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Revelation

Chapter 11 - Revealing Religion's Hatred for the Light Tearing Consecration from Desecration (vs. 19)

Revelation 11:19: And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Anytime we come into any passage in Revelation, the emphasis is that God is revealing something to us. The name “Revelation” literally means “*apokaluptó*,” which is unveiling or revealing. So, God is revealing things to us. The question you always then have to ask yourself is, “What is He revealing to me in this passage?” And we know that it correlates specifically with the church. That is to say that the letter starts off, “I've written these things to the church in Asia Minor,” and He begins to list the

church, whether it's Ephesus, Laodicea, Thyatira, Pergamum, Sardis, all the seven churches he begins to list. They were real churches at that particular time, and they are meant to be for the church of this day. These are letters that are revealing to us not only who God is and what His desire is for us, but what we're up against, as He begins to peel apart just the horrific things of this world. And it's one of the reasons why oftentimes people have a difficult time reading the Book of Revelation because of what is perceived to be a depressive scene of so many horrible things happening. But God is revealing to us those things that oftentimes the Church allows into its place which is very destructive. And if you didn't know what it was you were inviting in, the subtlety of it would be perhaps even, easily accepted. But what Revelation does is it says, "No, that's a snake. You don't want that coming in the church." So, Jesus will use the phrase, "You don't want wolves coming in sheep's clothing. They're going to come in and they're going to disguise themselves." As Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Even Satan disguised himself as an angel of light, as an apostle of Christ." So, what we're going to see is a blatant picture

of that which is horrible and trying to infiltrate the church, as well as the glory of God and the clear distinction between the two. There is a division, if you will, a consecration, and one of the reasons why you and I are called saints. A saint, by its very definition, means that you and I are set apart. We're set to be different. And Second Corinthians 6, verses 14 through the end is very clear on it, and that is that God wants us to be separate. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate. You're to be different. Now, that doesn't mean that we don't communicate with ungodly. What it means is that we don't participate in the things that they participate in. And Peter will write, "And they're surprised that you don't run in the same dissipation or the same wasteful pursuits that they do." They're shocked. "Why wouldn't you want to go do this? Why wouldn't you want to blow your money on these kind of things?" And we go, "Well, you know, we have another reason for living." So, the world is really baffled by this. If in fact they're not baffled, if in fact in some ways we're not creating enemies by virtue of obeying God, then our testimony isn't very strong. Because Jesus said very clearly to His disciples, "They

hated Me; they're going to hate you.” Now once again, it wasn't because Jesus was obnoxious. It was because He spoke the truth. And people are going to like you as long as you do the Jesus stuff, i.e. helping people and ministering to people. But the moment you begin to speak the truth like Jesus did, they're going to want you dead, too. So, up to a point, obviously, people love Jesus people, but they just don't want you talking about Him. And they don't want you talking about sin, and they don't want you talking about heaven, and they don't want you talking about hell. But eventually the truth needs to come out. Because how is it that you could actually love somebody if you didn't tell them the truth? Is it love to hide things from people? Is it love to not care enough to tell them the truth? So, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. And God calls upon us to do this.

There's an interesting passage in the Gospel of Luke, and you don't need to turn there because we're in Revelation, and I want you to probably keep in that place.

But in Luke 13, it says,

(Luke 13:22) “And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.

(Luke 13:23) And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” And He said to them,

(Luke 13:24) “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

(Luke 13:25) Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’””

I love the way that Revelation 3 ends, “Behold, I stand at the door knocking. If any man hears My voice and will open the door, I'll come in, and we'll have fellowship.” But He's knocking now. And the point is that there are so many things that are drawing people away from the kindness and the grace and the mercy of God; they virtually feel like they don't need it. And in many respects, as we come to Revelation 11, that's the picture that He's given us; more specifically, the picture of religion that

keeps men from heaven. One of the greatest enemies of Christ is religion. And we see that in particular when He goes to the Pharisees.

In Matthew 23:13, it reads this way,

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people...”

