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Revelation

Chapter 11 - Revealing Religion's Hatred for the Light Setting Apart Praise from Rage (vs. 14-18)

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

We have down as the title of this particular chapter, Chapter 11, “Revealing Religion's Hatred for the Light.” Religion. Now, why would Pastor Gary throw in religion in this particular chapter? Well, there are a number of reasons. The first is, if you look at the very beginning of this chapter, where are we? We're in Jerusalem. The text actually says that we're in the holy city.

If you look in verse 2,

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

We know where we are.

In fact, if you drop on down to verse 8, it is a place that is spiritually called or mystically called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified, where we know that we are now in Jerusalem.

So, first of all, we're in a place that is a very religious place. Holy place? Well, it's called a holy city, but it's anything but. The description once again in verse 8 is "Egypt and Sodom". So, it's anything but. But it is perceived to be, and thus the picture of religion.

The second thing that I would say is, is that he starts off measuring the temple. So, if you look within the passage, we're in a temple, and it is the measurement of the temple, measuring what God perceives as those who are His and those that He perceives not His. So, some are outside the court, some are in a place of worship, and He says, "I'm going to make that distinction." The fact that He's having to make the distinction is telling us that religion is involved. Of course, we understand that Herod's temple, which is now destroyed at this juncture, but the last great temple that was built had those massive courtyards, and it was where all of the thinkers and all of the debaters and all of Sanhedrin and those that were wise men would stand around and talk. Nevertheless, they were not righteous; they were not holy. So, God is making a distinction from those that are academic in their

relationship with God and those that are truly there to meet Him. And as we talked about, “Not only meet Me at the “halves,” but meet Me at the place of the altar.” And this is where God's true followers meet Him, at the place of sacrifice. It's the place where we realize His sacrifice for us, and God is therefore then calling us to take up our cross and follow Him. The genuineness of our hearts. Nevertheless, the measuring line at the very beginning of this is showing that God is making a distinction between that which would be perceived to be religion and God is making a distinction.

The third thing that I would say is that God is making a clear distinction in this of worship and just mere talk. And then I would say, and you see the altar in the courtyard, then I would say that in the 4th point in verse 8, you would see that the city is spiritually appraised. The word that's used here is, “which mystically is called,” but probably, more specifically, the word in the Greek is “spiritually called.” So, this particular city is being spiritually appraised. God is doing that with more specifically, religion.

And then last but not least, if you look within the passage, the city is judged in verse 13, according to the Law. You have 7,000, you have a tenth of the city; this according to the Law. So, it's letting us know that God is judging religion according to Law. So, the whole chapter is making reference to religion, and what we're seeing is the hostility against God's two witnesses that He places smack dab in the middle.

Now, obviously nothing new under the sun. But Paul will write in Colossians 2:23, as he speaks of those that follow things that have an appearance, he actually uses the word, of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement which have no value. In other words, one of the things about religion is it really yields no value at all. It might have an appearance, but it's not unlike 2 Timothy 3:5, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. So, you have an appearance, but no value. You have a power; you actually have something that has a form, but no power in it. And in each case, what we're seeing is, of course, the problem with religion. Jesus talks specifically about this, and it was probably one of His

greatest areas of debate. And if, in fact, we ever see Jesus get angry, it is Him going into the temple. It is Him arguing with the Pharisees. And in fact, in Matthew 7:15, He warns us against those that are wolves in sheep's clothing. That is to say, they look like shepherds. They're wearing sheep's clothing. They look like shepherds, but they're not, and they're only there to devour you.

Paul will talk about this in 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, and his statement will be, "Some are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Jesus will therefore call these false prophets in Matthew 23, "blind guides, whitewashed tombs"; you begin to see just that sense of, well, contempt that God has for them.

Then in 1 Timothy 6:5, there are some that actually use godliness as a means of personal gain. Can you imagine that? Never heard of that, have we? People actually use godliness or the platform of godliness to acquire. And listen, it's not all about money, always. Now, this particular context in Timothy is talking about money, but it's sometimes about position, it's about power, it's about

notoriety, recognition. And people will oftentimes covet these things so that they can fill voids in their lives, but it isn't because they love and worship God.

