

(Revelation) 07 the Fall of Babylon and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

by David Pawson

The sermon explores the theme of the fall of Babylon and its contrast with the city of God, Jerusalem.

Duration: 1:08:04

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 6:33, John 3:15-17

Topics: "End Times", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the climax of world history and the great Denouement. He highlights the tragic fact that despite repeated opportunities, the world still refuses to repent and even curses God. The speaker then shares a harrowing story of a Christian who experienced a devastating aircraft disaster, emphasizing the importance of recognizing Jesus as the logos, the logic of the universe. The sermon also mentions a vision in the book of Revelation where an angel calls birds of prey to a great supper of God, symbolizing a scene of death and destruction in the Middle East.

Transcript

I'm afraid we're still in the big trouble. There is one more aspect of it that we need to look at. We're now at the climax of world history, at the great denouement.

Tragically, again and again in these last few chapters, you find this statement, the world still did not repent. And even more strongly, the world cursed God. You know the worst aircraft disaster happened on the ground.

It happened in the Canary Islands some years ago. A jumbo jet was just taking off from the runway and a pilot who was in a hurry to get home pulled another jumbo jet straight into the path of the one just taking off, which sliced the top off the lower one and then both collapsed together and burst into flames. There was a Christian in the bottom jumbo jet towards the rear, and he described later how a ball of fire came down through the cabin incinerating people.

They just became charred black remnants. And being a Christian he sat quietly, but what struck him most was that most of the people ahead of him were cursing God as it happened. In their final moments they were cursing God for this inferno in which they were to die.

But he quietly composed himself and used the prayer of Jesus, into your hands I commit my spirit. Extraordinarily, there was an explosion under his seat and he found himself shooting up into the air, and since the other jet had sliced off the top of the cabin it was now open to the sky, and he shot out of that hole. He scraped his hands on the jagged aluminium edges of the hole, but he went right out and slid down the fuselage onto the wing, slid off the wing onto the grass and left, and he was the one survivor from that plane.

But he was prepared to die and quietly committed his spirit to God, but God's time was not yet up for him. But it struck him so much that in the disaster so many people were cursing God. I was talking to a man in Heathrow Airport, London, whose job it is to deal with the black box recording that is examined after crashes, to see what the last pilot's words were in the cockpit and so on, to see if that gives a clue as to why the crash occurred.

Actually, it's not a black box, it's bright orange so that they can see it in the wreckage, but everybody calls it the black box. I asked him a question. I said, is it true that sometimes you do something to that tape before it's played to the inquiry? He said, what do you mean? I said, well I have heard that sometimes the last words of the pilot are cursing God, knowing that they're about to die.

He said, well yes, when that happens we do remove that from the tape before it is played to the inquiry. Alas, disasters either bring you nearer to God or turn you against God. And here we have in the book of Revelation confirmation that the big trouble leaves people refusing to repent and turn to God and actually cursing him.

Now from now on, the book of Revelation is all about two women, two ladies who are very different from each other. All the individuals in the book of Revelation are male. The three females in the book of Revelation, for there are three, are all personifications.

They are not individuals, they represent someone or something else. And the two ladies who round off this whole saga of the future, one is a filthy prostitute and the other is a pure bride. A tale of two women covers the rest of the book of Revelation, but they each represent a city.

The two women represent Babylon and Jerusalem. The filthy prostitute represents the city of Babylon and the pure bride represents the new Jerusalem. Cities have a history, and I want to give you quite a lot of information about cities first before we look at these two.

One is the city of man and the other is the city of God. These two are in opposition, have been all the way through history. Babylon and Jerusalem are totally different places.

In the Bible generally, cities are bad places. They have a bad history. Indeed, they are first mentioned in connection with Lamech, the first man to forge weapons of mass destruction, a descendant of Cain.

So that's where cities began on the wrong side of the family tree, not in the godly line but in the godless line. They are bad places because they concentrate people and therefore they concentrate sinners and therefore they concentrate sin. Big cities have a peculiar habit of concentrating sin.

That's why they become dangerous places. For example, you'll find lust is concentrated in cities. That's where prostitutes, via their trade.

Over half the homosexuals in England live in London. The cities concentrate lust. They concentrate anger.

Violence, rioting takes place in the big cities. You never heard of a riot taking place in the countryside. Sin is concentrated in cities and the two particular sins that are concentrated in Babylon are pride and greed.

You will find more pride in the cities than anywhere else. Look at the architecture. The pride of man is reflected in architecture.

The Twin Towers in New York represented human pride because the architect said, I designed this as a monument to human greatness, and they were. So we have pride concentrated and not just in the architecture, but above all greed is concentrated in cities. That's where you go to make money.

That's where you go to worship mammon. People seeking their fortune don't go into the countryside, they make for the big city. There is at this moment around the world a gigantic migration into cities.

