

09.27.20

Revelation

Chapter 11 - Revealing Religion's Hatred for the Light

Dividing Rewards from Ruin (vs. 14-18)

Revelation 11:14-18: The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

I remember as a child sitting in church, well, gee, all my life. I think the next week after I was born, I was in church, from what my parents told me. But there were certain things that I would hear said at the pulpit. Sometimes I was listening, sometimes I wasn't. But when I was listening, I'd begin to question, "What about this? What about this? What about that?" And at times I would either talk to my dad or talk to somebody in the church and I would say, "What about this?" And sometimes they'd say, "Well, we just don't understand those things. There are things that we don't understand." It always bothered me. "But I want to understand those things." I think that inquisitiveness has caused me to dig deeper than normal. It's one of those things that God either gives you or He doesn't. And I think you can stimulate it. But I have come to realize, Deuteronomy 29:29, that hidden things belong to God, the things revealed belong to us, and that there are certain things that I don't understand. And quite frankly, as Solomon might say, probably best that you don't. You'd actually be happier if you don't understand.

And there's a whole lot of bad stuff that I don't even want to know about. But I also believe, and I'm thoroughly convinced, that there are truths that we have allowed ourselves to not understand just out of sheer laziness.

According to Proverbs 2, it tells us that if we would search for God's truths like we would silver and gold, if we would search for it like a hidden treasure, then God will give these things to us. But there has to be a kind of tenacity that just won't let it go any more than Jacob, you know, letting go of that angel, "I'm not going to let go until You give me the blessing in this, and I need to know this." One of the areas that have oftentimes plagued me is the whole concept of rewards in heaven. And I've wrestled with that throughout the years. Like we've oftentimes made mention of the fact that, I know it sounds very sanctimonious and very wonderful to say, "Well, I'm not really interested in the rewards, I just want to be in heaven." But how many times does God mention the rewards? So, it seems that it must be very important if God mentions it so many times. And obviously, it's not something that we would say is kind of a mere byproduct,

but it is something that we're actually looking for. Jesus will say, "You want to stack up treasures in heaven." Why would He be saying that? And why would that be such an intricate part of His topical discussion about heaven? So, it has to be an important thing, and it really needs to be something that we comprehend and understand Biblically, obviously, but something that God has in store for us.

You probably recognize that we're reading the same passage that we read last week, but we're looking at it a little bit different, that is to say we're focusing more on the rewards than anything else. This chapter, Chapter 11, is really taking us to, as we've been talking about, the precipice of decision. And in that decision-making process, never has the night been so dark and never has the light been so bright. And so, the distinction of these two witnesses and the power of God that is being displayed on the earth, it's irrefutable, it's undeniable; it has to be that you either believe in this wonderful, glorious message that has the power to move heaven and earth, or you embrace earth to its nth degree. It is that we

find ourselves in the middle of this chapter, and by the time we come to these final verses, we come to the distinction of either rewards or judgment. And in the text, as he begins to describe the rewards, he describes them in terms of the reward of a servant, the reward of a prophet, the reward of saints, the reward of those that are reverential towards God. And he seems to put them in those kinds of categories. Scripture is revealing to us throughout this particular chapter that there are clear distinctions being made all the way through.

How do you distinguish between real and fake? That really is the question that is kind of dealt with in this particular chapter. And I think that at the very beginning of this text, God is saying, “Will you draw a line in the sand?” So, He draws a line in the sand. I mean, He measures the temple and He says, “Okay, these are Mine; these outside the temple or not.” Now, we're in the same vicinity. We're in Jerusalem, which as we've been talking about, obviously we're dealing with religion versus reality. Are you really believing in God or are you not? So, God begins to measure off these sections. At the beginning of

Chapter 11, you see that measuring off happening within the temple, interestingly enough. What He says is, "Inside the holy place, are the holy ones." That is to say, set apart, distinct, very different. "Outside are the Gentiles, and they're trampling the grounds." So, there's this desecration outside, but inside there's holiness. And where the holy ones are gathered, it's around the place of sacrifice. It literally is described as the place of slaughter. The point being is that the choice is now very clear. You can choose to be separate as unto God and be willing to lay your life down, or you can go with the rest of the world and desecrate and destroy everything and literally draw near to everything self-gratifying and self-esteeming in your life. The choice is really clear. Total sacrifice or total debauchery. I mean, it couldn't be clearer. It's at this time that the two witnesses begin to reveal signs from heaven, of course, making it all the clearer that God is really on this side. Whose side is God on? It's so strange that people would wonder about these things.