2 Peter 2:3 warns us against those who in their greed will exploit you.

And Paul will ultimately say in 2 Corinthians 2 that there are many, and he actually uses the word “many,” that peddle the word of God. That is to say, they use the word of God to make money off of. Now, this was all the way back at the beginning of the church. So, what do you think is happening now? So, the point, and what is being revealed specifically to the seven churches in Asia Minor is, “You're letting the world come into your doors. You're letting the Serpent come into your door, and he's causing problems.”

I mean, you look at Revelation 2:14, you have Pergamum. Who have they allowed to teach in their church? Balaam. Now, we know that's not the guy's name. But he's using the name “Balaam” to describe the prophets or the people that are there that are teaching for money. Just read Jude. He's a prophet for hire. Balaam is a prophet for

hire. And he says to the church of Pergamum, "You've let him come into your house." You look at Thyatira, "You've let Jezebel come into your house." Which, if you think about Jezebel, really, the best way to describe Jezebel would be letting compromise come into your life and being syncretistic, allowing all kinds of faiths to come in for the sake of tickling the ears of the people that are coming in. You think of the fact that you have both in Smyrna and in Philadelphia, it's interesting, he warns them about the synagogue of Satan. Synagogue. Why would he call it a synagogue? But the biggest problems were of religion. And of course, Jesus would say to His disciples, "The day is coming when people are going to kill you and they're going to do it in My name. They're going to try to kill you in My name." So, what we have is religion and the indictment against religion within this passage. And in particular, when you see these two witnesses, you would think in Jerusalem, these are witnesses of God. Wouldn't you think they'd be embraced? That they'd be loved? No, no. They are not only thankful when they're dead, they're giving gifts to each other. More specifically, they're giving offerings to one another to celebrate their

death. So, by the time they come to life, of course, this great fear that begins to overwhelm within religion. Now, the point of all this is that what religion does is it likes to involve appearances and it likes to inform us with forms that actually don't accomplish anything so that men can exploit you. But God is telling us that clearly that's not the faith that we're involved in. If I can just succinctly put it, with ritual, you don't have to get real. One of the reasons why religion loves ritual is because you never have to get real about it. You can buy a trinket, you can say so many things; you can walk down an aisle. Nobody has to get real. You can then go home and do whatever you want to do. And it's one of the reasons why religion hates people that are real about their faith. "Oh, they're just, you know, lunatics. They're just going too far. They're just..." What's the problem? You're afraid you might have to get real? That's exactly the problem. Because it's far better to have this institution that allows you to sin and do your Mardi Gras thing and then come back and throw ashes on yourself. Because this is a way of controlling and a way of literally declaring themselves as vital in your life because you need them to somehow forgive your sins. But that's

religion, isn't it? Because true faith always has a sense of change to it. So, religion throws in that whole ritual. They don't want to get real. They throw in rhetoric. They like to talk about things. They like to memorize things. They like to decree things. It's all about talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. I don't see anybody changing.

The simplistic call of Jesus to fishermen and things and people such as that is telling us that God is looking for people that are real, and He says, "Just quit talking." In fact, in Isaiah 1, that's exactly what God says, "Quit talking. What, do you think your multiplied prayers are making any difference? I'm only listening to somebody that's going to be real and somebody that's going to be genuine." So, obviously, the world is looking for something that allows them to be consuming, devouring, to make them look superior, and religion just fits right into that.

In fact, if you look at Romans 1 and Chapter 2, that's the whole argument with God, in specific against the people that are proclaiming, "Well, we know what the right thing to do is." And God says, "Well, how do you know you

know what the right thing to do is?” “Because we can see the wrong things that they’re doing.” So, you're criticizing everybody else. And that's what religion likes to do. That's what Jesus says in Matthew 23. He says, “You tie heavy loads on everybody, but you don't try to lift it off them. You like putting the pressure on them to make them feel bad.” So in Romans 2, God says, “Well, if you know the right thing to do, why aren't **you** doing it?” Well, religion hates the finger pointing back at them. And of course, they sweep things under the rug and hide them and everything like that. “Well, we just won't talk about that.” Well, the fact of the matter is, you're just as much a sinner as anybody else. But of course, that's not going to go into conversation.

