

Revelation 5-19

Sunday 4/15/2007

He has a right to reveal it the way He wants to reveal it. When God wrote the Bible, and I know this is not popular today, He wrote a perfect book. Therefore, it has to carry the characteristics of Him being perfect. We are going to look at some things along those lines today, but we have been coming through a number of them.

Then I showed you that the book of Revelation, which reportedly is the hardest book in the Bible. If you would ask the average Bible teacher or the average pastor what the hardest book in the Bible was, at least in the New Testament, I am sure he would probably say the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation has been billed for years now as a mystery book. They like to use big terms like 'allegorical,' which means it does not mean anything at all.

The book of Revelation is a book that everybody likes to interpret their own way. The Jehovah's Witnesses interpret it one way. The Baptists interpret it another way. Charismatics interpret it another way. Everybody interprets it the way they want to. Of course, that is really the wrong way to do it, and that gets you into a lot of trouble. The Bible being God's book, God built within His own Word His systematic way of laying it out.

So we took that book, the book of Revelation, and I began to show you how the number seven is the key to the book of Revelation. When you approach the book of Revelation with the number seven in mind, let it reveal itself to you. I showed you when we started that the book of Revelation has seven churches, seven angels, seven personages, seven seals, seven plagues; it just goes on and on. That is the way you break it down.

So we have been through a lot of that. My goal for you is to help you really learn the book of Revelation. Not so much for your own self, though certainly I do not want to take away from that. You need to understand the Scriptures. I expect you, and many of you are doing this, that you have been working right along as we have been teaching all of this, and you have been going home, working it through. I have watched you; many of you are putting your charts together. You are doing very well with it. That is how you learn the Bible.

Because of the day and age that we live in, this is probably the single number one issue that is going on around the world today with all the problems in the Middle East, with all the impending disasters that are hanging out there. With everything that is taking place and transpiring in America and around the world, people are naturally antsy and want to know about these things, much like the disciples were with the first coming of Christ. One of the main questions they wanted to ask Him in Matthew 24 is,

Matthew 24:3

...What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Every three or four months, another disaster that is going to spell doom for the end of the world comes on. I heard somebody tell me the other day that in 2012, all the planets are going to line up exactly with the Milky Way, and it is going to rip planet Earth apart. I cannot wait; it will be a

great time. I do not want to miss that. Everybody is always talking about global warming and all of that. I wish global warming would hurry up and kick in because it has been cold around here for a while.

Everything around, everybody, they say all this stuff. People get caught up in that, and people get afraid of those things. Do you know why they get caught up in those things, why they are afraid of those things, or why they even question those things? Because they do not know their Bible. Now, global warming, and I am not an advocate of global warming, but I do believe in global warming. Global warming is going to kick in in the Tribulation Period. When we get to that point, I am going to show you global warming.

So it is amazing to me, if you are paying attention and you believe the Bible, how the unsaved people get a lot of concepts, but they just never get them in the right place. I love to just watch; I listen to all the news programs I can. The older I get, I love listening to what goes on in the world and how stupid so much of it is. A lot of people get afraid of those things. I know most of you, not all of you, are talking to people at work; your people come to you. I know a lot of you do not see this, you do not understand this, and I look at it as really part of your spiritual growth.

We just talk in normal conversations about things where you work, and you will come up with things. It is very obvious to me that people where a lot of you are working are seeking you out. They may give you a lot of problems, but at the end of the day, they know where the truth is. I remember years ago when I worked at the Hoover Company. When I got saved, I just kind of turned my life around overnight. I was just like everybody else one day and got right with God that one night or over a weekend.

The next morning I showed up with a pocket full of tracts and a Bible in my pocket, and it was quite a change. But I knew for me, if I did not just make a big fool out of myself the next day, I would never do it. I remember they always made fun of me and all those things. There was one guy in particular who always gave me a tough time. He would make fun of me and say all kinds of things, trying to degrade it.

But I will never forget, his little baby went into a hospital, and it was a very serious time. I will never forget as long as I live. I remember one day I was sitting in the back, putting parts down on the line, getting ready for it. They made washing machines and vacuum cleaners, and I would drive a forklift. I was getting them all set up on a line in this big, gigantic storage area. He called me back, and it was pretty desolate back there, just a lot of big containers. He pulled me over to the side, and tears began to run down his face. He asked me to pray for his baby.

At that point, it taught me a great lesson in life; it showed me a great lesson in life: all the abuse and all the ridicule that he was giving me was because he was fighting God. When push came to shove, he knew where to come to get a hold of God. In time, I won that man to Christ. I am telling you all that to say this: God has you where He has you for a reason. If you are saved and you are God's child, then God has something in your mission field.

So many times, Baptist churches talk about missions, and it is always some far away place. To me, there is no difference between the missions that are in Taiwan and missionaries here. I do not

see any difference. In our missionary budget, it is all one. We have the foreign people, and then we have... it is all one; missions is missions. It does not matter if you are in Taiwan or wherever you are at, or if you are in Kansas City. Missions is reaching out with God's mission to whoever you get.

You are all missionaries. This is why I take such exactness in teaching you the Bible. This is why I go to such great length to allow you to have as much of me as you want or can stand, however you want to put it, and for you to get what you need. You are a missionary, and you need to be prepared and know what you are talking about. You are going to find this is a great truth. You are going to find that most people you deal with at work do not have a clue what they are talking about.

They have heard somebody say something, or they pick this little tidbit up here, and they do not have a clue. They talk authoritatively until you sit down and begin to talk with them. Then you find out a great truth: they do not know what in the world they are talking about. My favorite line is to look at them and say, "You know what, pal? I do not have a clue what you are talking about. Do you?"

