

Why Study the Descriptions of Jesus in the Book of Revelation?

INTRODUCTION

The descriptions in the book of Revelation. This will be a challenging series because there are about a hundred descriptions of Jesus. When His eyes are like fire, that's not a title, but a way He describes Himself. That description has a message behind it. There are about a hundred of them. Of course, there's quite a bit of repetition in that hundred, and you could put different numbers to it. There are about fifty of them that are distinct.

However, we're going to draw your attention in this twelve-week series specifically to Revelation 1, 2, and 3, where Jesus stands before John and reveals Himself in a very direct way. Then there are statements John makes that also reveal the glory of Jesus. There's nowhere in the Bible where Jesus stands directly before anyone and reveals so much of His glory as fully God, fully Man, as in Revelation 1, 2, and 3. Revelation 1-3 is actually one vision. Often, we'll look at Revelation 1, then we'll take a break and go look at Revelation 2 and 3. Sometimes you get the wrong idea that it's two different experiences, but he actually had one visionary experience, Revelation 1-3. Then, some time later, we don't know if it was hours or days or what, he saw Revelation 4-5. It was a completely different experience.

REVELATION, THE END-TIME BOOK OF ACTS

But for those who are just joining us anew, I want to give a quick overview of how we're presenting the book of Revelation. I refer to the book of Revelation as the end-time book of Acts, where Jesus describes to John through the Holy Spirit the acts of the Holy Spirit through the end-time apostles. It's the book of Acts written in advance for the end-time Church. As Moses released the plagues on Egypt, stretching forth his rod and releasing through prayer the judgment of God on Pharaoh, as the early apostles released the power of God through prayer in the book of Acts, so the book of Revelation is the book of Acts and the book of Exodus combined on a global level, releasing the power of God and the judgment of God against the end-time Pharaoh, who of course is the Antichrist. Pharaoh was a type of a far more evil leader that would appear at the end of the age. The primary theme of the Great Tribulation is God's judgment against the Antichrist.

This is all by way of review. Those of you who have been here for a while have heard this a number of times, but a lot of folks, when they think of the Great Tribulation, think, "Oh, no!" because they think of the judgment of God coming on them. They think, "We've got to get out of here somehow." That's where we get the idea of the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture, which I do not believe is a biblical doctrine. The rapture is a biblical doctrine, but it's at the end of the tribulation, not at the beginning, because it's the praying Church that releases the Tribulation upon Pharaoh. The secondary theme in the Great Tribulation is persecution; it's not the primary theme. There are only twelve verses in the book of Revelation that directly describe the prayers of the saints—only twelve out of 400. Only three percent of the book is about Revelation. The majority of the book is the glory of Jesus being released from His Church driving evil off the planet.

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

What we're addressing is, "Why do you want to study these descriptions?" Now there are thirty distinct descriptions in Revelation 1, 2, and 3. We're going to outline these thirty, not tonight but throughout the course of this class. This one verse (Rev. 1:1) gives us insight into how glorious the book of Revelation is, and how relevant it is. A lot of folks say, "I'm not really into the book of Revelation." This one verse ought to change

their opinion about not being into the book of Revelation. Here it is: It's titled by the Holy Spirit, "The Revelation of Jesus." Any book which is specifically titled "the book that reveals Jesus," if you've said, "I'm not really into it," you want to say, "Jesus, what I meant was, I've been a little confused by it, and I lost my way, and I lost the vision of the value of this book." Any book that is titled "the unveiling of the glory of Jesus," if you love Jesus, you want to be into that book. The title says it in one phrase: It's the unveiling of Jesus.

Interestingly, God the Father has the authority on how much of the glory of Jesus is made known in this age. The Father gives Jesus the permission to unveil Himself beyond any other time in history. He essentially gave the mandate to Jesus, "Reveal more of Yourself than You have revealed at any other time in history."

So Jesus sent His angel to John and said, "Now go and tell John what the Father is giving Me permission to reveal about Myself."

THE MAN BEHIND THE EVENTS; THE HEART WITHIN THE MAN

It's interesting that the method Jesus used is showing John things or events that would take place. Here's the logic of the book: We study the events to know the events, yes. There's a value in knowing the events, because we're going to be participating with Jesus in releasing those events. If we're going to be whisked away any minute, and those events don't have anything to do with us, then I understand not really focusing on them, but we're going to be praying and releasing those events. They are very, very important, but the events are not the most important point of the book.

When we study the events, there is value in and of itself for the prayer ministry, but the bigger reality is this: We study the events to gain insight into the Man behind the events. That is because Jesus started, if you will, with a blank white board. He could have done anything He wanted, and the fact that He chose these events gives insight into His wisdom, His thinking, His creativity, His love, His zeal to confront oppression. So when we study the events, which again is important in and of itself, that's not the ultimate importance. We gain insight into the Man behind the plan. There is a plan that these events manifest, but there's also a man behind the plan. There's a man behind the events. He thought of them. They give insight into His passion, His way of thinking, His abilities. He has so much power, He can actually pull these events off. He can release them, but He's going to release them through us. That I am very interested in, but more interesting, more valuable to me, is getting insight into this Man's heart.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS

As I have already said, it is one visionary experience, Revelation 1, 2, and 3. John sees Jesus in His glory in Revelation 1, and then Jesus says, "This is how I want My people to dwell together before Me." That's Revelation 2-3. We have a series on the website on Revelation 2-3. We spent twelve sessions talking about Jesus' desire, a Church after God's own heart. It's the Church that Jesus laid out and described in Revelation 2-3.

