

**National Missions Conference 2025**  
**“The Kingdom to End All Kingdoms”**

**Revelation 11:15-19**

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Well, I do believe you've got yourselves a good missionary right there. And I've been wondering why Alabama is doing so well in football and now even basketball. And now I know the answer. They got a man who's praying for those boys and girls over there. And we know that Alabama needs it. So good for you, Scotty. I say there is someone from Tennessee whose team just got walloped yesterday or the day before. So somebody is praying. Scotty, it's just good to hear from you. Evangelize, equip, export. And for the families established. There we go. And then you can encourage and edify and empower. A lot of us preachers always work with the same letter. I don't know what it is. It just it just works.

It's so good to be with you tonight. And I just want to say to Rob and Max and their entire staff -- I know you join me in being very grateful for all the arrangements they've made for us this weekend. It's just been terrific. I told them this morning, you know, you stuck to the basics. We've just had really great testimonies, like we just have from Scotty. That's been a time when we can all learn about the mission of Briarwood to the nation and to the city. And I also commend you, because you're a church. You really do care about your city. You care about your region, you care about your country. And all of those three really need our prayers and our engagement. And I just can't think of a better church to have the salt and light influence in any of those three realms than Briarwood Presbyterian Church. So it's been an honor to be with you.

Now, yesterday, in the morning, you remember we talked about our God is a key. We have a king, and our king has established a kingdom. It's both come and coming. It's already and not yet. And furthermore, we are to be praying for the full coming of that kingdom in space and time right now, as well as praying for its ultimate coming at the end. Last night we looked at the challenges of two kingdoms that collide the kingdom of this world, the Kingdom of man, as Augustine called it, and the city of God, or the Kingdom of God. They collide. And we learned last night that if you are a citizen of the kingdom of God, and if you are seeking to promote and advance that kingdom, you are going to be challenged. And the reason is not because you're so bad. Although we could make a list, couldn't we? You're not so bad. It's that we were in a broken world. An evil world. It's broken. And it resisted Christ. It challenged him. It's going to do the same to us. Not only challenge us, but we saw that it will penalize us. It will punish us. It will

afflict us. It will persecute us. And the reason, once again, we are in the steps of Jesus Christ in the same world in which he was.

So whatever happens to Jesus happens to us. But then we saw that, we were vindicated. Ultimately, we saw that with Daniel being released from the lion's den without a scratch, because an angel came and shut the mouth of the lion. Then I posed a question. You remember I said, well, what about all the people since then who had been eaten by lions, namely those early Christians in the first century AD, and later, really for a couple centuries, who were being fed to the lions in the Roman Coliseum, and there were no angels to stop their mouths. Furthermore, we know that even today, tens of thousands of people are being put to death every year precisely because they're Christians. And demographers estimate that over 300 million Christians are being persecuted to one degree or another because they're Christians around the world. So where are the angels now? That's the question I left. Nobody emailed me any answers to that question.

So I'm left to myself. I'm actually not. I'm left to the scriptures, which is where I want you to turn. Turn your Bibles to Revelation chapter 11. You know, you knew we'd go to the last book in the Bible, chapter 11, in Revelation. And the reason we're turning there is on your way to chapter 11. Look with me at chapter two and let me remind you who's writing this, this letter and why. It's written by the Apostle John. Non-biblical history teaches us that all of the apostles were put to death. They were martyred for their faith, for preaching the resurrected Jesus Christ, except for one as John. John was not martyred. He was exiled. John was sort of the bishop of what we would now call Western Turkey. And in under his bishopric were at least seven churches in seven different cities. John, as a matter of punishment and of wanting to diminish his influence, was exiled. If you've been there, out into the Aegean, out to the outer Patmos. So he was put on to an island all by himself, apart from his churches, so he couldn't minister to them anymore. So John is in exile, in a lonely situation on the Isle of Patmos, away from his people. But he's still there, pastor. He's still there, Bishop. So John, while he's there, has this extraordinary vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of his majesty. And of course, John falls down as though dead. And that would happen to us too. When Paul saw Christ, he was blinded and knocked off his horse. That's the reason we don't see Christ. It would, probably kill us if we did. But John had a vision of the majesty of Christ, and Christ had a message for each of those seven churches that John pastored. So here we go.

