearance. The second advent is not the rapture.

It is seven years after the rapture. And he plants his feet on the Mount of Olives, it splits. We have seen this in Ezekiel.

We've seen the river of water that's going to flow out from under the temple and split, divide itself half to the east, flow into the Jordan Valley. We're going to be looking at this Tuesday, next Tuesday. We're going to look in detail at the path that these two water courses are going to take and the effect that has on the overall geography.

But, first three chapters, Jesus Christ talking through John to the church, chapter 4 all the way up to chapter 20, we don't see the church except as it appears in heaven, the white robed throng waving the branches and so on. Everybody else, all the unfortunate people that you see down on earth are either unbelievers drinking the cup of the wrath of God or they are believers, Old Testament saints, who are either martyred and find their souls under the altar crying out, Oh Lord, how long? Or they are in the hills subsisting and being preserved until the time that the Lord Jesus returns. Many, many of them will be killed.

So many that in the final days you have the ministry of the two witnesses and we've studied in detail who we think those two witnesses might be who in the closing days of this seven year period are going to be killed. And it is going to seem to be a great victory for the forces of darkness that these final two vocal witnesses who have power over the weather, who have power to call down fire from heaven, who work miracles, who testify to the truth of God's word and God's plan and the impending judgment of God, these two

are going to be taken out in much the same manner as John the Baptist was taken out. John the Baptist heralded the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and got killed for his trouble.

These two witnesses are heralding the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and they too will be killed for their trouble. But then they are going to be miraculously raised and that is going to signal the great earthquake and all of the other things that we've seen. We have seen the seven seals.

We have seen the seven trumpets. And we have seen the seven bowls. We have seen that the seals represent the human perspective on this period of time, most of which is in the last three and a half years.

The trumpets are the angelic perspective on that same time, overlaps and describes many of the same events in much the same order. And then you have the bowls, which go back and look at that same three and a half year period from God's perspective. God is looking for repentance and after plague after plague and upheaval after upheaval and natural disaster after cataclysm after catastrophe, people do not change their minds.

What is the purpose of this judgment? Why is God pouring out his wrath on just these people when there have been evil empires and evil people, evil dictators, horrible evil actions taking place all down through history, heinous indescribably awful torture and murder and oppression, slaughter of thousands upon thousands of people in generations all down through history. Why did God not intervene? Why doesn't he wake all those people up and then pour out his judgment on them? Why is it just this last gasp? If you look at human history, let's say 6,000 years of human history, you've got a single generation living in these final few years. Why did they get all of this horrible cataclysm and everybody else seems to have more or less gotten off scot-free? Well, you remember our old friend the chiasm, the inclusio, the bracket, the parenthesis, where a thing happens at the beginning and something complimentary and corresponding to that happens later on.

We've seen it in texts, we've seen it in books, and we see it in human history. You have human history beginning in the Garden of Eden where you have a wonderful environment and people given free will. At the end of human history in the Millennial Kingdom, you have a wonderful environment and people living there being given free will.

And there was a judgment at the end of the Garden Period and there was a judgment at the end of the Millennial Period. Another one of those chiasms that we see is the Nation of Israel. God begins after the age of the antediluvian civilization and the early, early patriarchs between Noah and Abraham.

You have this time where civilization is growing and building. You have the Tower of

Babel, you have God scattering people out. And then you begin with Abraham.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You have the inception of the Nation of Israel. And for the next almost 2,000 years, you have this age of Israel proper where God deals in human history in and through Israel.

That's where His presence is. That's where His word is. They are stewards of the mysteries of God.

Then you have this interruption and Israel is set aside. And the church. Everything is about the church.

It does not matter today, and it has not mattered for the last nearly 2,000 years, if your extraction, your heritage, your ethnicity, your culture is Jewish or any other culture. Being Jewish gives you no advantage whatsoever ever since circa 30 A.D. It just doesn't matter. There is neither slave nor free.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is either male or female. You're either in Christ or you're not.

And if anything, being Jewish can be an impediment because you have a lot of baggage depending on how Jewish your upbringing is. You have a lot of baggage you have to rearrange to see that Jesus Christ actually was the Messiah. But when the church leaves, there are seven years.

The 70th week of Daniel is yet to run. And you're back in the age of Israel. Everything is about Israel.