We find in Revelation 1, 2, and 3 thirty distinct descriptions of the glory of Jesus. Some of those descriptions are titles. He is the firstborn from the dead. He is the faithful witness. Some of the descriptions are like the eyes of fire, not titles but descriptions where Jesus reveals His own glory. So whether it's a title or a way He acted before John, the way He showed Himself, either one, in both of those categories, I'm calling them descriptions of Jesus. It gives us the clearest picture of Jesus in the whole Bible.

THE BEAUTY OF THE MAN DESCRIBED

You want to wear Revelation 1, 2, and 3 out in your Bible. There is no greater picture of the Man you love than Revelation 1, 2, and 3. If you read the book of Revelation with the right perspective, it will inspire you to adore this Man more than you do even now. You will adore Him; you will say, “Oh, Jesus, I love You,” and it will also inspire you to trust His leadership. So as a shepherd I want to teach these descriptions of Jesus because I want to help people. As a worshiper, I want my heart inspired in greater adoration and greater confidence in His leadership. I believe there’s going to be a Holy Spirit revival worldwide. *Revival* is not the right word, but there will be a Holy Spirit emphasis on Revelation 1, 2, and 3. Forerunners, you want to be drinking deeply from that well right now. Forerunners may have a one- or two-decades head start before these become more relevant. I mean, they’re very relevant right now; more than ever before, the Holy Spirit focuses on them more in a global way. You might have a few decades, but regardless, if it’s even a few more than that, it’s so edifying and so inspiring, it will deeply enrich your walk with God.

So I know some of you never really read Revelation 1, 2, and 3 much. Beloved, I am pointing you to a goldmine. It is not a goldmine that is easily mined. It will take effort and tenacity, but that is what you are here for, because you have tenacity. You care. You wouldn’t be here if you did not. I look at Revelation 1, 2, and 3 and I say, “Lord, I am in. I want to go all the way.”

THE GLORY OF THE LORD IS REVEALED

Again, I’m saying this is the clearest picture of Jesus in the Bible. Jesus reveals His glory in these three chapters as a man in a way He has never revealed His glory before in the Bible. He takes the truths of the Old Testament, the truths of the Gospel, the truths of the epistles, the letters of Peter, Paul and James, etc., and those truths are present, but then He adds another dimension to them. The Jesus of the Old Testament is exactly the same as the Jesus of the New Testament. Every now and then, you won’t hear it that much, but you’ll hear a person make an absolutely erroneous statement: “Well, the God of the Old Testament was judging and the God of the New Testament was loving.” It’s true that He’s judging in the Old Testament, but He’s also loving. It’s true that He’s loving in the New Testament, but He’s also judging. He’s exactly the same God; He never changes. When someone says, “The God of the Old and the God of the New,” they’re already confused. He never changes. There is no contradiction in the personality of God in the Old and New Testaments, but the book of Revelation takes them both, combines them, and adds another dimension by bringing them all together in one setting, particularly Revelation 1, 2, and 3. I mean, it’s magnificent.

Of course I’m trying to stir you up to go after this.

“OK. OK. I’m going for this.”

You want to go for it for a few decades, not for a weekend, not for a semester. You want to go for decades after these three chapters.

PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING; BRIDEGROOM, KING, AND JUDGE

Jesus is initially sent forth in the book of Revelation, chapters 1, 2, and 3 as Prophet, Priest, and King. That’s a well-known clustering together in the Old Testament of Jesus: Prophet, Priest, and King. We’ll look at that more next week. He starts off in Revelation 1, 2, and 3 as Prophet, Priest, and King, but as the book unfolds we see Him as the Bridegroom, King, and Judge. We’ll look at the Prophet, Priest, and King whom we see

ultimately as Bridegroom, King, and Judge. That is the overall framework of which these thirty descriptions of Revelation 1, 2, and 3 are pointing to Jesus: Prophet, Priest, and King.

“IN THE MIDST OF THE LAMPSTANDS, ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN”

Let’s read these thirty descriptions. We’ll break them down through the twelve-session course, number them, look at them, and compare them to Old Testament passages, the Gospels, and the teachings of Paul. Then we will find a full revelation of Jesus here in Revelation 1, 2, and 3 that I trust some of you have never seen Jesus in this grandeur, in this light, as seen in the Scriptures in these three chapters. I’m going to try to read right through it without making too many comments.

“From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests... He is coming” (Rev. 1:5-7) —that’s one of the key descriptions: He is coming. He isn’t just God reigning in heaven; He’s coming to the natural realm, to the earth.

“I heard behind me a loud voice” —it’s the voice of Jesus. He turns. The voice is like a trumpet. There are several implications in that. This Man who is fully God, fully Man with a trumpet-like voice said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” (Rev. 1:11). Those are not all synonymous; they’re different truths highlighted in each one of those descriptions or titles. Jesus tells John, “What you see, write; make it known to the churches; send it” (paraphrased). In other words, “Make it known.” So in the spirit of that command we’re still making it known, because John was to write it and make it known to others. As forerunners, you want to make these truths known to others. Of course you have to experience them and you have to grow in understanding of them in order to make them known, but that’s what you’re all about.

