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Revelation
Chapter 18 - Revealing the Hearts of Men
Exposing the Nations Illicit Affair (vs. 1-3)

Revelation 18:1-3: After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”

This is a book about revelation; revealing. And the Lord is revealing so many things and has revealed so many things to us. This book should be a book that is so beloved by all

believers because it is to the church and it does stir the hearts of every true believer to love God more and to desire His presence even more, because it not only reveals His greatness and His love for us, but it reveals just the treachery of the world. It is oftentimes hidden and subterfuge, but the fact of the matter is that the world doesn't love you. It says it does, but it doesn't. And so, what Revelation does is, it begins to expose all of these things that we have erroneously fallen in love with ourselves and have allowed the things of the world to come in and to creep in even into the church; which is truly a sad commentary on the church, that we would allow another thing to come in and draw our attention and oftentimes our love and affections away from God.

When Scripture talks about the immorality in particular in Chapter 18 here, it is not focusing on the sexual immorality that we oftentimes tie it with, although it is talking about a relationship immorality. And the relationship immorality is about your unfaithfulness to God. You made a commitment to God, and what you've done is, you've gone into the world and you've had an

illicit affair with the world, with the things of the world. And once again, this is mentioned over and over again, whether it's in 1 John or James, key passages, making reference to the fact that we have become adulteresses because, well, don't you know, as James says, that friendship with the world is enmity with God. You become an enemy of God. Well, how could you say that you love God and you love something else or someone else? And so, all the way through, what we see is these graphic pictures in the Book of Revelation that really paint that picture of what a relationship looks like and what our relationship with God really is about.

We're approaching now a new chapter in Chapter 18, and usually what we do is we do a little bit of going through the Book of Revelation so that we come up to Chapter 18 and understand its context even better. So, that's what we're going to do. And if you just think with me about the different chapters as we've gone through them, and without being real specific, we're going to basically take a jet tour through the Book of Revelation up to 18 as we see where it's been heading. At the very beginning, what

we understand is that the Light of the world is Jesus. And interesting picture, you see Christ in all of His glory and His face like the sun. So, there's no mistake within Chapter 1 what the light is. And of course, as we understand, according to the Gospel of John, light and truth are synonymous with each other. And so, we understand that light is making reference to that which is really true and that which is really genuine and real. And the world is just phony baloney, isn't it? I mean, you can't trust what they're saying. But when we're talking about something real, we're talking about a relationship with God, and we're talking about God's love is real. Though every man, as the psalmist would say, would be found a liar, God is true. And we know that we can trust in Him, and His love is comprehensively flawless as all of His truth is. So, we come to the Light.

Now, what we also see within Chapter 1 is a picture of the light bares. And so, what is the picture but the lampstands? And the seven lampstands that are pictures of, as he says at the very end of Chapter 1, the seven churches. So, what are we called to do? Well, we're called

to bear the Light. We're called to proclaim the Light, the glorious Light of the gospel of Christ. And that's what brings people out of darkness into light. And as Paul will say in 2 Corinthians 4, "If our gospel is being veiled, it is veiled of those who are perishing." And we understand that the church needs to let that light so shine before men that they would see the good works and glorify God in heaven, that our light should be... Well, the message of the light is to point to Christ and to point to Him and to point to His changing in our lives. That's one of the reasons why testimony is so important, because it gives such a clarity of, "Wow, there really is something real that changes life, that makes a difference in people's life." And you go, "Yes, yes, it's real." And they go, "I can see it. I can see it because that's truth. That's something I can grab a hold of." So, the church is to be, as Paul will write to Timothy, "the pillar and support of the truth." There you have a lampstand, right? Pillar and support of the truth which bears that light. And that's what we're called to do- to establish that truth and to give that light.

So, at the very beginning, you have this mystery. Why are people living in obscurity, and what is it that they need in order to have release from this from depression, from darkness in their life, from the insecurity and confusion that comes in their life? What is it that they need? Well, the Light of the world is Jesus and the mystery is now solved. And who is it that carries this message? Well, God has ordained the church to be the proclaimers of this wonderful message of "The Light of the world is Jesus." So, we see that being established right from the beginning and the mystery taken care of.