John is able to pastor his churches from exile. You know, some people can still run the Mafia even when they're in prison. John was able to lead his churches, even in exile, because of the power of Christ. In chapters two and three of revelation, you get a list of those churches, and you get a hint of the kind of challenges they're facing. And I want you to notice, for example, in chapter two, verse nine, when he writes to the church of Smyrna, he says, I know your

tribulation and your poverty, but you really are rich. He says, you're rich spiritually. And the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan, do not fear what you're about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. So John is speaking to these churches that were under, we believe this is in the 90s and this would be under the rule of Domitian. The Caesar. Domitian wasn't the worst Caesar they ever had, but he did persecute the Christians from time to time. And he was known to persecute the Christians that were in Asia that John is writing to. So John is writing to a group of people who are suffering persecution, for whom there's not an angel to shut the mouth of a lion's is precisely that these this situation.

He is writing, and therefore it applies to us. So often, you know, we face our challenges as Christians or just as human beings. And when you face some of these challenges, you feel very lonely. It feels sometimes like nobody else can understand what I'm going through. Maybe your mama doesn't understand what you're going through. That is possible. It's not possible that Jesus Christ doesn't understand what you're going through.

He has endured everything you've ever endured except the sin that we committed. He never sinned, but he endured. He understands he was in our place. He understands us completely, and he has a plan for us. And we're going to see what that plan is, because that's what John is doing. He's writing to people that are suffering who are dying.

Some of them, some of them being thrown into prisons. Their families are being split up, all kinds of tragedies. And you say, let me give you the answer. And that's what revelation is. It's what we need in our times of temptation and tribulation and affliction. So now we turn to chapter 11 and let me bring you up to speed.

After these letters, go to seven churches. When you get to the beginning of chapter four, you'll remember that John has heaven opened up to him. Now we're beginning to see what John is going to say to us about what his answer is for suffering saints whose suffering doesn't end in this life and doesn't get resolved. He's saying, the heavens are open, and he hears a voice and says, come on up here.

I want you to look around. Does he ever look around? Does he ever get his eyes full? He sees one who is sitting upon a throne, encircled by four living creatures these unusual, fiery, awesome creatures and also surrounded by 24 elders who are bowing down before him in abject worship and in the right hand of the one who is on the throne.

You remember in chapter five he has a scroll, and we discover later something about that scroll. It actually is the narrative of what God is doing and will be doing in all of human history. So the scroll is history before it's happened and it's not revealed because it's sealed up. There's seven

seals on that scroll. The 24 elders, of course, are waiting for the big end when Jesus takes over all the universe and brings glory everywhere.

So they're wanting this to come to an end, and they say, who is worthy to open the scroll and open all its seals? Who could possibly do that? Who could take the scroll out of His Majesty's hands and begin to unroll it? Well, they know they can't. The four living creatures can't. But behold, they see one who looks like a lamb and is a lion.

And he goes and he takes the scroll. He's the one who's worthy, the only one who's worthy to take the scroll of God's providence and begin to unroll it for us and to tell us what's coming. We desperately need to know this. If I'm suffering, if I'm on the downside of life and I don't see an answer to this, what's the what are the prospects for being a member of this kingdom?

Where is this all going? Give me the game plan. And there it is in the scroll. And then what happens in chapter six up into where we are now at 11, all the way through chapter nine or so, the scroll begins to be open. Each of the seals begins to be broken, and you know that when each one is broken, all majesty breaks loose.

It's quite a trauma. Judgment is coming on the earth as well as salvation. There are seven scrolls of seven seals in between the breaking of the sixth seal on the seventh. There's an interim. And that interim. We'll see it repeated right before our text. We're going to read. It's an interim when, in the midst of all the fire and judgment, God is reminding his people that he's got his eye on us and we're safe.

That's what those interims are for now, after the Seventh Seal is broken, now we go into trumpets and trumpets are blown. Of course, when there's a big announcement to be made or when some major historical event is to be ready to happen, or, as you know, when His Majesty appears. In public, there'll be obviously many trumpets that will play.

Even some presidents of the United States are in the habit of doing that. Trumpets announce something big. Getting ready to happen. There's seven trumpets and we have the first six trumpets. And then we have in the interim, during which God reminds us again that we're the witnesses and the martyrs, and he's got his eye on us. And then we come to the seventh trumpet, which really introduces for us the final end of all of history as we know it on this planet.

That's where I want us to pick up our reading tonight, because reading this answers the question. Let's take a look at it. Revelation 11 verses 15 through 19.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you for your word and pray that as we read it and seek to understand it, we will believe it and take it to heart and have this word of truth encourage us

every day of our lives until we see you face to face. We offer our prayer in the name of the one and only Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Revelation 11, verse 15. Hear the Word of God.

***Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. And the 24 elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worship God, saying, we give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is, who is and who was. For you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants. The prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great. And for destroying the destroyers of the earth. Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and earthquake, and heavy hail.***

All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of our God stands forever. Amen.

John wanted his tribute, lighted people to look up, to look out, to look into the future. For he knew that is ultimately the only thing that will properly encourage the saints of God. When I read Second Corinthians, which is Paul's passionate letter to the Corinthians, who were a wild and crazy church and gave him a lot of problems, but he found great satisfaction in the gospel, beginning to take work there, and he was explaining to them how he stays encouraged.

And he said, we do not lose heart. And he gave several reasons. One reason we don't lose heart is that we have this great new covenant message that far exceeds the glory that Moses ever saw. So we don't lose heart. We don't lose heart because even when we're struggling in our weakness, the fact is that the power of God is made no through the weakness of men, so we don't lose heart.

This is our very purpose is to demonstrate the power of God through the weakness of human beings. We don't lose heart, he says in chapter four, because we're suffering. But you're being edified. And so we take great encouragement that we don't lose heart. But then, if you remember chapter four in Second Corinthians, he moves on, then to the fact of the resurrection.

And by the time you get through with second Corinthians four, you know that for the Apostle Paul there's nothing that would enable him to endure his ministry, but the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and all the saints. So we do not lose heart because of the resurrection. And you get to the end of that chapter. And he says, oh, we do not lose heart for these light and momentary afflictions are achieving something for us, an eternal weight of glory.

So we look not to the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen, because the things that are seen are temporary. But the things that are unseen are eternal, is the resurrection, which alone sustains God's people, especially in your lowest moments. I have a chest at home that was given to me at my retirement for a second.

It's a kind of an antique chest, and in it are all kinds of letters of encouragement. In fact, there were so many of them at my retirement. To be honest with you, nine years later I have not had time to read them all. I'm still. I'm still going through them. And when I can, and it's precious to me.

It's right at the base of my desk where I do my work at home. I have to say though, that could never hold me. That could never keep me, that could. That's never enough. There's only one thing. That's enough. Is the love of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for me and has provided eternal life for me in my resurrected body to come.

Now there is the message of the text. So the whole book of revelation is to lay out for us why we are to be encouraged, even in the most difficult times. And don't go for any cheap substitute. Go for the real thing. And the Apostle Paul, you know, in Colossians three he tells us the same thing. Since you've been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, not on earthly things.

He says, but on heavenly things. Why? Because we are now cryptically in Christ. He says, we're incognito in Christ. But when Christ comes back, the lid is taken off and our true identity is revealed. We are in him. We're his brothers and sisters. Keep your mind on that, he says. And that's the beginning of that section that the NIV calls holy rules for living.

Well, they're big rules, and they're for living for holiness. But it begins with setting your minds in the heavenly realms, where Christ is in all of his glory. That's what John's trying to do with them. The only way to live in this life is with your head in the heavenlies. Some people say, you know, so-and-so is so heavenly minded she's no earthly good. I want you to know I've never met a woman like that. I've met a lot of women who are too earthly minded to be any earthly good. I've never met a person who is really heavenly minded, who is dividing a church. Never had that happen. Heavenly minded people are the most practical people on the planet, so that Samuel Rutherford, the well-known Puritan, he said here, here's the picture of the godly man. He's got his feet firmly planted on the ground, his hands on the plow and his head in the heavenlies. That's your posture.

Now, we don't have much time because once again, my drop dead time is in five minutes and 36 seconds. So quickly notice in verse 15 that what we see when we see what John wants us to see, is that the that the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of God. That is, we inherit the kingdom of God. Look at these beautiful words at hand, or put to one of the most

famous songs ever written. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

And handle goes on to say, forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. So an ending. That's where we're headed. So we do not let these light and momentary afflictions define our lives, or even to regulate our joy. We have a joy that comes from another place. And second life. Notice in verses 16 through 18 that our that that we are now able to worship him purely.

That's where you're headed. I've had people through my years of pastoral ministry come to me in tears and say, pastor I, it seems like you have a close, personal relationship with the Lord. I want to have one. I just can't seem to get close to it. And some of you have probably said that from time to time, you may have said it to your pastor, and I want you to know I feel deeply for you.

But the fact of the matter is, I don't feel all that close myself.

Maybe you feel like I'm closer to him than you are. I don't know, sometimes people look at pastors that way, but I think we all struggle with it. And sometimes I come away from worship services. And rather than being critical of the choir, critical of the preacher, I'm critical of myself. What in the world was I thinking during that worship service?