That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? He's talking to the religious leaders of His day, and I think making it clear.

In fact, He'll say in Matthew 23:15, “You make your followers twice as much the followers of hell as yourself.” So, it's an interesting picture.

(Matthew 23:14) “... you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers...”

It's so wonderful to look holy, isn't it? It's a wonderful thing. Especially, when you can broaden your phylacteries and your garments and you can look so prestigious and holy.

That's why Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:5,

“Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...” these.

Yeah, denying Christ. What religion does is it seeks to establish man's goodness to the extent of him declaring no need for God.

And so, like Romans 10:3 says,

“For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own...”

And that's basically what religion is. Of course, Paul will write in Colossians 2:23, it's a “self-made religion.” You see, religion exalts the goodness of man and diminishes the need for God every single time. That's why religion will always be works-oriented. “You need to do this,” and dress-oriented, “You need to dress this way. If you'll do these things, then you're as righteous as we are. Of course, that could never happen because we're in those positions of being condescending and oppressive, and we like it here.” Jesus says, “You tie heavy loads on people's backs, and you don't lift one finger to help it off.” So that religion is very condemning, it's very oppressive, it's very

demanding, it's very legalistic, but of course, we know that our faith is freeing.

Paul writes in Galatians, "For this reason, Christ came to set you free." So, what is the freeing message of the gospel? Good news. You can be free from your sins today. It doesn't matter what your past was. That's pretty freeing, isn't it? And it's amazing that in a moment, the righteousness of God would dwell in you. In a moment, if you'll but believe that He's the righteous one. See, religion likes to proclaim man is the righteous one, and God is the One that's not so loving, not so kind. That's why we proclaim His righteousness, His goodness, and we believe that when you introduce somebody to the power of God, God changes their hearts, God changes their lives. So, I don't have to go around fixing them. What fixes them is they now know Christ, and Christ creates a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

So, in Revelation 11, there's this division at the very beginning that Scripture is trying to reveal. And why is it revealing to the seven churches? Because they're allowing

religion to creep into their doors. In at least two of the churches that is mentioned in the seven churches, He makes reference to the synagogue of Satan. That's interesting, the synagogue, which would be a Jewish place of worship, of Satan. But it makes reference to the fact that you're being influenced by this. So, at the very beginning of Chapter 11, He begins measuring off the temple. If you go back in verse 1, you'll see that introduction.

It says,

(Revelation 11:1) “Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.”

Now, the very next phrase in verse 2 is,

(Revelation 11:2) “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.”

Now, the point is that God knows those who are His. And when it makes reference to the temple, proper, “*naos*,” the word that is used in the Greek, it’s making reference to the place of the holy, the holy of holies. So, that which is outside is the courtyard, and more specifically, oftentimes referred to during the times of Jesus, the porticos of Solomon, which is massive structure over 2 football fields; with a place in which the wise sages would come together and do their debating. If you've ever been at a seminary or cemetery or whatever you want to call it; if you've ever been at one of those or a Bible school, there's always these places where you can sit and you can talk about things that really aren't terribly important, but you can look really smart doing it. So, you begin to debate about these things and, wow, do you feel superior or what? I mean, you're using words that not the common man has no idea what you're talking about. And you must be close to God because of that. You're obviously speaking in tongues because nobody else understands you. So, anyway, but here you are in this setting, and we call them the “ivory towers.” But the fact of the matter is, that's the porticos of Solomon. And the fact of the matter

is, that's outside of God's concern. He literally says, "I want you to draw a line. This is religion. This is man declaring himself as so wonderful and so glorious." And 1 Corinthians 8:1, we keep repeating that verse, but it's the knowledge of man that makes him arrogant. It's love that edifies. And God has called us to build up one another. He hasn't called us to be condescending or critical towards one another. We're not competing. We're complementing. And that's why we have spiritual gifts that vary and differ. God has made us that way so that nobody's really any better than anybody else. What's the phrase? The ground is level at the cross. I mean, it's for "by grace that we're saved through faith" and not by our works. Nobody should be able to boast about this. We once were hateful, as Paul writes in Titus 3, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us; not because of our wonderful, great things, but because of His merciful acts. The bottom line is that the best of my works are like filthy rags. All we like sheep have gone astray. There is none righteous, no not one. But religion keeps pumping up man and keeps diminishing God, so that after