Now I say that to say this: if you just learn a little bit of Bible, the youngest Christian in this church that has been here for six months, I promise you... Now maybe you are a little timid, maybe you are a little this or that about it, but I am telling you this: if you have applied yourself just in the short time that you are here, I promise you, you know more than the people out there that think they know. Your problem is a confidence level. In time, you are going to be used of God and be able to talk with them and answer their questions.

That is why it is important to get books like the book of Revelation down. It is important to learn the whole Bible, but you are going to find on any given day with all this going on in the world, people want to know. They are excited, and they are afraid, and they are scared, and they are concerned. If you have the answers, God will mesh the two together. So I hope that as we have been coming through this book, you have been doing your homework and getting it down because God wants to use you. You are a missionary, and God wants to send you out. There are as many diverse cultures in Kansas City as there are around the world. You need to be aware of God wanting to use you.

I. The Structure of Revelation

So we have come through a lot of stuff. You remember the first thing: we have been through the seven churches; we have talked about the seven personages, how the book of Revelation is built around seven people that really help break the book down. I showed you how the book of Revelation itself breaks down into seven components. In the first three chapters, you have the Church Age. That is component number one. He shows you in that passage everything that you need to know about the early church right up to where we are at today.

He breaks it down into seven. He took this very complicated, hard book and then broke it down in a system of sevens that you and I could make it simple by understanding it, not in its entirety, but componently as God broke it down and then putting the pieces together. So in the first three

chapters, we see the seven churches. They bring us from the early book of Acts up to the time period we are living right now.

In chapter 4, we now know, we studied it, that in chapter 4, heaven opens and somebody goes up. There goes the church. We also know now that chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 all deal with the Tribulation Period after the Rapture of the Church. Now we also know that in chapter 19, we find that heaven opens again. This time, nobody goes up, but somebody comes down.

So what we have basically is the whole book of Revelation with all the corresponding events built around two chapters: chapter 4, somebody goes up; chapter 19, somebody comes down. Chapter 4 is the Rapture, chapter 19 is the Second Coming, chapter 20 is the Millennium, chapter 21 is the New Heavens and the New Earth, chapter 22 is Eternity. The whole book of Revelation is just that simple. If you want to study it, which we have done, we have one big component left to do, and that is what we are going to tackle in the next couple of weeks.

But we have come through this thing by the system of seven. We looked at the seven churches. We looked at all the different aspects, the seven personages. Now we are about to enter into the main section of it and break this thing down and help you to better understand it.

II. The Wrath of God and the Abomination of Desolation

What I am going to show you today is really what messes up probably 99.9% of the Bible commentaries and the preaching on the book of Revelation. You miss this, you miss a lot. When you do not get this, it not only shows that you do not understand how the book of Revelation lays out, it shows pretty much you do not have a very good grasp on the Scriptures. Today I want to focus, or begin to focus—we will not get through it today—but I want to focus on chapters 5 through 19. We will look today at the seven years, or begin to look today at the seven years of the Tribulation, but we are going to look at it from a new perspective.

Today I want to focus on, like I said, the middle part. We have already seen and we already should know that the Tribulation runs seven years. We know that. We know that the Tribulation takes place immediately after the Rapture takes place and the church goes out. We know that. We also should know by now, because we have talked about this in light of all the other things we have looked at, it has forced us to deal with a lot of things componently in the book, in the Tribulation.

We also know now that the Tribulation breaks down into two segments of three and a half years. The last three and a half years are called the Great Tribulation. It is where the wrath of God falls down and pours out on planet Earth and the Antichrist. We also know that during this time we have the coming of the Antichrist. We studied that in the seven personages. We saw the rise of the Antichrist when we studied the seven people, the seven personages. We now know that when he shows up, he counterfeits the Holy Trinity with an unholy trinity. We saw all of that.

We also know and understand that the Tribulation's main goal, outside of whacking the Antichrist and all the wicked people, is to chastise the nation of Israel. We went into great lengths on that.

You should have all this. We talked about how Israel is God's wife and the church is the Bride of Christ, and how God has two identities that He deals with. In the Tribulation Period, once the church is gone, we go to the Judgment Seat of Christ where we are getting our own due for what we did or what we did not do.

While we are up there, the Lord Jesus Christ, God, is dealing with the nation of Israel, and He is working out the kings without. We know that now. We have studied all that through there. We know that the end result of the Tribulation Period is really the end result of everything in the Bible: it is restoration. The key theme of the Bible, as far as the end of the day, is restoration. God wants to restore that which is unrestoreable.

That is something, we talked about this from a practical standpoint, that needs to be your outlook on everything as a Christian. It is God's outlook for His people, the nation of Israel. You and I as Christians should follow the lead of God. God is not a problem-causer; God is a problem-solver. You and I as God's people do not need to be problem-causers; we need to be problem-solvers. We need to understand at the end of the day, it is restitution. Now, sometimes you cannot restore things, but to the best of our ability, we need to follow that because the whole book of Revelation, with everything that we have talked about, is about one single thing at the end of the day: Israel gets restored.

That should be our purpose in life: to restore what is fallen. The Bible talks about that if you have a brother that falls, restore that one. That is our job. My job, your job, is Romans 15:1, one of my favorite verses, and I try to live by it. I do not always, but I try.

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Restoration, that is what it is all about. So we have looked at the Tribulation from that standpoint, but in this lesson, I want to focus on chapters 5 through 19, and I want to look at the wrath of God that is to come.

There are lots of things that the Bible talks about in this light, and Matthew 24:21 focuses on this point, and it basically says that there is never going to be a time on planet Earth, there has never been a time on planet Earth like this time of the past three and a half years. There has never been a time with all of the tragedies and all of the terrible things that have happened to mankind. You can go back and look at the destruction of Jerusalem when Titus killed them by the millions, and Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar came down and Sennacherib came down.