Galatians 2 talks about the fact that they're men of reputation. Of course, Jesus talks about that, whether it be in Matthew 6 or Matthew 23. They love the place of respectful greetings. They love the people coming to them and saying how wonderful they are. But that's religion. What we see in Chapter 11 is you have two witnesses, they are coming in the power of God, and they

begin to demonstrate something that up to this point the world has declared as their god. What is that? Power. Power and strength has been what they've been desiring more than anything else. Now, what's interesting is in the Book of Revelation, what it reveals for us is that the greatest power in all of heaven is the Lamb. But of course, man worships the beast. So, what does God do? Well, God says, "Okay, you're into this power thing. I'm going to send two witnesses with a lot of power. And they're going to stave off the heavens and they're going to breathe out fire and they'll get your attention." Well, what is this going to prove? What this is going to prove is that the world loves power. They just don't love you having it. They want to have it. They don't want God to have the power. So, it's not even that they're in love with power. They're in love with themselves having power. And the hostility goes against these two witnesses that are able to do and literally move heaven and earth under their feet to demonstrate the power of God, and yet the world will hate them for that.

It's the virtual picture that you see in Chapter 10 of Revelation. You see this grand angelic being, and the powerful witness of God and the message of God really, if you look at the head of this grand angelic being, is he has the rainbow over his head and he has the sun shine in his face. It's a gracious and glorious message that God has for us. You know the only thing that man can see? Judgment. And, you know, to put it very simplistically, it's like a father telling a two-year-old, "Drop the snake." Now, you want to know what the two-year-old hears? Judgment. That's the only thing the two-year-old hears, "I'm in trouble. I'm in trouble." But it's the most gracious message that the father could ever give his son. And so, the picture that's given in Revelation 10, of course, is that picture of God's gracious message. You have to see the rainbow over the head of the angel and his face shining. But the only thing they see is the judgment of the legs and his feet are on fire. And, "Oh, God's just trying to judge the world." God's not trying to judge the world. He's saving you, and it's His goodness. So, all the way through, we see man's misappropriating everything that God has given him and misreading everything that God is telling

him. So that here, for the last time these men are proclaiming the message of God, the testimony, they're witnesses. What are they giving witness to? The testimony of Christ. How do we know that? That's exactly what Revelation 19 says, what Revelation 1 says. What the whole book is about, the testimony of Christ. What are they testifying to? With great power, the saving, gracious act of Christ. What's happening? The world wants them dead. And it literally is the last straw, and that's the point of the text. God is taking it to the limit, and He's saying literally, "You've never seen the choice be so clear." And at this moment, heaven and earth reveal, "I've never seen the darkness so dark, and I've never seen the light so bright." And at that moment, God is saying, "What will you choose?" and the world says, "The world." Now, up to this point, what has been happening is we've seen these seven trumpets that have been sounding, and up to the fifth trumpet; it now goes into what is called the "woes," the three woes, if you remember.

If you go all the way back to Chapter 8,

(Revelation 8:13) “Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

(Revelation 9:1) “Then the fifth angel sounded...”

And if you look at the end of this particular paragraph, go on all the way down to verse 12,

(Revelation 9:12) “The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.”

Okay, so you have to ask yourself, “Okay, what was the first woe?” And here's the first woe. I'll just kind of define them for you. The first woe is the woe that demonstrates that the very thing that man has been worshiping, the spirit power of the world has only one desire, and that's to torment man. Man perceives, “I'm making a deal with the devil and he's going to be nice with me.” No, you make a deal with the devil, and he's going to torment you because it's his goal.

So, when you look at Revelation 9:1-11, what are you seeing? The tormenting of man. And by the way, the reason why the woes are coming in at this juncture is because up to this point, man himself has been untouched by the tribulation. The land has been touched, the sea has been touched, but now the attacks are going to be directly to man. That's why the next three are going to hit man specifically. That's why it says, "Woe, woe, woe." These next three are going to be hitting him. The first woe is the very gods you worship only desire to torment you. That's quite a woe when you think about it, and it's quite a revelation. If man could just step back and look at the things that he worships and watch how they abuse him; whether it be the job that he's on, or the people that he has to acquiesce to, or the way that they tell him to think, there's just total abuse and ultimate disregard. And God is saying, "You don't want to follow the god of this world. He's going to use you, exploit you, and throw you away. In fact, his whole goal is to torment you." And this is an obvious point.