As you go into chapters 2 and 3, you also begin to realize that oftentimes that light is not shining brightly. And so, the question is, why are people not seeing this? And the answer is because the church isn't shining. Jesus, when He says, "Look, no one takes a light and hides it under a bushel, right?" We used to sing that song as kids, right? So, nobody does that. Well, wait, sometimes the church does that. And that's Paul's point when he comes in 2 Corinthians there in Chapter 4. He says, "Look, if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled of those who are perishing."

And why is it veiled? Well, you look at the end of Chapter 3 as well as the beginning part of 2 Corinthians, and he says, "It's our fault because we've misrepresented the gospel of Jesus Christ and the churches have failed." So, what you see in chapters 2 and 3 is Jesus not only rebuking but pointing out what the churches need to do to let this light so shine.

And so, just by way of review, when you go through the first one, of course, the church at Ephesus, what is one of the things that darkens the light that the church is supposed to be shining? Well, what is clear in the church of Ephesus is that a legalism and a lovelessness in their piety is that which is oppressive. People come to church and the only thing they get is fingers shaking at them like this, and they go, "Where's the light of Jesus?" And nobody can see it. And we're quick to point out everybody else's failings, but we're slow to proclaim, "But God forgives. And how wonderful it is that He has given us new life. And today can be a do-over. What a wonderful thing. If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you. And it's just like as far as the east

is from the west, they're gone." And how wonderful that message is. Well, unfortunately, many times the church becomes more oppressive than it does “Light giving.” And we know that we've come to shine the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the church at Ephesus, He goes, "You've got to get that out of the way."

And He tells the church at Smyrna, "You can't have fear and trepidation and let the light shine. Yes, you're going to go through suffering, but you can't be afraid." And we see the church, oftentimes, fall into the same patterns of the world and we become afraid of the same things that the world is afraid of. And there's no light in that. There should be a distinction that says we're not afraid. We're not afraid. If God is for us, who can be against us to live? To live is Christ; to die is gain. So, what do we have to fear? I mean, Peter basically says, "We can't lose. If we suffer for Christ, yay! If we have the blessings of God, yay!" So, it doesn't matter what side of the fence we're on. There is the wonderful hope. And He says to the church of Smyrna, "You can't have fear and trepidation. You need to be confident in what you're going through."

You look at the church at Pergamum and what is clear in that is, compromise infiltrates the church, and the church oftentimes allows this to happen. And let me just say this, if compromise infiltrates the church and opportunism, that is to say, He uses the example of Balaam coming in, which was a prophet for hire... And this is why Paul says to the Corinthians, "We're not like many peddling the word of God, but of sincerity we're proclaiming this message." Here again, unfortunately, the church has made the proclamation of the gospel a business, and it's not a business. We're not for hire. And we're not to be dancing on stage or entertaining anybody for anything. Our message is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we believe it is the power of God to save people. And we cannot misrepresent this, and we cannot use this as a way to gain anything. Paul speaks specifically to Timothy as he is a pastor of the church at Ephesus where there's a lot of money floating around, and he says, "Timothy, you need to understand the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." He's talking to a pastor here, and he says, "You can't love this stuff. You've got to make it clear that the whole righteousness and the love for those things is far more

important and you can't be bought." And unfortunately, so many times, the position of leadership in the church has been bought, and people go, "Why should I listen to him? He's just like me. He's full of greed and avarice." And you step back and you go, "That looks like the world." In fact, many churches call their pastors CEOs, and I don't even understand why they would try to look like the world as a business. But unfortunately, the world says, "Light? I don't see any light. It's just like my world. It's just like my life."

