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**Revelation - An Introduction**

**Revelation 1:1-3**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just want to thank you for again the gift of this place, the gift of the body of Christ, the gift of your Son. We also want to pray for the gift of your word, Lord, I praise you and thank you for the gift of the book of Revelation as well. And I pray especially for the presence of your Holy Spirit, I pray for your wisdom to abide with us, I pray that you would accompany us on this journey, that you'd give us the ability to take in this material because we know without your spirit it's an impossible task. And so we pray your grace, we pray your insight and we pray you'd make this of permanent value; and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well we will be working our way for the next who knows through the book of Revelation. So without further adieu let's get started right at the very beginning. This is *Revelation 1:1-3*. It says: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word*

*of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.*

Well the word revelation, it's from the Greek word apokalupsis, we use the term apocalypse, which I think is an unfortunate term because the word kind of conjures up images that are far more Hollywood than they are scriptural. And people hear the book of Revelation and they immediately start thinking apocalyptically, about wars and battles and stars falling from the sky and people dying and scorpions coming out of the ground and people walking around with the mark of the beast on their foreheads or their wrists. Most folks think that the book of Revelation is coded language about the end of the world and if only we can just unlock the code we can actually look into the future. Well that's exactly what this book is not written for. And to get what that is, we have only to look at the opening sentence: It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is what is being revealed.

You know, years ago I tried to define the word apokalupsis or revelation because it's kind of a unique word. I tried to do it by describing an annual event that I experienced when I was growing up. Each year in the fall my dad would take us boys out to the

local arena for the annual car show. Every year manufacturers, they held these shows to promote their latest models and along with all kinds of displays they always had some kind of fancy car at the center of the display and it was always under a tarp. And at just the right moment, they would lower the lights, the music would come on and a spotlight would be on this covered car and after some fanfare a model would come up and grab the tarp and yank it off the car. That was what was known as the ta-da moment because it was literally to say ta-da and here's this car. Well what's being revealed in this book, in fact the ta-da moment is not a car, it's the Savior of the world. The King of the universe is beginning to reveal himself as King, as Ruler. It's the Revelation of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ. It is the revealing of what's long been concealed.

I mean I don't think we begin to grasp the extent of the emptying -- we call it the kenosis -- that Christ underwent in order to take on human flesh. We know for a fact that God said any full exposure by a human being to who God truly is would be instantly fatal. God told Moses whom he regarded as a friend that -- quote -- *"No man can see me and live."* For Jesus Christ to walk this earth having all the qualities of a mere human being required an extraordinary amount of power truncated, restricted and hidden simply so God could interact with us as a fellow human

being.

We saw hints of what Jesus was actually like in the miracles that he performed, and we know of only one or two occasions where hints of who Jesus really was were actually partially revealed. You know, one of them was at his baptism where God descended as a dove and God himself spoke directly; but the other was the transfiguration where Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on the mountainside, and there he met with Moses and Elijah. And for a brief moment at that time Jesus began to take on some of the glory that actually belonged to him for all time before he had even come to earth. And if you remember, the reaction of the disciples was one of absolute terror.

It's described in *Mark 9*, starting at verse 2. It says: *And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.*

Peter's essentially babbling, he's just kind of opening his mouth and just whatever is coming out because he's completely terrified. You see, for the 33 years that Jesus was here on earth, he had emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant being born in the likeness of man and being born in the likeness of us was who Jesus became but that's not who Jesus was. And the book of Revelation is the beginning of the revelation of who Jesus really is. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ and the events that are going to unfold to reveal him as King. See, the ultimate point of the book is not to show us some secret code that the world is going to end by but instead to begin the process of revealing just who the Lord Jesus Christ really is.

John MacArthur says: "Far from being the mysterious, incomprehensible book many imagine it to be, Revelation's purpose is to reveal truth, not to obscure it. That fact is evident in its title, 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ' (Rev 1:1), primarily in His second coming glory."