We now have Metropolis, the big city, but soon we shall have Megalopolis. Already people are talking about a megalopolis around the Great Lakes here in North America, a continuous stream of urban development that is one gigantic city. So we have this bad image of cities which on the whole are antagonistic to God.

They are more godless than people living in the countryside, largely because they are more anonymous. You can hide sin in a city much more easily than you can in a rural area. Now the great city that challenged God in the Old Testament was Babylon.

It began as the Tower of Babel, or Babel, by the great Euphrates River. With a man Nimrod, a mighty hunter, a big man with ambitions, and he wanted to build the tallest building in the world. That is still the ambition of many nations today as I'm going to show you.

But he was the first to want a building that reached up into God's sphere, but that man had built. So he built the Tower of Babel. Since it was in Mesopotamia there was no stone available, no rock available, and he certainly didn't have steel so he couldn't build what we know as a skyscraper today.

They only had bricks stuck together with bitumen and so they had to build a kind of stepped pyramid to get a tall tower. So don't think of the Tower of Babel as a New York skyscraper, but as a stepped pyramid. Well, let me show you.

Let's look at one. In fact, this may be the remains of the Tower of Babel for all we know, and all that remains of it is a kind of large stepped pyramid built of brick, baked from the clay of the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Let's look at a reconstruction of what that might have been like in the days when it was a mighty building.

Since the Mesopotamian basin is absolutely flat, like your prairies here, you could see this from mile after mile. There it stood, a man-made mountain reaching up into God's sphere, and God had to deal with that. Actually, it was the first occasion on which he gave the gift of tongues.

Did you ever see it that way? But that time he gave it to confuse people and separate them, gave them different languages. That's a whole other story, but it's fascinating that some with a new language which we now know as Chinese went east over the Himalaya mountains and settled in what we now know as China. In the Chinese characters of the Chinese language you find everything from Genesis 1 to 7, 1 to 11, right up to the Tower of Babel.

You can preach Genesis 1 to 11 from the characters of the Chinese language. Isn't that amazing? For example, the Chinese for a boat or a ship is a picture of a vessel with eight mouths in it. Where did that come from? Noah's Ark.

The word for temptation is a garden with two trees in it. Where did that come from? So even the modern Chinese language has memories of Babel, but they have nothing in their characters from Genesis 11 onwards. That's what happened at Babel.

The people were confused, separated, babble, and we still use the word for babbling, for confused speech which has no sense. That later became the city of Babylon. It grew and grew.

You see, it was on the mighty river Euphrates. Cities have to be at some focus of easy transport, either the coast, a river mouth, or a river, or a major road, or later a railroad. But a city can only grow if it's a centre of transport and trade.

That's how cities grow. Here, Kansas City, over half the GIs of World War II passed through Union Station in Kansas City because it's a key transport focus. Well now, that's how cities grow and Babylon grew.

It's interesting to contrast it with Jerusalem. Jerusalem is not on a trade route. Jerusalem is not on a river.

Jerusalem is not on an international road. It's there because God put it there. There is no other reason for Jerusalem to be a capital of anywhere.

But Babylon is a typical human capital built for money, for greed, for trade, and it grew into a mighty empire and became the Babylonian Empire. An Antichrist, not the Antichrist, but one of the many that have been in the world, was Nebuchadnezzar who ruled over this. I love the story of his conversion.

He went mad for seven years and they locked him up in his own private zoo. I mustn't get sidetracked, but Nebuchadnezzar is an amazing character that you ought to study. He was an Antichrist until the Lord took his sanity away and he ate grass like animals for seven years and his nails grew like eagles' claws and his hair grew like birds' feathers, all because he said, mine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

Those are his exact words. He got one word wrong of course. He said, mine are the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

God says, no they're not, they're mine. Then he came to his senses and for the rest of his life he worshipped the God of Israel, the Most High God. It's an amazing story.

But Babylon became the enemy of Jerusalem, and it was through Babylon that Jerusalem was first destroyed and its temple brought to rubble. The city of man reduced the city of God to nothing. And that's been the tale ever since.

Well now as we move on, oh by the way, let's just show you that Babel has not finished. Here's a page from Time magazine not long ago, and here are the things that man is trying to build. There's the Empire State Building which was for long the tallest building in New York, but now it's dwarfed, or it was.

And now we've got up to the tallest towers in the world at the moment are the Twin Towers, the Petron Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur. I've seen them, they are awe-inspiring. Two towers joined by a bridge halfway up.

But I wanted to show you this. A British architect has now designed a tower that is eight hundred metres high. That's what, getting in for half a mile? It's an incredible height.

It's designed to be built in the sea with most of it underwater. It will house fifty thousand people and everything they need will be in that tower - restaurants, cinemas, entertainment, everything that a person needs for life is going to be in that tower. And they're going to build it in an earthquake zone.

The pride of man is now so confident that they can build that in an earthquake zone. On the principle, well it's a scientific principle, but they noticed in the last Japanese earthquake that the taller buildings survived and the shorter buildings fell. Somebody asked why? They found out that it was because when the ground is vibrating at a certain pitch, the shorter building can vibrate at the same pitch and begins to break up, whereas the taller building moves at a slower pitch while the ground is going quickly and therefore will stand.