To the Church of Thyatira, He writes about those who will tolerate false teachings. And the church oftentimes allows false teaching to come in, and because it's just advantageous, because it's more acceptable, because maybe it appeals to a greater audience. You know, if we just let everybody come in and we allow the toleration of all kinds of thoughts and all kinds of, you know, open-mindedness. And of course, to the Jew, an open mind was both doors open in your head, you let anything in, you let anything out. So, we would call that an airhead. So, what we're talking about is those that will distinguish what is

good and that which is right and will hold on to that. And that's the difference. But unfortunately, the church oftentimes goes into the whole realm of "We're going to tolerate and maybe under that guise look like we're good and kind and wonderful." But of course, you see the church at Thyatira and the rebuke of Christ in that.

The same thing is true with Sardis in some ways, because the church of Sardis was all about show and superficiality, and it's all about the name, right? It's all about getting your name out there. It's all about popularity. And God says, "It's nothing about any of that." And unfortunately, churches oftentimes pursue those kinds of things.

The church of Philadelphia was concerned about intimidation and would allow this to cause them to be timid. And so, He tells the church, "You can't allow intimidation and timidity to be a part of who you are." The evidence of the Spirit of God within the church is boldness. And here again, why are we allowing the world to intimidate? I would say the only reason why we would allow the world to intimidate us is because in some way we want the approval of the world. I can't think of any

other reason why the world would intimidate us and that we would be timid or shy. But the evidence, according to Acts 4, of the Spirit of God filling us is that we speak with all boldness the word of God. And we're not ashamed of this, are we? So, the church has allowed those things to come in.

And last but certainly not least, the church at Laodicea who perceived that by virtue of their own ability and their own money and their own strength that they don't even need God. And I think some churches probably try to operate in that particular realm, but the world walks through the doors, and they go, "Okay, so how is this different than me making my own life fit?" Because man is all about control and about making things happen. And of course, the church at Laodicea is going, "Well, we're rich. We don't need anything." I can just see an elder board gather together, "Do we need anything from God?" "No." "Okay." "No." "You can take the day off." And God says, "You don't understand. You're naked, you're blind, and you're poor. You're not living in faith." And the perception is that "If I have the things of the world, then

we must be successful. We build big buildings, so we must be successful. We have big programs, so we must be successful." And God says, "You have no idea." So, the church has allowed these things to come in. And in many respects, it's the church falling in love with the world. So, as we go through this Book of Revelation, He begins to reveal these things.

As you come into Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 in the Book of Revelation in particular, it's interesting, it's like the camera was on the world and we were looking at the seven churches and then all of a sudden the camera goes up, and He goes, "Now, let Me show you what it's like in heaven." So, He takes us up in Chapter 4; we go into heaven, we see the powers of God that is able to calm the seas and everything is at peace because of the great powers of God. And the powers of God are there existing in all of their glory. But then we go into Chapter 5, and what's amazing is that God has so ordained that the greatest power above all powers is going to be a Lamb, as if slain, that will take away the sins of the world. And God will give this Lamb all power. So, from the perspective of

heaven, what is the greatest power in all of the universe? The Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. Now, we would say from our earthly perspective, "We don't see it; we don't get it. That selflessness, that sacrifice, how could that be powerful?" And God says, "Let Me show you." And so, much of the Book of Revelation is going to be displaying this wonderful power through the book.

The chapter that follows this, Chapter 6, takes us into the apocalyptic horse. And I think one of the interesting thing about the apocalyptic horses is that they reveal what man is going after. And in many respects, you see us kind of going through history and how man has pursued things. Our perception is that man can accomplish great things if he just goes after it. And so, what you have is man's pursuit in making things great. And at first, he's riding on a white horse. We start off with good causes, don't we? I mean, almost all the time we have good intentions anyway, "We're going to help people. We're going to save people. We're going to do something for the greater good." So, we're all basically utilitarian in some way. So,

our thoughts are that we're going to bring peace on earth, and how wonderful it is. So, we get on our white horse, and before long, we find out that most people aren't on board the way they want to, so what do we want to do? We've got to conquer them. Then, you have the Crusades, "So, you're not going to follow us doing good things, so we'll kill you." You can just see the wheels turning, "We figured this one out, you know." And so, what you realize is that man and his pursuits will only cause aggression, and then the next horse division, and then the next horse poverty, and then the next horse death. That whatever man's pursuits are, it's not coming up good. It can start off with maybe a good thought, but it basically ends there. The forces of heaven then begin to be revealed, and of course, payday is someday and that which you've sown you will reap. And it's an interesting picture in that particular chapter.