“Having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like the Son of Man” (Rev. 1:12-13). “The Son of Man” is the real key phrase here. That is the primary description of Jesus, the Son of Man, fully God and fully Man. Again, we’ll look at that next week when we look at the Prophet, Priest, King, Bridegroom, King, and Judge under the banner of Jesus as the Son of Man. He was clothed with the garments of a priest, actually. This is the priestly ministry.

“His head and hair were white like wool... His eyes as a flame of fire” (Rev. 1:14). Each of these has vast implications, not just to His glory, but even to His plan and preparing the Church for the plan. We have to know Jesus with hair that’s white like wool; we have to know the Jesus who has eyes like fire. We have to know the Jesus of Christmas and the Jesus of Armageddon and understand that there is no contradiction between them, whatever face He shows in the Bible.

“His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace. His voice was as the sound of many waters. He held in His right hand seven stars. Out of His mouth went a sharp sword” (Rev. 1:15-16, paraphrased) —which means that by the command of His mouth the sword was loosed on the earth. That is what it means when it says “out of His mouth.” It means that by the words He spoke the sword of God was loosed on the nations.

“His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man” (Rev. 1:17, paraphrased). That’s a strange way to say it. This is how the Living Bible says it, because John laid his head on Jesus’ breast and said, “I am the one whom God likes.” He knew who He was, and we’re all the

favorite of Jesus if you have enough revelation and boldness to stand in that. He loves you in the way that God loves God, the Scripture says (Jn. 17:23). We're looking at Jesus' closest disciple, who had his head on His chest sixty years earlier at the last supper. Now he's ninety years old. He's on the island of Patmos and he falls like a dead man before the Man that he knows so well. So what he finds out is, "Oh, I don't know you so well after all."

I can see Jesus kneeling down to put His hand on him, saying, "John, do not be afraid; it is Me. You didn't really know Me that well, did you?"

"I am the first and the last. I am He who lives, and was dead" —these are various descriptions here—"and behold, I am alive forevermore. I have the keys of death and hell" (Rev. 1:17-18, paraphrased). He has authority over hell and death.

Jesus goes on in Revelation 2-3 and quotes some of these descriptions of Himself. With His own lips He says them again. He is the One who holds the seven stars; who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. He is the First and the Last, who was dead and came to life. He holds the sharp two-edged sword. He is the Son of God. He's not just the Son of Man, like in Revelation 1; He's also the Son of God. His eyes are like fire. His feet are like brass. He has the Holy Spirit, the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars in His right hand. He is holy; He is true. He has not only the keys of Hades and Death, but the key of David. He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the beginning of the creation of God. That doesn't mean He was created; it means He has the primary place over all creation, being fully God, fully Man. *Beginning* means *primacy*, "the highest spot." We'll look at that in a few weeks.

THE PURPOSE AND INTENTIONALITY OF JESUS' DESCRIPTIONS

Now, everything about Jesus' appearance, everything about His apparel, and everything about His actions and words in these chapters has a message in it. None of it is accidental. He dressed for the occasion with tremendous purpose and intentionality. It's not like He went to John and said, "Oh! I have these seven stars in My right hand! OK... what am I going to do with these? I'm trying to talk to you!" No, He came with the seven stars to make the point for the end-time Church. It was for the early Church as well, but it has its fullness. Every single point and every action and everything He chose to reveal has a message in it.

THE ETERNALITY OF JESUS

This is to brace yourself so you don't get thrown off. We can only understand these truths about Jesus in the context of eternity. The reason it's to brace yourself is because you don't want to be quickly discouraged if, when you started reaching for these truths, you don't get much at first, because our natural minds are rooted in the temporal, and each one of these descriptions, whether it's a title or an action of Jesus, each one of them is rooted in Jesus and His eternal nature. In other words, there is a challenge inherent because we have a mind rooted in the natural, and the more we give ourselves to the Spirit, the more we refuse to quench the Spirit and the more we get connected to the Word, the more these things become clear because our mind is more familiar with the Spirit realm, and even the realm of eternity, a little, but many believers are so rooted in the earthly and only the earthly that the only Jesus they can get excited about is the Jesus who gives them more stuff right now. When He doesn't make it easier now or give them more things now, they get offended and discouraged and they want to quit, because though they technically know the Jesus rooted in eternity, functionally and practically they don't relate to that and then they cannot understand these descriptions of Him.

So we set our spirit on a pilgrimage to begin to live for the age to come, because when we begin consciously to live for the age to come, these truths come more into focus and the fog begins to lift. If our dream is mostly about now, if the dream of our heart is about getting more now, these truths will stay in a fog in our thinking.

