

Judgment on Egypt and Sodom, 2

Last Things

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Bible Text: Exodus 19:16-19; Revelation 11:1-14
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Revelation chapter 8, page 1,921, beginning at verse 1.

1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

The word of the Lord.

Help me, Lord, to pull things together in this magnificent symphony that you have written for us that sums up the entire Bible with themes from every book, from Genesis to Malachi. Lord, please bless us as we meditate on your word and give me anointing and power, Lord, for without the power of the Holy Spirit, I am useless. Help, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The first thing that we notice in all of this, as the angel has mixed the fire from the altar with the prayers of the saints, is a scene that is reminiscent of Exodus chapter 19. You may recall the scene, Exodus 19.

The Jewish people are at the foot of Mount Sinai. God has rescued them out of the bondage of Egypt. God visited ten plagues on the Egyptians, climaxing in the death of the firstborn. But on every home, whether they

were a Gentile or one of the children of Israel, on every home where the blood was splattered on the top and the side posts of the door, every one of those homes were exempt from the *malakh ha-mavet* (מַלְאֲכֵי הַמָּוֶת), the angel of death who passed over Egypt and killed the firstborn, from Pharaoh all the way down to the lowest servant, and even the firstborn of animals.

And so God rescues Israel out of Egyptian bondage, a place of cruel bondage, a place where Joseph had once gone and brought his fellow Israelites to live, and Israel had prospered under the hand of Joseph's administration. But then there arose a king who knew not Joseph, and in those days, they became cruel taskmasters, brutalizing, killing, murdering, demanding abortion of the male children and all these things (Exodus 1:8-22), and so God rescues the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage.

He brings them to a crisis point, leading them where Pharaoh's army is on one side and the Red Sea, *Yom Suph* (יַם סוּף, *yām sūp*), is on the other. and they don't know what to do. They're terrified. And God tells Moses what to do and he says, "Stand still and see the salvation of God."

God brings his people into tough straits so that he may demonstrate himself mighty and his power is great. And what happens as Moses does what God says? The pillar of fire turns and gets between them and the Egyptians and the *Yom Suph*, the Red Sea, parts so that God's people cross over. And again, it's a mixed multitude. It's not only the sons of Israel, there's a mixed multitude there (Exodus 12:38), and they pass over dry on the floor of that sea, and we're told by Paul that they were all baptized into Moses in the sea (1 Corinthians 10:2, "They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.").

But who got immersed? God's people came out of the Red Sea dry. When the Egyptians, when God lifts the cloud, and they decide to pursue the Israelites, suddenly the walls of water on both sides collapse and the Egyptians are immersed, not baptized. That's a little bit of a joke.

So anyhow, God delivers his people, and they wander in the desert and eventually they end up at Mount Sinai, and one of the great experiences of my life and Sandy's life was in the late spring of 2008. She and her sister and I rented camels at the base of Mount Sinai and climbed up that mountain in the pitch dark until the camels could go no further. And then when you're up that high, you don't realize how high you are and how dangerous it is, we

made our way keeping our night vision as focused as possible as we followed the feet of those and the hands of those ahead of us and climbed up Mount Sinai so that we could watch the sun rise over the desert from Mount Sinai.

It's an amazing place. And on the top of that mountain is a Jewish presence, Islamic presence, and a Christian presence. It's amazing. People can get along.

So Mount Sinai, but what was it that Israel witnessed? Holding your hand there in Revelation 8, turn back for a moment to Exodus chapter 19 because this is exactly what we're seeing here. Exodus chapter 19 and let's look there, page 117, page 117, verse 16.

16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

So that's what you find, isn't it, there in Revelation chapter 8 on page 1,922, and that is in verse 5, "Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake." And so that's the background.

Now as you read further here, you discover if you look at each of the first four trumpets, and I've written it out in the bulletin so you may want to mark it, when you come to the first trumpet, you have there in verse 7,

7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

And that corresponds to Exodus chapter 9 verses 22 to 26, one of the plagues God visited on the Egyptians. And then you go further in verse 8,

8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

And if you look at that, you see that corresponds to Exodus chapter 7, verses 14 to 25. And then we come to the third trumpet in verse 10.

