

The Jewish Final Solution to the World's Problem - Revelation, Part 5-Letters to the Seven Churches, Part 1

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Date: 23 October 2016

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[0:00] Open our Bibles, please, to the book of Revelation, chapter 2. And I am going to make my best effort this morning to quit in time to allow for some Q&A.;

But I refuse to promise that I'll do that because we've got a lot of content this morning. And we are going to give a bird's eye view of all seven churches and the things that most of them have in common.

And for starters, I want you to just think about these things, tuck them away in the back of your mind, and the reality of it will surface from time to time.

Again, these letters that are referred to as the letters to the seven churches occupy all of Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

And each of those messages to each of the churches is relatively brief. All are direct condemnations or commendations of Christ himself.

[1:10] The content of the book of Revelation does constitute the very last words of Christ directed to anyone.

Previously, his last words were those given directly to the Apostle Paul in his many revelations, as Paul referred to them in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

So it is important to keep in mind that the last words of Christ were not what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission.

Matthew 28 and Acts chapter 1. The last words we have of Christ now are those which are, of course, yet unfulfilled, and they are found here in the Revelation.

Sandwiched between what is called the Great Tribulation and the words of Christ to the churches, sandwiched between those historically, it's the messages that the risen Christ gave to the Apostle Paul that constitute the basis for the church age or the body of Christ or the church epistles, the day and the dispensation of the grace of God.

[2:22] Christ has something against five of the seven churches that we will look at, but he has nothing against two of them.

He also finds something commendable in six of the seven churches, finds something positive in all of the churches except one.

That's the last one. The church at Laodicea has nothing good to say about it because there is nothing good to be said about it.

And you know, Jesus Christ never was, isn't now, never will be, into political correctness. He just tells the truth straightforward.

Doesn't try to sugarcoat anything. He just tells it factually, as does all the Word of God. Also, there are four commonalities in all of these seven churches.

[3:24] Each letter begins, each letter contains something that is descriptive of Christ. That is, each letter starts out identifying some different aspect regarding the person of Christ.

And the fuller description of him is given by John in chapter one. And that is where we spent our time for the last couple of sessions. In all seven letters, each begins with the words of Christ being, I know.

And that, of course, is simply indicative of the omniscience of our Lord, how that nothing escapes his knowledge. He knows. Five times, it says, I know thy works.

Once, he says, I know thy tribulation. And to another church, he says, I know where thou dwellest. So, with all of the seven I knows, each one has something different.

Each I know represents, as I mentioned, the omniscience and completeness of the knowledge of Christ. Three, all seven letters make reference to he that overcometh.

[4 : 35] That's included in all of these seven letters. He that overcometh. And that simply means, of course, he who is victorious. He who prevails. And, it is stressing the obvious importance of overcoming.

Be advised of this. Christ never demands overcoming from anyone for whom and to whom he has not already granted the ability to overcome.

He is not a hard taskmaster. God does not make unreasonable demands on anyone. And, all seven letters share the commonality of he that hath an ear, let him hear.

what the Spirit saith to the churches. This is an appeal to the will and an admonition to obey. Again, bearing in mind that one of the most valuable things that God has given human beings is a volition. It is the power to make decisions, including moral decisions. He has not left us unable to do that. He has instilled within us a capacity to know and to distinguish right from wrong.

[5 : 53] And, in fact, that is going to be the very basis for human judgment. The fact that we were given a volition and we exercise it either in compliance with his will or in defiance to his will.

Either may be the case. So, if you will turn then, if you haven't already, to part one for our letters to the seven churches, keep in mind that there are two key expressions that characterize the book of the revelation perhaps more than anything else.

And that is, as indicated in verse one of chapter one, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, it is true that as you wend your way through the book of the revelation and all of its symbolism, and by the way, all of these symbols mean something.

They were never given to puzzle us. They were never given for obfuscation or as some kind of a mysterious code which only certain people can figure out.

No, no. The Bible will define for itself what each of these symbols mean. And that is one of the beautiful things about the book is that it does not leave interpretation or meaning to the imagination of human beings because we can come up with some dillies.