The law is back in effect. Sacrifices and offerings are taking place at the temple, on the altar, in Jerusalem. And this is before Jesus even comes back.

We have seen in the latter chapters of Ezekiel, chapters 40-44, the millennial temple. And for the thousand years of Jesus' reign, through his regent, David, who is at least going to start out. It's interesting, and we've talked about whether David is going to be able to last all the way through the thousand years because we know there is mortality in the millennium.

These people are fleshly. The Bible says a man who dies at the age of 100 will be said to have died in his youth. There will be capital punishment.

There will be widows. We looked at the instructions for the priests in the last few chapters of Ezekiel that we've studied. And that there are widows and so forth.

We know that there is the possibility of death in the millennium. So is David going to make it all the way through? We know he's going to start out being the prince regent. But so many of those instructions for the prince are said to be the prince.

If David dies in the millennial kingdom, who would be the next one to sit on the throne, would you imagine? Shlomo would be my guess. Solomon. He's the one that sat on the throne after his father the first time.

I really don't think Adonijah is going to be able to make it this time. But regardless, you have this thousand year period. So actually there's going to be a thousand and seven years here on earth that focuses on the nation of Israel.

The first seven years, that 70th week of Daniel, is judgment on the earth. It's a time of retribution and setting up the conditions that are going to bring the kingdom into being. And then that thousand year period, this is the time of fulfillment of all of God's promises.

The last and most important covenant to Israel is the new covenant mentioned in Ezekiel and other places that says God will pour out His Spirit on His people. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams.

Everyone will be taught by God. God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. And that's all flesh talking to Israel.

He will pour out His Spirit. And of course, they have to be flesh for His Spirit to be poured out on them. They can't be glorified.

It says nothing about us. Once we go to be with the Lord, it doesn't say we're going to have the Spirit. In fact, Paul says something more or less the opposite in Ephesians.

He says the Holy Spirit is the seal on us until the day of redemption. The Greek word is *Erebon*. And it's like a wax seal of ownership on a document or on a deed.

And it says the Holy Spirit is the *Erebon*, the seal, unto, with a view toward the day of redemption. You get the idea, at the day of redemption, the seal of the Holy Spirit will no longer be necessary because we will be with Christ. Jesus said, I'm going away and I will send you the Comforter.

I'll send you the Holy Spirit because I can't be with you. When we're with Him, we don't need the Spirit. But He is going to be poured out on Israel.

Why? Because Jesus is not going to be circulating amongst the fleshly people in that thousand-year period. That's the job of the Prince. He will come in and offer sacrifices.

He will be there for the morning and evening oblations. He'll be there on the new moons and the Sabbaths and on the first month feast and on the seventh month feast that we've discussed in Ezekiel. Okay, all of this says what? There is a focus on the nation of Israel.

Now, that's important when we're going through these chapters of Revelation. Why? So

much of prophetically oriented literature and Revelation literature that you read in these days wants to find stuff about the church in the book of Revelation, wants to map things out and say, well, the King of the North is Russia and the King of the East and the King of the... Here's how it all maps out and here's the European Common Market and here's how it's all going to happen. That's interesting as far as it goes.

But remember, we are not going to be here. We will be gone. If we see this at all, it's going to be from an entirely alternate perspective.

So, when we get to these references to Babylon, we have to figure this in the language of prophetic symbolism. What does Babylon represent? Now, we have in the last two weeks looked at this from Scripture. Babel is the site of Babylon.

The Tower of Babel was built where Babylon later stood, where you still find the remains, many of which were restored by Saddam before he lost his dictatorship over there. He went and rebuilt the historic city of Babylon. You can go there now.

I have seen film. A professor at Dallas Seminary went over there and took film and pictures of the restored walking through. It's the next best thing to being there.

Walking through and snapping pictures right and left. All of these baked brick walls that had fallen down were restored back when Saddam thought he was the latter day Nebuchadnezzar and minted his coins that had Nebuchadnezzar's profile. And then Saddam superimposed on top of it.

And he was harking back to the glory days of what is now Iraq and what was formerly Babylon. And you can see the walls where the hanging gardens, one of the wonders of the ancient world, were. You can see where the ziggurat was, where the Tower of Babel originally stood.

They have found the foundations of the thing and have restored a lot of that. It's there. What does it represent? We've seen this woman riding the beast and her name, the mystery sign on her forehead says, Babylon, the mother of harlots.