THE CLARITY OF LIVING FOR THE AGE TO COME

There was a time in my life when I certainly needed more, but some years ago I consciously shifted over and intentionally began to live for how I would relate to the Lord and how He would bless me in the age to come, more than in just this age. I'm not saying it was more; I'm saying that I made a decision that I wanted it to be more. I don't know quite how to measure where I'm at, but some years ago I said to the Lord, very sincerely and specifically, "More important than more money, than more crowds, than more power, more important than all those things is that I am faithful, that I have greater faithfulness, and that I'm getting ready for the age to come." When I began to make that decision and stayed with it, the fog over some of these truths began to lift, because when your dream is on the other side, not just acquiring more stuff, though it's OK to have some favor of the Lord on your life, but if it's primary, these truths stay pretty much at a distance. It's a Jesus we love, but we don't know so well on this side. Of course, we will never know Him so well on this side, either way, as John found out, but what I'm saying is really practical.

ANCHORING YOUR HIGHER VISION ON THE OTHER SIDE

I think some of you will actually transition in this season. You might say, "I never actually thought about it that consciously..." where you're praying and fasting, yes, for favor and breakthrough now, for sure; I want full favor and breakthrough, too, but there's something I want more, and it's something I get on the other side. When your dream begins to be anchored on the other side, these portions of the Scriptures open up and have new flavor. I want to challenge you to it.

Now, I only have a little bit of eternal perspective. However, a little goes a long way. A little will go a long way, but it's consciously deciding to go there, is what I'm telling you. It's those who are saying, "I'm going to learn these thirty descriptions of Jesus; I'm going to receive revelation; I'm going to set my life towards it." I'm saying you have to anchor your higher vision on the other side, or these will stay locked to you. These descriptions will remain locked and you'll think, "I don't really get them and they're not that interesting, but hey, I'll meet him on the other side and everything will take care of itself then." A lot of people have that attitude, but until we see the Jesus of eternity His judgments seem to contradict love. If all you have is a vision for this age, judgment contradicts love, but the truth is that His judgments remove everything that hinders love. His judgments are because of love, not contrary to love. You talk to Oprah and she will not grasp that at all. If it's not here and now, and it's in the Bible, it doesn't make sense to people in the mindset she represents. We are sons and daughters of the resurrection.

"THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY"

In Revelation 1, John is commissioned to prophesy by seeing Jesus' majesty. Now, John is receiving a commission to prophesy about the end times, but here's the point I want to make: Not only do these truths prepare us for the end-time drama, these descriptions of Jesus will change the way we prophesy about the end times. They will form the way. We will have a different spirit in prophesying and we will have a different approach to prophesying about the end times, encountering these dimensions of His heart.

I don't say this critically; I'm sure I've done it, and I'm sure I'll probably do it some more. I don't want to do it, I'm really against what I'm about to say, but I'm a weak man, so I'm prone to doing things and then later saying, "What? I don't like that." But without these insights in these thirty descriptions of Jesus, it's very natural for us to end up prophesying about the end times with a wrong spirit. The wrong spirit isn't just a spirit of anger. It is a spirit of timidity instead of confidence. It's like saying, "Uhh, well I'm not sure... It's whatever you... uhh..."

The Lord says, "Wait. If I said it, say it." There's a spirit of timidity; there's a spirit of harshness; there's a spirit of intellectualism. I'm not talking about a spirit like a demon; that's not what I mean, I mean an attitude. Some people approach the end times and say, "Big Bible quiz!" They're excited, but it's mostly about finding the puzzle pieces so that they can argue better and say they found them. There's not a tenderness. The spirit is wrong, not just because it's harsh, but because it's contrary to confidence and tenderness and clarity. We don't want to prophesy with anxiety and confusion.

A CHURCH BUILT ON THE REVELATION OF JESUS

These thirty descriptions will change our emotional and spiritual chemistry, so to speak. They will change us on the inside, is what I'm trying to say. That's one of the most significant messages Jesus was giving John: "If you see these things about Me, you will prophesy differently." In Revelation 2-3 we go from Jesus standing before John and John falls down like a dead man. Jesus begins to describe things to John. He describes the Church after His own heart. It's the Church He wants to come back for. He identifies the issues that will challenge the end time Church. Now, they were real issues in the Church 2,000 years ago in those actual seven churches. They were literal churches that really had those literal issues, but one of the reasons they were selected by Jesus strategically was because they would represent the major challenges of the end-time Church worldwide. So when we answer those challenges and overcome, the composite of the seven churches describes the Church that will be mature in faith, the Church that is mature in love, and the Church after His own heart that is prepared to release His glory onto the earth.

It's not like, "Well, Revelation 2 and 3 is the church part." No, no. It's critical. Revelation 1 is what Jesus wants us to know about Him; Revelation 2-3 is how He wants us to dwell together on His terms. You want to build your ministries on these realities. Young forerunners and older forerunners as well, you want to build your ministry on these realities, because these are the things that are important to Jesus in building His Church. When I look at the Church in the West, it looks really far from Revelation 1, 2, and 3, the messages, the emphasis, and the reality of the congregations. I say, "Lord, I'm a weak and broken man in the natural, but I'm crying out for help in the midst of a people who are crying out for help."

We want a Church built on the revelation of Jesus in these three chapters; a Church that dwells together according to this divine pattern on God's terms, fulfilling the entire New Testament pattern as well. Tonight, part of my interest is that you would determine, "I am going to build my ministry on these. I'm going to lock into the nuggets that represent these big truths, these goldmines" —"gold nuggets" is a better way to say it, and those are goldmines in themselves. "I'm going to build my heart and ministry on these nuggets." Obviously they honor the whole revelation of Jesus in the Old and New Testament.