[7 : 22] The Bible is its own best interpreter and it comments on itself. Scripture compared with Scripture interprets Scripture and reveals Scripture.

And we will see how this plays out as we deal with the numerous symbols that are found throughout the book. So even though the book does contain a whole spate of different revelations, different disclosures about what is going to transpire, nonetheless, the primary revelation is regarding the person of Jesus Christ.

And the title of the book is given in the first verse. And by the way, it isn't the title that is put across the top of the book in the title page. That is man-made.

The title of the book was given by John who was inspired of God and it is found in the first four words, first five words, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That's what the book is really all about. And it begins with a description of this risen Christ. Christ, this is the same person that John knew for three years as he walked and talked with him along the Sea of Galilee and in and around Jerusalem.

[8 : 50] And it is now 60 years later when this risen glorified Christ is communicating an update to John.

and John is instructed to write it. So, in some ways, John is seeing the same person that he spent three years with along with Peter, James, and John, and Thomas, and Thaddeus, and Bartholomew, and all the rest of the twelve.

But this is still a radically different, exalted, glorified Lord, even different from the one he saw in the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter, James, and John were there and saw Moses and Elijah along with him.

So, this is a description of Christ that is just mind-boggling in chapter one. We've already dealt with that. We'll not go into it again. But, the second thing I want you to keep in mind is when it took place. And that is in verse 10 of chapter one. John says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. I pointed out to you, he's not talking about Sunday. Nowhere in the Bible are our days of the week ever mentioned.

[10:05] You search the Bible through and you will not find a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, you won't find any of those. They are not there. They are all human contrivances. God made the seven days and he labeled them a week.

But he didn't give names to any of them. I don't know if you're aware of it or not. But I have a sneaking suspicion who named all the days of the week.

Look it up. They are all the names of a pagan deity. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are all named after a pagan deity.

Saturday. Satan is just trying to get his two cents worth in everywhere he can. The Bible never mentions any day of the week by that name.

But it does talk about the first day, second day, third day, and so on to the seventh day and sometimes the fifteenth day of the month and so on. But it always uses a number, never gives the names that we use today commonly.

[11:17] So this Lord's Day is the day of the Lord. I think it's just a different way of saying it.

The Lord's Day, the Lord's with the apostrophe S indicates ownership or possession and it is the Lord's Day. Another way of expressing it of course is the day of the Lord.

And what is the day of the Lord? It begins in chapter one of Revelation and continues all the way.

The position that I take and that I think most grace people take is that the entirety of the Revelation is future. It doesn't just begin with chapter four, but it begins right here with chapter two where we are now and the message to the churches and that of course means that you have to identify these churches or these congregations and we'll be talking about that later.

But I'm satisfied that they are Jewish congregations and the word that is used here in our English Bible of course is churches and it's from the word ecclesia and it simply means a gathering or congregation or an assembly and it doesn't necessarily mean what we think of as a church at all.

[12:37] So we'll be looking at that in more detail also. The day of the Lord is going to be described throughout the balance of the Revelation. But don't be confused into thinking that it is a 24 hour day because it isn't.

The day of the Lord is the equivalent of the tribulation period that is going to be seven years in duration. Yet we refer to it as the day of the Lord because it is the time of the outpouring of the wrath of God Almighty and it is going to extend for seven years.

This is the 70th week of Daniel. It is the time of Jacob's trouble. It is the time that Jesus Christ described as a time that the world has never seen before and will never see again.

There are going to be billions and that's with a B. Billions of people are going to lose their lives during this time.

of great tribulation that John is going to be describing here in the balance of this book. And it is the day of the Lord.

[13:50] Now we use that term all the time. We talk about this is the day of technology. What do we mean by that? Well we don't mean this 24 hour period that we're living in is the day of technology.

We mean really there's a whole spate of days that's referred to as the technological age or the day of technology or the day of modernity or however you want to describe it.

Most of the time when the Bible uses the word day it means day. 24 hours. But we also know that it uses the word day and it doesn't mean 24 hours.