When you look at all the terrible things that have befallen man—the Nazis, the concentration camps, the genocide, the terrible things that the Japanese did, and the Russians did, and all of those things... You could put all of those things together, and you still would not have what this is going to be like for just three and a half years. This is where the wrath of God gets poured out in such a great way that the Bible says that never in the world, in the whole world, has this ever been this much of a disaster before.

It is called the abomination of desolation. That is an interesting word. 'Abomination' is a composite of two words: 'abominable nations.' It is a time when the nations that have rejected God turn against the nation of Israel, and God holds them to be abominable. So God destroys those abominable nations. It is called the abomination, the abominable nations of desolation. He brings an end to everything as far as government is concerned, and everything that we know of today as some kind of civil society.

This is the underlying fear with people. It is one of those things like we get these vibes. Things are not going well on planet Earth. Everybody is talking about every time you turn around another disaster. If it is not that we are all going to be nuked by terrorists, then we are going to get hit with a rogue comet or an asteroid; it is going to kill us all. They spend all their time doing survey maps from the satellite, showing all these great impacts on the Earth that through the last billions and billions of years, the dinosaurs got wiped out by asteroids and all this stuff.

Whatever you want to believe, wherever you are at in the world, there is something to scare you, unless you are a child of God. Then you do not have to be afraid. I look forward to the end of the world like going to a Cassius Clay fight back in the 60s and getting front row seats. I know he is going to wax the guy. And I am in for the Earth getting waxed. I think I am in for the whole thing because never has this world had a chance to have what God wanted it to have. God gave His own Son, died on the cross, and all this world has done is thumb their nose at God and go after unrighteousness and wickedness to an unprecedented degree. So, you know what? That is what is going to happen.

In chapters 6 through 19, we have seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, the seven Spirits of God, seven angels, a seven-sealed book, seven kings, seven heads, seven judgments, and the sun gets hotter seven times. The thing that we have got to look at here is we are going to endeavor to lay all this out in an upcoming couple of weeks. I do not know how long it will take. I want to do it justice. I want to go through each one of these. I want to show you how they fit. I want to define them for you, what they are. I want to show you how they go through the Bible, and I really want to help lay those out for you so that you can really get a grasp on them and see how important it is and how they place themselves in the Word of God.

But the first thing I want to show you before we ever get to this is an absolute key that you have to have in getting all this material together. That is how the Bible divides itself. The Bible says, and I know this is a verse that most of you know, but the price of learning is repetition.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

III. The Bible's Consistency and Interpretation

When God wrote the Bible, He put some natural divisions in it. Obviously, the main division would be the Old Testament and the New Testament. You are going to find that every heresy that is being taught today—and brother, there is a lot of heresy being taught today by saved people...

But you are going to find that every heresy that is taught today is a direct result. I have never seen it fail in 35 years of ministry and dealing with people and being a student of the Scripture. I have never seen it fail, but every heresy that comes about today is a heresy that comes into play because of wrongly dividing the Word of God. Not rightly dividing the Word of truth will mess you up every time. This is what we are up against.

2 Peter 1:20

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

That is the first thing you have to know. Do you know what happens in most churches and most Bible studies? We have a Bible study on Thursday night. Most churches have Bible studies. Most churches have them sometimes on Sunday morning. You will see them on their marquees. We had a marquee; somebody stole it. But you drive down there, and you will see, 'Sunday Morning, Nine O'Clock Bible Class.' I am going to tell you, I have been around long enough to know how these things work.

You get your little group, and you are sitting in a little room. You all sit on chairs in a little circle. Then you read a passage; the guy in charge will read a passage of Scripture. Then you all take turns going around the room telling everybody what you think it means. When it goes around full circle, then you take the best of what everybody has said. Please do not take this wrong, and I love you to death, but I do not care what you think a verse means. No more than I care what I think it means. The Bible says that the Bible is of no private interpretation.

God did not write a book so you and I... Please do not tell me that the God who is omnipresent, omniscient, and whatever that other big word is, He is. Do not tell me that a God that is that way is just going to leave the Bible up to me. Now, do you really believe that? Look what happened when He left the tree of life and the tree of good and evil up to Adam and Eve. Now, you are going to tell me when it comes to the Bible, suddenly you are going to do better than they did? Or I am going to do better than they are? You think that you have the ability or I have the ability to read a passage of Scripture and say, 'Oh, I know what that means'? No, no, you do not do it by just making a private interpretation of the Scriptures.

When you approach the Bible, you have to approach it first of all as God's Word and God's book. The Bible, you know what? The Bible will define itself for you. The Bible is its own commentary. The Bible is its own dictionary. The Bible is its own concordance. The Bible is its own history book. The Bible is everything in itself. I do not have the right, nor does anybody have the right, to sit down and read a passage of Scripture and then suddenly arbitrarily say, 'That is what that verse means.' No, I do not have that right.

You and I read the Bible, and when we believe that it is the absolute, infallible Word of God—that is God's gift to mankind and separate from every other book on planet Earth—then we realize that God's Spirit has the answer within the book. When you compare the Scriptures with the Scriptures, staying within the proper context of the Scriptures, when you put it together in that sense, you are going to find that you are going to rightly divide the Bible. You are going to

know where this goes and where that goes and how it just normally lays itself out. I do not have to interpret anything. I do not have to interpret anything.

For instance, when you look at chapters 5, 6, and 7, you are going to find that the emphasis here is on the four horsemen. You are going to find a book that is sealed, and you are going to find that those seals are being opened. When you look at chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11, you are going to find that here it talks about some angels. It talks about some trumpets being blown. It talks about some judgments. It talks about thundering. When you go to chapters 12, 13, and 14, you are going to find that we already know that that chapter deals with the rise of the Antichrist. We studied it when we went through our seven personages, and you are going to find seven heads and ten horns. In chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19, again, you are going to find... it talks about five, and this is a great point—we did not get into this, but we will because I wanted to save this. It talks about five, it talks about seven kings, five are fallen, and one is. It goes through that.