a while you really don't even need God. "You can't have a relationship without us," is what religion says, "with God." And that's not true. There's only one mediator between man and God, and that's the person of Jesus Christ, and that's God Himself. And we can boldly come before the throne of grace and talk to Him. So, religion keeps getting in the way. And at the very beginning of Chapter 11, He begins to make that distinction.

Now, what we also see within Chapter 11 is the hatred that religion has for godly men. And we have the two witnesses that are standing. Now, once again, we know that this is about a religious passage. Why? Because we're in Jerusalem. The whole setting's in Jerusalem. But God says, "I don't see Jerusalem as being a holy city. I see it as Sodom and Egypt." That's in the text. You read it yourself. So, what does He mean by that? Well, what He means by that is they rejected the Messiah. They crucified the King. So, Christ said when He comes to Jerusalem, "I would have gathered you like a hen gathers its chicks, but you wouldn't have Me. Therefore, I leave you desolate." And of course, the great theme of the Book of Acts is that God

is shaking His feet from the Jews and is going to the Gentiles. And so, the theme of the Book of Acts is “Going to the Gentiles, going to Gentiles.” When we see this Chapter 11, it is the hostility of religion specifically, because we're in Jerusalem, towards the two witnesses. And as the text says, they proclaim the word of God for 3 1/2 years, and at the end, the beast comes and slays them, and then they lie dead on the street. They lie dead on the street for 3 1/2 days. Nobody wants to bury them. They celebrate their death. They give gifts to one another. They're happy they're dead. But of course, religion was happy when Christ was crucified. So, nothing's changed. Sort of like 1 Corinthians 2, Paul says, “You don't want to go with the rulers of this age, because if the rulers of this age were so smart, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory.” So, it just shows that they weren't using all their marbles there. So, the point of Chapter 11 is the hostility. And of course, God reveals to those people, to religion, that “These are My people,” and He resurrects them, and right in front of their eyes, they go up to heaven. Of course, then the earthquake happens, and 7,000 immediately die (Once again, you can read it, it's in

Chapter 11) in the city, and a tenth of the city begins to be destroyed, and then literally it's all-out war between God and man, because they're angry. But what's interesting is the contrast. But heaven is rejoicing, going, “Okay, the lines have been drawn. This is the day in which we rule.”

And so it is that, if you pick up with me, it says,

(Revelation 11:14) “The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

(Revelation 11:15) 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.”

(Revelation 11:16) And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God.”

And they cry unto the Lord, “Hallelujah, we're going to win.” And how did the nations react? (Verse 18) Enraged. They were enraged. So, we have an interesting contrast. So, if in fact you are rejoicing over the same thing that the world is rejoicing, you're probably not on God's side.

You're going to be happy over the things that the world is angry about, and they're going to be happy over the things that you're upset about. That's just the way it is. And there should be that kind of distinction in your life. When the wicked prosper, we're not happy about that. We do rejoice when righteousness reigns. So, it's a very different way, and so, the declaration is there.

It is this verse 19 that is particularly marvelous. And I have actually saved it to just talk about it specifically because of the glory of it. It is a picture of how God feels. And it's the beginning of this. In fact, we're actually going to see God, if I could anthropomorphize God, that is to say, put Him in like a human shell, it would be as if God opened up His chest and says, "That's what My heart looks like." And that's what makes this passage so wonderful. And to talk about unveiling, you know, I mean, I'm kind of scared to death when I see what the world looks like as it's unveiled. But when I see God's heart opened up to me and I go, "Really? That's what's on..." I mean, you think about the God of the universe and He can do anything; He can be anywhere. He can create anything. He can go