I don't know, but on the basis of that belief they're going to build this. They've yet to decide whether it's to be built in Taiwan or Japan, but the British architect has got it all worked out so that whoever builds it says, we are now the greatest. We now have the tallest and the Sears Tower in Chicago will be dwarfed by this.

Babel is still around, it's still in men's minds, building monuments to man's greatness and glory. Well now, there have been many Babylons in history in a sense. Incidentally, the original Babylon fell and I think I should really read something about that.

When the Israelites were taken off into Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed, this is how they felt when they found themselves camping beside the rivers of Babylon. By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplar trees we hung up our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs.

Our tormentors demanded songs of joy and they said, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill and my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth. If I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

O daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us, he who seizes your babies and dashes them against the rocks. Does that touch your heart? This is the cry of the people of God. But both Isaiah and Jeremiah said Babylon is doomed.

Listen to this because it's peculiarly echoed in the book of Revelation. Flee from Babylon, run for your lives, don't be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the Lord's vengeance, he will pay her what she deserves.

Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand, she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine, therefore they have now gone mad. Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken.

Wail over her, get balm for her pain. Perhaps she can be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed.

Let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds. Let's go to Isaiah. Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.

She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations. No Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there, but desert creatures will be there. Jackals will fill her houses and the owls will dwell there, and there the wild goats will leap about.

Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand and her days will not be prolonged. That's the final result of Babylon's attitude to Jerusalem and God's people.

It's quite dramatic, isn't it? We're going to hear echoes of that in the New Testament. Incidentally, Saddam Hussein is the first man to rebuild anything in the ancient city of Babylon. It is lain in ruins, indeed until a hundred years ago it was totally lost.

No one knew where it was. Then an English archaeologist found it again. Saddam Hussein has rebuilt the Ishtar Gate and rebuilt the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, which he uses as a summer palace.

But still, there are no residents there. They only move in for his holidays. He invited people to come and see something.

He has a laser beam projector in the old palace of Nebuchadnezzar which shines onto the clouds when there's a cloudy sky and portrays a profile of Nebuchadnezzar and Saddam Hussein next to it. He proudly claims he has the shame-shaped nose, so must be the direct descendant. It is his ambition to be another Nebuchadnezzar.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Jerusalem is his greatest enemy. But that's another story. What is the Babylon mentioned in Revelation? It's not that old one rebuilt because this Babylon is on the coast somewhere and its ruin is seen by ships at sea, so it's not the rebuilding of the old Babylon.

There have been many Babylons, as I've said. But the vision that now is presented to John the Apostle--sorry, no, it was that way--is a horrible vision. This is the scarlet woman, this prostitute, sitting on that red dragon, riding it.

The artist in London gave me that picture which he felt symbolized this Babylon that will exist at the end of history and the woman. She is drinking, but she's drinking blood. She's drinking the blood of the saints.

She's drunk on the blood of the saints. Clearly, many Christians will die in this Babylon wherever it is. So let's try and work through and think about this Babylon that is mentioned at the end of Revelation.

The first thing we need to notice is it is not a religious city. It is a godless city. Therefore, those who said it was the Pope are totally out of place.

Rome was the first city to which the Bible applies the word Babylon. Peter, writing his letter at the end, says this, the church who is in Babylon sends greetings. But of course, there was no church in Babylon.

Then it was lying ruined and empty. But he's writing from Rome and Rome became a Babylon. You see, the tower of Babel and the ancient Babylon and Rome were all foreshadowings of the final Babylon.

I've tried to tell you this week that the final events all cast their shadows before them and Babel or Babylon was a foreshadowing of the final Babylon, the final city that opposes God. But in Revelation it is a city of pleasure, it is a city of money, it is a city of trade, it's a city where pleasure is traded for money, hence the picture of a prostitute as representing the city. Does that kind of give you a feel? I believe that is another foreshadowing of Babylon.

I was alarmed to read that it's now becoming a family holiday resort for people. Well, they tell me it's very nice away from the centre, but the centre horrifies me. I'd never take my family to a place like that for a holiday.

Or what about Germany? Frankfurt on Main in the middle of Germany is making a bid to become the financial centre of Europe. London still holds that crown, but Frankfurt on Main is boldly wanting that. So I went to see the city to get a feel of it.

They have built a vast new stock exchange to handle the stocks and shares of Europe. Outside the stock exchange they have erected a huge golden calf. Would you believe it? A bull calf from ancient Egypt, a huge golden calf.

It's right there. Then I went into the huge new bank headquarters and I tell you, I thought I'd walked into hell. When I entered the huge new foyer, not quite as big as this room, there is a massive painting around the walls, a mural about three metres deep right round, and it's a picture of hell.

