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Revelation
Chapter 18 - Revealing the Hearts of Men
Finding Out What Grieves the World (vs. 9-19)

Revelation 18:9-19: “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more— cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were

luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’

Well, we're in the Book of Revelation and what's being revealed? Well, in this particular passage, what's being revealed is clearly the hearts of men and what they love

and what they long for. And so, in the very beginning of this chapter, we see the longing of man for the material things of the world, and it really has given us an interesting picture of the cities of the world which are almost alluring like a woman. And so, it gives the picture of the great harlot, the cities of the world, the things of the world that are alluring; loving the world and the things that are in the world. In this particular passage, He begins to list many of those things. The text is not saying that those things are bad in and of themselves, but what it is talking about is the love of these things is that which is bad and destructive in people's lives.

As we come to this, we realize that He is exposing an illicit affair that the world has with the things of the world. Why is it illicit? It's because of the fact that you should be loving God. You should not be loving these things. This should be a relationship between you and God, not with these things. And unfortunately, we abandoned our relationship with Him. And strangely enough, according to this passage, man will sell himself and everything that's truly valuable to satisfy his desires and to satisfy his

cravings. Even though they are insatiable desires, they can't seem to be ever met in an unquenchable flame that seems to continue to devour and finding no satisfaction. That really is, I think, one of the main points of Ecclesiastes 2. The writer, Solomon, begins to go into the realm of the world, and he says, "I tried to find out what pleasure was all about, and I tried to attain joy and happiness through pleasure. And the only thing I found was no satisfaction." And unfortunately, people have fallen into that lie of the world that says there is satisfaction in these things.

What is different, according to verses 4 through 8, as we looked at within Chapter 18, is the saints. We don't see things the same way. And God has called us to be different, but God's people don't feel at home. We don't feel at home in these surroundings. This world is not our home.

1 Peter 2: 11 says that we're strangers and aliens in this world.

In John 17:16, Jesus says they're not of this world. So, that's a clear defining of where we are and where we should be.

Of course, Hebrews 11:16 said this is not our country.

And as you go into Hebrews 12:28, we have a kingdom which cannot be shaken, which is a different kind of kingdom in this world. Of course, we're going to see within this particular chapter a kingdom that is shaken.

And in Hebrews 13:14, we have a lasting city. This is not going to be a lasting city.

In fact, in 2 Peter 3:13, it declares that we have new heavens and a new earth. But this is really the key point of the whole thing, is that we're looking for the new heavens and the new earth. Listen to the rest of the phrase, "where righteousness dwells." And what's so bizarre about this whole thing is that man is willing to sell himself and man is willing to suffer great things for the things of the world. Of course, we bought into the lie. I mean, Scripture tells us the outer man is decaying, but man will put a lot of effort in trying to make sure that never happens. And we understand according to Proverbs

that money easily makes itself like wings and flies away, and yet we perceive that it's a force of stability. Charm is deceitful. Proverbs will say at the end, beauty is vain, that it's not going to sustain you, but we still go after those kinds of things. And in the pursuit of satisfying these pleasures, which are fundamentally just a mirage, they're just an optical illusion, man buys into the lies and deception.

And I think that's one of the reasons why it's put in Mark 4:19, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things choke out the truth. And we begin buying into the lie. And what's even more bizarre is we feel at home going after these kinds of things and compromising our life. Man will because of this, because of his desires, because of his craving for other things, He'll embrace greed, he'll embrace avarice, hate, exploitation, slavery. I mean, all these things will become part of his life. And you say, "We're going to be taken out of the world? Oh, I'm going to miss it, so." Why? The murder, the mayhem, the, you know, whatever. And it's interesting how man even

attaches himself to these things that are horrific based on his cravings and his desires in going after these things.

So, as we go through this passage, what we're going to see is really an interesting contrasting and comparison throughout. As we go through, we're going to see the comparisons of those that have gone after the things of the world and the sorrow that brings. And then we're going to see in stark contrast, the believers who, this is not their home, this is not what they've been seeking. You and I are distinguished by that mark. This is not a place that we want to remain. We don't like the surroundings. We don't feel comfortable in a realm in which greed and avarice is a part of the conversation. We just don't feel comfortable there. We'd like to get out. And this is why you see in the text, He says, "Come out. You don't belong there. This is not your home. This is not where you're going."