The second woe comes in and literally death takes control. And the slaying of mankind. So, in the first, they're not allowed to kill man. You can just torment him. But now, death comes on the scene. And what death is going to do is it will show the extremity of consequence to man. In other words, the wages of sin is what? Death. Okay, that's the extremity of consequence. So, choosing the wrong god to worship, he's going to torment you, but now it's going to take it to the extremity. Now, it's taking you to death. Now, the reason why it's taking it to the extremity, and that's, by the way, not the woe. The woe isn't taking the extremity to death. The woe is that despite taking it to the extremity, man still will not repent. And that's the second woe. The first woe is that he's gone into a realm that is tormenting. The second woe is taking it to the extreme. Take torment to its very extreme. Take it all the way to death. Man will certainly at that point go, "Okay, I've made a wrong choice." No, that's not true.

And if you look at the end of this particular passage, it says, as it talks about the power of the horses in its mouth

to do harm. And of course, a third of mankind was killed, see verse 18? We're obviously dealing with death at this juncture.

But it says in verse 20,

(Revelation 9:20) “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold...”

I mean, they're still worshiping them despite the fact that they're killing them. The perception would be, “Okay, this is a time to not follow.” I mean, if you're just by nature a utilitarian, you would go, “Okay, this isn't working. This isn't helping me. So, I'm not going to do it anymore.” He goes, “No.” And that's what makes it a horrific woe. The woe is that we've made the wrong choice in the things that will torment us. The second woe is that despite how far they torment us, even unto death, we will not repent.

Now, what do you think the third one is? God is angry and nobody cares. That's the third woe. And the third woe is going to bring us into the wrath of God. It is really up to this point that God's wrath has been withheld. And that in

and of itself is one of the most magnificent things of the passage. That despite man's rebellious nature, God has not dispelled His wrath upon them. Nevertheless, at this point, God's wrath will come. But not for the purpose of anger's sake, but for the purpose of rescuing. Once again, God remembers mercy in the midst of His wrath. And so, as we come to this passage, it is the cry of those in heaven going, "Wow, are You great!" Because of His kindness towards us. Peter reminds us that God is not slow about His promise, as some count slow, but He is not wishing that any should perish. And it is His grace that does not displace His wrath upon us at this moment.

So, as you come to this passage, if you look at verse 14 with me,

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

Now, why does He tie in the two witnesses at this juncture with the rebellion of man? Because He's demonstrating the clarity of choice. So, they're preaching the gospel. Let me just say this. Matthew says that until the gospel is preached to all nations, you know, and then

the end will come. But if you look, not only are they preaching it; take a moment and turn with me to Chapter 14. And some of you are going to say, “Well, he's going to talk about the 144,000.” They're not preaching the gospel. They're singing. So, they're proclaiming God's care for them, but they're not preaching the gospel. Who's preaching the gospel in Chapter 14?

Look with me in verse 6,

(Revelation 14:6) “And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.”

The grace of God is amazing.

The point of these two witnesses in Chapter 11 is that God has made it so clear what is right and what is wrong. There is literally day and night together in this one place. And God says, “Life and death, what do you want to choose?” And man chooses death. People go, “I feel so bad for them...” What's your choice? Do you want to be with God? “Well, no, I don't want to be with God.” Okay. But never has the choice been so clear because you see

these who have been proclaiming the message, the beast comes out, slaughters them, they're lying in the street for 3 1/2 days, nobody wants them buried because they're rejoicing over their death. And then they get caught up into heaven. They resurrect; they come to life, and they go into heaven. Now, you tell me. Is the choice pretty clear? All right. Who do you think you ought to be going with? The whole earth begins to shake underneath them. 7,000 are instantly killed. A tenth of the city begins to be torn apart. You hear what God's saying? One last choice. Now, at this juncture, God says, "Done." And heaven begins to rejoice. It's been made clear. Choices have been made. Done.