anywhere. He is limitless. He never ceases to be that way. And yet, as my uncle would oftentimes preach, as he was a psychologist, the greatest thought that could occupy the human mind is the fact that God would love you. That's the greatest thought that the human mind could actually form within itself. So, what we're going to see is that wonderful picture within this passage of the heart of God being conveyed. Now, what we're going to see, once again, as the text started off at the beginning of Chapter 11, is we were in the temple, right? We're going to end in the temple. And we're going to see the difference between religion, who really hate everything righteous. I mean, Jesus would say to the Pharisees, "You know what your big problem is? You love money." And as you think about it, that's religion's biggest problem. They're in love with money and they're in love with power and they're in love with prestige. He says, "You love the respectful greetings and the people seeing you in the streets and calling you 'rabbi' and calling you 'father'. Don't let anybody call you 'father'. Don't let anybody call you 'rabbi'." So, very interesting picture.

But within this passage, you begin to see the love of God and what it means to have that relationship with Him.

So, if you look with me in verse 19, it starts off with,

(Revelation 11:19) “And the temple of God...”

Now, once again, the word that's used is not that which takes in all of the surroundings of, say, the temple of Herod and how he would have the porticos of Solomon and all that stuff. It's the Holy of Holies. So, He's opening the door, and He says, “Let Me show you what I've been thinking and what I've been planning and what's been on my heart from eternity past even to eternity future.” I mean, what motivates God? That's an interesting question. What moves Him?

“And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened...”

He said, actually, we get to go into His house and we're moving in.

“...and the ark of His covenant...”

Which by the way, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, I hate to tell you, but I think it's going to be in heaven. I don't know when it's going to go up there, but somehow, it's going to

be in heaven. Because the text says, it's in the heaven, the temple of God.

“... and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple...”

This is in heaven, obviously, “in His temple.”

“... and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”

Now, before you just read over that, understand that God is telling us something magnificent and revealing something magnificent to us. The peals of thunder is a pretty interesting thing to me, and I don't want to get too much into it, but I have found that true science, true science, does not contradict Scripture, but only affirms it. So, one of the ways that you can tell if science is true is if it agrees with Scripture. If it doesn't agree with Scripture, it's bad science. Because God's the one who invented science. And as we often said in Moody (Bible Institute), all truth is God's truth. So, if $2 + 2$ is 4, then that's God's truth. Because it's true. But the point is, as Jesus will say to the people in the fields, He goes, “Look at the way that flower is clothed. Now, I made something that Solomon

couldn't clothe that well. And I did it for weeds. You don't think I'm going to take care of you?" You look at the way the birds are taken care of. I'm always amazed. Of course, my wife got me in the habit of putting the bird feeder out. And so, she has these wonderful ideas, and then she walks away. And so, I keep feeding the birds. And we actually started having birds coming up to our lanai when I would forget, and they would start chirping at the window, chirping, chirping, and they were upset. I could tell they were upset at me. They're not upset at my wife. They don't even know that she exists, but they know I should be feeding them. But what's interesting is that even when I don't put that food out, those birds are still fed. And I'm glad that God is not as derelict as I am. But He is faithful to take care of them. Now, He says, "If I know when a sparrow falls, don't you think I care about you?" So, everything about science, we sing the song, "*In the rustling grass, I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.*" And Hebrews conveys so clearly that the things of this earth are shadows of the heavenly. So, we get a little glimpse of what heaven is like. And so, we get a glimpse of resurrection by putting a seed in the ground

that's dead. And in the springtime, when resurrection occurred, we actually get to see life come up. We get to see all sorts of marvelous things, such as the faithfulness of God, every single day that sun rises. *"Morning by morning, new mercies I see, great is Thy faithfulness."* So, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows forth His handiwork. So, everything about science. You come to this thing of the lightning and the thunder, and it's a picture not just to reveal the great power that there is, which obviously it's going to, but it all stands for something. And for anybody that's been outside and lightning struck close by and that thunder came out, I mean, they say if you heard the thunder, everything's okay. But wow. I mean, some of that stuff can really scare the bejeebies out of you, right? And like I said, the closer you are, the more powerful it seems. Scientists actually have named the thunders, and there's kind of like a systematizing of naming the thunders.