Now is the book hard to understand? Well, let me answer that question with a question: Should it be simple? You know, I have a cat that I have a love-hate relationship with -- actually it's more annoyed-dislike relationship with this cat based on the fact that one time it used our shower as a litter box, and I stepped into the

shower not realizing that and stepped in something else in the shower and ever since then me and the cat have not been on good terms. You know, I heard someone say, if a cat could text you, it wouldn't. That's what I think about cats. I find myself frequently talking to my cat even though I know it doesn't understand a single word that I'm saying. But what if I was serious about trying to explain what it means to be me to my cat? I think you all know it's not going to happen, I mean, there's absolutely no way for a creature this far below human to understand what it means to be human. I mean it's never going to understand sports or cooking or faith or hobbies or anything else that makes human life human because after all, it's just a cat. And the difference between human and feline is just simply too great for us to truly communicate to one another. But now consider the difference between the King and the Creator of the universe and us as his creatures, and we're human; he is divine. I mean how do humans think that we're going to suddenly figure out how the King of the universe who spoke the stars and the planets and all the life into being simply by the force of his word, how are we supposed to make our understanding of him simple?

It should encourage us to know that the very first readers and hearers of the book of Revelation, they also had a tough time understanding everything that John saw and heard. In fact even

John himself didn't immediately understand the meaning of everything that he saw and heard. You know, as one reviewer put it, a number of times John actually has to ask the angel who's guiding him through the experience questions like "What is that?" or "Who are they"?

Revelation is certainly a book filled with images and many of those images are bizarre and unique. I mean, there's the Son of Man holding seven stars in his hand, there's a lamb that appears to be slain having seven eyes and seven horns, there's a woman clothed with the sun giving birth to a great red dragon that seeks to kill the child being born -- or while a great red dragon seeks to kill that child being born. There's a beast that comes out of the sea that has ten horns and seven heads, there's another beast that comes from the earth that has two horns and speaks like a dragon, there's a woman who's sitting on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns and she's holding in her hand a cup full of abomination. Finally we have the last chapter detailing a holy city coming down out of heaven with the glory of God. You see, all of these incidents, they're so unique because they're designed to create images in our minds that are intended to drive the truth behind those images deep into our consciences.

One author Darrell Johnson points out that this is exactly what

advertising does today. I mean one of the things that you notice about advertising today is especially look at ads for cars. You see these ads for cars, they don't speak about the car's safety, about its efficiency, about its reliability, instead they just put out these powerful images of what owning the car represents with the intention of getting you to connect somehow with that image and then want to buy that car. Well that's what Johnson says about the imagery of Revelation. This is what he says. He says: "Imagery has the power to go deeper than mere words. Just ask the television advertising specialists. Imagery has the power to hook us deep inside. Images can quickly and effectively convey that which we struggle to put into words. Imagery goes beyond the intellect and through the emotions into the imagination, grabbing hold of us at the deepest recesses of our being. Imagery goes beyond the intellect and through the emotions into the imagination, informing the intellect and igniting the emotions. Imagery slowly, but surely, works on the intellect and emotions, changing the way that we see and hear and feel reality. And more than mere propositional truth, imagery sustains the new vision of reality." (Johnson, Darrell W.. *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (p. 22). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

I mean just consider the opening lines that I just read, the



opening lines in the book of Revelation, there's a statement in there I bet just went right over our collective heads. It goes directly to the fact that this book is so filled with these images that are designed to hook us in a specific way deep inside. John opens the book and I don't know if you remember but he said this is a book that's intended to be read aloud. I'll just repeat what he says. He says: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* There's no other book in scripture that offers a blessing to those who read it aloud, and that's because its imagery is not simply just to be read, it's supposed to be experienced.

So is this book unique? Well, it absolutely is. I mean, for a while this book was excluded from the cannon of scripture simply because it is so unique. But understand, it was John's intent to reveal Jesus to us within the context of a pastoral letter that is written to a suffering church. This was not some magically hidden treatise only to be understood at the end of time but a pastoral letter encouraging a church that was undergoing severe persecution.