10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water—11 the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

And that, you see, corresponds to Exodus chapter 15, verses 26 and 27 and also echoes Exodus 7:14-25. And finally, the fourth trumpet.

12 The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

And that corresponds to Exodus chapter 10, verses 21 to 23.

So we see something very clearly here, don't we, that this is modeled in particular out of the book of Exodus. These judgments on Egypt, the great oppressor of the Israelites, Egypt, these are the plagues that fell there, but there's some things we notice that are different.

In the case of Exodus, these things only pertained to that land in the northern tip of Africa, which we call Egypt. Only there. These were not worldwide phenomena. But what we have in the book of Revelation is a set of worldwide phenomena but not total, fully, and absolutely so. It's only a third. I'm not sure of all the reasons for that. But what we're dealing with here is not Egypt so much as the world, but not everything in the world. So the plagues of Egypt in these first four trumpets are there.

Now I want to think about the trumpets for a moment. If you hold your hand there and turn back to Numbers 10, to the book of Numbers chapter 10, you see something there and that's this. Numbers 10 and that's page 222. "The LORD said to Moses: 'Make two trumpets of hammered silver.'"

Now, this is a different word (ḥaṣōṣerāh, חֲצֹצְרֵת) than the normal word that is found in the Old Testament for blowing an alarm or blowing a trumpet. That's the shofar (šôpār, שׁוֹפָר). That's a ram's horn that's carved out so that someone can blow it.

These are actually made out of silver, and you see they have various functions for calling the community together, for having the camp set out:

"When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. If only one is sounded, the leaders—the heads of the clans of Israel—are to assemble before you. (Numbers 10:3)

Verse 5: "When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out," and so on. This is about moving them through. And then he says, very striking, he says in verse 8:

The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come." (He says) "When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies. (Numbers 10:8-9)

So what do we have in Revelation chapter 8? We have these four trumpets. They're a part for a whole, and it's the sounding of the trumpet of the Son of God going forth to war. It's the sounding of the trumpets for the Son of God leading his people into war. What war?

Well, if we look at this again and reflect on it, and if we turn over to chapter 11, as we saw last week, he says something rather striking, and that's page 1,924. And he says—and we'll get to these witnesses in a moment, in Revelation 11:8, "Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom," we looked at that last week, "and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

Where in Egypt was Jesus crucified? Was he crucified in Memphis? In Alexandria? In Giza? Where was he crucified? Where in Sodom was Jesus crucified? You see, what he's saying here is the city is Jerusalem. Where was Jesus crucified? He was crucified in Jerusalem, and he says, "which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt," and we saw last week why it's figuratively called Sodom, because the Old Testament prophets over and over and over again said of the city of Jerusalem, "You're Sodom and Gomorrah," and Jesus himself—I won't re-preach last week's sermon, Jesus himself said that it would be more tolerable for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment, than for those people who heard him preach and who witnessed his miracles (Isaiah 1:10; Ezekiel 16:46-52; Matthew 10:15; 11:23; Luke 10:12).

In other words, God has a standard of judgment, and that standard of judgment is this on the day of judgment: to whom much is given, much will be required, to whom little is given, little will be required. That servant who knew his master's will and did not do it will be beaten with many stripes. That servant who did not know his master's will and didn't do it will be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:47-48). There are degrees of punishment in the hereafter.

And so again, Jerusalem is here identified with Sodom, and it's also identified with Egypt. Why? Well, now there's something interesting, isn't it? The Egyptians were the great oppressors of the Lord's people throughout history until the time when Gog and Magog came out of the north.

Who's Gog and Magog? You see, what happens is Egypt is always the great enemy of God's people until the enemies out of the north, beginning with the Assyrian Empire and continuing on with the Babylonian Empire, and continuing on with the Persian Empire, and continuing on with the great oppressor of God's people, the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great and his four generals.

And so here's what you have, you have here Egypt stands for the enemy of God's people until the time of the northern empires coming and the barbarians out of the north who hated God.

Now there's something else we notice here, and that's this, and we pick it up in chapter 11 and verse 1, page 1,924.