But in particular, I want you to look with me in Revelation 19, just to kind of get your equilibrium here and understand, when He speaks of thunder, and He's been

really from the beginning, He started off talking about the peals of thunder, and then ultimately, He'll describe it as the seven peals of thunder. And all the way through, you have this question, "What is that? What is that?" And in Chapter 19, He tells us. So, I just want to kind of cut to the chase and say, "Okay, what is it?"

So, in Revelation 19:5, it says,

"And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

(Revelation 19:6) Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

What's the peals of thunder coming from the throne of God? It's the declaration of His saints. Now, what thunder does is, and what God has done for us in the earthly, is He's given us shadows. So, what does thunder do on the earth? Well, thunder announces light, and it announces power, right? It just lets you know. In other words, that lightning bolt comes down, and thunder goes, "Okay, that

was light, and that was power that just hit you.” And you're going, “Thank you. I wouldn't have known that otherwise.” So, that is the purpose of it. Now, the science of it is interesting. Once again, true science will always complement the word of God. And the science of it, as I've gone through, begins to explain how God has created. I mean, we know He created all, more specifically, we know, as John 1 says, Hebrews 1 says, Colossians 1 says, that Jesus is the one that created all things. And all of these things were gracious acts to point to Him. So, as we look at creation, if you don't see Jesus, you're misunderstanding why He created it.

But in understanding lightning, let me just read a few things to you. And I'm actually quoting the service of NOAA, not Noah of the ark, but N-O-A-A. And the University of Illinois, NASA, has done this sheet, this workup, so I'm actually quoting them. It says, “Thunder is the sound generated by lightning produced by a sudden and violent expansion of superheated air. And it is this electrical charge that goes down this channel path,” it actually uses the word “channel,” which just to interject,

Job refers to the lightning going and the thunder going down a channel path. So, I don't know if that's where they got their information from, but it would have been correct. But it says, "Thunder can be a sharp or rumbling sound. The intensity and the type of the sound depends on the atmospheric conditions." Now, I want to stop here for just a second. So, the volume of the sound depends on the atmospheric conditions, or the atmosphere. What is happening in Chapter 11? What is happening in Chapter 11 is that truth and deceit are coming to heads. Right and wrong, positive and negative are finally coming. And in the heavens, the atmosphere is electric because God is taking charge. So, the sound is now going to be increased. In fact, that's one of the things you'll see in Revelation, the sound of the peals of thunder until all the way up to 19, that's when it gets really loud. So, the atmosphere keeps increasing, if I can put it this way. Lightning physics was interesting to me, but it says, "Flashes of lightning between thunderstorm and earth are called cloud to ground, and flashes of lightning in the clouds is called intracloud." So, just for your information, there are two kinds, but they're the kinds that go from cloud to ground.

That's a pretty interesting one, because that's the one I want to talk to you about. It goes on and says, "Lightning is initiated by the attraction of positive and negative charges." And of course, what you're seeing in Revelation 11 is the distinction between good and evil and how there's an interesting battle that is going on. I couldn't make this up, "When the electrical potential builds up to overcome resistance of the air, lightning will occur." Can I read it again? "When the electrical potential builds up to overcome," a word that's repeatedly used in Revelation, overcome, "the resistance of the air," we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of the air, "lightning will occur." He's overcoming the resistance of the air. That's what He's doing. I know that Don would be happy to hear this; 90% of the lightning actually occurs over land and not on the sea. Not to say that you're safer on the boat, but there you have it. Some thunderstorms over land have been known to tower over 70,000 feet. There are 50 to 75 flashes to ground occurring every second on the earth. 50 to 70. In the U.S., there are over 125 million flashes of lightning annually, an estimated 25 million strike to ground. The