So, you come through this chapter, and finally, towards the end of this, of course, the world, the beast comes up

and slays these two witnesses, and they're slaughtered in the street. They lie in the street for 3 1/2 days, and nobody on the earth wants them to be buried because they hate them so much, which shows that the lines are so clearly drawn. And then God, after 3 1/2 days, raises them up. And of course, at this juncture, the earth starts trembling, and 7,000 die almost instantly in the city, and a tenth of the city falls. And then in all of heavens, it says, "We win. We win." The passage is really revealing a sense of- this is a time to make a decision.

We talked about in Psalm 73 this past week, that really I think one of the points that is being conveyed in that particular Psalm is that everything good that will ever happen to the wicked will happen to them on earth. And everything bad that will ever happen to the righteous will happen to us on earth. That if in fact there is any good that is going to happen to the wicked, this is it. If there's ever any bad that is ever going to happen to the righteous, this is it. And then the grand and glorious rewards, and we look forward to those things. I think one of the saddest things about not being a believer is that

you have nothing to look forward to. You have absolutely nothing to look forward to. And that's, to me, one of the greatest joys of my life. I mean, you even think about Thanksgiving and Christmas and gathering together with people that you love, that's really something to look forward to. Now, when it actually is happening, it's over so fast. But the looking forward to it is, I just think, some of the greatest joy that we have.

There's an interesting passage, if you turn to Mark 10. And in Mark 10, Jesus is saying to His disciples, "It's very difficult for the wealthy to get into heaven." So, of course, they're going, "Okay, who can be saved then?" Because at this point, they were thinking, "It's the wealthy that are saved, because they're the ones that are reaping all the benefits of this world." And Jesus says, "Look, I know it's hard for you to believe, but they're the ones that are going to have a hard time getting in." And Peter goes, "Okay, then that's good for me because I've left everything and followed You. So, what do we get?"

And Mark 10:28 reads this way,

“Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.”

(Mark 10:29) Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake,”

That's a key point.

(Mark 10:30) “but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Now, one of the reasons why I like this passage so much is because God is saying, “You not only get rewards here, you get rewards there, forever.” And I look forward to the rewards of God. I mean, one of the great rewards of God that we receive here today is family. I know the gospel is divisive in many respects. It's not like we shun them. They shun us. But God, through the body of Christ, says, “But I have families for you. I have children that you can hug and embrace, and I have grandparents that you can pull in.” And you begin to realize, “I've got more relatives than

I ever knew I had.” It's just such a wonderful thing. And so, the grand benefits of today that God has given us and in this church. But that we would have eternal benefits; I mean, my wife has, and I think one of the women of the church actually wrote this out and framed it, but it goes something like this, “All this and heaven too.” And that has become her basic logo in the house. And it is such a wonderful thing to know that.

So, I just felt it would be appropriate, even though we went through some of the passages, to go and talk specifically about these rewards that God has in store for us, even in the heavens. And maybe I can be a little bit more specific. I mean, obviously I haven't been up there yet, but maybe I can be a little bit more specific based on what Scripture has conveyed to me. Now, let me just say this, and when I think about these things and from what perspective I'm going to begin, oftentimes the Lord just puts thoughts in my mind and oftentimes those thoughts are to reveal, and I believe one of the great purposes of Chapter 11 is to show us distinctions of choice. The reason why I believe it's so important is this, that as He

writes to the seven churches of Asia Minor at the very beginning, as He tells us that's who He's writing to, His grand concern, God's grand concern, is that the churches are allowing the light to go out. They're allowing the light to go out by virtue of obscurity. And this is why Jesus says, "You don't take a light and put a bushel over it. You don't do that. So, what you want to do is let your light so shine before men that they might see your good works and glorify God in heaven. So, let your light shine. Let it shine." But what we see is the church is allowing the world to come in and it's causing great obscurity, so that we're seeing gray, we're seeing shadows, and nobody really understands. And so, what's interesting when you think about, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, he says, "Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." So, what happens is, as Paul will say in 2 Timothy 3, that they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. So, the world has a way of decorating themselves in such a way that they look a little bit more religious, and the church seems to be working on, and we're trying to look a little bit more worldly. Well, you take those two together, and before long, you can't tell the difference.