THE BRIDE WILL MAKE HERSELF READY

How mature is this Church going to be? Well, according to Revelation 19:7, the Church will make herself ready. Another translation says the Church will be prepared. Beloved, Jesus is not coming back until the Church is prepared. He is not coming back any minute, I assure you. The Church is not close to prepared. We are some decades out; we could be two or three or four or more, I don't know. Personally I believe it is within the lifetime of people who are alive on the earth right now. It could be sooner; it could be later. I know this: The bride will be ready, and she will be ready according to the book of Revelation. In other words, the Jesus of Revelation 1, dwelling together with other saints according to Revelation 2-3, will be prepared by that standard.

Paul points out the prepared bride, but uses different language. He talks about the Church in the language of the bride in Ephesians 5, but he calls her a glorious Church (Eph, 5:27). She is glorious. John called her "prepared," or "ready," depending on which translation you read. Paul said the same thing, but said "glorious." Again, the glorious Church is the Church that follows the design of Revelation 1, 2, and 3. Of course, the book of Acts and the Epistles are all implied in that divine pattern that Jesus gave in Revelation 2-3. No one is a better Church-builder than Jesus. Jesus is standing before the Church telling them what He wants to be different. Beloved, you do not get any better than Jesus giving you counsel on how to build the Church. We are talking about the best Church-planter ever, amen. There you go.

THE GLORY OF AN UNCOMPROMISED CHURCH

Now, notice she has no blemish, which means no compromise. This is not the gift of righteousness we're talking about, although the gift of righteousness is given. Listen: We're talking about how there will be a time before the second coming where the Church worldwide will not have any compromise in it that is substantial at all. There will be no compromise. There will be weakness because we're still in the flesh, but there will not be any intentional compromise in the Church globally.

Now of course the question you'll ask is, "What is going to happen between now and then that is going to change things drastically?" That is the other chapters between Rev. 1 and 19. Think about it: Think about the Church in the whole earth with no intentional compromise. Think about the Church in America. Think about you with no intentional compromise. When I read Ephesians 5:27, which is Paul's version of Revelation 19:7, and see that the Church is ready, I say, "Lord, this is intense."

His answer is, "The outpouring is intense and the shaking is intense. The intensity of the outpouring and the intensity of the shaking will be sufficient to produce this kind of character in My Church."

It's better just to say, "Well, this is where it's going. I'm jumping in, starting full blast now. Why am I delaying the inevitable? For real, I'm going to start anchoring my hope in the age to come, and take what comes in this age." I mean, we're going to use faith, we're going to use the Word of God, but we're not going to get offended if things don't work out as we expect. We're going to go hard and never look back. That is what I'm talking about. I mean, I want the full breakthrough, the full flavor, but I'm determined not to be offended if it lands differently than I'm imagining, because it always does. I have never, ever thought of the next three years correctly. In the thirty-five years I've walked with the Lord and thought about the next two or three years, I have never gotten it right once, ever. I'm like 0 for a thousand, so let's just assume I don't have it right in terms of how everything is going to work in my life in the next couple of years. So I decided to anchor my heart in the

next age and believe God and believe His leadership as I go full blast in faith and obedience by the grace of God.

FOCUSING IN ON THE SPIRIT'S FOCUS

Revelation 1-3 is a very significant passage for the maturing of the prayer movement and the prophetic movement. I've known a lot of prophetic folks over the years, and I want to say this tenderly, not like a hotshot: I don't know too many of them who are focused on Revelation 1, 2, and 3, and I know that's where the Holy Spirit is focused. If you are in prophetic ministry or you know someone who is, start gently wooing them and then make it a little bolder if the Lord gives opportunity. Revelation 1, 2, and 3 is the passage that defines the maturity of the prophetic movement when the Lord returns: the focus of it, the spirit it operates in, the revelation it's locked into, what it's teaching and what it's producing in the people. So much of what I see today is promising people more stuff, more money, and how to feel better while they're sinning. It's true! How to make them feel better while they're sinning, while flattering them with false promises about more honor, and more money, and less trouble. They may get more money; they may get more honor; but I guarantee you, if they do, trouble will come with it because of the bull's-eye of the enemy. It will take a greater resolve of faith and obedience to withstand that trouble.

ADVERTISING AND HIGHLIGHTING TRUTH

I'm getting you postured for these eleven sessions to follow. This is just getting you in the right frame of mind for this course. Some of you are already in it. You're already there, but I want to take an important principle: Hearing a teaching like this, or this whole course, is actually good, but it's not good enough. Hearing a teaching like this is like reading a menu in a fine restaurant. You can read the menu and starve to death. You could underline the menu, you could photograph it, you could call a friend and tell him about the menu, you can testify about the menu, and never eat, and die of starvation, right there in the restaurant.