Every known sin is portrayed in this portrait and it's full of demons, horrible things gloating over their victims. I remember one particularly. It showed a fat, bloated banker standing up to his knees in Deutschmarks and a grinning demon over his shoulder, a man whom Mammon had captured.

It's a horrible mural and I wanted to get away from it quickly, so I went through to where there are cashiers and counters where you can have bank dealings. But in there I was even more horrified. There were figures standing before the counter.

They were bronze figures, all totally naked, of men and women in the last stages of degradation and decadence. There was a great, fat, naked man with piggy eyes and his belly. He hadn't seen his feet in years.

Next to him was clearly a prostitute full of disease, withering away. You have to stand in a queue with these bronze statues before you can get any money. I will briefly show you the kind of thing.

There are the statues that you stand with to get your cash in this bank. Here is part of the mural, but my camera went wrong and couldn't even pick up some of these pictures. Well, all this is foreshadowing the final Babel.

It will be a place of perverted pleasure, of trade, of money, of everything that man wants, concentrated in one final world trade centre of which the Twin Towers in New York were a foreshadowing. Now where it will be, I don't know. But it will be the World Financial Centre and the World Pleasure Centre rolled into one, the last big Babylon of all, the most godless place where mammon is worshipped.

It says that financial centre will dominate the world rulers. One of the great changes we've seen happen in recent decades is that the real power in our world is not with politicians but with big business, that the economic factors are controlling the situation. Now with multinational corporations, do you know that all the business of the world is in less than three hundred gigantic business corporations now? It's all heading up to one control system of international wealth and commerce.

Again, the scenario in Revelation becomes only too credible as we see what happens. Now it's very interesting, God has pronounced the fall of Babylon, the end of Babylon. But he doesn't bring it about.

What happens is that the rulers controlled from Babylon rebel against this financial control and it is they who destroy Babylon. As Hitler destroyed the Jewish economy in Germany which was holding it up, politicians jealous for power become jealous of businessmen who have more control than they have. That's what will finally happen to this city.

It will be destroyed by those who are jealous of her power, who envy her power. Though it does say God puts it into their hearts that the way to be free of Babylon's control is to destroy Babylon. Therefore, it will be destroyed by people with political ambition to get rid of the financial control of the world.

So Babylon falls and the Bible says that the fires that destroyed it were visible to ships at sea and they saw Babylon fall. When I saw that on television, and I happened to be buying an air ticket when the crisis in New York began, and suddenly all the people who were serving customers huddled together in a frightened little group. I went to them and said, what's wrong? They said, we've just heard there's been a serious air crash in America.

I dashed home and switched on the television so was actually watching it happen as many of you were. I don't think I've ever seen such a shocking broadcast. To see it happen and to see those towers with their brilliant new design, a design that facilitated their collapse so quickly, it went down like a pack of cards.

What a sight it was. But when I saw that particular scene on the television, for a moment I thought I was watching Babylon fall. But then I realized that it could not be a fulfillment of Revelation's prediction because New York is not drunk with the blood of the saints and therefore it cannot be New York.

I had letters and phone calls even from America asking me, was this the fulfillment? Was Revelation coming true and was the next Jesus return? And I said, no, it is a very clear foreshadowing of the fall of Babylon, but it isn't it yet. We can very easily get too panicky or excited because a foreshadowing of the future has happened, but we must be careful not to say this is it until it really happens, and we will know. Well now, what does Revelation say to Christians about this final Babylon? Three things.

First, it tells us that Babylon will be a very dangerous place for Christians to stay in because the one group of people who will be hated in this pleasure loving, money-worshiping capital city, centre of the world's trade, will be the Christians. They will be the only conscience in the city, the only people to raise a protest, the only people to stand for the things of God, and they will be hated for it. So clearly there will be many martyrs in this city.

It says, she is drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. To be in that final world trade centre and talk about Jesus will be to sign your death penalty. That's what the first thing Revelation says to Christians.

Secondly, Christians are told, get out of her, flee from her. Exactly the same words that Isaiah used are used here. Flee from Babylon.

Don't stay until she is judged for her sins or you'll die with her. Get out. And of course, that's yet another indication that Christians have to get out themselves.

They are not taken out, they are in it, but they need to get out. And there will come a time, and maybe it's getting quite near, when Christians will have to disassociate themselves from the increasing secularity of business, of commerce. And indeed, I talk to businessmen and many of them say, I don't know that I can continue in business.

It is now getting so corrupt. Well, it's not just business that. I'm afraid even doctors and nurses and teachers are now telling me this kind of thing.

They wonder how much longer they can continue in an increasingly godless profession. So Christians are told here in Revelation, come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues, for her sins are piled up to heaven and God has remembered her crimes. So many Christians will die in Babylon, but others will remember the Word of the Lord and get out before it's too late and flee from such a gripping spider with its worldwide web.

And then the third thing Christians are told is the most surprising. When Babylon falls, Christians are told to sing hallelujah. Now they will be the only people shouting hallelujah on that day.