It may mean an extensive period of time. How are you to know which is the difference? The context. Context is always the king. Usually it will define that for us. So that this is the day of the Lord and to just give you a little brief sampling let's come back to Revelation chapter 6.

Revelation 6 we'll stay right here in the same book because I don't want to spend all our time just flipping pages. But if you consider Revelation 6 in verse 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks fall on us and hide us from the presence of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb for or because the great day of their wrath has come and who is able to stand.

[15:24] That's what this book is talking about from chapter 4 onward. It is the outpouring of the wrath of God that is going to extend for a period of seven years and it is going to be utter total devastation the likes of which not even Hollywood's special effects can imagine.

And it will all be described here in vivid detail. Chapter 14 of Revelation and we'll get to these verses and we will be discussing them in detail verse by verse chapter 14 and verse 7 and he said with a loud voice fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come.

Now again like with the usage of the word day when John uses the term here the hour of his judgment has come.

he doesn't mean one revolution on the clock of the minute hand one hour. No, no. This is an extended period of time. This hour is going to be extended.

And while we're in the neighborhood, look if you will at Revelation chapter 19 and verse 2. because our God, because his judgments are true and righteous for he has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality and he has avenged the blood of his bond servants on her.

[17:15] And this is speaking of the past tense because that judgment is past. And the only thing that is awaiting is of course the arrival of Christ on the scene. So let us turn back if we may to Revelation chapter 2 and we will be as thorough as we can be yet trying to maintain as much brevity as we can.

I do not want to spend an exorbitant amount of time on these letters to the churches, although each one is more than worthy of a message in itself.

But I hasten to get on to that which is yet coming. And these messages to the church have application for us, but I consider these all future as well. And let me stop right here and make a word of explanation because this is not going to be easy for you to grasp because it isn't easy for me to explain.

but in addressing the revelation as all future, which I think consistency requires, what comes into play here is also the rapture of the church and believers having been removed from the scene.

And if this is future, how is that all going to play out? And just I'm going to put this on the table. I don't expect you to buy it.

[18:39] All right? But I would just like you to consider it and think about it and put it on the back burner because it will surface time and again. I believe that these messages to the seven churches are addressed to churches that are going to be future that do not now even exist.

Now, there's no question there were churches in Asia Minor, some of which Paul visited and established and we know the church at Ephesus was one of them. So there was a historical church there and many of you like I have visited the ruins of ancient Ephesus there on the coast of Turkey and have witnessed the magnificent leftovers of that incredible culture.

So these churches had a historical reality at one time and yet what is being talked about here is going to be addressed to churches that will exist during this tribulation period.

So these are future. And here's a very important point. This is something I think that the vast majority of expositors would not agree with, but I insist that this is the way it has to be.

These congregations are going to be Jewish assemblies. churches. Now we ordinarily don't think in terms of Jewish churches. We think of Jewish synagogues, but we don't think of Jewish churches.

[20:12] And in the original language the synagogue simply means a synagogue, it's a place of gathering or a place of coming together. And in the ecclesia, our use of the word church, it simply means a called out group or assembly.

And it isn't necessarily even a religious body, but we tend to think of it as being a church. church. These are going to be congregations primarily consisting of Jews, Jewish people.

Well, where are you going to find all of the Jewish people to fit into this category to comprise the seven churches? Because even though there are a number of Jewish people now who have come to faith in Christ, they still represent a tiny, tiny, tiny minority.

Where are you going to get all these Jews? This is in the midst of and after this tribulation period begins. And during the entire time, and I think that this will be justified as we move through the book, I think during the entire time of this tribulation period, the time of Jacob's trouble, there will have been an enormous number of Jewish people who have come to faith in Yeshua HaMashiach. they are those who are going to constitute these churches when that time comes. They will include and will be the result of 144,000 Jews, all of whom will have embraced Jesus as their Messiah, and there will be 12,000 of each of them from each of the 12 tribes constituting this 144,000.

[21:55] We will look at it in detail when we arrive in Revelation chapter 7, and then in chapter 14. And just because they do not surface chronologically until we get to chapter 7, don't make the mistake that I did previously in thinking that they didn't come along until chapter 7.