At the time that John wrote Revelation Nero's persecution, that was terrible but that was a thing of the past. That had occurred in AD 65. It was now some 25 to 30 years later and persecution was just the normal, normative part of the church. I mean think about it, Peter had been crucified, Paul had been beheaded, James had been taken by the sword, Timothy had been murdered by a mob when he protested their worship of the goddess Diana and at the present time Rome was under the power of Domitian who demanded each and every individual offer personal worship to him. Well, John refused and he was arrested and banished to the island of Patmos where he wrote Revelation. And he's writing to a people who could understandably be struggling with this whole idea of a triumphant church.

And again Darrell Johnson puddle it this way, he says -- quote -- "'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near.' Where? Where is the kingdom? 'Jesus is Lord'—but where is the evidence? The church was having to operate behind closed doors. Immorality was gaining footholds in some of the congregations. John, the beloved pastor and bishop, is hauled off by the police into exile. Where is Jesus in all of this? (Johnson, Darrell W.. Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation (p. 24). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

Well, fast forward almost a couple millennia till today and according to Pew Research, the most persecuted religious group in the world by far is Christians. You know, according to *Voice of the Martyrs*, 5,898 Christians were martyred for their faith just last year, the year 2022. Of course those are numbers that are just the only ones that are verifiable. I mean, who knows what numbers were murdered in closed areas such as North Korea. A staggering 360 million Christians experienced -- quote -- high levels of persecution and discrimination according to *Voice of the Martyrs*. That's one out of every seven Christians in the world who may well be experiencing the same kind of existential crisis that John the Baptist experienced when he had his own personal persecution. I mean understand, after John had literally seen the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descend on Jesus, after God had audibly spoke in saying: "*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;*" after John himself said: "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" persecution drove him to a profound crisis of faith. Sitting in a wretched dungeon John felt his faith simply evaporating.

Luke's gospel describes it in *Luke 7*. It says: John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "*Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?*" Well Jesus' answer was incredibly gracious. He says: *And he answered them,*

*"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."*

And then he said to the crowd: *"What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'* I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

See, Jesus is doing what the whole book of Revelation is doing, it's bringing together two very separate kingdoms: The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of this world. And he's doing that because John has lost sight of the two kingdoms when the kingdom of this world has kind of overwhelmed him physically. And the one that Jesus identified as one of the greatest ever born in the kingdom of this world, if he could stumble like that, what do you suppose could happen to John's people?

I mean, these kingdoms that exist, Jesus makes it clear that John was one of the greatest saints that was ever born. But by the same token he acknowledges that there's a very different kingdom that he knows all about that we know nothing about where even the most humble citizen is considered greater than John. You see what he's

saying is these two kingdoms exist simultaneously. But Jesus wants our eyes focused not on this world, but on the other world. He says: *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* That's the kingdom that God wants us to focus on in the book of Revelation. And you know, Paul says what Jesus is saying and Paul refers to it as well in *2 Corinthians 4:18*. He says: *We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

You know, it's kind of like a Venn diagram. You all know what a Venn diagram looks like, it's just a set of intersecting circles. You could do a Venn diagram of the reality that Revelation is describing and it would consist of one circle that describes the kingdom of earth and another intersecting circle that describes the kingdom of heaven and where those circles intersect, that section right in the middle, that's where we are, right in the middle of everything. But you see, God wants us to fix our eyes on the other kingdom than the one that we're in, the kingdom of earth. He wants us to have influence on the other kingdom as well. He wants us to bring both of those kingdoms together and we find this repeated all the time through the book of Revelation. You may not have realized it but we all bore witness these last few days to how these two kingdoms can come together and what forces are desperately trying

to keep them apart.

I want to talk a bit about an event that took place in the sports world that transcended sport itself and it kind of linked both worlds in a way that we have seldom seen, in a way that really points out how we are right in the middle of these two worlds. I mean, how many times have you heard me say that we are at war and the war's between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness? Well last week that war kind of spilled out into the public and it spilled out through a football game, and it was all about prayer.

You see, if you view current events like Revelation does as really being an interaction between two different kingdoms, you can actually see in that an ongoing battle between these two kingdoms. But first we need to get a little brief history about the whole idea of football and prayer.