I mean here is the collapse of world trade. It will close down the world stock exchange. It will be the end of all your pension and your savings.

Your stocks and shares will be not worth the paper they're written on. The whole financial web of the world will have gone. Hallelujah! My bank has closed, my account has gone, my savings have gone, my pension's gone.

Hallelujah! Now this is a very surprising development, isn't it? How many of you have heard a performance of Handel's Messiah? A lot of you. Well of course, there's one chorus in that, the hallelujah chorus. And it's probably the best-known part of Handel's oratorio.

You probably don't do this in America, but in England whenever the hallelujah chorus starts people stand up and sit down afterwards. Somebody's nodding back there so I know you know this. Do you know why? It's a rather silly story really.

The king, King George, was the king at the first performance for Handel wrote it for him. And when he reached the hallelujah chorus it was such a mighty musical item that King George was convinced it was the end of the show and got up to leave. Now in England when royalty stands, everybody has to get up.

So the whole audience stood up and somebody said to the king, this is not the end of it, it's just one of the choruses. And so he stood to the end and then he sat down again and everybody sat down with the king for the rest of the oratorio. And ever since it's become a tradition to stand for the hallelujah chorus.

But what many people who love that chorus don't know is that it's taken from Revelation 19. All the words are taken, hallelujah for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. That's Revelation 19.

It's the celebration of the collapse of world economy. And sometimes when I'm at a performance of Handel's Messiah, I want to get up when they start singing, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. And they get so excited I want to say, do you realise you're celebrating the end of your pensions, your savings, stocks and shares? I've never dared to do it yet but I'm not beyond that kind of thing.

And maybe one day I'm going to do it and get a headline and at least people will then know where Handel got that from. Hallelujah for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. When you see Babylon fall you join the hallelujah chorus and it sounds like rushing mighty waters.

It's a celebration that the grip of finance on our world and the grip of pleasure on our world is broken because then the other lady can come, the new Jerusalem like a bride adorned for her husband. That's

why Christians sing hallelujah. It's not because of revenge, it's because the end of one thing is the beginning of another.

How are we doing for time? One more hour. Oh right, then I must rush on. Then let's go beyond.

I'm finished with the big trouble. I thought I'd hear the hallelujah chorus. All right.

Revelation is made up of two kinds of revelation, visions and voices. John is told to write down everything he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. For the last few chapters it's all been, I heard, I heard, I heard, I heard.

I heard the angel shout, Babylon has fallen. I heard the sound of many voices singing hallelujah the Lord God omnipotent reigns. It's all hearing about Babylon.

Then quite suddenly and unexpectedly, after an announcement that the time for a wedding has come, it changes to, I saw, I saw, I saw, I saw. Now we are into the final visions that John had in the prison in Patmos. We're back to seeing again and altogether there are seven visions which he sees.

Now it is unfortunate that your Bible and mine is divided into chapters. By the way, you can now get the New International Version without chapter and verse numbers. A friend of mine who is a professor of law in Malibu University near Los Angeles has produced the New International Version without chapter and verse numbers and in chronological order so that you can now read the Word of God in the order in which God gave it because your Bible and mine is not in chronological order at all.

The prophets are arranged in the Old Testament, the biggest first and the smallest last. The letters of Paul are arranged the biggest first and the smallest last, Romans and Philemon. This is not really the most helpful way to read a Bible, but to read it in the order in which it happened, the order in which God gave his Word, is profoundly helpful.

His name is Professor Lagard Smith. He belongs to the Church of Christ and he's a lovely Christian man. I only met him because I wrote a book called Leadership is Male and he wrote a book saying almost exactly the same thing under another title at the same time and he heard of my book and got in touch with me and we became friends.

But there it is. The tragedy of chapter and verse numbers is partly that it divides what God put together and some of the chapter divisions are in just the wrong place. The problem with the verse numbers is that it makes it too easy to quote a verse without quoting the context.

Now for a thousand years, Christians had Bibles that had no chapter and verse numbers in, and boy did they know their Bibles. What they did was they searched the scriptures we're told. What modern Christians want to do is look them up.

Do you know what I mean? Somebody says to me, why do you never give chapter and verse numbers David? Well I say, because I want you to search the scriptures for what I say, not look them up because you just look up a text in isolation. And I showed you the other day that many people can quote John 3.16 but they can't quote John 3.15 or John 3.17 and so they've lost the real context of that statement and therefore lost a great deal of its meaning. But the chapter divisions are often in just the wrong place.

Some of you are so busy copying all that down that you're not hearing what I'm saying. Copy that down as I get to it please. Well, the chapter divisions are often in just the wrong place.

Genesis 1 and 2 are divided in the wrong place. The worst case is the beautiful chapter Isaiah 53, the song of the suffering servant of God. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed. You know that lovely song don't you? It's a song. Unfortunately, the first verse of the song is in chapter 52 and so it's never read with the rest of the song.