The problem with all this material, and this is where everybody gets screwed up when they teach the book of Revelation... This is why nobody really, for the most part, understands it out there. Therefore, if you do understand it, it is going to put you in a better position to help them come to an understanding. Your job and my job is to put out truth. That is all it is. It is not gloating about the fact that we have the truth and somebody else does not have it. That is not what it is all about. It is simply because we have it, we have a tremendous obligation to put it out:

Luke 12:48

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:

Your job and my job is, especially if you are a member of this church, you have a lot of truth that is imparted to you. You have a lot of stuff that God gives you, and you need to make sure you become a good steward of that, that you do with it what God wants you to do with it. I just want to put that in there.

IV. The Consistency of God's Word

The problem with all this is this: these chapters, 6 through 19, are all taught... They are taught as, in every commentary you are going to read, and certainly every preacher I have heard with the exception of maybe 20 or 30 in my lifetime, they are all taught as an ongoing event. In other words, chapters 5, 6, and 7 take place, and then 7, 8, 9, and 10 take place, and then 11, 12, 13, and 14 take place, and then 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 take place. In other words, one after the other. Of course, that is not true. That is not true. That is where the first big mistake comes in of trying to put this all together.

You see, the Bible is a book of consistency. I guess if you can grasp the consistency of the Bible, or just the concept, it is the one thing that sets the Bible apart from every other book. I know that God is holy and man is not, and I know when God wrote a book that is holy, every other book that man writes is not holy. I know that; I understand. But if there is one single thing that sets the Word of God apart from every other book on planet Earth, it is one word: consistency. God's book and God are always consistent. God will never violate His own principles. He never will.

I think of the story of Adam and Eve. I know that when you look at Adam and Eve, you find that this is where, this is how they got messed up. I know everybody thinks that the devil showed up as a serpent, and there was an apple there and all that stuff. That is great; that is right up there with 'Mary Had a Little Lamb.' I understand all that. But if you want to get the bottom line of the truth, here it is: God told Adam and Eve what they were to do and what they were not to do. The same as you have in the Bible that tells you what to do and what not to do.

When the devil showed up to Eve, he showed up, and the first thing he did was question that God knew what He was talking about in the first place. Then when he quoted the Scriptures, he misquoted it. What Eve should have done is exactly what you ought to do with your Bible. Eve was smart; she should have been smart enough to know that God would not change what He told them and then give it to somebody else to re-change another way. You see, Eve was just like us. She was not paying attention. She was not listening to what God said. She heard it, but she was not listening. She did not take to heart the words of God. That is why the Bible says that you and I are to hide the Word of God in your heart.

When I listen to somebody teach or preach the Bible, I am critiquing them, not based on whether I like them or not. I am critiquing them based on the Word of God that I have hid in my heart: do they preach it lined up with what the Bible lays itself out to be? Eve should have had that book in her heart. She should have had the words that God said to her impregnated in her heart. When the devil changed the Word of God, she should have caught him just like that, but she did not.

Now, if you want to take that one step further, over in 2 Corinthians 11, when Paul is talking about the church being deceived, he uses Adam and Eve for the example, because that is exactly what the devil will do today. God never violates His own principles. That is why when the devil came to Jesus in Matthew 4, he tried to get Him to do some things. He tried to get Him to do three things. Every time the Lord simply said—He did not get in an argument with him; He did not pull out a New Testament and start—He just simply said, "It is written." He quoted the verse that the devil had taken out of context and put it into context. After three times, the devil said, "Nothing here, but I am going on, I am moving on someplace else. I cannot get anywhere here." Do you know why? Because God's Son did not deviate from the Word of His Father.

That is why it is so important to learn what I am giving you, to show you that it is not about me. It shows me it is not about you; it is about your attitude and relationship toward the Word of God. When you approach that book from the right mindset and seeing its consistency, then God will open up the Scriptures to you. You do not see the Bible as the number one thing being the most consistent about it. Those of us that are coming through the books of the Bible—we have 60 or so of us that are doing that every month or so—you are beginning to see now in the first five books of the Bible, we are just finishing up Deuteronomy.

You are beginning to see now how the exactness of the Word of God really plays in. You are understanding now why God requires the things in the Old Testament with some of the stringent laws and rules that He has. Because it all points to something down the line in the New Testament in type, and God always is consistent. I have laid those out to you as we have come through, and there is no need to do that this morning, but it is the greatest teaching aspect of God

and the Word of God. This is why basically God closes the book to most people. This is why most people can never get anything out of the Bible. Then they are relegated to get it from some book that some man wrote, and there is where the whole process begins to spiral into the ground.

I cannot overemphasize that great key, that great key to the Bible. You follow this, and God will reveal so much to you because that is the way the Bible is built. Of course, to get that, you have to believe the Bible is completely the Word of God by God's design.

V. Critiquing Modern Biblical Scholarship

Most pastors—and I am not being critical, I am just telling you the truth. I have been around pastors for 35, really 40 years, been one myself for 35, and I have hopped on with everybody. So I am in a good position to say what I am about to say. Now maybe you are not, but I am. If you are a plumber here, you are in a much better place to tell me why things in plumbing go wrong than I am. If you are a mechanic here and you have been around cars all your life, you are in a much better position to tell me why my car will not start. If you are somebody here and you know a lot about computers, you are in a much better space to show me how to figure the thing out.

Because I know nothing. When my car breaks, my tool is a hammer. A hammer answers everything in my life. My grandma used to say, "If it will not start, give it a whack." But you know more about it than I do. I have always admired people that could just listen to an engine and tell you what is wrong with it by the sound of it. To me, that is incredible. My ear does not hear those things. You hear the little pings, the little knocks. You hear when a guy steps on the gas that it does something different than it did when it idled. You immediately catch that. Do you know why? Because you have been around cars all your life.