No. They are operative for a considerable period of time, and they are going to meet with tremendous success. It's going to be the greatest evangelistic endeavor undertaken.

There will be lots and lots of Jews and Gentiles come to faith in Christ during the tribulation period, and these people subsequently will also be persecuted by the Antichrist, and many of them will lose their lives for their testimony.

We will see that surface as well. So all of this has to do with the day of the Lord. These churches are assemblies or congregations. They are all, in my estimation, future.

Now let's look at the very first one, Ephesus, chapter 2. To the angel of the church in Ephesus. Here again is where I have been forced to rethink this thing, and it does not do my ego any good to tell you that I think I was wrong about this, but I do think I was.

[23 : 22] Originally, when I taught through the Revelation, right here, back in the, what was it, 1980s, I just assumed, because this is what most of the commentaries said, and frankly, I was influenced by them because they are commentaries written by stellar individuals and recognized scholars.

angel. The word angel is the word angelos, and it simply means a messenger. It may be a human messenger. It may be a divine messenger, but it's just a messenger, just somebody who has a story, a message to tell, and they deliver it.

That's an angelos. Pastors are angelos. At least each pastor ought to be, each pastor ought to be a messenger.

So, what makes me think that the angel here in chapter 2 and verse 1 is not a pastor? After all, isn't he the one to whom you would ordinarily direct a letter if you wanted to address a congregation?

Would you not address it to the pastor of the church? I get letters like that all the time. To the pastor of Grace Bible Church. It seems only logical, and it just kind of falls in with logic. But if we allow the Bible to interpret itself as we ought, look at verse 1 of chapter 1.

[24 : 43] The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his bondservants the things which must shortly take place, and he sent and communicated it by his angel to his bondservant John.

Now, here we have three classes, three different entities of beings. In this one verse, we have a divine being in the person of Jesus Christ and of God, two members of the Trinity who are mentioned in verse 1.

We have an angelic being also in verse 1, John, and we have a human individual in verse 1. John. And what does this all mean?

To me, it means that God is incorporating this information for the totality of intelligent, deity, humanity, and angelic spheres.

This is a message for the whole, for everybody. these are the three intelligent levels of entity that exist.

[25 : 59] Number one, the divine. Number two, the angelic. Number three, the human. There isn't anything left. Everything that has creative intelligence comes under one of those three categories.

The only thing that's left biologically, of course, is animals. And this isn't anything that animals need to know or to be communicated to. They are simply unwilling participants in the whole thing.

Not only that, but all three of these entities have volition about them. God has his own volition. He does everything after the counsel of his own will.

Angels have a volition. That's what enables some of them to fall and rebel against the maker. And humans have volition. So we can say that this is message and information that is addressed specifically from God to all who have volitions.

And that includes you and me as human beings. And the angel that is mentioned here in verse one, I have no reason to believe that that is somehow a human pastor.

[27 : 07] It's an angel. And no, angels are not what you think. I know Hollywood has done a job on that too. It is true.

Seraphim, who are created beings, seraphim, have six wings. They are described in Isaiah chapter six.

They have two wings. With two, they cover their eyes. With two, they cover their feet. And with two, they fly. These are incredibly extraordinary individuals.

They are the only ones described that way in all of the scriptures. And we will see them when we get further into the revelation. These are the seraphim. They have six wings.

Apart from that, we do not know of any angels who have wings at all. Nor does the Bible say anything apart from the seraphim who have six wings. So how did we get two wings attached to

most angels?

[28 : 05] As you see them in pictures and as Hollywood portrays them. And usually, they are handsome in appearance, male, long hair, white robe, with wings out the back.

You've seen a wonderful life. Remember when Clarence got his wings? How touching that was. Well, that's just Hollywood. We ought to know better.

The Bible doesn't give wings to angels. I think that this angel, even though he is not described and he is not named, he is an angel who will be in some kind of position of authority regarding each of these seven churches.