And yet the first verse of a song gives the tone and direction of it. And here we have the most outstanding example. These are the last series of seven things in the New Testament, in the book of Revelation, and yet hardly anybody notices them because they've been split between three chapters.

And since we tend to stop at chapter endings or start at chapter beginnings, I've never heard the seven visions read together. I read them last week to you together and that may have been the first time you ever heard that. Seven times I saw, I saw, I saw, I saw.

And they not only belong together, but they are consecutive things that happen after each other. They are chronological. And if only that had been realized centuries ago, there would be no arguments about the millennium.

Isn't that sad? You'd never have heard of amillennial people and premillennial and postmillennial. I'm going to talk about them this afternoon later. A friend of mine got off a plane in Belfast where they're very good sermon tasters.

They like to know your theology before they let you loose on their congregations. And my friend got off the plane and somebody said, are you amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial? And he said, that is a preposterous question, which I thought was a pretty good answer to them. But we'll talk about this this afternoon.

But there'd be no argument if people had spotted that these seven visions are the final seven and belong together in the book of Revelation. But we'll see that more clearly this afternoon when I talk about it. Let's begin to look at some of the visions.

The big trouble is over. An announcement has been made that the wedding is about to take place and the bride has made herself ready on earth in fine linen, the righteous deeds of the saints. So everything is ready for the wedding except one thing, the bridegroom hasn't appeared, and that's rather important.

So what do we see? As soon as in chapter nineteen verse eleven, there I've given you a head start, don't usually do that. But chapter nineteen verse eleven begins, Then I saw heaven open and a rider on a white horse, and there's no question who it is. It's Jesus and he's riding out of heaven to deal with the situation on earth.

That's why he's not coming on a donkey anymore, he's coming on a horse which is always a symbol of military aggression. It says quite specifically he's coming to make war. He's no longer the Prince of Peace now, this is a different Jesus or a different aspect of the same Jesus.

He's coming to make war on evil. To deal with the situation of that big trouble and bring it to a speedy end. So he's riding like a military conqueror and his name is the Word of God.

Many things are said in this first vision. We call it the parousia, I've told you what that means. It's the arrival of a royal visitor to be met and that is the most common name that Christians have used of the return of Christ, the parousia.

It means to be, ousia means to be and para means to be beside, Jesus beside us again, the parousia. On his thigh he has embroidered on his robe, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But he is the Word of God.

The only two books in which he's called that are of course John's Gospel, in the beginning was the Word and now here in the book of Revelation. White horse and a blood-stained robe, not his own blood this time. This is the mark of a fighter, it's the blood of those he's killing.

And he is coming with the wrath of God against evil. This little section is the source of your battle hymn of the Republic, I think. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, you know that? Of course you do.

Then he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. You may have wondered what that line means. It's straight from this passage because throughout the Bible, wine is a symbol of the wrath of God.

A cup of wine is a symbol of God's anger to be drunk to its dregs by some people. That is why Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, Father, I don't want to drink this cup. Take this cup away from me.

He knew what it symbolized. It was to be the focus of the anger of God. He'd never known his Father be angry with him up to that moment and he shrank from drinking that cup.

You find the cup keeps coming up and in Revelation, the cup of divine wrath made from trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. Indeed, didn't Steinbeck, one of your authors, have a book called *The Grapes of Wrath*? I've also read many temperance books entitled *The Wrath of Grapes*, again from America, I hasten to add. But here we have the beginning of the battle hymn of the republic.

Jesus is coming back as a fighter, as a killer. Now that would be a dreadful shock to the world if they'd been brought up on some of the typical Sunday school teaching about gentle Jesus, meek and mild, and these lovely pictures of him with freshly shampooed hair. You know the kind of thing I mean.

That's a Jesus nobody would be afraid of. But here is a Jesus who causes such fear that people actually cry out to the mountains, cover us! They're asking for an earthquake to bury them because they can't bear to look into his eyes. You see, one of the reasons I told you for reading Revelation is to get a balanced picture of Jesus.

We need the whole picture. When it comes to evil, Jesus can be very angry and can deal with it. He didn't do much of that on his first visit because he didn't come to do that on his first visit.

He came to save, but on his second visit he's coming to deal with evil. The world has been very disappointed with Jesus, you know. They say, why didn't he clean up the world on his first visit? Because if he had done, he'd have had to get rid of every one of us.

That's why. He came first to save us, to give us the chance to be recycled and made fit for a new world. But he's not going to go on doing that forever.

The only reason why his second coming has been so long delayed you will find in the third chapter of Peter's second letter. It is to give the maximum opportunity for repentance. That's why.

He is so reluctant to deal with evil. He wants so many people to turn around and be recycled for him, and so he's kept it off. But that won't go on forever.

The day is coming when it will be settled. I want to say a little about this title Logos, which is usually a translated word. That's a very inadequate translation of the Greek word Logos.