And what's also interesting is, by the time you come to Chapter 10, you have this great Being with a message of the glory of God. And you say, "Why is it that down at His feet there's a fire and there's burning, and up at His head

there's a glowing light and a rainbow over His head?" And the answer is, from heaven's view, the Gospel is that wonderful message of hope and glory. But to the world, it's condemnation. And so, the way that the world sees the message of God is very different than the way the heavens have proclaimed it. But man distorts these things because man only sees the gospel of God as, "Okay, so you're telling me I can't do this anymore?" “No, I'm not telling you that you can't. I'm telling you that if you receive Christ, you won't want to do it anymore." But they see it as, and one of the first things you hear as an argument of people that don't go to church is, "Oh, it's just a bunch of dos and don'ts. I don't want to hem me in, cramp my style," and they say all kinds of things like that. And I'm going, "Well, I understand you don't get it. But it has nothing to do with that." "But you're going to take away stuff from me." What? The sad thing is that people begin to perceive it in the light of where they're coming from. And God says, "No, it's the message of hope." And so, I think one of the things to me that Chapter 10 does is it just gives the distinction between the way that the

message should be perceived and the way that man oftentimes perceive it.

You come into Chapter 11, and what you have is just a revelation of how religion hates the message of the gospel. Religion hates it. And once again, if you read through Matthew 23, it's very clear in that particular passage that Jesus is attacking religion, dead orthodoxy; the piety of man and the righteousness of man; snobs; condescending leaders. And they have all this garb; they look very righteous; they know how to hum in unison, and they look so righteous. In fact, I don't know, maybe some are walking on air. But the point is that their righteousness is that which is oppressing and taking from people. And it's all a very selfish thing. The strange thing Luke records that the Pharisees loved money. So, oftentimes in the realm of religion, it just becomes a money laundering thing, which unfortunately begins to happen. So, I think one of the main points of Chapter 11, there are many, many points within chapter, but what you see is that it's in Jerusalem that the two prophets that God sends will be slain. It's in Jerusalem. Now, there's no

city on earth that is declared a more righteous city than Jerusalem. It is the holy city. It's even called that. But it is that interesting picture of, "But who hates the message of the glorious gospel of God more?" And there's no group of people that hate the message more than religion. And if you understand that, then you also understand why religion through the years has twisted this message. It's a wonderful message. Jesus saves. There's nothing complicated here. You don't have to jump through a lot of hoops. But you see the destruction of the prophets in Chapter 11.

In Chapter 12, what's being revealed to you is the relationship that God has with His people. And it's a picture of almost a husband and his wife, and she's in danger; a father and his child and the child's in danger and a dragon's coming to swallow up the woman and the child. How would the father feel? Why is this at this point in Revelation? The reason why it's at this point is we're almost in the wrath of God. So, the question we would ask ourselves is, so why is God angry? If you read Chapter 12 and you don't understand why God is angry, you didn't

read Chapter 12. Because any father would be protective of his child. Any husband would be protective of his wife. So, the emotions are stirred up, and you go, "Yes, be angry. Don't let him get him." And you can see this helpless child in this. I'm oversimplifying, but as we come, hopefully you're seeing some of these things.

And what's bizarre is that you see the love of God and His desire to protect His own, and then you see in Chapter 13 the world and how it loves the beast; the very beast that would slay the child; the very beast that would slay the woman. But the world's in love with the savagery of the world. And they are attracted to these kinds of things. So, really, by the time we come into Chapter 13 and 14, you begin to see all these consequences of choice and revealing the heart of the matter. And as we go through, you're going to see that attachment by the world to the things that are evil and destructive.