I marvel at some of you that could do what you do with a computer. As far as I am concerned, I have tried. I just know and I know. I have come to the conclusion computers are demon-possessed and they are satanic in their origin. If you want to fool around with Satan, go ahead. Do not tell me, man. There is no consistency to it. You bring it up, and you do this, and suddenly it decides to do something else. It does not even have the courtesy to say, "I am doing this." You know those little geeks that run around in little Volkswagens? They are demons. They just further your addiction.

You get on them suckers, and they have a mind of their own. When it says, "I am shutting down," it is shutting down. Okay. When it simply says, "I am not opening that webpage," you are not getting it. You are still paying the money every month. You try to call the guy; he is down in Palm Beach, laying on the beach, laughing at you. I do not understand those things. I know I am old-fashioned. I do not understand email. Why would you want to send somebody an email that you have to wait for until they get it? We can call them on the phone and get the answer right now. Okay.

What is the big deal of waiting? I am not a very patient person anyhow. When I want to know, I want to know. I do not want to send you an email and then wait for you tomorrow to give me back and say, "Yeah, let's go to lunch." And it was too late because I wanted to go that yesterday.

I am going to call you up, and I am going to say, "Hey, I need to borrow \$20. I do not want it tomorrow; I need it today." Now that is just me, but I envy you people that can do that. I do not know how to do that, but I am telling you...

That is the way you need to get with this book. Just as some of you guys can listen to an engine, you ought to be able to listen to this book and know what is real and what is wrong and what is right. Just as some of you can go to any webpage and get it up. When something breaks down a computer, I am amazed at some of you. It will go in a blink and not crash, and you will have that. You will get in there, and you will know exactly what to do. But you know what? That is what you ought to get to the point with the book. You ought to be able to do the same thing with a Bible that you can do with a computer. It is just that simple. That is what the Bible talks about when it talks about you learning the Word of God and rightly dividing it and coming to the point in your life where you accept it as the Word of God.

Most pastors like to do a lot of lip service toward the Bible. They will tell you the Bible is the Word of God, but when you really put them down, they will say... Well, if you would ask the average pastor—and just try it, do not take my word for it, please do not. I do not want you just to believe me on the cuff. Just do this: if you have a pastor friend this week and you know him as a pastor, or maybe you are visiting here from another church, I suggest you do that. Put me to the test. Call your pastor, or talk to the pastor, or any pastor. You see a pastor walking down the street. You can tell who they are.

They all look like they were put out on an assembly line someplace. When I go out, you will never know I am a pastor. I mean, incognito, you say. But you can tell them. We went down to see the Dead Sea Scrolls a couple of weeks ago—good naming, by the way. We went down through there, and I was telling some of the guys that you can look around here and see who the pastors are. They all were there, all prim and proper. One guy, I knew he was a Baptist preacher. He had a leisure suit on from 1965. That was a dead giveaway.

Back in the '60s, all the Baptist preachers wore them. Do you remember leisure suits? They came in right after the last hippie died. Who would wear a leisure suit? And the material, it looks like you just slipped out of a Saran Wrap box, man. It is shiny. They call it Swedish Knit. It was very fitting because most of the preachers were slippery anyhow. When you put your hand on the back, it just slipped right off of that thing, man. It was slick. They would wear those things with a big pointed collar. Get them a pair of black boots, and an Apache could be a pirate. But anyway, you can tell. There is a theology in that. We do not have time to get into that this morning.

But just ask them. I promise you. Ask them, "Hey, Pastor, there are 66 books in my Bible. Did God put the order of the books in there?" Pastor, a Hebrew Old Testament is not the same order as the Old Testament in my Bible. Did God by His design put the Bible in the order of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus? How come mine is different from theirs in certain areas? How about the New Testament? How come it runs Acts, Romans? Did God have anything to do with that? Was that divinely handled by God, or did man just think this is the way it should go? Do you know what they will tell you? They will tell you that God had nothing to do with that, but that is the way that man thought it should go.

You look into your Bible right now; you have chapter and verse markings. There were no chapter and verse markings in your Bible until 1200. We get the idea that in the New Testament, when John is writing the book of Revelation, it is verse one, verse two, verse three, here is chapter four. No. The Bible does not start having chapters and verses in it until around 1200. The first English Bible that has it is the Geneva Bible. Ask your pastor why that is. Ask him why it was not important to have them in before, but it is important to have them in after. Ask him that.

Then ask him if it was by God's design or man's design. Then ask him this question: ask him about the punctuation. Is the punctuation of God, or is the punctuation of man? Does the punctuation follow an order, or is it just put in there the way they thought it should go? He will tell you that it is not of God. To me, life is simple. It is either all God's book or it is none of God's book.

I just do not understand. Let me ask you a question: when Jesus came through this world, did He come through a virgin? He came through Mary. Was she human? Yes, she was. But was He tainted by that at all? He did not have her blood in Him because the Bible says in Acts 4, He had God's blood in Him. So here is a case where the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, came through a sinful woman. Yet through the process of birth through a sinful woman who had sinful blood, who had unregenerate blood, who had the fallen nature in the blood of Adam, God brought Him through, and He was absolutely perfect in every detail.

Well, He can do it with Him. Why can't He do it with a book? And does not the Bible say His name is called the Word of God? I think it does. Why do we have such an easy time with that and a tough time with this? To me, everything is black and white in the world. I do not see colors. I am colorblind. I do not see color. I simply see it either as God's Word or it is not God's Word. To me, it is. I believe that; I believe all of the Bible. I believe all of it. I believe it is inspired from cover to cover, including the cover. I believe everything about it is by God's design. I believe it is the only book in the world that when God put it and gave it to man, He set it apart from everything that man wrote and everything that man was.