And that was the great concern of Christ with His churches, whether it's Laodicea, who was so in love with their finances, or Sardis that loved the fact that they were being noticed by people and they had a name for themselves. There were those that were allowing compromise and Jezebel to come into the church. And there were those that were selling out, literally selling the gospel and allowing Balaam's teaching to come in to the church. All these things were coming in, of course, we know with the church at Ephesus, that kind of legalism. But the truth was not being clarified. The wonderful gospel of Christ and how He loves you, and that He's the only way, and there's so many wonderful things in Him. All of that was being obscured by virtue of everybody trying to maybe look religious, but obviously not be. Colossians, Paul writes specifically, and says that "You're working on a self-made religion." And I think that's an interesting phrase because that's what we're seeing. And really what we're seeing in the country is a religion of environment. We're seeing a religion of health care. I mean, I can go down the list of all the religions that we're seeing. And if you think about it, they're even naming

their hospitals after saints. But the point is that it's a perceived kind of religion because it's under the guise of altruism, "We're benevolent people. We're do-gooders. We're saving the planet. We're saving the animals. We're saving the cobras. We're saving the sharks." I don't know. They're saving everything. But I guess they're saving them while they're eating them. Maybe they're feeding them. But there's a sense of, "We're so wonderful," and you're seeing the finger being pointed, and anybody who says that Jesus is the **only** way is so terrible. "You're so terrible." So, the church is buying into it, and they're saying, "Well, we can be nice, too." So, the church tries to fit in with all these things.

You know, my mind was taking me, and just bear with me a second, all the way back to Hitler. There was an interesting article that was entitled, "How Did Hitler Happen?" It was an interesting article. Well, they began to list the things that Hitler did that made him popular. And it says that he made a group of people feel superior. So, he kind of started off with that. He would make a group of people feel superior and deserving of more than

what they had. Just listen to some of the things that he does. He rallied those people around the failures of others. He rallied them around the failure of economic capitalization. So, he capitalized on economic depression, and it was a legitimate reason to rebel. He, not unlike Nero, found an enemy, a group of people to hate. A nemesis, if you would. And he hated in particular and would bring the Jews out in forefront and declare them to be the enemy because, does anybody know why?

Because they were the wicked capitalists. The Jews were the wicked capitalists. And they were the financiers, so he was working for the common people, and he was going to save them. He convinced his great Aryan race, and this is a quote, "That mankind grows great in eternal war, but would decay in eternal peace." At first, they say Hitler did not push you to join. He just mainly asked for permission. Different ones around him were part of his propaganda, and they literally describe him as an empty vessel outside of political life. They said he had no personality at all. But he had only a few friends, if you could call them friends, but he had an over-inflated view of his intelligence. He was a master of propaganda and media images, so that he

would always show himself as a cultured gentleman, beloved by children and animals. He was a good moral man, as the signs would say, though the man that would depict these pictures said, “It was fabricated, but very effectual.” They often showed him in cozy domestic scenes, and one featured Hitler as a dog lover. By the way, that was in the American Dog Kennel Gazette. One strategist wrote, “You've got this sociopathic, violent regime, but your mind gets diverted by thinking about this fresh tomato on his table.” The most sold images of Hitler in 1934 were pictures of Hitler at home playing with dogs and with children. Propaganda. The point is, if you can make evil look friendly, benevolent, kind, generous. Let me say something. Evil is anything that denies Jesus Christ. I mean, we can't get any clearer than that, right? But look how nice evil looks. And what's bizarre to me is how many people sit there, and go, “They like dogs; they like children,” and actually believe this stuff. The point of it is that the lines are not clear. Satan is a master at blinding the eyes of the unbelieving. He's very good at this. And we're seeing the infiltration in our world. And good is called evil, and evil is called good. And it's basically

Isaiah 5 all over again. God is saying that there is a clear distinction. And we believe that. And we believe that the things that God is telling us to do oftentimes are perceived, I think, by the world as, "How terrible, how mean you are. The fact that you would even take a stand on right and wrong is just the worst thing that you could ever think about doing." But we know that we're in the right, and that God rewards those. So, I felt it appropriate at this juncture to talk to you about those rewards, because the world is so oppressive in their hatred for you and I and for the things that we stand for.