So, in many respects, that brings us up to Chapter 18. And as we see that man has clearly been allured by the things of the world. And this is one of the reasons why Babylon is referred to as the great harlot, because as he ends

within verse 18 of Chapter 17, the cities of the earth is the great Babylon. It's things that allure you. And unfortunately, what has happened is that we've fallen in love with the stuff of the world rather than God.

As you come to this passage, he begins to talk about the nations and this illicit affair that the nations have; the nations should be worshipping God. They're falling in love with the things of the world. And what I believe He's conveying to us within the text is that the problem is not an isolated problem. It literally is copiously universal. That is to say, it's all over the place. So, when you understand that the problem isn't just in San Francisco, it's in Jacksonville too. And it's all over the place. And the ubiquitous nature in the sense that it permeates every part of our society is just interwoven within our thinking, and one of the reasons why the church is so easily sucked into it.

So, it starts off this way in Chapter 18... You didn't think we were going to get there, but we did.

(Revelation 18:1) "<u>After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority</u>..."

Now, underline the word "authority" there. The word "*exousia*" is making reference to freedom. And it is also making reference to the fact of great privilege. It oftentimes comes into the realm of jurisdiction; and so, the ability to reveal things. So, in this particular context, what it's going to be talking about is that this angel is going to have great freedom in...

Well, the way the text reads is,

"... having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory."

Now, "illumined," "*phōtizō*," is making reference to the fact that he's going to render the evidence of what is going on in the world. In other words, he's peeling back the covers; he's got great freedom to do this, and he's going to reveal what the world is really about. So, the illumination is about to happen. The jurisdiction that he has is to bring all these things to light, to even expose them to light, and so he's going to do that with his great glory. The heavens do that. The light of the glory of God. The Scripture tells us in Ephesians 5, you're to be sons of Light, and by virtue of you walking in Light, you even

expose evil. And that's what it does. So, this great force of heaven begins to expose what the world is really about.

And so, as you pick up in verse 2,

(Revelation 18:2) "And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon..."

Now, the point is that Babylon, of course, is an interesting word meaning confusion, "the city of confusion," but "fallen" is making reference to one that was at a high place at one time is now descending to a low place; one that at one time was very wealthy is now being robbed of all the wealth. And so, it's given this picture of everything being taken away that would elevate this great woman. And here again, the point is going to be, "Yeah, but what happens when she doesn't have all the makeup on, so to speak? Or what happens when she's not able to allure? Or what happens when everything is taken away from her? What happens when it's no longer advantageous for her to be gracious to you? Will she still love you?" "Oh, the world loves me.” “Yeah?” “They said they would take care of me." Okay. What happens when the government goes bankrupt? What happens when wars come in? You know,

during World War II, a lot of people thought, "Well, we'll stock up on gold." And the government goes, "We'll confiscate your gold." And they did. But the thought is, you know, "I have all these safety things from the world." What happens when it's no longer beneficial to them? Go to a restaurant and order your food and see how wonderful the waitresses are. Now, look at the waitresses and say, "Could you come to my house? I need some cleaning done and I can't really pay you, but you guys seem so nice and you seem so happy to serve me." And see if they follow. The fact is that a lot of the graciousness, I'm thankful for people that are kind in what they do, but they'd like a tip. And you should give them one. But what we're talking about is a world that is basically quid pro quo. I mean, you give them something, they give you something, and there's this trade-off. But that's not a relationship. And this is what Scripture is wanting to convey to you. The reason why it's so important that you understand this concept of the “Lamb as if slain” is that He had nothing to gain from the relationship. He was dying for you. And for you not to be drawn to that, there's something wrong with us. There's

something wrong with us when we're happy with relationships that are trade-offs. There's something distorted or twisted in that whole perspective.

And so, the point is,

"And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons..."

Now, it's not a mistake that the word itself is a root word which means distributor of fortunes and demons. So, it also means a distributor of knowledge. So, you come into the cities, of course, you live in a place that says, "We're going to increase your knowledge, and we're going to increase your money," and you go, "That's where I want to live." But what you don't understand is who's running the camp.

And the passage reads,

"... a dwelling place of demons and a prison..."