And if you look with me, it reads this way in verse 15, (Revelation 11:15) "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.'"

Done. No more darkness. Now, at this point, see, the middle of the 3 1/2, everything has been made so crystal, at this juncture we know whose side we're on. Everybody

knows the side we're on. And there's great rejoicing in heaven. Now, what's interesting is that it's in contrast with the great fear of those that are left on earth, or more specifically, those that have rebelled against the kingdom of heaven and had wished these witnesses dead. There's great fear. The contrast is very clear as well, which is they were celebrating their death; we celebrate their life. The world and us, we celebrate two different things. So, if you're celebrating the same thing that the world celebrates, guess what? You're happy about the wrong things. But the rejoicing is in heaven, and heaven begins to lead the chorus. And at this point, what Scripture is telling us is, heaven is glad that not only a choice has been made clear, but now everything's going to get right. And the patience of God, I think, really is at the forefront of this passage, because it is really what we praise God for; His loving kindness to us, His patience towards us, that never seems to fail. (This is what Greg was talking about.) We have something to be thankful for all the time. I mean, how gracious God has been to us. And it's what makes us different. What's going to be interesting as you watch this in Revelation is the praise is going to get

louder. So, he calls it seven peals of thunder. But the seven peals of thunder will be the praise of the saints in Revelation 19, and it'll literally describe them as such. So, the praise is getting louder, and that's the purpose of it, that God is getting us to praise so powerfully that we drowned out the noise of the world. See, that's one of the great points of the Book of Revelation. It's causing us to say, “Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” The things of this world grow strangely dim. We don't even hear them anymore, the noise of the praise. And you want to drown out your misery and your sorrow, start praising God. You won't even hear it anymore. All the misery and sorrow will go away.

So, the passage reads that they all began to rejoice.

And it says in verse 16,

(Revelation 11:16) “And the twenty-four elders...”

Which we understand to not only be these sagacious ones who are sitting on thrones, but those that are literally representing God's people day and night. Do you ever wonder why you have 24 hours in a day? That God is really conveying something to us in that? As Jesus will say,

“Are there not 12 hours in the day and 12 hours in the night?” Why would you have the two? And then you put the two together and there's 24. Why would that be? Because Scripture tells us that the 12 patriarchs of old of the Old Testament, were patriarchs like shining stars in the night. And that we, or the apostles, are the 12 that are sons of the day. And how God has left witness for us night and day, as Scripture tells us at the beginning of Genesis, and there was evening and there was morning one day. Night was first, and then day. So, the passage is revealing to us that God has proclaimed this witness, and the witnesses are those that had been leading us throughout are proclaiming the victory of God.

And if you look with me in verse 16, that's exactly what's happened.

“And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces...”

Now, why would they fall on their faces? Well, we know it's an Eastern thing to do. But more specifically, it was a displaying of, “Not my face,” and here again, your pastor's going to get off in his binge, “Not my Facebook, but God's

face be seen.” It is literally burying your face so that you're not seen, so you're not elevated. Scripture tells us, “Do all to the glory of God. May others see Jesus in you.” I don't know how they can do that. We're seeing so much of you. The point is that He should be seen. And these elders say, “Don't let us be the ones that are being proclaimed here. Let it be You in every way.” And these great paragons of our faith that God has so ordained to reign with Him are burying their faces to the ground and saying, “You're greater than anybody could ever imagine.”

The text reads this way,

“And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God. (Kissed His feet)”

Now why, once again, would they be doing this? I believe that the context is not only in reference to the fact, of course, that he's a great God, but that they're worshiping Him because of His great patience. They now come to the understanding, and if you read throughout Scripture, how many times do you read, “How long, how long, how long, how long?” You finally come to this extremity in the

middle of the tribulation, and we know what's happening in the middle of the tribulation. What is it? The abomination of desolation. The evil one is going to speak out blasphemous words for 3 1/2 years. Why would God allow something like that to exist? The point is, the patience of God and that He would make it so clear. People say, "Well, I think somebody's going to hell because they don't understand. They just don't understand. It hasn't been made clear to them. They're somewhere in this far distant land." "*Far distant land*," like God's not there either, "But they're in some far distant land and they just don't have all the truth that we have." Well, we have a lot of truth and people aren't coming to know the Lord. So, that's not the question, is it? And is it possible that God not only created them, that He's known them before the foundation of the world? Is it possible that He loses not one? Is it possible that with the information that they have, that God has so ordained, that they would come to Him, that He knew what was necessary in their lives to bring Him to Himself? Is it possible that every single human being that is not with Him has made and understood that he had a clear choice?