In the beginning was the Logos, writes John in his Gospel, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God, and the Logos was made flesh and pitched his tent among us. What's he meaning? Bear in mind he's writing in Ephesus where he later died, the old man. What must he be? Well he must be 80 or 90 when he wrote this.

He remembers that the word Logos originated in Ephesus. Six hundred years before a man called Heraclitus laid the foundations of science in Ephesus. He gathered around him students and he taught them that the heart of science was observation, that they must watch and observe things and try and find out how they worked and why they did what they did.

He said, watch the weather, watch the clouds, watch the... why does rain come, why does the sun shine? Try and observe and find out what makes things behave. Watch animals, see how they behave, why do they do what they do? He said, what you're after is to find out the reason why things behave the way they do. For him, the word for reason why was Logos.

It was almost find out the logic of it, find out what causes this and that. And the result is that every science today copies Heraclitus by calling themselves an ology. So we have psychology, sociology, meteorology, zoology, biology, and so it goes on.

And we all got it from Heraclitus, the Logos, the reason why. That's what we're trying to find out. But of course specialized science is only looking at a tiny part of the universe to find out the reason why that particular part behaves.

Nobody seems to be bothered to ask for the reason why it's all there, why it all behaves as it does. John, when he wrote his gospel, had a problem. What does he call Jesus before he became Jesus? You see, he was only called Jesus when he was born.

What do I call him? Because you see, John had the answer to the question, where do you begin the life of Jesus? Mark said when he wrote his gospel, I'll begin with his baptism because that's when his public ministry began. Then along came Matthew and said, no Mark, you're wrong. You've got to go back to his birth and his conception, and because he was Jewish he's a son of Abraham, so I'll begin the story of Jesus with Abraham.

Then along came Luke and he said, no, you're both wrong. I'm going to start the story of Adam because he's a son of Adam and he begins with our humanity, and so he starts his gospel with Adam. Along came the age of John and said, you're all wrong.

I'm going to start the story at the beginning. But then of course he had no beginning and our feeble minds can't imagine what it was like before there was a universe, so that's as far as our imagination can go back. So he said, in the beginning he was already there.

Then he thought, what shall I call him? I'm going to call him the reason why. Isn't that beautiful? In the beginning was the reason why, and the reason why was face to face with God, and the reason why was God, and the reason why became flesh and lived among us. He's the logic of the universe.

He's the one who's caused it all. He's the one for whom it's all been made. The Father made this universe as a gift to his Son.

He's the reason why. And you know, interestingly enough, I've heard so many testamentists say this, that when people came to Christ they found a reason for living. They found a purpose.

They'd found the reason why. They'd found a logos, a logic for life. Well there's another sermon for some of you.

Let's get back to Revelation. How did I get to this? Because he is the logos. The logic of the universe is coming back, to put it all right.

Isn't that beautiful? Let's move on to the second vision which he saw. Now this is an extraordinary vision, and in a sense it's simultaneous with the third. He sees an angel flying in the air calling to birds of prey, come to the great supper of God.

What supper is this? God's supper? There's a whole area of the earth covered with corpses, two or three deep probably, just corpses littering a particular area in the Middle East. It's a triangular plane, the plane of Israel or the plane of Jezreel. It's had many meanings.

It's the only flat area in the hills of Judea and it separates the southern hills of Judea from the northern hills of Galilee. There it is right in the middle. It is the cockpit of the Middle East, said Sir Winston Churchill.

It has been a battlefield down the ages because the road from Asia to Africa crosses the road from Arabia to Europe in the middle of that plane against a little hill called Megiddo. That stands at the crossroads of the world. That's where God planted his people so that the whole world would pass by and see a model of what he wanted society to be.

He put them in the hills of Judea, but the people came and went through the hills of Judea through this plane. Overlooking the plane is a village called Nazareth. I imagine Jesus as a boy lying down on the top of the hill and watching the caravans come and go.

It would be a bit like an airport lounge. I shall be in an airport lounge tomorrow and I know I'll see people from all over the world passing me. That's what Galilee was like.

The world came and went through that crossroads and that's why it was called Galilee of the Nations. It was an international crossing point, like Kansas City is to the whole of America. It was right there in the middle.

Hill of Megiddo in Hebrew is Har-Magedon, Har-Magedon. Here at Har-Magedon, let me show you a photograph of it so some of you will have had the privilege of going to see it, but let me just show you what it looks like. You wouldn't think that is looking at part of the mountains of Judea, would you? It's a great flat

area but in the middle is this little hill.

You are looking at the scene of this great battle. This is where it will happen. Napoleon was here, Alexander the Great was here.

This is where Saul and his son Jonathan were slain by the Philistines. This is where King Josiah was slain by the Pharaohs. This is the battlefield of the Middle East.

It's the crossroads. Whoever controls this place controls the world. It is crucial.