You might find a spark that touches your spirit in a teaching time. I trust you do find a spark here or there. I think you know what I mean by that: moments of inspiration where only a few ideas are highlighted and you find a heightened sense of courage and resolve to go for God for a few minutes here and there in the course of a teaching. That is the anointing of the Spirit touching you: a few new ideas are emphasized, and there comes a swell, a heightened sense of resolve to obey God and go hard. Then the teaching is over; a few hours go by and you think, "Huh." A few days go by and you think, "Oh, I really love that teaching, but I can't remember; I just know it was good. What was it? I don't know, but it was good!" That's very common. There's nothing wrong with that.

Here's the point I'm making: What I'm really doing in a series like this is the same for everyone. I'm advertising and highlighting truth. If you don't study this truth out and get it into your prayer language, your dialogue with God, you will not be fed by it. You can be inspired for a few moments tonight and get a spark, a few ideas that grab your attention, and even a new resolve for a moment or two. That isn't really being fed. You are fed when these truths get into your private dialogue with God in your private life. When you talk to Jesus about these truths, you and Him, then you are being fed.

THE SPIRIT LEADS US OUT TO PASTURES GREEN

Now it's true that teachers feed people, but it's very limited; it's a small-f, little *feed*. It's more like they inspire and point to the green pastures, but at the end of the day your spirit is only fed in the real sense by your going

after God. The reason I take the time to make notes is so you can actually take the few bits here and there, not that you should always be focused on all the notes, but the phrase here and there, the paragraph here and there, the one you mark. You say, “OK, the Lord highlighted that to me during that session. He wants to talk to me more about it and I’m interested in these few other points.” Go search them out and see where the Holy Spirit brings you.

“WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?”

Matthew 16:13-27 is one of the most important passages that relates to the book of Revelation and the end times. Jesus is about to go to the cross. He’s still some weeks out, still up in the north. Soon He’ll start heading down south to Jerusalem and go to the cross. He’s making His journey from here, right in this season. So He gathers the apostles together and asks a question. It’s the very question the Spirit is asking the end-time Church right now; that’s why I’m bringing it up. I’ll give it to you in a summary. He said, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? Who do they say that I am?” It’s interesting, when Jesus appears to John sixty years later in the book of Revelation, chapter 1, He shows Himself as the Son of Man who fills in the blanks of this question. He says, “Who are the crowds saying that I, the Son of Man, am? Who do they think I am?”

They gave three answers. One said, “You are John the Baptist,” because John had been beheaded. In other words, “When they hear You preach, they see a holiness preacher.”

I’m making up this conversation, of course, but Jesus shakes His head and says, “Yeah, I’m a holiness preacher for sure, absolutely. I really care about dedication to God, absolutely.”

Another says, “No, that’s not the crowd I talk to. They think you’re Elijah. They see you do great signs and wonders: You can call fire from heaven, You can cast out demons...”

Jesus said, “That is true, too. I can do that.”

Another guy said, “No, they think you’re Jeremiah.” Jeremiah was known as “the weeping prophet.” “They see Your compassion and Your tenderness towards people.”

Jesus said, “Oh, I am tender. I’m a holiness preacher, I call fire from heaven, I cast out devils, and yes, I weep over people. They are all right, they all have a part of who I am, but I am more than this. I am the Son of Man.”

“WHOM DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”

Matthew 16:15 is the verse you want to circle. Jesus looks them right in the eyes and says, “OK, let’s forget the crowds. Peter, James, John, Matthew, here’s the question of the hour: Who do you think that I am?” They look at each other and think. That is always the primary question of the Holy Spirit, no matter what generation you live in, for 2,000 years. It’s a very important emphasis of the Holy Spirit in this hour of history. “Who do you think that I am? What am I like and what am I about? Am I the Jesus of Christmas only? Am I the Jesus of Armageddon only? Am I both? What am I like? What am I about? What am I after?” If you can’t answer that, you’re going to end up down a side path, or at least being tempted. Jesus is about to start the early Church because He’s going to die in some weeks, rise from the dead, and then comes the day of Pentecost. The early Church is only a few months down the road from here. He’s getting these guys ready for the book of Acts

Church, to lay the foundation for them to be the ones who lay the foundation. He's getting the end-time Church ready with the question, "Who do you say that I am?"

"I can tell you the answer: the Revelation 1, 2, and 3 Jesus. That's who You are."

"Good answer, Mike." The Holy Spirit may say, "Break it down."

"Uhh, well, I don't know that much about these thirty things," we might say, "but I'm going to learn," because the answer to the question 'Who am I?' was used not just to build the early Church, but to build the Church that He will use to transition human history in the age to come.

WHO DO YOU THINK THAT JESUS IS?

"Who do you think that I am?" Are you preaching the right Jesus, or are you preaching the American Jesus? If you preach the true Jesus in a secular, humanistic, covetous culture, you will be greatly resisted by the Church of Jesus. The Church of Jesus in our nation is far more western, far more humanistic, with its heart more anchored in its money and in its pleasure than it is in eternity. The true Jesus will disturb them. If you're in a popularity contest wanting to get a crowd of people to applaud the true Jesus, it won't go down that well at first. However, the true Jesus is going to be revealed in His splendor by His forerunners, and there will be a harvest in every tribe, tongue, and nation. They will flock to Him, and they will love Him even unto death. That is where it's going. So you might have a tough road on the front end in a western, secular culture that names the name of Jesus on every corner. The Jesus of the Bible is not the Jesus that is in focus to many of these groups; and though they actually really love Him, they have been dulled and inundated by the culture. I don't mean they're not true believers, but they're stuck in a secular mindset of the here-and-now. That is not the Jesus that is going to transition human history to the age to come. It's the Jesus of Revelation 1, 2, and 3.