I think about the fact that... What is it, John 13:35? Jesus says, "They'll know you're My disciples by your love for one another." How do we know those that are in the world? They love themselves. 2 Timothy 3:1, they're

lovers of self, lovers of money. So, the very things that we love, there's a marked difference, and I think the world's probably confused, "You're holding others in higher esteem than yourself?"

John 12:43, the world seeks the approval of men. What do we seek? The approval of God. Galatians 1, that's what we seek. And we long for those things. And we long to please Him in all these things.

The way it's put in 1 John 4:5-6 is that the world loves to listen to themselves. But I don't like listening to them. I like listening to God. So, we have different ears and we have different perspectives. And the things that we love are very, very different and very unique. And we don't feel at home because the world doesn't think the way that we do. We're just so thankful that God has placed these things within our heart.

As we pick up in Revelation 18:9, what we're going to see are emotions that are being stirred by the loss of things that are loved. And I would say this, that sadness comes when that which you love is taken away from you. That's where sadness comes from. So, what do you love?

Oftentimes, people come towards the end of their life and it's a very depressing time and they're very upset and they're very…., because they're still hanging out in the world. So, they're upset, they're angry, they're feeling great sorrow, because they sense the loss of something that they love being taken away from them. And they oftentimes get angry at God because of that. And this is a source of grief, it's a source of sorrow, but it's a source of depression because the depression is going to come when "I can't have what I want." So, in the passage, what we're going to see is this sorrow that comes out of the world losing their grip on the very things that they love. And you're going to see this wailing and crying because of this. It is a good reminder, be careful what you love. And once again, I think one of the great themes of the Gospel of John, that which you love, you'll believe in, you'll put your trust in, and you'll put your hope in. And we see this in this particular passage.

So, we pick up in Chapter 18,

(Revelation 18:9) "And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality..."

We'll put it another way, "sold themselves so that they might attain their cravings." There's a lot of compromise that goes on and the immorality that comes into play is that which takes us away from the love of God and puts us into the realm of a love for this world.

Now, what's bizarre is, it says, the kings of this earth committed acts of immorality or sold themselves to live wantingly or without regard for what is right; so that they can fulfill their desires and their cravings. But what's interesting to me is, they live sensually with her. You notice the passage? So, who is it talking about? Well, once again, it's talking about the great city of Babylon. And so, the question is, okay, so what did they find that was so wonderful about the great city of Babylon?

Well, the passage, if you back up to verse 2 and 3 and you go in, you begin to realize that they seemingly have fallen in love with the demonic influence, unclean spirits, hateful spirits, tormenting spirits, and they prostituted themselves for this. Once again, I can't understand how come people feel at home within those kinds of surroundings. And yet, they do. And the passage is saying

that they lived in this wanton pleasure without regard for anything that was right and wrong, and this sense of just meeting whatever desire and craving they had. And it says how they now react when it's taken away from them. Look at the passage.

"... (They) will weep and lament (beat their chest) over her when they see the smoke of her burning."

As they begin to see the cities burning.

Now, once again, just to re-emphasize who is destroying the cities, when you go back in Chapter 17 and you look at the end of Chapter 17, it's man who's destroying the cities. So, this is the hostility of man. And greed and all the pursuits of man and his cravings will ultimately lead to destruction. And that's what you're going to see. And so, man is literally destroying himself and imploding.

But if you look in verse 10, what's very interesting to me is where the kings, who are the leaders, the people that had probably, in many respects, received their office by virtue of taking bribes or whatever, as we've read in places like Jeremiah and so forth, what we see is their stance in this text. And this, to me, is extremely interesting because we

know that they're in love with the things of the world. We know that. And the world shows itself that it's in love. But they still can't be loyal.

And if you look at the passage, it says in verse 10,

(Revelation 18:10) "(The kings are) standing at a distance..."

Yeah, "*makrothen*," which means basically they're standing as far away as they can. So, what is it saying? "I love you, I hope you're okay. I hate seeing you burn that way." So, it's always good to know that you have a friend. They just can't seem to know what love and loyalty, intimacy, care, devotion, and sincerity truly means. None of this is a part of the world, even at a time in which that which they love is being burned up. They don't love it enough to fight for it. They don't love it enough to protect it. They don't love it enough to care for it.

"standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment..."

You would have to pay a price. You'd have to stop loving yourself. And once again, you go into 2 Timothy 3, "men will be lovers of self, lovers of money."

"standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’"

The swiftness of the judgment of the city is revealing just how vulnerable it was. Of course, as we've read oftentimes in Isaiah as well as in Revelation, the cry of the city Babylon, which he actually states and quotes from Isaiah in Chapter 18 here, is that "I said in the heavens, 'I sit as queen forever, I'm never going to be moved.'" And God goes, "It's only going to take an hour." So, you see the sense of stability and the arrogance. And as Isaiah says, "Your arrogance has deceived you. It's made you think that you're invincible and you're not." I think it's one of the themes in Isaiah, as you go into 24, 25, 26, he talks about the unassailable city. Then he goes, "It's going to crash. It's going to crash. They think that nobody could touch them, but in one hour your judgment has come." And then it begins to describe the things that the world

loves so much. And in these descriptions, at the top of the list, is money. "Merchants" is the term. Now, it shouldn't surprise you that the name itself, "*emporos*," is probably where we get the word "emperor". And it's making reference to the fact of those that will journey long distances in order to acquire things and in order to have great things. So, what you have is somebody willing to sacrifice valuable stuff in order to get what they want. Relationships. People give up relationships. Isn't that bizarre? They'll give up family. People will say, "Family is the most important thing." You watch the same people, they'll go travel miles to be away from their family for a long time in order to acquire great riches. And it's all about what? It's all about money. It's all about what they want. It's all about the things that they have.

And what you begin to see is this list,

Revelation 18:11) “<u>And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more—</u>"

So, it's about buying and selling, yeah.

(Revelation 18:12) "cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen..."

Very costly stuff. These are valuable things. It just never ceases to shock me when I'm talking to a person that is "a strong Christian" or something, how they can be so upset about money. People get upset about money. I'm going, "It's just stupid money. It's stupid. Let it go." Have you ever been wronged by a company and you get on the phone and I've caught myself several times. I mean, you just get ticked off because they're messing with you and they're trying to get away with murder. So, you find yourself getting in on the battle and before long you're almost as mad as they are. In fact, I think you're more angry. So, you start doing this battle, and finally, I don't know if it's like this with you, but the Lord just sort of hits me on the head and goes, "What are you arguing for? Let him have it." And I just go, "Let it go. Let it go." I'll tell you, you'll probably live longer. People that argue and fight with their money aren't going to live as long, I don't think. But of course, they say you can't take it with you. I don't think people actually believe that. But the point in this is

that money has become so important, costly things and possessions, these things you can buy, that it's a thing that makes you sorrowful. You know, are we really sorrowful that people don't come to know the Lord? Are we really sorrowful that we haven't spent time with the Lord. I mean, what is it that really makes us sorrowful? And if you watch what makes you angry and you watch what makes you sorrowful, that's gonna define what you love. That's what's gonna tell you what you love so much. And if you lose sleep over stupid money, then I guess you love stupid money. And I just call it stupid because it doesn't think. It just sits there. I've never had a really loving conversation with money. It doesn't have any kind of feelings or anything. And unfortunately, we spend so much of our time focused on these things. If it wasn't a big deal, Scripture wouldn't talk about it so much. But over and over again, it's telling us how... In fact, even the Pharisees, Jesus says in Luke, were lovers of money. So, I mean, ministers don't love money, do they? Some do. And this was the great warning of 1 Timothy 6. It's a great warning to Timothy. As Paul is writing to a pastor, and he says, "Look, you can't love money." Now, we know that

people perceive the ministry as a source of gain, and it is a source of gain if accompanied by contentment, but this godliness is what's the issue. And you can't love money. You can't pursue after these things. He goes on and says, "Everybody who has pursued this, has loved money, all kinds of sorrows and pain have come into their life because they've embraced something that was fleeting. And this is why so many people are so upset most of the time. It's because they've loved the wrong thing and because those things are volatile and very fleeting. They are upset and angry and very often sorrowful so much of their life, living in depression because of great loss. If in fact you love God with all your heart, is it possible to lose? You've literally banked into One that never changes. And God is going to cause all things to work together for good. Aren't you good with that? The presence of God, the pleasure of God is upon you if you just please Him. Isn't that the way you want to live? Every day can be a good day. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are. You can have a good day because you love God with all your heart instead of these things.

So, the passage begins to describe all these costly things,

(Revelation 18:13) "and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots..."