Now, once again, keep in mind this idea of chiasm because Babel is at the very earliest beginning of the spread of human civilization, isn't it? That's how everybody started speaking different languages and it shows up again at the end where once again you have united nations. Everyone unites against Israel. Everyone unites to accomplish this objective under the rule of the Antichrist.

And it's under the sovereign banner of Babylon. Babylon is riding the beast, which is the government. The beast, the seven-headed beast with the ten horns, represents human government.

And it is being directed. If you're riding an animal, unless you're in a rodeo, you're there

to control it, right? You're there to basically ride a horse. You don't say, well, I'm going to climb on this horse and just see where it goes.

Or I'm going to climb on this bull and see where it takes me. Typically, you get on an animal and you direct it. You control its movements and you direct its travel.

This is the implication of the woman riding this beast. She is directing it. She is dominating it.

What does the woman represent? There have been many speculations, but we have seen over the last few weeks that this represents religion. This is godless religion. This is false religion.

This is religion that either distorts, corrupts, perverts, or entirely eliminates the Word of God. This kind of religion has ever existed. The Tower of Babel was a religious effort.

Looking at its foundations and its orientation, they have determined that like many other ancient constructions, it was astrologically oriented. It points and is oriented to the stars as they existed in those days. You get a copy of Redshift and some of these other astronomy programs and you can run them back and they can give you the configuration of the stars in, say, 4000 BC, 3000 BC, 2000 BC.

Some of the constellations look different, but when you retrovert those back, you find that these things align perfectly. It was religious. That's the reason God busted it up and scattered everybody.

They were looking toward the heavens. They're going to build the tower unto the heavens. It's with a view toward the heavens.

They're looking to astrology. It's a false religion and God busted it up. Well, the same thing is going to happen at the end.

So, when we come to chapter 18 and we see the big heading in our New King James Bible that says, The Fall of Babylon the Great, what is this? This is, in a single generation, the fall, the wiping out, the judgment of false religion. Now, let's say, just for the sake of argument, that we're looking at the seven-year period from 2024 to 2031. Just to pick a number out of the hat.

2024 to 2031. Why do I pick that? Well, let's say Jesus was crucified, rose, and ascended in 31 AD, as is commonly believed. Exactly 2,000 years later, he would return again.

Kind of makes sense. So, we'll say there's a seven-year period that backs up and we would only be here until 2024. I'm not setting a date.

I have no earthly idea. Might or might not happen, but we'll just say this. 2024 to 2031.

We speculate. We just assume, for the sake of argument, this is the 70th week of Daniel. The last three and a half years of which is the tribulation period.

In that time, in 2028, 29, and 30, and into 31, you have this last three and a half year period, and false religion, all the Christians are gone, and this false religion is riding the beast, is driving the beast. What false religion could it be? A lot of people think it's Roman Catholicism. They see all kinds of harking back to Rome, and the seven hills, and the pearls, and the gold, and it's a woman, and Mary, and the co-redemptrix, and all of that.

Could be. Could be a perverse form of, and a completely un-Christian, in the true sense, form of Roman Catholicism. It could be Islam.

It could be New Age. It could be revived Manichaeism. It could be revived Ashdard, and going all the way back to, what's her name? It was the wife of... Yes, Semiramis.

Could be any one of these. Look at the evolution of religion in the world today. The growth of these things is unpredictable.

Who would have thought 30 years ago that Islam would be as dominant in Europe as it is today? And if you don't think it's dominant, do some reading. It is dominant. It has taken over countries like Holland, and Northern Europe is just rife.

Look at Southeast Asia. Look in Indonesia. Buddhism, I mean, look what they did to the whole Taliban, and all their blowing up of monuments, and so on.

It's not just Christianity that's suffering at the hands of militant Islam. Whatever this religion is, it's godless. The godly people eject.

They've gone away initially. And so you have this false religion, and what a powerful combination. I'm sure you've heard the criticisms that I've heard, that, well, religion has mixed with politics.

Religion has gotten into government. Religion, here's Constantine this, and Inquisition that, and look at the Holy Wars, look at the Catholics fighting the Protestants in England, and the Irish, and all down through history, you have everybody blaming religion for warfare, and to a large extent, there is an element of truth in that. Religion has been abused.

It has been used as an avenue to gain political power. It has ever been thus. It's been this way since Babel, and it's going to be that way in the Tribulation.