This is a critical question. The forerunners are going after this question, and that is why I am teaching this series. I am teaching it for me as well as for you. I am saying, "Lord I have got to go deeper."

The Holy Spirit is saying, "You absolutely have to go deeper yes, much, much deeper because you only have a little insight as to who I am, but this is the Church I'm coming back for. This is the Church that will be working together with Me unity to drive evil off the planet." So the question is, "Are you in?" Do you want the American Jesus or the Revelation 1, 2, and 3 Jesus who is fully anchored in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Old Testament prophets—well, in the whole Old Testament! Not just the prophets. Peter answers and says, "You are fully God and fully Man." That's one way you could say it. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). "You are the Christ" —the anointed Messiah. "You are human, and You are fully God."

"AND UPON THIS ROCK WILL I BUILD MY CHURCH"

Matthew 16:18 is very abbreviated. Here's the point: "On this rock" —on this foundation—"I will build My Church." Here He says something very, very important: "The authority of hell" —*hell* and *Hades* are the same word. "The gates of hell" means *authority*. *Gates* represents authority. The authority of hell is Satan and all his demons. "If you build the Church on the revelation of who I am, the authority of hell will not defeat you" (Mt. 16:18, paraphrased). I don't just mean you make it to heaven saved; I'm not just talking about that. The goal is not to make it saved, by the skin of your teeth. The goal is to enter into the fullness of the grace of God: that God has a portion to weak and broken people, and in His kindness and His mercy, He has made a way for guys

like us to make it in our weakness. It's doable for folk like us, weak people. The fullness is within reach to people who are prone to ten negative things, like all of us, whatever those ten are because by the Holy Spirit we repent when we blow it. We sign back up, and the fullness of God is still within reach if we will not give up; if we don't quit in our tenacity, if we don't quit, we win. We really do! You win if you don't quit.

“THE GOD OF PEACE WILL SOON CRUSH SATAN UNDERNEATH YOUR FEET”

So Jesus makes this very dramatic promise. There is coming a time in society, not just by faith so that no one can see it; there is coming a time when the authority of hell on the earth in society will be openly defeated. As you will see in the notes, because I want to bring this to an end, this passage has been true for 2,000 years. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross 2,000 years ago; He defeated him 100 percent. However, the manifestation of that victory in society is still very minimal. It's 2,000 years later, and I would venture to say that ninety percent of the structures of the earth are still under the influence of Satan. The victory has been won in the heavens and at the cross, but the application of this passage in society, though we have more victory than at any other time in history, still leaves us about 90 percent away from full victory. We've grown from five percent to ten percent. That's exciting, but we're a long way out from this prophecy being fulfilled.

The book of Revelation time frame and battle plan is the time when the Church will bind and loose through prayer, through the prophetic proclamation, and through the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. Under Jesus' leadership, when He appears in the sky, they will ultimately drive the usurper off the planet, and the Antichrist with him. That is where this is going. Jesus is actually giving an end-time prophecy right here in Matthew 16:18.

Now, again, for 2,000 years the victory that He accomplished was 100 percent, and the Church had the keys to bind and loose for 2,000 years. However, we haven't gotten past the ten-percent mark yet, and He promised us 100 percent. There will be a huge change in what's going on in the earth. There will be a huge breakthrough of the Holy Spirit, a huge shaking, a huge attack, and a huge victory. I believe it will come to a head in the lifespan of people who are alive in this room right now. They will see with their eyes the authority of hell in society with no power; they will see it with no power anywhere in society, completely driven off the planet.

Jesus goes on and tells them, “You will do it through binding and loosing” (Mt. 16:19, paraphrased) —that is, prophetic proclamation, through intercession and the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, with the serving and humility, etc. But in the weakness of our humanity under the grace of God, we will bind and loose. I have a few paragraphs explaining this for if someone says, “What? I've never seen this verse! It's brand new!” Most of you are familiar with this.

“JESUS, I HARDLY KNEW YOU”

In Matthew 16:27, Jesus makes it clear that ultimately what was in His mind was going to Jerusalem to die in the context of the second coming. In the book of Revelation, Jesus appears to John, sixty-plus years later. There John is like a dead man. He could have said, “John, remember sixty years ago when I asked you, ‘Who do you think that I am?’ You didn't really know very much, did you?”

John is trembling like a dead man. He's ninety years old. He's been walking with the Lord sixty to seventy years. “I hardly know you!”

Jesus says, “Now John, the next thing I’ll show you is the battle plan where My people, in the future, will bind and loose. They will have full victory” —not just, quote, “in the Spirit” where no one quite sees it, but it will be openly manifest for all the nations to see. But this authority to bind and loose is based on Jesus going to the cross. The faith and the love maturing that can operate in that authority is based upon the revelation of Jesus in Revelation 1, 2, and 3, and a people that will dwell together according to Jesus’ counsel in Revelation 1, 2, and 3. That is why we are studying this course.