Is that possible? In fact, would it be possible for God to do anything but that? And what the elders are praising God for is, “You have made it far more clear than we could have ever done. And the lines have been so obvious that anyone making the decision, there is absolutely no doubt.” I mean, think about it. Tormented and you're still worshiping? Killing your family off, and you're still worshiping? You still won't repent? Somebody's made a choice. You've just watched two guys resurrected into heaven that were telling you that you had been going the wrong way? That's not clear? Scripture is revealing to us not only in Revelation that God did this in this situation, but Scripture is telling us this is how God operates. You understand that? So, we're seeing His modus operandi. We understand that this is the way that God operates in every person's heart. And that's why he says in Romans, “You're without excuse. You know these things.” It's the people that are doing wrong that will come up to you and say, “Well, you know, God's not fair.” They know the truth. But they want to put in and interject that whole thing. “Well, what about this person? What about this?” Well, first of all, you don't know that person. Secondly,

God does. Thirdly, God is not willing that any should perish, and He will go to the extremity to save them. He'll even die for them. So, there's no doubt in our mind who has rejected who. It's man. So, it's declared in the passage, and this is what they're giving thanks for. If you look in the passage, they're falling on their faces, they're worshiping God, and they say, "We give thanks to You. What else can we say?" By the way, it's actually where the Catholics get the name "Eucharist". That's the actual word here for giving thanks. It's a recognition of the sacrifice that God has bestowed upon us and the gift that He gives us. And so, you're thanking Him for that wonderful and marvelous gift. His patience towards me; His lovingkindness.

Now, watch the phrase as it goes,

"... who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign."

Now, the interesting passage, and I think if you have the King James, it seems to make reference to "who art, who was, then who is to come." And I think it kind of adds in that "who is to come." But this particular passage doesn't

do that. Why is that true? Because it actually isn't in there. But it's understood. And here's the reason why. Because if you look at the phrase, “who art,” that's in the present continuous being. So, God is existing. Now, here again, that is the point. If He is and He is in a state of continuing existence, then He will always be. Then the passage goes, “who was,” and that's emphasizing a past being continuous. So, He has ever been in the past. So, He has ever been in the past and is ever being. It's literally the name of *Yahweh* in Scripture.

“... because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”

That's a little misleading, the way that that's put, because the word “begun” is not actually in the passage. So, if you can just kind of read it this way, “By Thy great power You reign.” That's the way it reads. The emphasis of the passage is that “You've been reigning all along. It's been Your graciousness that's been doing things the way that they've been done, and You've brought things to this head for the purpose of saving. Everything You've done is for the sake of rescuing man. And You've allowed it to

come to such an extreme that there is never a point that You were never in control. But You were controlling this so that the day would come when You finally do take Your throne, man would be without excuse.” There's a great praise there.

If you look in verse 18,

(Revelation 11:18) “And the nations were enraged...”

God reigns! And how do the nations feel about it? Very upset. Very upset. Why? Because they have to change, and why they wouldn't want to change? I mean, it's been made very clear to them that change would be the best thing that could ever happen to them. And yet, the nations, “*ethnos*,” which is making reference to every kind of people, every kind of ethnic group in the whole world, was enraged, was mad at God.

“And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came...”

Why is God so upset? Because you were upset at Him for showing lovingkindness, for rescuing you, for His compassion that never failed. You wanted Him dead. You wanted His witnesses dead. You wanted everything about

Him dead. And yet He continued to allow you to have breath in your nostrils to curse Him. And you wonder why God's upset? You were angry at Him first. His wrath upon you is that you would not receive His gift that was still there. And in fact, as we read in Revelation 14, an angel will still proclaim the gospel, even through it all.

“... Your wrath came, and the time came...”