Bible scholarship today, they do not accept that. They do not accept that at all. You see, so it is hard for them to get the perspective that I am coming to you with today: that I believe that if God has got enough to inspire it, then He was God enough to preserve it. And very frankly, if He was not God enough to preserve it, I am not sure He was God enough to inspire it in the first place. What good is it if God inspired something someplace once upon a time and then was not God enough to keep it until I got here? To see the stupidity of that argument is absolutely, totally ridiculous. It is a supernatural book. So that is what you have to come up to. That is what you have to understand.

I said all that to say this: in the New Testament, keep in mind now, it is God's supernatural book, and the key is consistency. In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, God gave you four accounts of the first coming of Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give you four different approaches to the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When scholarship deals with this, they have a problem. Do you know what they call it? I love this term. They call it the 'synoptic problem.'

How nice to be in a position where you can use words like 'synoptic.' Nobody knows what you are talking about, but that is the plan. Pastors revel in the fact that people come to their church and preach; they talk in terms they will never grasp. Then they go over the fact that you leave not understanding what they just tried to say to you. I just talked plain to you. I will just talk plain to you. It is a synoptic gospel. Do you know what 'synoptic' means? It means they do not match.

And scholars, oh, they just have a time of it. Just have a time of it. The synoptic gospels are that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not match. So do you know what scholarship says? Because they take the position that you and I do not take. They take the position that man put the Bible together. Oh yes, God at some place a long time ago gave the inspiration for it. But it was that... you have to get that. You have to get that. Oh, and so you will never get that. No, no.

So when they see Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they think, 'It cannot be that that book is above me, and I cannot get it. Oh no, it cannot be that. It cannot be my problem that I am too stupid.' It has to be the Bible's problem, you see, because I am educated. So when I am up against the synoptic problem, it is simply this: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not match. You will read an account in Mark. It will tell you the story, and it will say there was one man there. You will read the account in Luke, the same story, and it will tell you there were two men there, same story. Then you will go to the other two books; you will not even find the story.

Now that leads them to believe, you see, because the Bible is guilty until proven innocent. If you are going to ever be an effective Christian, you need to learn two rules. One, the Bible is guilty until proven innocent. And for you personally, no good deed you do will go unpunished. Think about it. No good deed you do will go unpunished. They are going to whack you no matter what you do.

So when you look at that, you see that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they are not synoptic. They do not match. So there has to be a problem with God; there has to be a problem with the Bible. It could not be that God was showing you four different accounts with an emphasis on something different every time. It could not be that. No, no, no, it could not be that. It just could not be. It could not be that. No, it just could not be.

You remember a while back, a couple of months ago, I took you over to Ephesians 3. Remember I showed—I do not remember, it was a Sunday morning, I think it was a Sunday morning. But I showed you how God, over there, talked about the fourth dimension. Remember that? I showed you how it talked about the height, the breadth, and the length of God. They were the three dimensions. Then there was a fourth dimension called the depth of God. I told you that you and I live in the third dimension as human beings.

But for a Christian, there is a fourth dimension that goes way beyond, and that is the mind of God, the Word of God. I showed you that. It said that we may know the height, the breadth, and it talked about the length. Then it talked about the depth. Everything in our physical world falls into the first three: height, length, and breadth. But the depth of God is the fourth dimension. For you and for me, that is stepping out of the natural and living into the supernatural. Most Christians never get there.

Most Christians are never effective for God because they live in a natural world all their life. For whatever reason, they refuse to step out of this world and get into the depth of God that is in this book and let God transform them from the natural to the supernatural. That is when you have the power of God in your life. That is when God can do something with you. You start to look at everything on God's plane, not from a human plane. Then you are not afraid anymore of what is out there that you cannot see because you understand that God is going to take care of you.

Now you begin to look at life's circumstances from God's standpoint, not a human standpoint. Now you do not see problems; instead, you see opportunities. Now you do not see drunks. You do not see dope addicts. You do not see prostitutes. You do not see this. You see people whose lives God could change if they are given a chance. It changes everything. Why? Because you leave the three dimensions that are physical and move into the spiritual.

When I taught that that morning, you all said amen. You loved it. Can I have another amen just to make sure you are with me? All right, thank you very much.

The Bible is consistent. So when He gave you Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, He gave you four. Three are natural; one is supernatural. Matthew, King of the Jews, natural. Mark, He is a servant, natural. Luke, the Son of Man, natural. There they are, Ephesians 3. John,

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Supernatural. Three physical, one spiritual. There is the depth. There is the depth. Do you know that when people cannot give somebody a Bible, do you know what gospel they always give them? The Gospel of John. Do you know what Matthew does? It portrays Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews. In Mark, He is portrayed as a servant. And a servant has no genealogy, so in Mark, you find no genealogy. In Luke, He is portrayed as the Son of Man, so His lineage does not go back through the kings; it goes back through the earthly line, back through David, through His mother. But when you get to John, it says,

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

It goes right back to God, eternal. Now, if you are going to take the synoptic approach, you miss that. If you just take the old hillbilly Baptist approach, the Bob Alexander style of interpreting the Bible by the Bible itself, you know what you get? You get one of the greatest keys anywhere in the Word of God.

I told you all that to say this: there are two approaches to your Bible. I always love Easter. If there is ever a time that you can have some fun after you go home from church, it is Easter. Because everything on TV has all religious programming. I caught them all. If you have the new modern cable modes, you can tape while you are watching, get them all done. I saw Victor Mature as Barabbas. I saw The Ten Commandments with Charlton Heston. I was amazed just the day before he was running around naked in Planet of the Apes. Now he is Moses. I loved it. I saw The Robe. I love it. They all were just right there because the whole world on Easter

becomes religious. Sex and the City has to go by the wayside. Be back Monday. Desperate Housewives do not seem so desperate anymore.