So, I say all of that to say this. When you see the judgment of Babylon the Great, the woman as she exists in this final generation, in the last few years of the 2020 decade, let's say, that is symbolic and representative of the judgment that God renders on all

false religion, all practitioners of false religion, all down through history. Nobody gets away with Inquisitions, and badly motivated Crusades, and Jihads, and religious exterminations on whatever side.

If they justify it in the name of Christ, or they justify it in the name of Mohammed, or they justify it in the name of anybody. All of that is pictured here. What does the Chiasm have to do with it? Israel in its inception, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the law at Sinai, the wandering in the wilderness, the entrance into the land of Canaan, the expulsion of the Canaanites, the kingdom set up under David, all of that, that thousand years of history, from Abraham through Solomon, that's almost a thousand years.

Abraham is circa 1850 BC, you've got Solomon down there around 950. It's just almost a thousand years. And God's dealing with Israel in that period that is contained largely in the historic books of the Old Testament.

And that is elemental. It is symbolic. God judges people.

A man gets stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. A man is speared through for bringing a prostitute from the Canaanites outside the camp, into the camp, and going in and having his way with her in the tent of Israel. It doesn't happen every single time.

These judgments are symbolic. The legislation that God gives at Sinai, where He says rebellious teenagers are to be stoned. The lascivious daughter of a priest is to be burned.

And all of these other judgments that people point to the Old Testament and say, oh, look at the violent God of the Old Testament. Look at how He told Israel to go in and wipe out men, women, children, animals. He's just cruel and heartless, and He's mean and horrible.

These are symbolic judgments that represent God's attitude in every single generation. Now, God does not carry out the judgment in every single generation. People say, how can someone abuse a child and get away with it? How can someone do a mass extermination and get away with it? If there's a loving God in heaven, how could these possibly happen? Look, God has demonstrated His attitude and what the judgment is going to be like for every single person that perpetrates this kind of act.

But if He carried it out, what kind of human history would we have? How could sin be shown to be sin? How could we see how evil evil can get if God didn't let it run its course? You say, well, but does this have to be on the backs of the women and the starving children in Afghanistan and these people that are mutilated and tortured? Why doesn't God intervene? Why does He let it go so badly? Well, let me just offer you this thought. Taking nothing away from the horror that people have inflicted on one another. And it is horrible.

There are unspeakably atrocious acts that have occurred all down through history. People in the days of Israel worshipped Molech and took little babies, especially little baby girls, and shoved them alive into the fire and burned them to death for no other reason than they wanted good crops. They have found the burn pits.

They have found the bones. It is detailed in the Bible. It is declared to be an abomination.

And this is why God said, you must go in and wipe these people out because this is my attitude toward cultures and civilizations that tolerate this kind of behavior. Now, if God never let that happen, evil would be a hypothetical. It would be a theoretical.

God in heaven and His angels and human beings in some altered and different form who had not lived through human history, God would say, I don't want you to disobey me and I don't want you to reject me. Because doing that separates you from my life and my character and my righteousness and it's unspeakably awful. And people would say, well, I wonder how unspeakably awful that is.

I mean, you say it's unspeakably awful, but of course you're going to say that because you want to keep us all in line. I think it might be fun to separate myself from you. I think I could run an alternate civilization that would be just fine.

Why do you have to be at the top? Why do we all have to have a connection to you and share in your righteousness and reflect your glory? Why can't we go off and do our own thing somewhere? Which is exactly, if you read Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, this is exactly what Satan argued. And God said, fine. I'll set up a creature inferior to you and I will give him a choice and I will let him fall and I will let his civilization run on.

I ask myself any time I get up in an airplane, it seems like God could have made all of His points with maybe two or three thousand people. Why have we had so many years of so many people? You get up in an airplane and look down at the Metroplex, fly over Chicago or San Francisco or any of the other big metropolises and you look down and there are literally millions of people. Look at film overseas.

Look at the millions of people that live in China and the hundreds of thousands of people that live in all these other God forsaken, deprived, living in the mud places. And you think, is this really necessary? Look at these, you bungees, and these people living off in the middle of the jungle who live and die. You just think, why is God running this? I mean, maybe I'm wrong.

Maybe there is no God and this is just all evolved and blah, blah. I mean, because why would God, why does He need to let this run on? And look at these people. God is bigger than we imagine and every single human life is unique.