Each one will have their own angel. They are not named. We have Gabriel and Michael named as the archangels. None of the others are named. And I take it that the angel in this verse in chapter one and the angel in verse 18 and the angel in verse 8.

These are all angelic beings. And let me say this, because I want you to really be sure to remember this. If you forget it now, I'll remind you time and time again, because as we go through the revelation, you are going to see direct intervention and involvement of angelic beings time after time after time.

[29 : 31] the revelation is going to be a return to the time of human infancy that we described earlier in civilization and humanity when God was doing so much that was outward, obvious, physical, demonstrable in your face.

It isn't that way in the church age. Because we walk not by sight, but by faith. In the Old Testament, they walked by sight. And God revealed himself personally and directly to them time after time after time.

He doesn't do that today. This is the dispensation of the grace of God. Paul said we walk by faith, not by sight. We do not believe God because we see him do miracles.

We see the dead raised. We see blind people being able to see. And we see the lame walking. No, no, no. No, no, no. We don't see those things. It does happen, but it's very, very rare.

In the revelation, there is going to be a return to that element that characterized humanity before the church age ever began.

[30 : 46] And what was it? It was one display after another of the supernatural. You see it in the Old Testament, in the ministry of the prophets.

You see it in the earthly ministry of Christ for three years. If there was anything that more clearly characterized him and his being here on earth, it was the miracles that he did.

And these were physical miracles, demonstrable. You see them with your eyes. There was no doubting them. And in the apostolic age, in the early book of Acts, you find the same thing because he gave them authority to replicate his ministry and Peter and John healed that man who was born lame, hadn't walked a day in his life for 42 years in Acts chapter 3 at the temple gate.

Beautiful. Physical. But as you come into the church age, what happens to all of those miracles? They're gone. They're gone.

Does this mean we put God in a box and tell him that you can't perform miracles today, God, because this is the age of grace, that miracles are not allowed? No, no, no, no, no. Listen, God can do anything he pleases, anytime he wants.

[32 : 03] God can heal anybody of anything he wants. But most of the time, the vast majority of the time, when the doctor says you've got six months to live, he usually doesn't miss it by more than a month.

There are unexplained cases of people walking around who should have been dead 15 years ago, but they are a distinct minority. This is not the day and age of miracles.

But, in the 70th week of Daniel, it will be. There will be an enormous return to the physical, demonstrable, obvious in your face.

And, there will be incredible activity on the part of cosmological effect, sun, moon, stars, etc.

There's going to be the induction of this thing called wormwood, which may very well be an extremely toxic meteor meteor, that is going to plunge into one of our oceans, and as a result, a vast percentage of that ocean will not sustain marine life.

[33 : 22] It will be toxic and kill everything in it. So, that's coming. And, this is all instigated through the agency of angels, because angels are far more involved in things than what we know.

Are you aware, for instance, that in connection with the angelic beings, that the law was given to Moses was through the instrumentality of angels?

Galatians 3.19, and we won't go there, but Paul talks about that. And I don't know why God had to involve angels in giving the law to Moses, but he did.

And once again, it just seems as though the Almighty is intent on filtering his word and his instructions through all possible responsible parties.

And that includes not just humans, but angels, because angels are going to be directly involved.

Also, Stephen, the martyr, in Acts chapter 7, made the statement as he was about to be stoned, which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?

[34 : 40] And you rebelled against the law that God gave to Moses through angels. You rebelled against that. And he's reading out the Sanhedrin right before they stoned him.

So there the angels come into play again. Daniel was involved with direct angelic beings in chapter 7, in chapters 8, and 9, and 10, in the book of Zechariah.

And these are all prophetic, by the way, and we'll have to consider them as we move through this. Zechariah 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 all refer to angelic involvement in the last days.

And they are all prophetic, and they all tie in in an undeniable way with the content that we will be looking at in the revelation. So, we are in for quite a ride, particularly when angels are involved, and they are going to surface time and time and time again.

So, let us continue. To the angel, who is a real bona fide angel of the church in Ephesus, right?

[35 : 49] The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand. As I told you, each of these letters, each of the seven letters, begin with some aspect that identifies the sender.