For one day, oh boy, everything you want. I was flipping around, I have channels, there it was: 'The Real Story Behind the Crucifixion.' They actually had a guy who volunteered to be hung on a cross to see how it hurt. They put him in a laboratory, hung him on a cross to really prove that somebody could die the way Christ died. Of course they did not put the nails—I mean, he was a chicken. He only went and he did not put the nails in his hands and his feet. They gave him little things to hold on to. Or the whole thing. Then there was one on 'The Real Truth Behind the Resurrection.' It is amazing to me because when you watch all this stuff, one thing comes out: there is no God, there is no Bible anywhere around it.

They will talk about this, and then they will say, they will call an expert. Do you know who the expert will be? The divinity professor from Rochester, New York, which is really a good source. This boy does not believe God even existed. He is just some old dead apostate guy that could not pastor a church, could not preach if his life depended on it. So he got a job teaching people stupider than he is. He is up there expounding on the resurrection without a Bible, without one verse. Then we go from the University of Kentucky. Then we go to the divinity department of Yale University. Oh man, we ran the whole gamut. Everybody said the same thing, and everybody left out the same thing: the Scriptures are useless; God is not around.

And we will tell you what really happened from a logical, human, scientific, test-tube perspective. Scientific... I do not know what I am saying. I am frustrated. Everything but God and the supernatural side of it. Let me tell you something: that is the difference between, or should be between, you and them. That is the difference. God is everything. That Bible is completely everything. The Bible says that you and I should look at that book as everything that it is. I do not know why it is so hard for people.

I have a friend of mine that is in the ministry, and he called me a couple of weeks ago, and he was having a Bible study in his home. He got into an issue over something in the Bible, over something that they were reading in a book. He called me up on the phone and wanted to inject me via the conference call, which is just a little bit better than the email. He put me into this thing to get my take on it. I do not mind doing that, but let me tell you something. Please do not drag me down to your level of non-intelligence. I get upset. I did.

Because here were four or five people sitting around. They had just read this book by a guy that was a saved man. This guy was against this particular teaching in the Bible. So now they wanted to call me. The way they put it to me was, "We know you believe this, or we would like you to give us your perspective on it." Now that is the worst thing you can say to me. Well, here is what I said. I said, "What is the name of the book?" He told me. "Who is the author?" He told me.

I said, "Okay. Now I have a question for you. Before I answer this, and I am not sure I am going to answer it because I really do not think that where you are at, you need an answer." Because you guys, let me ask you a question: this guy that wrote this book does not even believe there is a Bible in print that is God's Word. He does not believe anything about the Bible. He does not believe anything about anything that you and I supposedly believe about the Word of God. He

openly would tell you, if you ask him, that there is no absolute truth, that there is no absolute Bible, that the real keys to the Scripture are in man and all of this stuff. Why in the world would you even consider that a man who rejected the Bible as the Word of God would have anything of value to you on such a deep subject?

I do not understand that. Are you not smarter than that? That is like going to Plato to find out about the resurrection. That is like me calling Norman Vincent Peale and trying to get him to explain to me about the deep things of the Bible. The man does not believe the Bible is worth anything to begin with, and I am going to trust his judgment? I am even going to offer opinion from God's Word up against a man that you should not even read anyhow? But that is our mindset. We can say whatever we want to say. And pastors say it all the time. A lot of Christians I know say it all the time, not you guys.

But the bottom line is, the proof of the pudding, when push comes to shove, is why would you mess with a guy who does not even believe? I am not saying you cannot learn some things, but you will not learn anything right. You will learn what is wrong. Why would you even entertain that a man that does not believe the Bible is the absolute perfect Word of God could remotely give you any truth on a level that deep? I do not understand that. I do not understand it. I am not saying I cannot learn from him, but his book would not be on my commentary shelf of things to learn the Bible. He would be over here with my great collection of Mad Magazine. He would be with Huckleberry Finn.

But that is the mindset today. Now you have four accounts of the first coming of Christ with a different emphasis on everything. I am telling you: when God gave you the book of Revelation, from Revelation 5 to Revelation 19, you have four accounts of the Second Coming of Christ. That is why they do not match. If you start to teach them that each segment takes place after the other one, you are messed up. They are all happening at the same time. They are all taking place at the same time.

Let me give you a great verse before we get into this, as far as we can today. Turn to Luke 24. I give you this because this is the verse, probably the single verse, that helped me more than anything else when it came to the Bible. This verse was one of the key verses that unlocked the Scriptures for me. Here is what it says, Luke 24:45. Great, you have to mark this in your Bible:

Luke 24:45

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

Now folks, I am going to tell you something: if God does not give it to you, you are not going to get it. You notice in that verse it says, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the original manuscripts"? No, the Scriptures, the Scriptures. He is talking about a book. The original manuscripts were not in Scripture form. He is talking about a book, a Bible. He is telling you there that if the Holy Spirit of God does not open up your understanding, you are wasting your time trying to get it.

That book is closed to anybody who does not come to it with a mindset of... notice 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

That is where it goes to. That is where it goes to.

VI. The Four Parallel Accounts of the Tribulation

So in Revelation, from chapter 5 to chapter 19, you get four different accounts of the Second Coming of Christ, just like the consistency gave you four accounts of the first coming of Christ. If you lay it out this way, it is real simple. I am going to lay them out to you so you can get them into your notebook or your Bible. Then when we come back, we are going to tackle them one section at a time. All right, let us start from the very beginning.

Revelation 1, 2, and 3, we know now as the Church Age. We know that. Revelation 4: a door opened in heaven, somebody goes up; there is the Rapture. Chapters 5 through 19: you now have four accounts of the Tribulation with the emphasis on the last three and a half years, with four separate accounts of that last three and a half years, each one showing you a different attitude and a mindset about the Second Coming of Christ with a different emphasis, just like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Here is what you need to understand: it is not an ongoing order of events. These are all following at the same time during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation Period. These things are falling on planet Earth at the same time. Because a man does not understand that, here is the heresy that is being taught today. I am telling you, if you do not rightly divide it, then you are going to get messed up.