This is a history that goes back about thirty years. You see, when pro football teams began ending their games by having both teams come out on the field linking arms and praying for one another, that was an event that took place about thirty years ago and people looked at something like that and some thought it was charming and lovely, others thought it was phony and stupid depending on what worldview you had. Well the kingdom of this world hated the idea

that men would spend three hours locked in some form of elite combat and then follow that up by linking arms and offering up prayers for one another. One of the chaplains responsible for initiating this whole idea praying after games described it this way. He said: "(The prayer) is not really about who won and who lost. It's about honoring God and guys who really look at their talents and their abilities and the privilege to play in the NFL as a gift from God," said Buffalo Bills chaplain Fred Raines. "It's a chance just to give thanks."

Well the prayer actually got started in December of 1990. This is -- what had happened is ahead of time the chaplains for the New York Giants and the chaplains for the 49ers, San Francisco 49ers, they agreed to meet mid field after the game and decided they were going to have a brief session of prayer. What took place in 1990 is described in an article written back in 2014. This is actually what happened.

It says: "Watching from his seat in the stands, Richie (the San Fran Chaplain) was amazed by the size of the crowd gathered at the 50-yard line at the end of the game. However, he soon realized that the featured event was a fist-fight, not prayer. From his team's coaching booth above the field, Bratton (The NY Chaplain) looked down on the unfolding chaos. He saw his Christian players

standing around, unsure of where to go. Eventually, a small group formed away from the fray and the players shared a short prayer. Twenty-four seasons later, there is still a note of disbelief in the chaplains' voices when they tell the story. 'It's pretty phenomenal that this thing that goes back now over 20 years almost didn't happen because of a fight between two football players,' Richie said."

Well, you see actually it's been almost 30 years because this article itself is ten years old. But now, may say, well, wait a minute, I tune into NFL games occasionally and I've never seen anything remotely like that. You might wonder what this article is even talking about because you'll see nothing of a prayer circle not because it's not there but because the networks refuse to show it on television. And you say why? I say it all goes back to that Venn diagram and the two kingdoms intersecting. You see, the world hates even the idea of prayer and it will do whatever it can to monkey wrench it.

So when this whole idea of public prayer started, people began complaining that they -- they were having religion shoved down their throats. Of course people complain all the time that they don't like seeing half clad women writhing on stage during half time shows but those folks are ignored because the world has almost



complete control over its entertainment complex. Folks complain they pay good money to see people bash each other, they don't pay that money to see people pray. Well little did I know but I didn't realize the NFL responded by invoking the fraternization rule which said that players from opposing teams were not allowed to fraternize for more than two or three minutes; and if they did so, they would face large fines and penalties. Well, the players that decided to go out and actually pray, they did so in face of potentially large repercussions but now it's a standard part of every single NFL game even if it doesn't make it to the television screen.

Again, I want to put this in the context of John's letter. What does this have to do with the book of Revelation? You see, what John wants his people to understand is that their lives, just like ours, do not occur in a spiritual vacuum. John wanted his people to know that they were absolutely not alone and that what happens in heaven reverberates on earth and what happens on earth reverberates in heaven. I mean you might think this is nothing more than a minor league dispute over prayer, when it's actually part of a much bigger picture ultimately about the clash of two different kingdoms. You got to understand, the kingdom of this world hates the very notion of prayer and it will do everything it can to stop it, even if it's just some professional athletes

gathering after a game. And thus far they've been extremely successful.

Stop and think about it. In the last few years they've gotten the world to look at prayer more or less as a waste, as a joke, as something that stupid people do. I've mentioned before how it's become fashionable to attack people who offer up prayers for tragedies and they declare that prayer is a poor substitute for legislation or some other type of activity. I even quoted some of the response to folks going to prayer over mass shootings noting one meme, there was a meme that featured two people arriving in an empty van with a sign saying, "Don't worry, folks, the first load of your thoughts and prayers has arrived." That's how the world views prayer.