And the sender is Jesus Christ, and each time, something in reference to him is the beginning opening for each of the letters.

the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand. We saw that in chapter one. The one who walks among the seven golden lampstands says this, I know, that is with a thorough, full, and complete knowledge, I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance and that you cannot endure evil men and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not and you have found them to be false.

And you have perseverance and have endured for my name's sake and have not grown weary, but I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Now, it's significant. Many times this is read that they have lost their first love. They didn't lose it.

They left it. There's a difference.

[37 : 18] This is volitional. This is intentional. This is turning your back on your first love. And it is an object of criticism on the part of our Lord.

What is this but just a coldness and indifference they had lost the wonder. What does that mean?

It's a curious expression that I well remember that stuck in my mind indelibly. The message I heard from Vance Habner many years ago. This is a man who was born in the backwoods of North Carolina, grew up in Hickory, North Carolina, began preaching at the age of 12.

And he was an object of edification to hundreds of thousands of believers over a period of decades.

And I remember hearing him deliver this message and it was entitled, Have You Lost the Wonder?

And I saw that message. I had it on an old 33 and a third LP. I played it on WEC, on the Poopery, an afternoon talk show program that we had back in the 1960s.

[38 : 36] And where that came from was a preacher that Vance Habner was describing, whom he knew and had heard personally, but had gone on to be with the Lord.

And this preacher's name was Gypsy Smith. And he had the nickname Gypsy because he was a bona fide gypsy, born and reared into a traveling gypsy family that migrated throughout the United States.

And the gypsies never did and still don't have a very good reputation. Frankly, they are classified generally as a bunch of thieves on wheels and every local law enforcement jurisdiction, hates to see him come to town.

Well, that's the kind of situation that Gypsy Smith was reared in. And as a very young man, somehow or another, he heard the gospel.

He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and it radically changed his entire life. And he began preaching. Problem was, it was difficult for him to preach because he didn't know how to read.

[39 : 46] And someone was giving him instruction in reading and slow and maturely he was able to read and he could read a lot. He could read most of the words in the Bible, but when he would get a crowd of people together, usually fellow gypsies, and just as a teenage boy, he would begin

preaching to them.

And he said, and when I came in the Bible, when I came to a word that I couldn't pronounce or didn't know, I stopped right there and preached a while.

And then when I resumed to the reading, I started on the other side of that word. You can't trust these preachers, you know, they all have something up their sleeves. And Gypsy Smith had a profound ministry throughout the United States for something like 50 or 60 years, and one day he was being interviewed.

And it was obvious to all that he was nearing the end of his ministry. and the interviewer asked him, he said, Gypsy, how is it that you were able to maintain your enthusiasm, your excitement, and your vim and vigor for the gospel after all of these years?

How is it that you were able to continue? And he paused for a moment and he said, well, I guess it was just because I never lost the wonder.

[41 : 11] He never lost the wonder of how God could love someone like him in such a way that he would make provision for him in the person of his own dear son.

He just never got over it. Do you know what produces coldness and aloofness and a lackadaisical attitude in the hearts and minds of Christians?

I'll tell you what it is. It's when you lose the wonder. When you lose the wonder, you can begin to take Jesus Christ for granted in the same way that a lot of husbands and wives take each other for granted.

God will be trusted. He never lost the wonder. If you will stop and reflect back on the time when you came to faith in Christ and try to recall how blind you were, how alone you were, how confused you were, how unsettled you were, and how that all changed when Jesus Christ came into your life and you trusted him and you became a brand new person in Christ, do you realize that was a miracle all over again?

You know, we can't call it anything short of an absolute miracle every time a precious little baby comes into the world. How many millions of times has this taken place right here in the USA?

[42 : 55] I mean, about 300 million that we know of and counting. And yet, we just cannot escape from describing every one of them a miracle.

It's just a miracle. It's a miracle that can only be matched, maybe even exceeded, when the regeneration of the human soul takes place.

That's a miracle too. It took a miracle. to hang the stars in place. But when he saved my soul, cleansed and made me whole, it took a miracle of love and grace.