1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, 'Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. 3 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. (Revelation 11:1-3)

And that takes us back to the book of Daniel, which we won't go back to today because I already preached on this a year and a half ago, that takes us back to the time when under the Greeks a man by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes, the greatest persecutor of the Jewish people in the old world, arose and he sacrifices a pig on God's altar in Jerusalem to the Greek god Zeus.

The king of the North (Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, 175-164 BC) will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country . . . Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant . . . His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. (Daniel 11:28-31)

Out of one of them came another horn (Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, 175-164 BC), which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of rebellion, the host of the saints and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled-the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings (just short of seven Jewish

years.); then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.” (Daniel 8:9-14)

The seven-year time frame of Hellenistic Syrian desecration of the Temple became the foreshadowing and type of the oppression of the people of God under worldly authority, and Antiochus Epiphanes is a picture of the future Man of Sin. The more we understand what happened under him, the better picture we have of the Man of Sin, whose motives for a one world government and common culture appear good and humane but are beastly in the end. “Antiochus’ ambition was to use the common culture of Hellenism to unify the diversity of the Seleucid empire.” (Whitehorne, J. (1992). Antiochus (Person). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. (New York: Doubleday), Vol. 1, p. 270)

The dreadful persecution that this Greek tyrant inflicted on God’s people is recorded in several places, including Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* and the first four chapters of First Maccabees.

The Lord Jesus commented on these scriptures and said that they would be fulfilled after his death in the destruction of Jerusalem. This occurred in AD 70 under the Roman prince, Titus the son of Vespasian (Matthew 24:15 ff; Luke 21:20-24). Thus, the last, or seventieth seven of Daniel is divided into two sections: the earthly ministry of Christ which was terminated by his being cut off on the cross, and the last half of the week which would include the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Gabriel does not tell Daniel when the last half of the week ends. But it is interesting to observe that both Daniel and Revelation refer to a period of time that adds up to one half of seven years.

It is sometimes referred to as 42 months (Revelation 11:2; 13:5), or 1260 days (Revelation 11:3; 12:6), and rather cryptically as “a time, times and half a time” (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14).

This period of time seems to stretch from Christ's ascension to his second coming (Revelation 12:5; 14:14) but has a particular focus on the time of the manifestation of the Antichrist, the terrible time of persecution just before the Second Coming of Christ.

A survey of this history is helpful, not only for understanding the basis for Hanukkah, but also for understanding the coming of the Lord Jesus, both in his birth and in his return. That's one reason why observing Hanukkah fits in so well with the Christian season of Advent, pointing as it does to our Lord's two advents. Daniel is concerned with the exile of the Jews and how they survived under foreign oppression. It looks ahead not only to a return from the exile but to a restoration of the theocratic kingship under a descendant of King David.

The nine candles of Hanukkah point to the triumph of God's people over an anti-Christ figure who reigned over a century and a half before the Lord Jesus was born, Antiochus Epiphanes. But that ancient tyrant is a foreshadowing of the final enemy of the people of the Lord, the one "whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

The light of Hanukkah points to the light shining in the darkness, and the ultimate triumph of the light, through him who is the Light of the world (John 8:12).

He's the great abomination of desolation. He's not the only one. He's the great abomination of desolation and so the sacrifices terminate around 168-167 BC for three and a half years.

In December 167 B.C. (on 25 Kislev) the first pagan sacrifice was performed on the altar to Zeus which had been erected over the altar of burnt offering in the temple: this is "the abomination of desolation" alluded to in Dan 11:31 and 12:11 (cf. 1 Macc 1:54; Mark 13:14 in a Gk version). (Whitehorne, *op. cit.*)

Three and a half years corresponds to 42 months, corresponds to 1,260 days. So this is a pattern taken out of the book of Daniel. Remember the quote that

I gave several weeks ago, that the book of Revelation is best understood as a symphony that takes a theme from here and a theme from there and weaves them together into this magnificent symphony that sums up the entirety of Scripture.