record horizontal distance of a cloud flash was 118 miles. Job talks about the lightning becoming a canopy in the heavens. I've seen that. It's an interesting picture. But once again, God has given us shadow pictures of what really is. But this is where it gets interesting, "During a cloud-to-ground flash, the first stroke of lightning is downward from the cloud along the channel. A flash consists of one or more return strokes. A cloud-to-ground flash may have only one return stroke but usually has two or three. They are called return strokes because the flash originates in the cloud, not the ground, and the flash which strikes the lower charge to the ground, causes objects on the ground to send up streamers to meet the leader coming down." I couldn't make this up. I mean, I almost felt like I read 1 Thessalonians 4. He's coming in the clouds, He's going to meet us in the clouds, and the dead in Christ arise. Matthew 24, He's going to come as lightning, Scripture says. That's what Scripture says. He will come as lightning. And you can just see this interesting picture of lightning hitting the ground and then bringing it up with Him. That's one of the reasons why when you see lightning, you're seeing the flashes,

and you're seeing the streamers go back up. Now what's also interesting to this, we know that I think that speed of light is 185,000 miles a second, something like that. But the streamers are 62,000 miles per second, which is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the speed of light. The interesting point to me is that it demonstrates that God is the power, but that God is bringing man up to himself. Of course, this is a wonderful picture of the rapture. And when you read about the rapture, one of the statements in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is that you and I will be caught up in a twinkling of an eye. The text actually is, "a jerk of the eye," that it's a reaction to what God is doing. So, in many respects, what God is doing is, well, the dead in Christ will be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. The dead in Christ will rise first, and we who are alive will remain, will be caught up with the Lord to meet him in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words. True science will always complement.

But I did want to make a mention as well about the thunder, since obviously the thunder is mentioned within the passage. We understand that 1% of the lightning's

energy is converted to sound, just 1%. So, obviously, once again, gives emphasis to the greater source. But at a very close range, thunder is capable of literally causing property damage. The shock wave, the pressure, the propagation of thunder may cause exterior and interior damage to structures. Popping of a nail-supported drywall away from the horizontal and vertical wooden studs inside houses has been documented. As you go on and read this, what's interesting is, of course, you know, our military has gone into this with their, I think, sonic grenades. They have certain sounds that will cause people to feel a certain way. They actually feel like they have a sound, and they'll be coming out with it soon, that will prevent burglars from stealing by virtue of the sound waves. They have sound that is so powerful that you walk in the room, it makes you instantly sick to your stomach. You don't know exactly why this is true, but that's what it's doing to you. And they have one in particular, that the weapon is so powerful that it makes people see apparitions or ghosts. So, they begin seeing things. Can you imagine when we proclaim the power of God and all of His glory, what's going to happen? Can you imagine the

sounds that are going to bring people to their knees? I oftentimes read Revelation 19, and it says, “By the word of His mouth, He slays the nation.” You go, “How could that happen?” I know how it could happen.

Look with me again in Revelation 11,

(Revelation 11:19) “And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened...”

God's opening His heart.

“... and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple...”

Now, the best place I could give you, and of course, we obviously could go in the Old Testament for this, but the best place in the New Testament to go is in Hebrews 9. And whether you turn to it or not, let me just read it to you. It's found in Hebrews 9 as it begins to describe the ark of the covenant, the temple of God, as being a shadow of that which is truly in heaven.

So, if I could just read it for you, it reads this way,

(Hebrews 9:1) “Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.”

(Hebrews 9:2) For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place.

(Hebrews 9:3) Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies,

(Hebrews 9:4) having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold..."