Or cars. Chariots would probably fit in that category. But mark it well, the end of verse 13 is a turning point within the text, because it's almost like you and I have been set up. What we've been set up is, "Yeah, I love that, I love that stuff, I love that stuff. I love that smell. I love the way that looks." And we'll go great distances to buy really special stuff. So, "I love those things. I love those things." And he goes, "Yeah, wouldn't it be terrible to lose that?" "Yeah, it'd be so terrible to lose those things." "What about human lives? How terrible would that be? Because that's what's being lost too." But we don't see human lives as human lives. We see them in a long list of commodities. And if you look at the text, it's the last on the list. Don't you think that's interesting?

The passage reads this way,

"... cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives (souls)."

The slaves making reference to literally bodies. The word there is "*sōma*," which means your body. What's interesting is that can either be taken as somebody that you see as a body to do something for you. Or it can be seen as simply a corpse, which is telling us how cheaply we perceive the human in a long line of valuable stuff. It's at the end of the commodity list. And then it goes into the realm of, yes, and even the souls of men are just mere commodities to us. That we play and we manipulate with the feelings. I mean, you think oftentimes just in the realm of sales, how salespeople will play and manipulate a person that really can't afford a product to go in great debt to buy a product; in fact, they'll try to make you feel guilty if, in fact, "What, are you poor? Are you insignificant?" "Oh, no, I'm very significant." "Well, then you want to buy this, right? I mean, you do want to be somebody, right?" They're playing with the souls of men. They're bringing people into a realm of not only

indebtedness, but oftentimes great depression. And it's all for the purpose of what?

It was interesting. I was going through how the city draws us in and says so many things are important. You know, that you have electricity, that I have electricity, it's pretty important; that we have water, running water the way we should. So, here's the deal. Hoover Dam, 96 lives were taken in the construction Hoover Dam. Aswan Dam, in the Nile, 500 lives were taken in the building of that dam. New River Diversion Project in West Virginia, which is near and dear to my heart, they lost count. It was somewhere between 470 to 1,000... that's a pretty interesting jump... died in the construction of a diversion project of a river. Transcontinental railroad, 1800s, 1,000 to 1,500 died so that you could have transportation. The White Sea and the Baltic Sea, the canal that was dug, 12,000 to 25,000 died in the building of that canal. Panama Canal, 27,500 at least, they estimate. Burma Railway, 90,000 civilians, 16,000 POWs, died in the building of that. The Suez Canal, over the years, 120,000 lives have been taken. Mining accidents in Japan, 1500.

Early 1900s in the place of my birth, Monongah, West Virginia, an estimated 500 died. According to the records, in the 19th century, there were at least 13 mining disasters. In the 20th century, over 51 mining disasters with large numbers. I'm not going to quote them all. The National Human Trafficking International Labor Organization estimated in 2017 that 40,300,000 people globally were humanly trafficked. 2017. Abortions worldwide, 26 million legal abortions. 20 million illegal.

What Scripture is telling us is that we perceive humans as a commodity to get what we want. And the declaration in 2 Timothy 3 is, they're lovers of self, they're lovers of money, and they're going to do what they want to do. I mean, they couldn't care less about relationships. They're disobedient to parents. They're unholy. They don't love God. What, do you think, they're going to love you? If you don't love God, are you going to love man? They're not going to love man. That's why if you go to 1 Timothy 6, the warning is to the pastors, first of all, and you think of the church at Laodicea, it goes, "We've got a lot of money, so we don't need anything." He goes, "Do you

have any idea what you're holding hands with and what you're willing to sacrifice for the souls of men?" You know, a church might lose a building. Are you going to cry over that? It's a stupid building. The souls of men are the value that we should be investing in. And Paul was focusing in on, as is the beginning of Revelation, when he's talking to the churches, he goes, "You can't think about making a name for yourself, Sardis, and you can't think it's about money, Laodicea, and you can't think about the compromises that you allow on your door, Thyatira." You know, He begins to deal with all these things. "And most of all, the church at Ephesus, you can't stop loving because this world is full of cold breath." It's the way that it's put in Matthew 24, "The love of many will grow cold." It's actually "cold breath." There's not a warm spirit within them. But in 1 Timothy 6, he talks about the fact that we understand that people are going to pursue godliness as a means of financial gain. It's actually the context in verse 5, if you look at the end of that, because they're deprived of the truth. They don't love God. They don't love His people.

But it says in verse 6,

(1 Timothy 6:6) "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.