It's like fingerprints are unique. Why are fingerprints unique? If everybody got DNA and it

all evolved, then how come no two people have the same fingerprints? How come no two people have exactly the same face? I mean, you look at the billions of people and you think, well, there's probably some people who got exactly the same face. They don't.

I have traveled the world over and I've seen people that reminded me of someone. I've seen people that were similar, but as soon as they smile or as soon as they talk or as soon as they move, they're not the same. I'm off my subject a little bit, but I wonder about this.

There's two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. How many possible configurations are there that the human mind can distinguish? But I have looked through milling throngs in many countries of the world. I have looked at literally hundreds of thousands of faces in my short life and I've never seen any two that look the same.

I can tell them apart. Go to the airport and watch people go all day long. You can tell if you've seen that person come by before or not.

They're all unique. How is the human mind able to distinguish so many faces and keep them all straight? And the more you know people, the more distinct they become. And no two fingerprints are the same.

Why did God do that? He is telling us something. Every human life is unique. Nobody gets exactly the same genetic start.

Nobody has exactly the same environment. You can grow up in exactly the same house with exactly the same parents. You can be twins.

And you don't end up being the same. You make different choices. You fall in love with different people.

You get different jobs. You move to different towns. It's fascinating to read twin studies.

But what's the point? What is the point of all of this? God set up certain generations to be symbolic generations and to communicate eternal truths. What kind of judgment is in store for people who reject God and follow the harlot and relate themselves to the harlot who rides the beast, who go for false religion, who believe the lie? The judgment is detailed in the first chapters that tell us about Israel. And it is detailed in the last chapters of human history that tell us about Israel.

And this 70th week of Daniel generation, this fall of Babylon the Great, it is designed to communicate an eternal, timeless truth. Everybody that has gone with the harlot is going to suffer this level of judgment. We have no comprehension of the judgments of God.

We have warnings in Scripture. You need to pay attention. You need to watch and pray.

Remember our watch and pray study? Every thought captive for Christ. Every thought,

every word, what has been whispered in secret will be spoken on the housetops, Jesus said. And we just can't conceive it.

We can't comprehend it. We think, what do you mean every word, every action? God is so much bigger than we are. It is like ants trying to comprehend the builders of cities and skyscrapers and walking up to the nearest granite wall and saying, it must have been a really big ant that piled this stuff together and moved this rock upright.

It is so incomprehensible. So when you look at this chapter, after these things, look at chapter 18. I saw an angel coming down from heaven having great authority.

The earth was illuminated with his glory. This communication from this angel to John is designed to illuminate what we see on the earth. Fret not yourself because of evil men, it tells us, back in the Old Testament.

Why? Judgment. Fair judgment. Righteous judgment.

Perfect judgment. And absolutely inevitable judgment is coming on everyone. Nobody gets away with anything.

I was very irked when I went over and was defending freedom and shooting bullets on behalf of my country to return and find that somebody had broken into my car and busted up my dashboard and tried unsuccessfully to steal my stereo. And I thought, you ingrate. And you have this, I mean it's a minor thing, but you have this sense of violation.

Somebody has come in and messed with your stuff and tried to take it. Long gone. Never caught.

I've had three nice bicycles stolen. These are petty things, I know. But it irks me.

And I think it is so unjust. Many people have suffered horrible crimes and the perpetrator was never caught. My brother-in-law was murdered and the perpetrator was never caught.

Murdered. No justice in this life. No justice whatsoever.

One would tend to be frustrated. One would tend to be angry. One would tend to shake their fist and say, where is God when children are tortured? You've had this stuff in the news recently about little girls suffering horribly and being killed.

And it has ever been thus. And you say, where is God? Well, here's your answer. Here is God.

And this is the symbolic judgment that tells us that every perpetrator will come to justice. Great crimes. Small crimes.

Murders. Thefts. Everyone is in the eye of God.

Nothing is overlooked. Nothing is missed. The thoughts and intents of the heart are all recorded.

Small and great. God is just as much in the microscopic world as He is in the macroscopic world. And the heavens declare the glory of God.

The firmament declares His handiwork. Creation manifests His eternal Godhead and deity. Nothing escapes His notice.

You look in the electron microscope level and you see the handiwork of God and His attention to detail. And you realize it's all in His hands. These judgments are representative.