That is amazing. And we ought to go back and recount that time again and again and again when we came to know the Lord. it will help you if you have lost the wonder.

It will help you to renew it. But, it's entirely possible with as many people as there are here this morning, there may be someone here who has never really had the wonder, never really experienced it.

[44 : 17] Maybe didn't even know it was available. But God's love, God's peace, God's forgiveness, God's pardon, God's grace, God's presence, are all available to anyone who puts their trust and their faith in Jesus Christ as their substitute for their sin.

That is an experience that you'll never get over. Oh, it's possible to become jaded, to forget, to become cold and aloof, to be unconcerned about others.

Remember how concerned you were about your loved ones and about your neighbors when first you came to faith in Christ? Do you have that same concern now? Probably not. Neither do I.

and I'm not proud of it either. We need a rethinking, a refurbishing, a recommitment to the wonder that I wonder if many of us have not lost.

Has your profession of faith become tarnished, distant, removed? Well, the formula is right here in verse 1.

[45 : 37] last three words of verse 5, unless you repent. And, God is incredibly, mercifully, always, the God for a new beginning, God for a new start.

He's the God of forgiveness. He's the God of starting over. God of God, God, He's always ready and willing. Are you to pray with me?

Father, we've talked about a whole lot of things, the likes of which we don't understand nearly as well as we would like.

But because of the clarity of your word, we understand enough to be able to act upon it. In our heart's prayer for anyone who may be here this morning, boy or girl, young or old, they've never really come face to face with the claims of Jesus Christ, of who He is, why He came, what He did, and why it matters.

We pray they'll find no rest and no peace until they come to know Him, whom to know aright is life eternal. And, dear friend, you may be here this morning with fears, doubts, questions, perplexity, and everything that goes with the human frame.

[47 : 03] But I just want to assure you that God loves you with a love that is greater than anything you can imagine. And He is waiting with open arms to receive anyone who will come to Him.

You can have your own wonder. You can contemplate on it for the rest of your life. It is a wonderful thing to have the wonder. If you're here this morning, and you've never made that decision, I want you to understand it is an act of your will.

Don't wait for a feeling. It's not an emotional thing, although it may be accompanied with emotions. It's a deliberate, definite decision, act of the will.

And you will, with your will, if you choose to, receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, will, or you will decline.

Either way, you will use your will. And our prayer is that you will accept in a positive way what God offers to you through Christ.

[48 : 06] And if you want to do that, you just follow along with me in this prayer and make my prayer your prayer. dear God in heaven, I don't know very much about many of these things.

But I want to be open to the truth. Most of all, I want to be open to you. And if you are really there and you really love me, and what this man says about you is true, and about the Bible is true, and about salvation is true, then that's what I want.

And as best as I know how with all of my doubts and questions, I do know this, I do know I am in need, and I can't meet the need myself, and I believe Jesus Christ died for that very purpose, to do for me what I couldn't do for myself.

And as best as I know how, right here and now, I want to receive, believe, on the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for my sins.

I acknowledge you as my Savior and I put my trust in you. And dear friend, if you do that, God will hear you. He has never, ever turned anyone away.

[49 : 23] He will accept you and cleanse you and pardon you and forgive you and make you his child for all eternity. That's what it means to be born again. That's your decision.

You let God know it right now. Thank you, Father, for this time we've shared together. Thank you for the truth set before us. And thank you for the difficulty in understanding some of these things because that drives us to study.

We ask your blessing upon our congregation as we dismiss. If anyone has made that decision, we pray you'll give them the courage to tell someone else so that they can be of help to them.

Thank you for all that you've been pleased to reveal in Christ's wonderful name. Amen. Well, we will not have Q&A; this morning, but I'll aim for it next week.

All right? I'll try my best and we'll see. By the way, if you are a visitor and you have, or if you're not a visitor, but if you have an October birthday, be our guest and select any book or Bible on the table back there.

[50 : 34] October babies, consider that our birthday gift to you. God bless you and happy birthday. You are dismissed. Thank you.