The unity of John's book, then, is neither chronological nor arithmetical, but artistic, like that of a musical theme with variations, each variation adding something new to the significance of the whole composition. This is the only view which does adequate justice to the double fact that each new series of visions both recapitulates and develops the themes already stated in what has gone before. (G. B. Caird (1966), *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: Black), p. 106)

And so here we have it. It's given over to the Gentiles. The city of Jerusalem, after it had already been conquered and destroyed by the Babylonian Empire in 586 BC, once again experiences desolation.

The Jewish people returned from Babylonian captivity exactly 70 years after they were sent into captivity. And the temple, which was destroyed in 586 BC, is rebuilt and completed exactly 70 years later in 516 BC.

Two 70-year periods.

So it's rebuilt and the Jewish people enjoy some freedom, but they're always under an outside governor from the time Israel is destroyed by the Assyrian Empire, on with the Babylonian, on with the Persian, and on with the Greeks. And so what happens is this: They're not free.

In fact, from the day that the last king of Judah is captured by the Babylonians and has his sons murdered in front of his eyes and then his eyes put out and he's taken to Babylon as a prisoner, from that time on, Israel, Judah never had another king (2 Kings 25:6-7).

You say, "Well, I thought Herod was a king?" Herod was not a descendant of David. Herod was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau, who intermarried with Israelite people. There never was another king to sit on the throne of David from the time the Babylonians killed him.

Now, we read further, so the Gentiles ruled Jerusalem for 1,260 days, three and a half years, 42 months, and that is taken from that theme out of the book of Daniel. It's a theme like Pachelbel's Canon, it's a theme that's worked out in the book of Revelation, you see here. And now notice what else we see in verse 3.

3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. (Revelation 11:3-4)

What's that taken from? It's taken from the book of Zechariah, the next to the last book of our Old Testament, Zechariah (Zechariah 4:11-14). And then he says,

5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. (Revelation 11:5)

Now we get a clue here in that and in the next verse.

6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. (Revelation 11:6)

Who does this remind us of? It reminds us of the two great leaders of the Old Testament. We call the first five books of the Bible the Torah, the books of Moses, and all of these things are true of Moses. He's the one that called down all these plagues under God's instruction, called them down on Egypt.

And there's another man. Who is the greatest of all of the prophets of the Old Testament? Who is the man who, along with Enoch, never died? Remember, Moses died but God sent his angels to resurrect his body and take him to heaven bodily (Jude 9), that's why he and this other man are with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Who is on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord Jesus Christ? Who is there physically, bodily present with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-5), who was taken up in a

chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11-12). And you remember that Elijah called down fire (2 Kings 1:10, 12, 14). All these things. And so, who are the two witnesses?

You know, there's so much speculation on it because we fail to understand this fundamental truth: The things that happen in the book of Revelation happened in the first century, but they are recapitulated again and again and again in a different form throughout history until the final climax near the time of our Lord's return.

So who are the two witnesses? Who are they? Joe Biden and Donald Trump? Who are the two witnesses? There is all this speculation, who are the two witnesses? Well, the Bible is crystal clear at this point. Who are the two witnesses?

It is Moses who represents the first part of the Old Testament, and it is Elijah who represents the second part.

Remember that the Jewish people understood of their Bible, these two great divisions, and later on they split the prophets into two so that in the Hebrew Bible, which is called the Tanakh, the Torah, the Nevi'im, the prophets, and the Ketuvim are the songs or writings or the Psalms, and Jesus refers to it that way in the gospel of Luke chapter 24 (תּוֹרָה, כְּתוּבִים, לִבְיָאִים, Luke 24:44).

The law, the prophets, and the writings. But the other way, the normal way, the less sophisticated way is to refer to the Old Testament, what we call the Old Testament, but no Jewish person would ever refer to it as the Old Testament. Why? Because if it's the Old Testament, it means that it's outdated, worn out and is replaced by the New Testament, the New Covenant that Jeremiah prophesies about (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 7:18-19; 8:7-13).

So who are the two witnesses? They're Moses and Elijah, those same ones who stood on the Mount of Transfiguration and met with the Lord Jesus Christ, and you see that so clearly in what they do. Verse 6,

6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. 7 Now when they have

finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Again, what is this? It's taking a theme, again like Pachelbel's Canon, it's taking a theme out of the Old Testament, theme of the Song of Moses out of the Torah, and a theme of the prophets, the Nevi'im, with Elijah being the great prophet of the Old Testament, and it's weaving it together into a symphony that pointed to the first century of the Christian Era, but it isn't exhausted there. There will be a recapitulation of this in the future.