(1 Timothy 6:7) For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either."

So, you shouldn't be disappointed when you go, right? What are you leaving? Nothing. Nothing I want to take with me anyway.

(1 Timothy 6:8) "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

Why? Because that sustains us for today.

(1 Timothy 6:9) "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction."

Not only your life, but everybody else's. How many people have died so that we could have something? I mean, that's why I went through that list with you. The world is crying, "Oh, we couldn't have this, we couldn't have this." How many people have died so you could have that? Well, there's not a thought about that. There's not a

concern. The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, which means that you're willing to hurt anybody and do anything to get whatever you want. How many arguments and fights have been in houses? How many couples have been divided because they're fighting over money? Let them have it. Let it go. It's not worth the relationship, is it?

(1 Timothy 6:10) "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

(1 Timothy 6:11) But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness..."

They can't take that away from us, so we'll never sorrow.

"... godliness..."

They can't take that away from us, we'll never sorrow

"... faith..."

They can't take that away from us.

"... love, perseverance and gentleness."

We can hold on to those things. I mean, that's the forever stuff. I mean, is it possible that Christians that are really following Christ would ever be depressed? And I would say no, not if you are following Christ. Because we don't lose. Peter says, "You're suffering for Christ, you win. You don't suffer for Christ, you win. You get to go home, you win. You get to stay here, you win." Where do we lose? I don't understand where we lose.

So, the passage begins to reveal all of these things and how sad it is to me that at the end it begins to deal with the human soul and the sorrow of those things. You know, when Paul writes to Titus, he has to stay, of course, on the Isle of Crete, which is a very unruly place to be. But he writes in the letter to Titus, he goes, "You know what? You're going to have to tell the women to love their husbands. And you're going to have to tell the women to love their children. And unfortunately, we have to say the same thing to people in America today. I mean, you married him. You can't love the person you chose? Love your husband. Love your children. Isn't that natural affection? Isn't that supposed to be natural affection? It

just shows how far we've gone in which mothers will give up their children to pursue careers. They'll give up their children to have a second car. They'll give up their children so they don't have to in any way work or fight for what is not theirs. So, the hostility of man begins to come in and we begin to see the greed take over and before long, that's the only thing that really matters. They love themselves and they love money. I mean, you don't really have to go much further than that because it just covers the gamut.

It goes on, it says,

(Revelation 18:14) "The fruit you long for..."

Probably best put, "Ripe pickings that you've craved."

"... has gone from you..."

No longer can you just grab at something that you want. And of course, here again, that's a picture of the world that we live in. I mean, it's great, isn't it? You want something, I just get on the internet, I order it. I like ordering because I don't like shopping. Just get on the internet and one day I wake up, plop, it's on my door. And

it is on my door. How did it get there? But that's the kind of world that we live in. What would happen if it didn't plop? I think that's the issue, isn't it? I mean, it's okay to have things. But you can't love that stuff. I had a couple of deals this past week where I had to suffer a pretty big loss. I just, I could go one way, I could fight it, and I'd just go, "Why? Let it go." And I think that there are times in your life where God does that to test, “Is this important to you?" And if you can go, "You know what, it's not. Just let it go." Then good, you're at a good place. In fact, I really think we need that kind of exercise almost every month. At least maybe once a month, just to remind us that we shouldn't be putting our trust in that sort of stuff. We shouldn't be loving that stuff. That shouldn't make me sorrowful at all. I shouldn't lose a moment of sleep over it, not one, because it's not important. It's just not important.

“The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.

(Revelation 18:15) The merchants of these things, who became rich..."

I mean, there's no doubt we're talking about money and all the things that money can buy.

"The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her..."

Once again, not having the character or the fortitude to stand up for what they say they love, but still in great sorrow because they cannot have what they want.

(Revelation 18:16) "saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls;

(Revelation 18:17) for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance,

(Revelation 18:18) and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’

(Revelation 18:19) And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’"

I don't know if you're seeing repetition, but it's about money, and it's about sorrow over money. And this passage is just so clear that the world loves different things than we love. We're heading in different directions. And you think of the message of the gospel, how very different it is. Let me just see if I can do a little bit of contrast, because the contrast is going to hit us in verse 20. And we're not going to go into that this week. But the contrast is that we as believers are rejoicing over the burning of the world. We're rejoicing over the things of the world going away. Because all these things, including the trafficking and the wasting of lives in order to get what I want, are now gone.