In other words, it's keeping you under guard. Why aren't people leaving? Why aren't people leaving? They can't. Why? Well, first of all, they charged up all their (credit)

cards. There's just so many things, and so you become under guard of these forces. You're actually under forces you didn't know about. I mean, God says, "Come to Me, I'll give you water. I won't even charge you for it." Remember reading that in Isaiah? Water, and you don't even have to pay for it. (I've got to pay for the drainage of my water. I'm actually giving water back into the soil, and they want me to pay for that. I'm not bitter, once again. Something I thought you should know.)

So as it goes on, it says,

(Revelation 18:2) "... a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit..."

Unloving, indifferent.

And it goes on and says,

"... and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird."

By the way, every time you see "bird" mentioned in Revelation, it's under the picture of a vulture. So, what is He talking about? Well, what He's talking about is that you live in a city full of vultures. And they're waiting for you to start dying. And they're going to take advantage of

the weak. And so, what you have is an interesting picture of indifference and those that are elevated, i.e. birds, and they look down upon us as opportunities exist, and they take advantage of those things and they take advantage of those that are failing and falling.

So, it goes on and says,

(Revelation 18:3) “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion..."

It's dealing with both the lust for more things, and anger. You find yourself getting angry about stuff and you don't even know why you're so angry. But most of it is because you've gone after the things of the world and then when you can't have them, you get this insatiable desire, and if you can't have it faster next time, if you can't have it faster next time. I mean, I actually remember before there was a microwave. Now, I'm sticking stuff in the microwave, and you know, it might say something like "30 seconds," and I'm going, "How long? 30 seconds? Why can't it do it faster than that," you know? What is that about us? I mean, what is it about the fact that we find ourselves getting upset and angry? There's a little bit of

traffic, and it doesn't take long to just ruin our whole day just because of that.

So, the passage makes reference to the fact we've drunk the wine of the passion of the city. Go into a big city and see if you hear any horns blowing.

"... of her immorality..."

That is to say, her illicit intercourse. In other words, we've had intercourse with the things of the world. We've loved it and drew it to our sides. And we said, "I love this more." You know, whether it's your cars or surfboards... I'm going to talk to myself while I'm here. But the technology, the health care, the education, the entertainment, the possessions, the conveniences that we have; all these things, I mean, you fall in love with it. It's easy to do.

He says,

"... and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her..."

Now, this phrase goes into "have prostituted themselves." That is to say, the kings have sold themselves out. We'll put it another way. The kings have disregarded integrity.

We'll put it another way. The leaders, the presidents, have stopped thinking in terms of right and wrong and have started thinking, "What will benefit me?" So, they've sold themselves.

"... the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth..."

These are basically anybody that makes money in any way. It's not just talking about those that are on the seas, but those that are on the land, anyone that buys or sells; sometimes can be translated as retailers.

"... the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

What that means is that you and I can get rich by tapping into people's desires. "I've got to have this." Like with a new cell phone; people have to stand in line to get their new cell phone. So, you can tap into that. I mean, if you have the ability to get a hold of something like that, you can take advantage of that. You can take advantage of people. In fact, if there's a hurricane and people need lumber, you can raise the price because what an opportunity it is to make so much money. Of course,

stores would never do that. If they would, that would be a wrong thing to do. What is happening within the passage is it's revealing the nature of man, and it's exposing man's illicit affair within the passage.

How can you say it's an illicit affair? Well, just look with me in Exodus 20. If you just touch base with me on this, Lord willing, I'm going to be able to pull this together. But Exodus 20, if you look with me, the very fundamental command is this... It's not a complicated command.

Here's the deal:

(Exodus 20:1) "Then God spoke all these words, saying,

(Exodus 20:2) "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Now, the fundamental point here is that only God can save. I mean, we have people looking to man as the hero. So, it's the hero soldier; it's the hero doctor; sometimes it's the hero product or invention; sometimes it's the drug; the technology. From psychologist to plumber, "You're our hero." Okay? But what does this passage say? "I'm the One that saved you." Yeah, I mean, Isaiah 43:3

says, "I'm Savior. I save alone. There's no savior besides Me." You know, it's easy when you're in the city to listen to the rhetoric that says, "We will save you," and begin to believe it. There's only one Savior.