Well, it's against that backdrop of the prevailing attitude towards prayer that we saw a decided turn in a battle between the kingdoms last week. There was a game that took place a little over a week ago that took on far greater significance than simply a sporting event. It wound up being a display of just what happens at the intersection of these two kingdoms. I mean I happened to be watching the game when a Buffalo Bills player by the name of Damar Hamlin, he made a simple tackle, stood up and then just dropped like a sack of bricks. I told Janice right at that moment that

looked a lot more serious than I thought, a lot more serious than a simple injury which you see all the time if you watch football. But what unfolded next is still reverberating. You see, Hamlin had suffered a unique and devastating cardiac event where the chest is hit at the precise moment in the cardiac rhythm that causes it to cease. And when Hamlin hit the ground, for all intents and purposes, he was a dead man; no pulse, no respiration, nothing. But this didn't happen in a small town, this happened before 24 million people. And when the medical personnel got to him, they instantly recognized the seriousness of the situation, began frantically giving him CPR. And it was at this point that both teams just poured out of the benches and surrounded the player and those closest to the player could see that this was clearly a matter of life and death and you can see these massive hyper masculine men stunned and weeping. But what was most notable of all is that all of them were on their knees, all of them were praying. You see, every one of those players knew that it could just have easily been them lying lifeless with frantic medical people trying to get a pulse.

Well eventually they brought out those paddles, those AED paddles and they shocked his heart and they got it working again and as the ambulance took him away, everyone from player to staff to announcer to commentator, they again went directly to prayer.

Dan Orlovsky is a former NFL player, he's now turned commentator, he's got a show on ESPN, he did something absolutely astounding, so astounding *Newsweek* magazine commended on it. It said -- quote -- "Former NFL quarterback Dan Orlovsky has been receiving widespread praise after saying he was 'sad' and 'angry' during a prayer he shared in a live broadcast for Buffalo Bills player, Damar Hamlin. Paying tribute to the young athlete, former Detroit Lions QB Orlovsky took a moment during an ESPN broadcast to pray. His seemingly impromptu words were widely praised online, with millions of people viewing it live on air and across social media. On Tuesday, he said that while it perhaps wasn't the right time or place, he was about to pray for Hamlin."

I guarantee you, if he had done that a week before he would have been fired on the spot. But you see, no one was complaining about prayer that night. I think I know the reason why, I mean, this is a young man, a peak athlete in peak condition, he's lying near death as medical personnel are frantically working over him and suddenly it's on display for the entire country and people are genuinely terrified. Grown men are weeping and hugging each other trying to find some comfort and answers. And what do people do when they're actually terrified? You know what they do? They pray. Damar Hamlin, who turns out to be a committed Christian as

well, had literally hundreds of millions of people all praying for the same thing.

So we say, okay, what does this have to do with the book of Revelation? Well, you see the book of Revelation, number one, is a pastoral letter from John that's written to a suffering church that knows all about persecution. And we, thanks to communication, know more than any other generation that the church is still suffering great persecution. I mean thanks to *Voice of the Martyrs*, thanks to *Open Doors*, thanks to all these other ministries, we know, we know what's going on. I mean, no one in the United States has come even close to experiencing persecution but we can see the very same forces assembling and we can feel the hatred, we can feel the bitterness growing. We need to know that no matter what takes place, everything that takes place is according to plan. That's what the book of Revelation is going to tell us.

Secondly, the book of Revelation is not just pastoral, it's also prophetic. It's prophetic in what it declares about the kingdom of God, and it's prophetic about what it predicts about the unfolding of events in the future. And thirdly, it's going to culminate in what we call an apocalypse, not just a battle but an unveiling, an unfolding, a ta-da moment revealing a Christ whose only previous appearance has been as a suffering servant. And so the pastoral,

prophetic and apocalyptic parts of this book, they're all laid out in the very first sentence. It says: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.*