And I'm going to the city where righteousness dwells, where people actually love each other and care for each

other and are concerned for one another. That's where I want to be. So, I rejoice, "Good, we're done with this. We're finally done with this." But when you think of the message of the gospel and how it morphed from the Old Testament, and it starts off where God really begins to work in the life and through the life of the of the spirit of Abel at the very beginning. And you see this man that is willing to give God his best, but he's the one that gets killed. And then you see as time goes on, because of Abel, because of course he was not the gotten child, Cain was the one that worked with his dad in the garden, and these were the ones that were tied together because they worked together. But what did Abel do? He was a shepherd. Abel was just a shepherd. But God goes, "You know what we're going to do? We're going to just go with the shepherds." So, Abraham's a shepherd. David's a shepherd. Moses is going to be a shepherd. We went with the shepherds. You can feel them pulling away from the things of the world. All these towers are being built throughout the world, and people are going, "Wow, that's impressive. You see the tower that's in Babylon? That's impressive." And God goes, "No, I'm here with the

sheep." And so, then in the Old Testament, it begins to point to things that we wouldn't think that... I mean, the Messiah is coming, right? The Messiah is coming. But where's He going to be born? Bethlehem. And where do we find Him in Bethlehem? In a manger, where the sheep are. And we begin to see it. Who's going to be there first? The shepherds. Of course, the shepherds. And who is Jesus going to equate with? Fishermen. And what great city is He going to come out of? Nazareth. I mean, everything about Him is counter to what the world does.

If you look with me in Isaiah 53, you'll see this truth that is conveyed. Isaiah 53. Of course, the initial declaration is, "Who could believe this?" This is an unbelievable point. Who has believed this message?

Read this with me,

(Isaiah 53:2) "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him."

The city of Babylon is all about attraction. Why is God telling us this? This is the point. And a point that's so

missed today. Why is God telling us this? Let me tell you what He's telling the church. He's telling the church, "You cannot be in the game of attraction. You cannot be in the realm of trying to allure people in." This has never been the way of God. Never been the way of God. God hasn't been standing out there going, "We have the biggest tower." You know, I mean, if it was up to man, it would be a competition between these great big buildings in the sky, "We have the biggest one. We have the biggest one." But God says, "I'm not even interested in building buildings." Well, what about the greatest temple? We're going to build the greatest temple. "All I want is a tent and we're going to call that tabernacle and that's where I'll dwell so I can be with you. You can pick up the tent, it'll move, so I can be with you. And that's what we'll do. We'll build a tabernacle." So, there's nothing about God or Christ, even in His meeting with the multitudes that He's meeting on the hillside, I mean, why didn't He meet with them in the porticos of Solomon? I mean, He would have more clout if He were doing that. Why is it that Scripture continually calls us to get out of there, to come out of the realm of religion and all the fanciful trappings of it, stop

looking like the world? That God is wanting a heart that wants the things that are important. If in fact we throw in the glitz and the glamour, then there's confusion with people. If you tell people, "You follow Christ and you can have more cars and you have more stuff," they get confused. What should you be telling them? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart." "Should I have things?" "I don't know. God doesn't care. Just don't love them." Love Him with all your heart. Love one another. Love His word. Put Him first in everything that you do. And everything changes. He's trying to take us out of the world, and one of the reasons why is because the world is passing away. And also, it's lust. If what you love most is transient and fleeting, you are setting yourself up for future depression. It's going is a given. You're going to be depressed. But if what you love is eternal, it'll be constant.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your word and encouragement that You give us even in this passage that is dealing with the transientness of this world because we don't love it and we don't want to be here with it. We feel uncomfortable in the surroundings of a world that loves stuff more than people. It uses people and exploits people to get what they want. We feel uncomfortable. We don't want to be here. We want to be with You. And we look forward to that place where righteousness dwells; a city that will never go away. Something that's unshakable. Immutable. You. We want to be with You.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, Scripture's speaking to us as a church, specifically as a church, "Don't love this stuff." You've got to make that individual decision. The church should never make any decisions based on monetary value. The church should always make a decision based on the Spirit of God moving us. You do too. You do too. You need to decide what you're going to do based on, "Is it right, is it helpful, is it beneficial, will it glorify God?" And do it. Live that way. Because in so

doing, you're embracing the things that are forever. And you'll never be disappointed.