Now let's notice something else. Verse 9,

9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial.

Let me tell you something about Jews and Muslims. This is very important. Bodies have to be buried within 24 hours. Bodies have to be buried within 24 hours. If a body isn't buried within 24 hours, that's a terrible, terrible thing for both Jews and Muslims, children of Abraham.

And so what happens here is these two witnesses are refused burial. Is this literally Moses come back physically, and Elijah come back physically? No, they are part of the great theme here of the whole Old Testament.

The whole Old Testament is a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. What he's saying here by weaving these themes from the Old Testament together is that the entirety of the Hebrew Bible is the Testament of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the one who inspired it to be written by his Holy Spirit:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the

sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. (1 Peter 1:10-11)

And so it is the witness of the entire Tanakh, the entire—what we call the Old Testament—that the Lord Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.

And what we find here is that in spite of the infallible proof that the Bible teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament, in spite of that, because of hard hearts, because of rebellions, they deny it, just as they were led to believe when the high priest bribed the Roman guards and told them that Jesus' disciples stole the body (2 Corinthians 3:12-18).

In other words, they believed a lie, and it was a lie that was spread from their political religious leaders (Matthew 28:11-15).

But remember this, if you look at the book of Acts, the Jewish people in huge numbers embraced the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, King, and Lord. You see this throughout the book of Acts (Acts 5:14). You see the priests in huge numbers, not simply Levites, the priests, the people who could go inside the temple itself to trim the lamps and so on and to deal with the showbread (“And a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith,” Acts 6:7).

The priests, large numbers of the priests embraced the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and Messiah because they read the Tanakh, they read the law and the prophets and they understood, “This Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified under the inspiration of our leaders actually did rise from the dead and he, we believe, is the true Son of God. He is the true Messiah, and we accept him as Lord and Savior.”

But what about those that rejected it? What about those that believed the lies, bribed by the high priests? They're given over to a lie. Their minds become darkened. They cannot believe. They refuse to believe. The pride is overwhelming, and they refuse to bow their knees to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ who is Israel's Messiah (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

And we see a celebration here and it says in verse 10, If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.

10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. (Revelation 11:10)

And I'm going to say this, there's an application in 2023. Bible preaching torments people. Never forget it. Bible preaching torments people. It makes them angry. It makes them furious.

I'll never forget, and I've told you the story before. I learned to preach on street corners because on street corners you've got to hold people's attention, or it's a waste of time, and so I always attempt constantly to be surveying the congregation and to see whether people are with me or not with me.

And I'll never forget, I was preaching on the streets of Ashville where the police department allowed us to preach, and I was preaching outside of a bar, and I've never needed amplification because uh... my voice coach trained me to sing by pounding scales with his right hand and punching me in the gut with his left, so he taught me to project.

And so there I am preaching outside this bar, and I can tell you what must have been going on inside. There were those guys, and they were thinking about the grandmother who raised them. They were thinking about a praying grandmother, and they're saying to the bartender, "Shut that man up, or I'm leaving!"

And in spite of all the salty peanuts, the beer wasn't doing its job, and so what does the guy do? I'll never forget it as long as I live. He opens the door with a shotgun, and he points it right at me, and he motions for me to quit, and that's when you know that that's the 23rd stanza of "Just As I Am," and it's time to end the altar call.

You need to understand, need to understand that Bible preaching torments people. Why? Because if it's not Bible preaching, it's flattery. All you got to do is look at a majority, not all, of the famous preachers in modern America, and they're all about flattery. You want to feel good, and it's about feel-good preaching. Flattery. "Oh, you're so wonderful."

I will never forget, I will never forget a preacher one time saying when I went to a Thanksgiving service in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1972, and he's preaching, and he's talking about the evils of society, and then he said this, "I'm not talking about any of you here."

And I thought to myself, "Why in the world are you even in a pulpit? You shouldn't be in a pulpit if you're not talking about the sins of people there."