(Exodus 20:3) “You shall have no other gods before Me."

"You can't trust in anybody else but Me." That doesn't mean you can't go to the doctor. It just means that you can't put your trust in him.

(Exodus 20:4) “You shall not make for yourself an idol..."

You can't make something with your hands and say, "This is going to help me out more than God." And really, with technology, I mean, we're coming up with some really, really grand stuff. And we go, "Look, I made this with my hands. This will save us." You can't do that. You can't do that. Because any time you do that, what have you just done? You've turned to another love. You said, "I'm going to love this more." And before long, you're not coming to God with anything. "Well, who is God? He can't do anything." And you have no relationship with Him. You don't talk to Him anymore. You don't look to Him for anything.

Isaiah 40 has got to be one of my favorite chapters. Not simply because it has the eagle thing in it. Which yeah, I like that too. But to me, what I love, I think the most about Isaiah 40 is the great theology in it. You know, how powerful God is. And how dare us think that we could put our trust in something else and it would be grander than God. God says, "Here I am. I can do anything. Is there anybody that would be like Me?" And in order to have a relationship that was meant to be had, that exclusive relationship between you and somebody else, that's very unique, in order for that to take place, you have to say, "There's nobody like them." Walk up to your fiancé, walk up to your wife, walk up to somebody that you say you love so much and say, "Oh, you're a dime a dozen. There are a whole bunch of people like you that I like. I don't like you really very much more than anybody else." And see how that goes over. The point of Isaiah 40 is, He goes, "There's nobody like Me. Why would you put your trust in anything else?" And of course, there truly is nobody like Him.

He says in verse 15,

(Isaiah 40:15) “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales...”

(Isaiah 40:17) “All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.”

I mean, who would you compare God with?

And so, that's what He asks in verse 18,

(Isaiah 40:18) “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?”

What model would you build? What thing would you carve that would look like God? And you go, "Oh, how beautiful this little statue that I carve is." God goes, "How could you even compare that with Me?"

So, the question in verse 21 is what?

(Isaiah 40:21) "Do you not know? Have you not heard? ..."

"... where I sit? What I reign over?"

(Isaiah 40:25) "To whom then will you liken Me..."

"Who would you say, 'That person would be equal to God' or 'that thing would be equal to God?' Would it be the cities? Would it be the power of the nations? Would you say, 'Oh, the power of the nations'? Wait a minute, wait a minute. The earth is like a speck of dust."

So, verse 28, he asks the question again,

(Isaiah 40:28) "Do you not know? Have you not heard? ..."

"Don't you know who I am?"

In all of this, man has drunk the wine; he's become intoxicated by his affections, and all of the things of the earth have drawn him away. And God's going to look at the church, and He's going to say, "Get away from her. Get out of there. Because she doesn't love you, and I do. Get out of there. We're going to reveal what she's about. Everything that has covered her in all of her glory is going to fall. Get away. Run for your life. She doesn't love you." What you love and how you love defines and distinguishes you. And this is one of the main themes of the Book of Revelation. The question is, what is it that you're attracted to? What is it that draws you to something?

Many years ago, about 50, I met my wife around the third grade. And I said to myself, "I kind of like this girl." She convinced me that I liked her. Because at first, I really wasn't into it. But as time went on, we became an item and 3rd, 4th, 5th, off and on, 6th grade, junior high, high school. And though, we were asked to maybe date others, and we did from time to time. We kept coming back to each other. I was drawn to her. She was drawn to me, and I can't fully say why beyond the fact that I was very attracted to her as a young person, but why was I? But then I began to realize, well, there's a lot of integrity in this young girl, and, you know, at a very early age, I mean, she was helping with Sunday school and all these things, and she really didn't come from a household that was godly, but she just had a zeal and a desire for those kinds of things. I can honestly say in the times of the high school years, though I admired that, I wasn't into it. I'm saying to myself, "Just give me a fast car and a good day at the beach and I'm happy." But I was attracted to the fact that she had, really at that time, higher standards than me, which makes me wonder why you were attracted to me, but anyway. We got married, and at first, it was a little