Now, “*kairos*” is the word that is used for time, making reference to a specific time that has been waited for, that is appropriate for things to happen.

So, if you look within the passage,

“... the time came for the dead to be judged...”

Now, dead is emphasizing in a genitive case that it's really describing the people. So, that means that they're dead in their spirits. Not only are they dead, but they've been dead in their faith. I'll put it another way, Ephesians 2 says, you were dead in your trespasses and sin. So, it's describing them as a people because they have embraced death. So, God within the text is going to what? Judge them. Now, if you understand what the word “judgment”

is, He's going to make a distinction, He's going to separate them, and He's going to say, "Okay, you get death. You long for death. I said, 'Choose life,' but you chose death. So, death is what you get." So really, it's been the grace of God to not give us what we've asked for, up to this point. But God says, "Okay, everything's been clear. No mistake. Done. You get what you want." And it's at this moment that He gives the dead the things that they had desired, and the time has come to give what?

"... to reward Your bond-servants..."

Okay, now you might want to list this. This is a great, great text. God is going to give to his bond servants and his people what their reward is. Now, here again, I know there are always people that are far more holy than I, and they don't want their rewards. I'll take yours, it'll be fine. But if you look in the passage, He is actually describing your rewards. So, if you want to know what they are, here they are.

It says in the passage, He's going to give the reward to His bond servants. So, there's a reward to those that are servants of God, those that specifically serve. If you look

at the division of the spiritual gifts, there are speaking gifts and there are serving gifts. Now here again, we're all bond servants of Christ. We understand that. See, look, there are people that aren't necessarily in front of a grand audience. They don't necessarily have a lot of ability to change things around, influence or whatever. But God says, "Can you serve Me where you are?" "Yes." Okay. Then great things will come, and great rewards will come to those that are true servants. And so, the passage is making reference specifically to the bond-servants, the people that are serving in that way.

And if you look in the next one, "the prophets," who are basically the mouthpiece of God, right? The ones who are proclaiming the mysteries of God's truths, that "I have a stewardship," Paul says, and the stewardship is to proclaim these truths. God has given me these things, so you better do it right. God is going to reward me according to if I got it right, not according to if in fact it pleased you or felt good on your ears, but if I said what He wanted me to say and I clarified that truth. That's how I'm going to get rewarded, according to that.

“... and the saints...”

Those who have set themselves apart and have lived in that holy... Once again, when you look at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke and you see characters such as Anna and you see somebody such as Simeon, and you go, “What did they do?” And God says, “They lived holy lives.” “What about Mary? What did she do?” She lived a holy life. God says, “We've got a special reward for them.”

“... and the saints and those who fear Your name...”

They've walked circumspectly in such a way that they revered God. So much of what I'm seeing today is a flippancy about God. “Well, so what?” Or “the guy upstairs,” or whatever. Show me some people that really reverence God, and I'll show you some people who are very sincere when they begin to communicate who God is to people. I think one of the reasons why people feel like they have an option to take or leave God is because we've misrepresented God. We've basically represented Him in such a way as “He's kind of a nice guy.” He's King of kings and Lord of lords. He is creator of the universe. He's allowed you to exist at this moment. The lack of

understanding and reverence for God is the very thing that causes people to be lackadaisical and apathetic and lethargic about their faith. It's the very thing that has caused that to happen. And God is saying, "I'm looking for people who will literally fear Me and proclaim Me in such a way." It is that particular passage in which we see that heart within this text and God is calling upon us to live in such a way.

Matthew 25, if you take a moment and turn there with me.

As you come into verse 31,

(Matthew 25:31) "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

(Matthew 25:32) All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

(Matthew 25:33) and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

(Matthew 25:34) Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

That's an amazing phrase.

(Matthew 25:35) “For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;

(Matthew 25:36) naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’

(Matthew 25:37) Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry...’”

Now, one of the things that make these individuals righteous, you know what it is? They have no idea that they've been doing it.

“... ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink?

(Matthew 25:38) And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?