Now, the specificity of the description of this ark and God having them make it a certain way is interesting. I don't want to go into a whole lot of detail, but if you were to go back to Exodus 25 in particular as He begins to describe the making of this; He uses a word, He says, "You've got to use acacia wood. This is the kind of wood you have to use, so you need to go find it." Now, according to the Hebrew text, from what I understand, "šittā" is the kind of wood that is acacia. So, anyway, it's this kind of wood. What makes this wood unique is it's a very dark wood with large, dark thorns. And it has properties that create a strength in the kind of fluid that it has within it so that as it gets older, it actually becomes petrified. And it's an interesting picture of hardness, of blackness, and of

thorns. And He says, "This is the tree that I want you to use." Now, He then has him put this together, and then He says, "Now, I want you to cover this with gold. And the picture that, of course, that we're seeing is the tree with the thorns that are placed upon our Savior's head, and the sins of man being placed on it. But God will say within the text, by virtue of placing gold, "This is what I value." It's a marvelous picture, because what we have is a box. And if you go through the Old Testament, you'll see a number of these boxes. One will be with Noah. It'll be a really big box, but it actually uses the word "ark". Now it's using a different word for ark than the ark of the covenant, but the word itself is just explaining another side of ark. And the ark that's used to describe the ark of Noah is an ark if we were to use the description of a coffer. Now, a coffer specifically is that which depicts a treasure chest. And so, the picture is, of course, that God was putting Noah in the ark because He treasured him. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, so He puts him in a treasure chest. And a treasure chest is where you put your valuables to protect them. So, He sends them in the water. There's a guy by the name of Moses, which means

to be drawn out of the water. And his mother will put him in the same word that's going to be used for the ark of Noah. So, it's another treasure chest in which she sends him out, and he's valued, and God keeps him. And it doesn't use the word "basket," it uses the word "ark," which is the same word that describes Noah's ark.

By the time you come to Exodus 25, there is another side to this ark. It is perceived as a treasure chest. So, in that regard, it's like Noah, and it's like the basket that took that little child into safety. But now this ark is going to have another side to it, and will literally be translated in some arenas as coffin. So, the coffer, the treasure chest, has become a coffin. That's one of the reasons why we buy coffins for our loved ones, is we're saying these are valuable people to us. It's a way of conveying that. So, we say we treasure them, but we're also saying it's a place of death. The amazing thing about this ark is it's a picture of death. It's a picture of man's hatred towards God. It's a picture of the thorns and the nails that had been driven into His hands and a picture of man's hardness against God. And God says, "Now, this is what I want you to put in

it.” And if you understand in Hebrews 9, as He'll literally quote from the Old Testament, “Having a golden altar of incense,” which is that wonderful picture of a sweet aroma that's given to God, which is the love and the sacrifice of His Son, as Ephesians 5 will say. “Having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, and which was a golden jar holding the manna of God.” Remember the manna, which means what is this that comes down from heaven? That's life sustained, if you think about it. That's this mysterious, wonderful provision of God. What's on God's heart? Let's see. Let's open the box and see. And God says, “Okay, this is what's on My heart; that you might understand that I love you enough to take care of you even when you can't do it yourself. That if you could just comprehend that I care for you that much, that I would sustain you, even if it meant bringing bread down out of nowhere. Man can't live by bread alone. You've got to believe that I'm the One that takes care of you because the bread's not going to sustain you forever, but I am,” and Jesus will declare Himself, “I am the bread that comes down out of heaven.” So, what are we putting in a box when we put

the man in the box? Christ. "I am the bread that comes down out of heaven." But the picture of God is His desire to sustain you and keep you.

Now, what's the next picture if you look within the passage? Well, not only the fact that there is this wonderful manna that has been placed, but Aaron's rod. And what is Aaron's rod? Why is it so different than all the others? Because his rod bloomed. It's a dead stick, and it blossomed. And God says, "How will you know Aaron is the guy? Because he's going to have a dead stick and it's going to bring forth life out of death." What do you think's on God's heart? To bring resurrection to you, that you would live forever. This is on God's heart. This is what He wants more than anything else. What's the last thing that He has in there? Well, not only does He have the manna and Aaron's rod, but He has the tablets of the covenant, which is the way of life, the direction of God. When He gives the covenant, what does He give? He says, "Choose life. These are words of life. If you'll do what this says, you'll have a wonderful life." Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but

through Me.” What does the way look like? What's the covenant of God?