Do you know what they are being taught today? This is everywhere. I had another lady call me this week from down in Oklahoma, and she is just beside herself because everywhere she goes, and her husband and the pastor, they are finding this down there. It is running rampant. Do you know what they are teaching now? They are teaching that the church is going through the Tribulation Period. That is the big thing. You and I are now going through this time in the Tribulation Period according to a lot of the preachers out there and a lot of churches.

Do you know where that heresy got started? It got started by not knowing how to rightly divide your Word. There is another teaching floating around all over the world today that is being accepted by Baptist churches and all over the place. Everybody is getting it now: the fact that you and I have taken the place of the nation of Israel, and that you and I now are the ones, that God is finished with Israel, and you and I are the new Israel, and that is all out there.

Everywhere you go, and then right along with that heresy comes the next one that is called by a new name now. It is called Reformation Theology. Back in the old days, it was known for the heresy it was: Calvinism. Calvinism has reared its ugly head again, and that teaching of Calvinism is that a long time ago, before it ever started, God walked down, looked through history, and He picked you to go to heaven and you to go to hell. You to go to heaven and you to

go to hell. You to go to hell, you to go to hell, you to hell, you to go to hell. He had a bad day that day. You are going to heaven, you are going to heaven, you are going to hell. He picked and chose who was going to heaven and going to hell, and you have nothing to say about it. If you are predestined to go to heaven, you are going to go. If you are predestined to go to hell, I do not know what they are saying, 'Jesus loves me, sorry about you.' You are not part of the chosen few. I do not know how they sing in those churches, but I am telling you, that heresy along with the other heresy comes in because they do not want to rightly divide the Word of truth. That simple.

All right, let us get some of this down here in a few things we have remaining.

- Chapters 5, 6, and 7
- Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11
- Chapters 12, 13, and 14
- Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19

Four accounts that match up to the first four accounts that lay everything out exactly the way it needs to be from the emphasis. You see, God did not want you to read the book of Matthew and get it all, because do you know what God knew? God knew human nature. Somebody asked me one time, "Why did God write the Bible the way He did? It is so hard to figure it out." Well, it is really not hard to figure out if you follow it His way, but the reason why He made it a little more challenging is because He knew human nature. You and I follow the same trait: once we think we have got it, we will not bother with it again. If He wrote the book that we could understand it with one or two readings, we would never study it.

So He made the book a challenge because men like challenges. That is why they climb Mount Everest, that is why they go through the desert, that is why they do all the things that they do. They love a challenge. The challenge is in everything that man does. He loves a challenge. The problem is most of the challenges are the wrong challenge. The real challenge for you and me is to learn that book. Of course, He did it that way. So He had it in there because He did not want you to get it. If He had written it like any other book, then you would come away thinking that because you are educated, you could get the book.

Of course, when it comes to the Bible, it is not your education that counts. It is how dumb you are when you come to the Word of God. The dumber you are, the better you are. Because the key is when He opens up your understanding, that is when you get the Scriptures. That is the way it works. So that is why He did it the way that He did it. So we are going to find that we get, from chapter 5 to chapter 19, the four accounts. Then chapter 20 is the Millennium. Chapter 21 is the New Heavens and the New Earth. Chapter 22 is Eternity.

Every section is given the way that it lays itself out. Now when we are done with this, you will completely have the book of Revelation broken down. If you take your notes, if you put them into your Bible, if you follow the study and lay it out, comparing the Scriptures with the Scriptures—do not just take what I tell you, go back and look it out, lay it out, see it, put it into your notebook or into your Bible. Get in your Bible and your wide margin Bible when you

finalize this whole thing. Get that thing laid out to those seven sections and get them across the top of your Bible. Get them in there so that when you look at Revelation, it just lays itself out, and you never have to wonder where you are at or what you are reading or what the context is.

That is the way God designed it. He just took the hardest book that man tells you and just made it the easiest book in the Bible. But it has to get it His way. It has to come His way. Next week, we are going to start breaking down, and you want to get your notebooks ready or your Bible ready or however you are going to do it. Hopefully you are staying up with this thing as we go through, but you are going to have to begin to learn the exactness of the Bible.

Hey, say it again: God has something for you. He has something that He wants you to do. You are never going to do it until you learn the Bible, and you are never going to learn the Bible until you begin to learn it His way. Not my way, not your way, not man's way—God's way. He has built a systematic study through the Scriptures that just walks you through and opens it up, lays it out, and breaks it down. If you just take the time to put it into your Bible, do the work. You will come away understanding it so that when you go to work or God puts people into your path...

I believe with all of my heart that right now while we are sitting here, I believe that wherever you work—maybe your neighbor, maybe somebody in your family, maybe one of your friends who is lost—I believe that God prepares sinners, unsaved people. I believe that while all this is going on, the Holy Spirit of God, who the Bible says is

John 1:9

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

But you see, there are two aspects to it: God prepares sinners, but He also prepares servants. The problem in the world today: He has more prepared sinners than He has prepared servants. God wants you to learn today what that Bible is all about. He wants to put you on a mission field. He wants to take you to the point where you are His missionary, that at work or wherever you go, whatever God calls for you to do, that you are equipped, that when you are faced with the natural things around us that soften people up, that maybe give them that fear, you can get your foot in the door, that normally you would not be able to do it.

You are prepared to do it. You know what to say, how to say it, and when to say it. When they come up with these ideas that make them so timid or make them afraid, or the heresy that is being taught, you can stand on the ground and show them what the Word of God says, thereby being the light that in many cases will lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.