So what is our application? It's fine to speculate on who's the bear with the ribs in his teeth and what's going to happen in Revelation and people get all wild and happy about prophetic scripture. But what counts is what kind of people are we after we look at it. James says there are people who look into the perfect law of liberty like a mirror and then walk away and straightway forget what they saw.

What should we take away from our study of Revelation? If we don't remember anything else, what should we remember? God is a God of righteousness and justice. This is a book of ultimate judgment and the assurance that God's righteousness is going to prevail. Those who have been martyred, God says wait a while.

Justice is coming. If we are wronged in this life, if we get a raw deal, if we have to labor along under whatever we consider to be an injustice, the antidote, the answer, the comfort is faith. God is in His heaven.

Everything is going to be made right. And for those who disregard God, who don't consider Him to be an important part of their life, there is an equal inevitability. Judgment is coming.

Now my question is, I look at myself and I know that I ought to be in line for pretty much everything that's written in this book. What is the avenue of escape? How can we flee to the hills and not fall under this judgment? Remember the psalmist says, I forget the exact wording, I cast my eyes on the hills for whence cometh my strength? Whence cometh my help? We, through Jesus Christ, have this amazing, amazing gift of grace. We can acknowledge our sins and God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

David, the man who committed adultery. David, the man who committed murder. David, the man who was faithless and it resulted in the death of thousands of people in the nation, says in Psalm 51, Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. And in other psalms he says, I walk before God in mine integrity. I walk before God in integrity.

This is the man who let the spit run down his beard and scrabbled on the gates of Gath, dragging Goliath's sword behind him. This is the man who lied and got 80 priests at Nob slaughtered. And yet he says, I am clean, I am washed, and I walk before God in my integrity and God has prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

My cup runs over. Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and after that I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And we've seen the fulfillment of that in those last chapters of Ezekiel where David himself, the prince, is going to sit in that place of privilege in the eastern gate vestibule and watch the sacrifices being offered.

He has the best seat in the house. He's the only one that can go in there and sit and be as close to the altar as any non-priest can ever get. That's David.

Why? Because he claimed God's grace and it's the grace that's available to you and it's the grace that's available to me. All we have to do is claim it. Our sins are separated from us as far as the east is from the west.

And none of these judgments apply to us anymore. God's mercies are renewed every morning. We start with a clean slate.

We appropriate the righteousness of Christ by faith. Hebrews chapter 11, by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith. Abraham, who had a son with the wrong woman and gave birth to the Ishmaelites and 17 other sons with Keturah, who have been a thorn and plague to his legitimate heirs ever since, waited for a city whose founder and builder is God.

And he's going to sit down with Isaac and Jacob and the rest of the sanctified, glorified, qualified saints in the city. Jesus stated so in Luke chapter 17. You will see many coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom.

Jacob, look at the mistakes that guy made. And he's there. Why? For the same reason that you and I are going to be qualified and can be qualified to be overcomers, to walk with Christ in white, to have a white stone and a new name and the hidden manna and all those other wonderful promises in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. Because of the work of Jesus Christ that is only appropriated by faith.

It's trust. It is claiming what is ours by right of birth because of the work of Jesus Christ. As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, authority to be the sons of God.

But you have to cash it in. We have to claim it. That's what these people never do.

No matter what God does, no matter how many demonstrations of His eternal power and

Godhead He gives, they never turn. Seeing, they see and do not perceive. Hearing, they hear and do not understand.

Their heart is calloused over and grown cold and they leave themselves no other future but judgment. It is true for every human being that has ever lived from Adam down to the last person that's born in the millennial kingdom. We all are accountable to God for our decisions.

That's the import. That is the thrust and the message of Revelation and that's why this book is important for Christians to study. Even though a lot of it doesn't apply directly to us, it's just as important as studying the Old Testament.

It ought to motivate us and encourage us to lay claim to the grace of God and avoid wrath. We are not of the night or of the darkness that we should suffer wrath. Paul argues it in Thessalonians.

He argues it in Philippians. He argues it in Galatians. Just as God says to Israel, all day long I have held up my hands to a disobedient and stiff-necked people.

Why will you die, O house of Israel? There's no good reason for it. All we have to do is claim the grace of God by faith. None of this has to happen unless people choose it.

Well, that's our overview and background. We'll resume with our more detailed study in Revelation 18 when we come back from the break.