And there's one passage in particular, if you look with me in 1 Peter 4. Isn't it interesting about the way he starts off in this verse 7?

(1 Peter 4:7) "The end of all things is near..."

So, what should you be doing? Well, don't listen to the world and don't try to fit in with the world because everything's gray with them. But listen to God. There are rewards.

"The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

(1 Peter 4:8) Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

Let me just say this. I have found that when I can come to church and I sense and experience the love of God, a lot of bad things just go away. My anger, my upset, my fear, my anxiety, all those things just seem to go away. And the relationship that we have within the body of Christ, above all, in these days, in these last days, “In the last days, perilous times will come. Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, boastful, arrogant.” You know, I mean, it's terrible times that are starting to rally their head, and things are getting so blurred it's hard to see what is true. But you keep loving the brethren, because everything in this world is trying to get us to stop caring for one another.

(1 Peter 4:9) “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

(1 Peter 4:10) As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Scripture, whether it's 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12 or 1 Peter 4, reminds us that God has uniquely gifted us to build one another up. And here again, one of the most bizarre things to me in all of this is that He gifts us in ways that we weren't necessarily talented in. He gifts us in ways that we weren't necessarily good at. But what He does is He gives us a gift so that when we begin to use that gift, we go, "Okay, that was God. Because I know that wasn't me." And, at first, like I've oftentimes debated, I said, "I'd never become a pastor." I didn't want to have anything to do with that sort of stuff. But when I finally did what God wanted me to do, I go, "There's nothing else I'd rather do." And you're going, "How did I get here?" So, you begin to do the very things that you want to do. Somebody asked me, "What are you going to do when you get too old to preach?" I said, "I don't know, I'll probably start another church." I don't know what else to do. There's just nothing else I want to do. So, you know, I'm going to keep doing this until the Lord takes me home. But that would be true of any of your spiritual gifts, right? I mean, we don't retire. So, we just keep using our spiritual gift. But what's wonderful is, we're using

something that God has given us that we didn't even have before we were born again. We didn't have this gift until we received Christ. But once we received Christ, I mean, like Paul would say, the love of Christ seems to constrain me, and I've just got to do it. And we love in different ways.

And this is one of the things that he's saying in verse 10, “... as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

(1 Peter 4:11) Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves...”

Now, he's making distinctions between speaking gifts and serving gifts. In other words, certain people are prone to as they came to Christ, I mean, I've seen speakers, good speakers, when they came to Christ become servants. And I've seen people who were serving in menial task when they came to Christ become speakers. Paul says, “His strength is made perfect in my weakness.” And strangely enough, Paul, when he writes to the church of Thessalonica, becomes a mother. That's what he calls himself, “I'm your mom.” But it's something that God does in our lives, and we realize that was what I was

meant to be. It's really not until you become a Christian that you really understand why God even created you. We've all taken different paths. All we like sheep have gone astray. We each went our own way. But when God laid the iniquities of us all upon Him, He not only saved us from an eternity of hell, He saved us from a wasted life. And we begin to become the very person that God has called us to be. But what the passage is saying is that they're not only manifold gifts, there are different places of service that God has placed us and given us. So that, strangely enough, remember I told you that in psychology they say that there are two things that people are most afraid of, and one that they're more afraid of than death, and that is speaking in front of people? And that was definitely me. So, if God can change that and cause somebody to want to do something that they didn't want to do, then truly the Spirit of God is moving. And I thank Him every day because I realize, I go, "This isn't me, this isn't me, this isn't me. I'm not here." And it's the graciousness of God that just takes me out of it. Because really, I'm a fairly miserable creature. And it really is the grace of God that even makes me remotely likable. And I

know that many of you are still working on that part. But it's His grace that does that.