rocky. I had my things I wanted to do. She had her things she wanted to do. And she didn't understand why I didn't want to take off and do all these things. It was a little rocky to begin with. And I knew I loved her, but to the degree of how much I loved her, I don't know. The time came when we made a decision to do something with our lives in the ministry. And so, we sold everything, and we headed off to California to take classes out there. And I can honestly say that we still were having struggles, but as time went on, those struggles intensified. And she was expecting, and we had two kids while I was going to school. I was working three jobs, taking 17 hours (of classes). And it was a time of real stress in our lives. And it was not an easy time for her. She was basically stuck in the house with these two little ones and with a husband that was hardly ever at home, hardly ever at home. And on top of that, with the bills at the school and everything that was always mounting, and it's not cheap to live in LA, with all the expenses that you have, it was overwhelming. And I remember one time in particular, and this is the point that I'm getting to, where this particular semester was the absolute worst, and I didn't have any money. And

I didn't know how I was going to take care of the kids or my wife or anybody. And there's nothing worse than feeling like you can't take care of your own family. And we didn't have enough money for milk. And long story short of that, I had to end up pawning stuff. But I remember coming to her and I remember saying to her, "I feel terrible. I don't know what to do. I feel like I've let you down. I've been a terrible husband," you know? I mean, what else do you say? I didn't know what to say. And she looked at me and she said, "I love you. I'm not going to leave you. We're in this together and we're going to make this." And I'm going to tell you something. On that day, I fell in love with my wife. Because on that day, that's what I'd been looking for all my life; somebody who wouldn't leave me or forsake me; somebody to stay with me in sickness and in health, for better or for worse. And on that day, I realized what love was. It went beyond the appearance and the attraction. I found somebody that would die for me. And that's what this is all about. The world's going to offer you all kinds of glitz and glamour, but you have somebody that died for you. Now, what

you're attracted to will define you, and it will distinguish you from everybody else.

The very next phrase that's going to come out in this particular chapter is, He's going to turn to the church, and He's going to say, "Get out of there. Get out of it." And the question is, how long are you going to linger? That moment has so sustained me that I've never wanted to look anywhere else. I'm home. And it'll be the one thing that will sustain you in your walk with Christ. If you have that moment of going, "He died for me. I'm not leaving Him." What is it Peter says? "Where do we go? You're the only One that gives the way to eternal life. Where can I go?" And you fall in love with Christ. That's what happens. Why do you think He's talking about affairs and all that kind of stuff? Because He's talking about relationships. And what is it that attracts you? Why are you drawn to this and why are you drawn to that? There has to come a moment where you decide, "What am I going to be drawn to?" And at that moment, you're either going to choose real, or you're going to choose fake. And if you choose fake, what a disappointment and what a sorrow the rest

of your life will be. But if you choose real, I mean, yes, you're going to fail and you're going to falter so many times, but you're going to always come back to that one you love because you know that person loves you more than anybody else could ever love you. And that's what our whole faith is about. You read through the Gospel of John, and the Gospel of John is focused on, "You want to know why you believe? Because you love Him." And if you'll love Him with all of your heart... This is why Jesus will ask Peter, "Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" Because He knows that if he loves Him, he'll put all of his trust in Him and he'll believe. And you'll never falter in that faith. You'll never falter if it's based on love. Make that decision.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we give You thanks for Your word and the reminder of how this world so allures us into this false sense of pleasure and joy and

fulfillment. But it's none of those things. It's none of those things. It's just a facade.

We turn our eyes upon Jesus. We look full in *His wonderful face, and the things of the earth seem to grow strangely dim*. Because what we see is somebody that loves us. And we can't leave that. We can't leave that. It's your choice. You have to make a decision. But I can tell you what drew me to the Lamb.