(Matthew 25:39) When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

(Matthew 25:40) The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’”

Now, I want you to understand the criteria here within the text because there's a lot of do-gooders out in this world. But what are the criteria for reaching out and ministering? It doesn't mean that you shouldn't be kind to all but what was the focus of these individuals? They were drawn to saints of God. They could see somebody that loved God, and they were going to invest in them. See, we have a really bad habit in this world today. We like to reward bad behavior. We're very good at doing that. The Scripture's clear. You don't work, then don't eat. But we reward people that don't work. We reward people that are steeped in sin. And we say to them, “Our grace to you is going to save you,” which is not true. Your grace to anybody is not going to save anybody. But the hearts of the righteous go, “There's somebody doing something

right, and I'm going to do all that I can to support those people that are doing what's right." They love God.

They're following God. And sometimes those people that are following God are probably difficult for us to like just by virtue of the fact that we have different personalities. I mean, I've known missionaries that I'm going, "Okay, I'm looking for a personality here. I can't find one." And yet you know that they love God, they're following God, they're proclaiming God. It's just a personality thing. And I have felt like God purposely does that to test to see if I'll love that person because they love God or if I'll love that person because somehow, they make me feel good or it gratifies me. Why do I love the people that I love? Why am I ministering to the people that I minister to?

"... 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

(Matthew 25:41) Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me...'"

"Because you did just the opposite."

Peter will say to the Lord, “We have left everything and followed You.” That's Matthew 19. And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me in the regeneration of the Son of Man will sit on this glorious throne, and you also shall sit on the 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.” Who do you think that was falling on their knees? “And everyone who has left houses and brothers and sisters, father and mother, or children, or farms, for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much and shall inherit eternal life. First will be last; the last will be first.” Jesus will say to His disciples, “If you give a glass of water in My name, you never lose that reward. A prophet will receive a prophet's reward. A servant will receive a servant's reward.” God has great things in store. What do you think the reward for a prophet in heaven is? Want me to tell you? I think we're going to be allowed to proclaim the hidden mysteries of an eternal God. Because that's exactly what we were called to do here. What do you think a servant will be able to do? Do you think maybe you'll be allowed to be in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He'll let you do special things in heaven for Him? I want those

rewards. I really want them. And I want to be as close to Him as I can be. If I can be like John and lean my head against Him, that's exactly what I want to do. But I can't imagine not being closer to Him if I have the ability to be. I mean, you think about how different people relate to different people. I mean, the way my mother shows love to me is very unique and yet different than my father. My father and I have a relationship of love. My mother and I have a relationship of love. I have a relationship of love with my wife and my children. Different relationships, isn't it? Well, some in heaven will have a relationship of a bond-servant. Some in heaven will have a relationship of a prophet. Think about it. Because of the way that you relate and the way that you were meant to. Remember, you were created before the foundation of the world. So, the way that you act and the way that you respond. Those in heaven are declaring, "There's absolutely nobody like Him. He does all things well. He is a God of mercy. He's a God that is just. He knows what we want." You follow Jesus throughout the gospels, and when people are coming up to Him, one of the first things He asks them is, "What do you want? What do you want Me to do for

you?" Some will say, "I need to be healed." He goes, "Okay, you'll be healed." What do you think He's telling us in that text? What do you think He's telling you? Some people are satisfied with just having a God that comes in their physical world and hopefully they're not going to be sick today. And that's the God- that's the relationship they want. But some, like the disciples, said, "We'd like to know where You live." And He says, "Come and see." What do you want?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for this word in which we realize that You are a gracious God. You take us to this pinnacle, to the halves, to the place in which we meet You, and the decision has never been clearer. Perhaps that's today for some of us. For You don't hide your will. You have not hidden Your love for us. The cross is not obscured. Your love is clear. But it is Your grace as well to reveal just how hateful and how hurtful this world is. If, with that complete

understanding in our lives, we can see the clarity of the two and make our choice, You have certainly been gracious to us.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. The Lord has given you the privilege to go through this book together with me. The clarity of His word is telling you that you can play the game. You can go into the whole ritual thing. You can talk about it, and your rhetoric can somehow, maybe appease your thoughts. But God knows your heart, and you do too. And you know what's real, and you know what has power. And the longer you read the word and the longer you listen to the truth, the clearer things become. And God is gracious to reveal. God is gracious to separate. Each, on that day, will get what they have longed for. What are you longing for?