So, when you look at the passage, he's saying that we have these gifts. My point is, it's in these gifts and through these gifts that you and I are rewarded. It's by the Spirit of God moving in our lives through these spiritual gifts. That's why they call them spiritual gifts. So, if you look with me throughout Scripture, God begins to explain these things.

Another passage I need you to look at is Matthew 10. I'll talk a little bit faster. But Matthew 10, Jesus is pulling His disciples together and starts getting a little bit more specific, not unlike the Revelation passage that we were looking at in particular, where He's dividing out the rewards. And of course, we see the rage of the world because they're facing judgment. But what are we facing? Rewards. Actually, the word "rewards" can literally be translated "wages". The wages of sin is death. But the wages of walking with Christ pays high dividends. What's the payments?

(Matthew 10:41) “He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives...”

By the way, he's making reference to receiving is embracing and holding it as your own. So, you become a part of that work. John writes about this in particular in 2 and 3 John.

But it goes on, He says,

“... and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.

(Matthew 10:42) And whoever in the name of a disciple gives...”

Or literally offers a drink, is actually the text, because sometimes the person may not receive, take the gift.

But if you simply offer the gift, this is a wonderful truth,

“... to one of these little ones...”

Of course, He's talking about someone small in stature and rank and influence being His disciples. As He talks to His Heavenly Father, He goes, “Thank You for giving Me babies.” So, He would oftentimes refer to them as the

little ones, because what are they? Just fishermen and a tax collector and a zealot and basically nobodies.

“And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”

His reward will never go into “*apollyon*,” where we get the word “destruction,” or literally hell. In other words, it will never be wasted. It's eternal. God is ordained.

The picture, once again, is seemingly making separations. The separation seems to be not unlike the Revelation text, servants, prophets, saints, those who are reverential to God, and it's making distinctions. The point is that there are clear distinctions of rewards in heaven. Now, this is where it starts getting interesting to me, because really, if you turn with me to Luke 12, it says in Luke 12:35 as Jesus tells the story,

(Luke 12:35) “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit.

(Luke 12:36) Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they

may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.

(Luke 12:37) Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.”

That's a very interesting picture. In some way, Jesus is conveying something. Now, we know in the Gospel of John, John 13, that Jesus begins to serve His own disciples and He washes their feet. It's a great passage. His point is that, “If I'm your Master and I'm doing this, then what do you think you should be doing?” And I'm sure it was a wonderful lesson. I want you to focus specifically on the phrases that are being used. And sometimes the little nuances of the word really give us great clarity.

If you look with me towards the end, at the end of verse 37,

“... truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve...”

Actually, where we get the word “deacon,” by the way; “*diakoneō*” is the word that's used.

“... and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.”

Underline the words “wait on them”. Because it's not just simply attending to them as far as serving them. But the word in the text is ministering and attending to their interests and their desires. In other words, in that day, Christ is going to serve you and say, “What do you want?” And He's going to attend to your desires.

Are you familiar with Psalm 37? Yeah, we're all familiar with Psalm 37. “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart.” What an amazing passage that is. Now, what's interesting is this, is as we become Christians, we are transformed. We're being transformed, literally, as Paul would say, into the image of Christ. What a wonderful thought that is. And we're taking on His heart so that His desires are actually becoming a part of us. I mean, look, before I really made a decision to follow the Lord, I don't think I wanted to read the Bible that much. I don't think I really wanted to be in church that much. I'm not really sure I wanted to be around a lot of Christians that much. But things begin to change, don't they? And

you begin to realize that, wow, serving God's people, that's the greatest thing I could ever do. That's the greatest thing that I could ever do.

So, if you look in the passage, He continues with this theme.

And if you drop on down,

(Luke 12:41) "Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?"

(Luke 12:42) And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?"

So, obviously He's talking in terms of a steward now responsible for others.

He then says this,

(Luke 12:43) "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes."

Watch verse 44. It's a key to unlock something.

(Luke 12:44) "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions."