MINISTRY TIME

Amen. Let’s stand. Again, I want to encourage you to highlight a point, like when I give you these notes, or whoever gives them to you, whether it’s someone on the Internet, or here, or far away, or a friend says, “Listen to this CD” or something. Put a little star and highlight the parts where your heart says, “Mmm” for a second. That’s like the Holy Spirit saying, “Ah, I’ll give you more on that one.” No, I really do that. I mark it. I don’t always get back to it, but I try to mark where the hunger spiked for a second.

I’m going to have the instruments play, and we will wait on the Lord for a few moments as they play. I want to encourage you to read these thirty descriptions. I put them all there on page two, I think. Just read them over and over and say, “Holy Spirit, speak to me. I hardly know anything about You; speak to me.” That’s what I say. I say, “Lord, there is so little I know about You. I want to know You.”

He says, “You keep talking this way, and I will talk back to you.”

I’m going to invite you to stand if you want to stand. If you’re more comfortable seated, that’s good as well. I encourage you to close your eyes. We’re going to gaze on the throne now. There is the Father sitting on the throne. It says in Revelation that the saints are on the sea of glass like crystal, gazing at the throne with the rainbow around it, myriads of angels and the living creatures crying “Holy.” There we are in that scene. That’s where you’re focused right now. In your spirit you’re saying, really gently, “Abba, I love You. Here I am.” That is how we wait on the Lord in a ministry time: We get in that posture.

Let the instruments continue just like this. Holy Spirit, come and touch us. We are not going to get in a hurry. Holy Spirit, here we are. Many of you are saying, “Lord, I want You. I want to go all the way; I want to go deeply.” Most of you in the room are saying something like that, even though the words might be different. “I want to go all the way. Ah, I’ve got to go deeper! I’ve got to get unstuck. I am stuck. I want to go deeper.”

If you feel really desperate, if you feel stuck—I don’t necessarily mean in sin, even—if you’re thinking, “I’m stuck. I feel like the Word is stale and I love Jesus, I really do, but the presence doesn’t seem to be there; I feel stuck tonight, this last few weeks,” and you would like prayer, I want to invite you to come stand on these lines in this next few moments. Come on up. Those that are new here, I’m actually going to ask to stand on the lines so we can have room for prayer teams to come around you. I’ve been stuck a bunch of times in my thirty-plus years of going with the Lord. The exciting thing is, I want to assure you that God plans for you to go into a new season. It may not happen immediately, but He wants you in a new season. I’ve been stuck a few times; I mean, it feels desperate—almost panicky. The first few times, I was really nervous, but then I always came out of it, so then I began to get confidence in the grace of God. You will come out of it, I assure you. There are no super saints. Whoever comes out of it, it is because God is kind. My point is, it will work for you. His kindness will work even for you.

When you get stuck, sometimes the devil exaggerates it and makes you feel like you're the only person who won't come out of the tough season. It's a lie; you will come out of it. I guarantee that you will, if you will go after this thing even in your weakness. You might have to spend your time a little differently, say "no" to a few things and "yes" to a few other things. But you will come out of it if you don't quit. Don't give up your vision to go deep.

Holy Spirit, I ask You to come like fire. Instruments, continue like you do as the Holy Spirit leads you. Lord, I thank You for a prophetic spirit on the musicians. Release a prophetic anointing more and more on the musicians in the house of prayer, and even tonight. Musicians, focus on the Lord and do what comes. Don't even try to be prophetic; focus on Jesus and play how you play. That's how it happens. Release Your fire; we are asking, Lord, for more of Your manifest presence. Release Your glory all over the room, in the bleachers and everywhere in the room.

Those in the bleachers, stay connected. I encourage no one to talk if you don't need to talk right now. In the name of Jesus, touch my heart even tonight, Lord. Come and touch my spirit tonight. Come, Holy Spirit. Come touch me afresh. Release the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

I'm going to ask about fifty of you, even if you are new here, to come and pray for folks. If you love Jesus, you are qualified to pray for folks.



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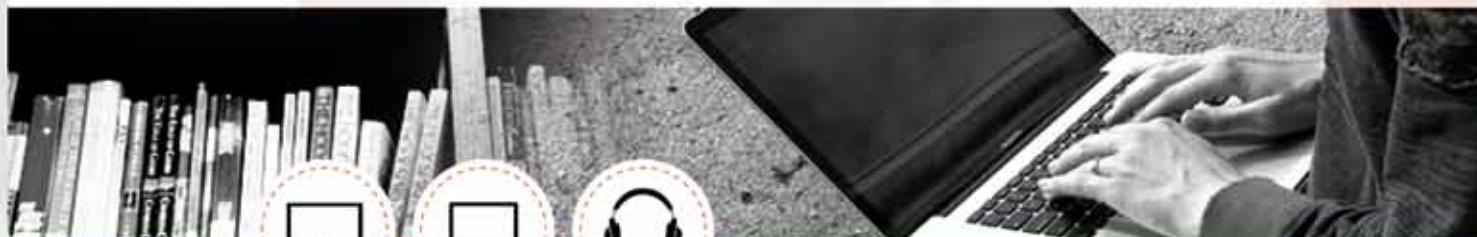
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