Now, what's interesting to me about this passage, because if you look in Revelation 11,

(Revelation 11:19) “And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant...”

Now, we would take the Old Testament and read that, and basically, we would translate it, maybe transliterate it, to the promise of God. But when it's in the Greek, it's just so much greater description. And let me see if I can describe it for you. It literally is saying, this is God's, now we're looking at a coffin, right? We're looking at a coffin. We're looking at a treasure chest. So, here it is, “This is God's last will and testament.” If you were to put your greatest desire, your greatest will, in a box, what would it be? This is God's, “That you would be sustained, that you would live forever, that you'd put your trust in Me and not in anybody else, that you would be resurrected, and we would forever be together, and that you would walk in the way. I mean, this is My heart's desire.” And this is God's desire throughout all eternity. Can you imagine that

the God of the universe would actually even be thinking about you? And yet, this is the motivation of the heavens. Scripture's letting you know, if you were to go into the holy place, if you were to go into the Holy of Holies, if you were to come in and open up the heart of God, what is it He wants more than anything else? And this is what we're finding. So that when the earth declares, "I hate Your gift," what do you think it's going to generate? Lightning and thunder. And why does it say hailstones at the end? You know what hailstones are? Hailstones are water, rain, that's been hardened. It's the blessings of God that have been turned into destruction. Hebrews 2 says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" The message of the gospel of God, which is the greatest message on earth, has become a very destructive force. Because man has hardened himself to the love of God. And the very thing that was meant to shower blessings upon us, now by virtue of the hardness of man, has become a destructive force in our lives. God feels passionate about His love for you. God's not just sitting up there in an apathetic state and going, "I guess it's going to end pretty soon." Heavens are shaking because of His

love for you. And man is complacent. Man is apathetic about all of these things, but not God. And so, the picture is that heaven's beginning to rumble. And what we're going to find out, and I'm looking forward to Chapter 12, is that you're going to see His heart. Because what you're going to see as you go past Chapter 12 is the wrath of God. But you know what you have to see? You have to understand why He's angry. And in Chapter 12, He's actually going to describe to you and me why He's upset. But what you're going to hear and what you're going to see is this, "It's personal. They hurt people I love. This is now personal. And that's why all heaven is shaking. You're hindering people that I love. I want to give them forever. I want to sustain them. I want them to trust in Me. I want them to walk the way of life. And you're hurting that. I'm upset about that." And that's one of the reasons I like Revelation so much.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your book and for these words, and not only words of encouragement, but words

that really generate a cry within our hearts that says, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." We never had any idea that You loved us so much, that You thought about us so much, that we would be center stage in Your heart. I mean, You tell us in Hebrews, which of the angels did You ever call son? Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God, and such we are. And the day is going to come when You're going to come with a flash of lightning. The dead in Christ will rise first, and we who are alive who remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and the clouds. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Every time I see that lightning, Lord, I'm reminded of that. Thank You for these wonderful signs.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, you feeling that you're not valued? Read it again. God's been thinking about you before the foundation of the earth. And all of this is that you and I might live forever with Him. You think heaven is an ominous foreboding place? Absolutely not. It's a wonderful place, filled with glory and grace as the chorus goes, *"I want to see my Savior's face. Heaven is*

a wonderful, Heaven is a marvelous, Heaven is a wonderful place.” I can hardly wait to see the one who loves me so. If you don't know Him as your personal Savior, wouldn't this be the time? I mean, if God is so passionate for you, shouldn't you love Him back? If He would value a coffin, as Scripture would tell us that it pleased the Father to crush His Son, that He might bring many sons to glory, He must really love you. That He would take the darkness and the hardness of man, and that He would take the thorns upon His head and wrap it in gold, and say, “This is what I treasure.” Could you imagine that? Why wouldn't you give your life to Him? “Behold, I stand at the door knocking. If any man hears My voice and will just open the door. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name.”