So what we have here is God giving the assignment to his Son who's given it to the apostle John, and that assignment explains why there's so many visions and images that unfold in this book. You see, Jesus has been tasked not to tell his servants like Paul does in his epistles but to show his servants through vivid imagery what is going to unfold as we welcome his return. I think we've taken that vivid imagery way, way too far literally. You know when folks go around suggesting that getting a Covid-19 shot is a mark of the beast, you got to be kidding me. I mean if you're looking for instructions as to how to avoid getting a physical mark of the beast on your forehead or wrist, this study's going to be a big disappointment. If you're looking for encouragement that God is still sovereign and still in control in spite of what may be daunting circumstances and possibly a call to suffering, and yes, even possibly martyrdom, if you're looking for a call for a greater commitment to sharing the gospel, knowing that we really are at the intersection between two kingdoms, well then this study will be your cup of tea. Instead of seeing the book of Revelation as a book about earthquakes and famines and monsters and beasts, we need

to see it as a call to arms, to a renewed commitment to seeing this world as the intersection of two competing kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, and understanding, as I said, that what happens in heaven reverberates on earth and what happens on earth reverberates in heaven. *We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

I want to conclude by putting our own world into that same mode that we see in the book of Revelation because in the end Revelation is still about the gospel. John said in verse 2 that he -- quote -- *bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.* Well just think about that. That's the exact assignment that we've been given. God expects us to do with everything that we have, with everything that he's given us, God still causes all things to work together for good, and that includes Damar Hamlin's collapse that God is still using for good. And the two kingdoms of light and darkness, they're still intersecting and they will be until the moment that Christ returns.

I want to show you an interview that took place directly as a result of that collapse because I think it's highly illustrative for us. This is something that we can easily have put into apocalyptic terms if we were taking our experience and pushing it

2,000 years into the future. It involves another football player, this time a man by the name of Ben Watson. I don't know if you know who he is, but for those of you who care, he was an all-pro tight end who played for the Saints and he played for New England, he's also an incredibly committed outspoken Christian. He's the father of nine kids, he spoke last January at the annual March For Life in Washington. He was being interviewed by Anderson Cooper about the astounding response of the whole country to Damar Hamlin's collapse.

But I want you to understand something. Both men in this interview, Ben Watson and Anderson Cooper, both men, they represent both kingdoms. Cooper represents the world about as good as anybody possibly could, he's a gay man married to another man, he's got two children via surrogacy, he's also the child of one of the wealthiest families in the history of the United States, the Vanderbilts. I don't think you could find a better representative of just what this world represents than Anderson Cooper. Ben Watson's a football player but he just represents the kingdom of God. I just want you to listen to their exchange. You got that?

((178) Benjamin Watson (former NFL Player) speaks into NFL tragedy and shares hope on CNN's Anderson Cooper - YouTube)



Did you notice how he went effortlessly, effortlessly from Hamlin's collapse directly to Anderson Cooper's need for Christ? He said he's the only hope for your future and that's the message that we have as well; that God became a man, that he led a perfect life, that he went to the cross with that life and offered it up so that we by faith in him could appreciate and have his righteousness as our own and stand before God worthy of heaven itself. That was the message that Ben Watson simply gave to Anderson Cooper. Ben Watson, he's not a preacher, he's not a missionary, he's not even a minister, he's a football player. He's also someone that recognizes that every one of us has a role to play in bringing the kingdom of heaven to the kingdom of earth and that's just what he did.

You see, the book of Revelation is going to be an unfolding of that whole process, of seeing that earth and heaven are vitally connected. That each of us has a role to play within that connection and that at some point time on this earth is going to simply run out. And finally, John ends his three-verse introduction to the book with these words, he says: *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.*

You see, every one of us, every single believer represents the intersection of two kingdoms, whether on stage before millions like Damar Hamlin or Ben Watson or whether we're sitting over a backyard fence and the time is nearly 2,000 years nearer than it was when those words were first written. But our task today is no different than John's task was 2,000 years ago -- quote -- *"to bear witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that we see."* Let's pray.

*Father, I thank you for your grace, I thank you for this incident. I just thank you that something as mundane and prosaic as a football game is actually far more representative of the clash between kingdoms than we even imagine. And Lord, we are not destined to be addressing millions of people, I suspect, but we are destined to be addressing our friends, our neighbors, our colleagues, our family, our cousins, our neighbors, and so I pray that we would get more and more of the understanding of somebody like Ben Watson who just says I'm taking whatever opportunities I have to say that Jesus Christ is the only answer you need, the only answer that truly works. I pray for that courage and I pray for that opportunity, in Jesus' name. Amen.*