Now stop, just think with me. He's a steward. He's in charge of possessions. What's his reward? Being in charge of more possessions. The point of the reward is always directly associated with the position. A prophet, a prophet's reward; a servant, a servant's reward. It's always associated. Now, here's the deal. Some of you ladies like baking cakes. In fact, you had the best bakers for a while, Kim, right? Best bakers. So, I'm thinking in my mind, who would want to bake? But there are some people that actually like baking. And they like baking so much that they just do it on their time off. Nobody's paying them or anything. But you know, what their reward is, the reward is not the cake. The reward is they take it to somebody, and they go, "Mmm mm." And they're just sitting there going, "That's so wonderful," you know? Because that's a baker's reward. Can you imagine getting into heaven and you spent your life being a servant because God gave you a servant's heart; God gave you a servant's heart and you became a servant; you began doing things for people. And you finally get into heaven and God goes, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Wow, do I have some work for you." And you're

going to go, “Really? You mean I get to do more of that stuff?” He goes, “Man.” And you're going to see smiles on people's faces. I mean, they're going to be so thankful. So, you're going to get these rewards of smiles, and the relationships are going to grow. I mean, to a real server, their greatest day is doing something. And think of the way that you like to serve, and then multiply that 500,000 times, and you're not even close, because you're going to get to do those wonderful things in heaven. You're going to get a servant's reward. He says, “If you've been faithful in little, I'm going to give you much.” You turn to a prophet, and you know, one of the greatest desires of a prophet, mouthpiece of God, is that he proclaim a truth, and people go, “Whoa.” I'm going to get to see a lot of “whoas” in heaven. God's going to allow me to tell them things that eye has not seen, nor ears heard, nor has entered into the heart of man. God's going to let me be a part of that. You know the person who has always been very honorable and respectful, who's feared God? He's going to be telling people, “You want to know something about God that nobody else knows?” “Yeah.” “Let me tell you.” And he's going to tell them, and people are going to

go, "I never knew God was so great." Because the one fearing God will have that privilege. When you think about these rewards, it just makes me want to be in heaven more, see? The rewards are who we are, who God has made us. The desires that He's placed on our hearts will only grow greater because these are spiritual gifts, and if they're spiritual gifts, they're eternal gifts. And if they're eternal gifts, they never die. The wonderful thing about us preparing for Christ in that final day is we get so focused on what we should be doing, and so Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand, so let's get busy." Let Him find us working when He comes so that we just slide right into that new position and God just fill us in with those greater things. All that will be glory for me, right? Glory for me.

So, I hope in some way we've distinguished in a little bit better way what the gifts of heaven are going to be, and I don't think they are anything to shun. There are things to look forward to. This world will confuse and obscure, cause you to see things in a very distorted way. "How terrible it is to be in heaven. We can paint pictures of you

sitting on a cloud with a harp.” It looks so boring to me. All that looks almost freaky and scary. But they want you to think that. There's a new heaven, a new earth. We're going to be roaming on horses that fly. I mean, how great is that?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we want to give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us and for the distinction that You place within our hearts. You have placed within us a desire to love You, to love Your people, and it just seems to grow more. The rewards that we have here on earth, well, You draw us closer together. But how magnificent it's going to be as we use these gifts in the eternal state and how we grow even closer throughout all eternity. How magnificent it is that You would call us into Your wonderful home. And Lord, You've called us to be different. You've called us to be saints. We are to be set apart. We're not like this world. But Lord, don't let the world bog us down and don't let the world take our focus away from what we should be doing. You have called us

to proclaim Your name, to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ who has died for sinners and will save them all eternity. You have called us to build up the body of Christ, to love them with all of our hearts as we do our Lord and Savior. You have called us for a work. May we finish the course. May the day that we arrive in Your presence, all of us here, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, if I did one thing today, this is what I wanted to accomplish- I wanted to accomplish within the church, the church to say, “Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” This is the whole purpose of the Book of Revelation. It is to show the distinction. It is to show how hateful and destructive the world is, how they are enraged at God being in control, and how we are celebrating at the same time. There's a clear distinction, and we have a clearly different path. But more than that, this is not our home. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.