And I mumbled along some of the hymns and wasn't really engaged. What's wrong with me? Look at these people. When John sees and the 24 elders are shouting loudly, true worshipers do not mumble their hymns. These people are singing loudly, lustily, and look at their posture. Their faces are on the ground is Erik. Alexandra has said their faces are on the ground because they can't get any lower.

During the presence of His Majesty. They are delighting themselves in the grandeur and the beauty and the majesty of his presence. Perfect worship. Perfect intimacy and fellowship. And not only in their posture, but look what they're praising him for. Because as the Psalmist in Psalm two reminds us, the nations may rage and plot against the King of kings, but he, using the heavens, laughs.

It's divine mockery. And he says to them, I have set my son on Zion's hill, and you'll do well to kiss the son quickly before his wrath breaks out against you. And here it does. And whatever you felt about the injustices of this world and the wicked perpetrators who have been tyrants over humanity for centuries and millennia. Whatever you think about them, you should have pity for them because of what they have to face, which ought to bring peace and pity to our hearts toward them.

There will be perfect justice displayed at the end. And notice not only that, but there will be a reward for the saints looking. Look in verse 18. And for rewarding your servants, the prophets

and saints. You say, well, I guess if anybody here deserves a reward, they'll get it. But I know I don't qualify. Oh, yes, you do.

Look, you've never committed a perfect act in your life when you're at your best. Your motives are mixed. I know that as a pastor. Do you think he doesn't know that he's quite aware of your limitations? He's quite aware of the confusion in your life. But you're his children, and he loves you. And you take these little steps toward him, and you do these little things to please him and to carry out his great commission.

You come and give yourself to national missions. He notices this, and you say, well, I really came here because I wanted to see my girlfriend or whatever, I don't know. You've got these mixed motives, but part of you wanted to come because you wanted to be involved in national missions. You wanted to be here with the people of God tonight.

You want to worship the Lord. Don't think for a minute he'll ever forget it long after you forgot it. You forget so many things you did. And for the sake of Christ, he won't forget one of them. And even though you have mixed motives, he has pure motives. And that is, he's looking for any excuse to give you a reward.

Any little hint that you've done something Christian may you be rewarded for it handsomely. Look, I know you don't deserve it. You don't have to explain it to me. I don't deserve it either. But that's what he's going to do because of his amazing grace toward you. Now, lastly, with some negative 10s that are left. Look at verse 19.

We've seen that we inherit his kingdom, and secondly, that we worship him purely. But in verse 19, would you please look and see? We beheld his glory. The beatific vision, the ultimate good, the summum bonum of all human experience, is to be in his presence, to experience him. Look at the description. The temple is open, and we behold the ark of the covenant, which, as you know, nobody sees the Ark of the covenant except the High Priest.

Once a year. Now the most intimate sanctuary is open to you in the presence of God. He's saying, come in and experience me. And here's the experience. Flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and earthquake. Heavy hail. You'll know you're in the presence of God. I remember one time, years ago, first church I pastored. I had the little youth groups there, probably 7 or 8 of them, and we were on the front porch of the church on a Sunday night, and I saw a storm coming in over the mountains.

You could just watch it. It was coming closer and closer. We kind of noticed it, but nobody said anything. And finally got right over us. Wham! A big bolt of lightning hit the top of the steeple. Flashes of light everywhere. Everybody was terrified. And against the wall. Perfect time to talk about God. Ladies and gentlemen, I say to them, you just got a little foretaste of what we're talking about when you actually enter into his presence.



You will be overwhelmed with His Majesty. You'll be overwhelmed with his love and grace toward you. John sets this true vision before us and says, you must remember every day and every moment where you're headed, what's set up for you? This is a journey indeed, and the destination is actually, as Paul says, beyond your wildest dreams. So more than just an angel stopping the mouth of a lion, in your case, the lion of the tribe of Judah will open up for you the very presence of God and His glory. And you will enter into his glory. That's what we're offering to people in Birmingham, people in Alabama, and people in the United States of America. That's precisely what they need. And I say to you, proclaim the kingdom of God.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this great kingdom and all of your majesty and power and authority, promising to us this rich and wondrous future that our eyes and our minds cannot behold nor contain. In this moment we can only grasp after it. We can only seek to understand. But we know enough to know that it will be absolutely wondrous. And because of it, we will be encouraged and inspired by this true vision. Every day of our lives. Help us, Lord, to set our minds on things above where Jesus Christ reigns at your right hand, praying in his precious name.

Amen.