As I told you last week, some of you, Winston Churchill planned the final battle of World War II here because as the Italians pressed the British army back towards Egypt along the North African coast, and the Germans came down through Crete into the eastern Mediterranean. Churchill honestly thought because he knew his Bible that the battle of Armageddon was going to be now, and so he sent a team of British officers out to survey this very place and plan the final battle of World War II. He was quite a strategist, was Churchill.

But he was wrong. It didn't get that far. The British army managed to stop the enemy at El Alamein just on the borders of Egypt and the whole war turned after that.

That was before you joined us. But there we are. Here is the hill of Megiddo.

The crossroads of the world is just here, just below the hill, and you can go to any part of the world from here. That's where it's all to be. Now that's where this pile of corpses is, and the angel is calling to the birds, come and clean it up because nobody could bury this lot.

It's the remains of a huge army. But whose army? And what's it doing there? The third vision tells you. Jesus has come back.

He has been joined in Jerusalem by all the saints. There's a huge crowd of Jesus and his disciples, and the Jews are now believing in Jesus. This is a world crisis for the unholy trinity of Satan, Antichrist, and false prophet.

They raise an army, kings, generals, rulers, soldiers, and they gather as every army attacking the hills of Judea has gathered in the plain of Israel. This is the mustering place where you gather your forces who then fight their way up into the mountains, and they are gathered there to attack Jesus and his people and get rid of them for a second time, or get rid of him for a second time. The battle of Armageddon is not really a battle at all.

It's won by Jesus with the word of his mouth. Remember, the Roman soldier had two kinds of sword, the thin sword that we know as a sword today with which you can fight two or three soldiers at most. But the broad sword of the Roman soldier was a far more deadly weapon.

It was shaped like a spade like that with a ridge up the middle which extended beyond the blade to a long handle, and you held it with both hands. It was very heavy and you swung it, and it was sharp as a razor down both sides, but with the weight of it nothing could stop it. If you came anywhere near that broad sword, it sliced your arm off, sliced your leg off, no bother at all.

So one soldier swinging that in a circle could keep fifty other soldiers away. They wouldn't dare come within reach of the blade. Now in the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament it says the Word of God

is like a two-edged sword cutting through to the marrow of the bone.

It's a vivid picture. But here's the shape of the two-edged sword, and Jesus had that in his mouth. It says, the rider on the white horse has a two-edged sword in his mouth, and with that sword Jesus will slaughter this entire army with a word.

He did use that sword only once during his first visit to planet earth. When he came to a fig tree and found no figs and he was hungry, he cursed the tree. The next day the disciples walked along and said, Master look, the tree's dead, there's nothing on it.

Jesus said, are you surprised why if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, as tiny as that, you could say to this mountain, jump in the sea, and it would go. Was he using hyperbole? I know of one example where a mountain has been thrown into the sea by faith. Better tell you or you'll come and ask me afterwards.

It's in Japan. There was a Christian orphanage that took in many unwanted children in Japan, but they were full and still there were more children needing a home. It was a five-story building with a street on three sides and at the back a steep hill right up against the back of the building.

Therefore there was no room to expand the building because it was in an earthquake zone and they were forbidden to go more than five stories high. There was such a need of more children for a home that the missionaries were discussing it in the presence of the children. They said, well we can't expand that way, that way, or that way, or that way.

The only way to expand is back, but that great hill is in the way so we can't go that way. One of the missionaries made a kind of in-joke for Christians, well we ought to tell the mountain to jump in the sea. And the missionaries laughed, good joke.

But the children didn't laugh and the children went away and held a prayer meeting and they said, Jesus, throw that mountain in the sea so we can have more children in simple faith. They went away on holiday for a fortnight to the seaside, that was their annual treat, and when they came back from the holiday the missionaries and the orphans couldn't believe their eyes, or the missionaries couldn't, the hill had gone, it was level. And they said, look it's gone.

And the children then said, yes we told Jesus to throw it in the sea. Well the missionaries were so curious they had to find out what happened so they asked all the neighbours, what happened while we were away? And what had happened was it was actually in a great seaport and they were reclaiming land in the harbour to build more warehouses and they'd built a dam in the shallow part of the sea and now needed a whole lot of stuff to throw in the sea to build up some land behind the dam. And somebody had said, there's that hill behind the orphanage, that's not doing any good.

And they'd sent earth-moving equipment and literally in just days they had reduced the mountain to a plain and thrown it all in the sea. I've got a photograph of it at home. You know children sometimes have much simpler faith than we sophisticated adults, they just tell God to do it and he does it.

Well, back to Armageddon. Kings and armies destroyed by the Logos, by the Word, by the broad two-edged sword in Jesus' mouth. And now the empire of the unholy trinity is dismantled.

The first two human beings to go into hell are the Antichrist and the False Prophet and they go into hell even before Judgment Day. They are thrown alive. All their army is dead around them.

The two are left alive and they are thrown into the lake of fire where they are tormented day and night for ever and ever. But what happens to the devil? I'll tell you later today. Come back.

That's enough for this morning I think.

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