Do I try to hit your sins? Yes. Of course, I do. And I trust the power of the Holy Spirit to take the written word and apply it to your heart and my heart because guess what? When I preach to you, I've got three fingers pointing back at me. I always preach to myself. Revelation comes to me while I'm preaching because I see my own heart and how deeply I need the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now notice something else in verse 11, this very short period, which I think is also a picture of what we're going to see at the time of the Lord's return, a very brief period, three and a half days of tribulation,

11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. 13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. (Revelation 11:11-14)

What may we say here? I could be wrong, again, remember this is taken out of themes from the entire Old Testament from Genesis, Zechariah in particular. I believe this is what we call the rapture of the church. What do I mean by that?

Do I believe in a future seven-year tribulation period? I can't reconcile that with the Bible. I really can't. I have studied the Bible continually over and over again since I became a Christian in 1964.

What I see is that there is a period of intense suffering for God's people just before the return of Christ, and that's the three and a half days.

There's three and a half years of tribulation and trouble. When does that begin? It begins when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and continues on throughout our era till the Lord returns.

You say, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you've got me all confused." Well, go back and look at my sermons in Daniel. Anyhow, what is this?

This, I believe, is what we call the rapture of the church, and there's a period of suffering on this earth that intensifies until the Lord returns. It's been going on for 2,000 years, persecuting the church, and we look at the world today, the persecution of Christians around the world. And during that time of suffering, because living in the world today on October 22nd, 2023, you're in a time of suffering, as I shared a prayer request for a family member during prayer time. A time of suffering, a time of suffering, a time of pain, a time of persecution, a time of losing a job because you believe in the Lord Jesus, a time of losing a job because you won't deny biblical standards of truth.

And yet, in the middle of all that as God pours out his cataclysmic judgment on our world before the Lord Jesus Christ comes in judgment on our earth, he will do what he did in the first century. He rescued believers out of the city of Jerusalem.

They remembered his words that Jerusalem, when they saw the armies of the Gentiles, they were to flee from Jerusalem, and they would be preserved. And they were. They escaped all of those things, believers did, that happened to Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24).

And so, in our time, as prophecy recapitulates, God will pour out his wrath on our earth in very intense ways, but before the final outpouring of wrath on the earth, the trumpet sounds. The voice shouts, "Come up here!"

And you know, dear ones, I am so grateful that I know the Lord Jesus Christ, because as the world gets worse and worse, as persecution becomes more intense and more global, as crazy people try to attempt to impose a "New World Order," turning sometimes a democratic republic into tyranny in an

empire—you have to remember this: They'll never succeed because the Lord Jesus Christ has already established a "New World Order."

And if anyone be in Christ, he is part of that new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and that's why I know that I'm going to be with the Lord Jesus Christ when he shouts from heaven and says, "Come up here!"

I want to escape the final outpouring of the wrath of God on a rebel planet that is coming in the future through fire. Through fire. Through fire.

And if you're watching and aren't here this morning, let me urge you to close with Christ. Our world is a powder keg. It's getting worse and worse and worse, increasingly severe.

Chinese warships off the coast of the Middle East, American warships off the coast of the Middle East, all of these troubles and tribulations. We are closer to a great nuclear holocaust than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis, which began, today is the anniversary of that horrible event (President Kennedy addressed our nation on October 23, 1962, 61 years ago today.)

It was saved by a Russian submarine commander who countermanded the orders of the two officers on that sub to launch a nuclear missile at us (Vasily Arkhipov). Wow!

We're hanging by a thread. That close. If I were you, I would be sure that I was truly a Christian, not somebody that simply walked an aisle and shook a preacher's hand, not somebody who once joined a church but has no interest in being with believers today, I would make sure that I had repented of my sins and put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we pray.

Lord, take this word and use it to advance your kingdom in our own hearts that we may be like Moses and Elijah, witnesses to the Lord Jesus, who take the whole of Scripture and share it with others that we might win them to Christ. We pray,

Lord, because there will be no peace in the current conflict until both the descendants of Abraham bow their knees to the Son of God and embrace him as he's offered in the gospel.

*Lord, grant it be so, for Jesus' sake.
Amen.*