

Q3 L13 - The Ultimate Rest - 2021-09-25

Shawn Brummund: Hello, friends, and welcome to another edition of the "Sabbath School Study Hour." My name is Pastor Shawn Brummund, and I'll be your host today as we continue to study in a very enriching topic. It's our last study in "Rest in Christ," and so I trust for those of you who have been joining us from week to week over the last three months have been enriched by this very important topic and that you will be blessed, I know, as you have decided to join us over the next hour as we continue to study and worship the Lord.

And so we're in lesson number 13, which is the last lesson of this quarterly, and it's entitled "The Ultimate Rest." And so, if you have your Sabbath School quarterlies available, make sure that you go and take advantage and grab that right now. And, of course, we're always going to be able to need our Bible as we continue to study together and open the Word as well. Our pastor, our youth pastor, Pastor Luccas Rodor, will be our teacher here today.

Before we invite our singers out though, I'd want to invite everybody to--that is watching today to take advantage of our free gift offer. And so each and every time that we come together for study hour, we'd like to give something that will continue to help you in your study of the Word. Now, this is one of my favorite reads. It's entitled "Is Sunday Really Sacred?" Very important question to ask in regards to Bible truth and present truth and prophecy, for that matter, and so please take advantage of this little booklet. It's written by Joe Crews. It's free offer number 150.

So if you do decide to dial in to the number that you could see on the screen, it's 1-866-788-3966, and just ask for free offer number 150, and we'll be glad to give that to you if you're in North America, that is, in Canada or the U.S., for that matter. And also you can get a digital copy of this. And so, if you'd like to download this on your computer or on your phone, on your phone you just text the code "SH042," and you want to be able to dial that to 40544. And you can also see a website that's available there on the screen as well if you want to download that on your computer. Thank you, Pastor Rodor.

Luccas Rodor: Happy Sabbath. It's good to see you all and to be here with you. Just hearing that beautiful song takes me back to when I used to go to church with my parents as a child, and that was one of those songs that would always resound with me. You know, I love that song, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," and that just reminds us that we have a faithful God. We worship a faithful God. Friends, today is the last Sabbath of this quarter. We have the last lesson here of this quarter, and I don't know about you, but it has been an extreme blessing to study the subject of "Rest in Christ," right? Just studying and learning more about how we can rest, truly rest in God and in ways that transcend even just the Sabbath. I mean, usually when you talk about rest, we--our mind jumps straight to Sabbath, but "Rest in God," it transcends even that. It goes beyond just hours of the Sabbath, and if we understand this correctly, "rest" in the Bible is our lifestyle. It's a lifestyle of resting in God.

So this lesson has been just a blessing, and this week's lesson has been just--it's just been this deep remembrance and reaffirmation of everything that we've seen so far. The lesson begins with the great controversy. The lesson's teaching this week, it begins with an approach of what has been going on in our world for the last few millennia. You see, friends, the entire universe has been immersed in a moral conflict that has affected everyone, everyone in the universe, the unfallen worlds, the angels, God. Everyone has been affected by this great controversy, this great conflict. The infinite and the eternal God was also involved in this, by this invasive force of evil.

You don't have to go very far to realize it to see it. I mean, just turn on the news, and you see all the bad things that are happening in the world: the wars, the political unrest, the social unrest. Just look at yourself. We don't have to go very far. Just look within, and we see the results of this conflict in our own

lives. The infinite and eternal God was involved by the invasive forces of evil. Doubt was cast. Mistrust was sown. Malice, deceit, a conflict of formidable proportions began, and this, years ago, in the brilliant paradise of heaven. The enemy we know, he employs the weapons that he wields with extreme mastery, lies, and deceit. I mean, when we study the book of Revelation and the lesson, it mentions the subject, and we're going to get into it a little bit more profoundly as we go through the different days of this week's lesson, but Revelation itself reveals to us that the tail of the dragon, what does it represent? Lies, deceit. The conflict began in paradise, in heaven, in God's paradise, and then it was extended to our small planet.

You know, according to Jesus, the enemy--and this is a big thing in our world today where several different voices try to make our enemy sound as this impersonal force, as an energy, as a myth, a legend, but according to Jesus, the enemy is not a myth. He's not a legend. He's not an impersonal force. In Luke 10, verse 18, we find Jesus saying that He saw-- "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." He saw him come down. In the book of Revelation, the scene is no less dramatic. Revelation 12, verse 7, a verse that we all know pretty much by heart, "There was a war in heaven. War broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels also fought, but they did not prevail, nor was their place found with them--or for them in heaven any longer.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil, and Satan--" curious that these words, they mean literally "the accuser" and "the contender." And that is really the best description for our enemy, the one that accuses and the one that contends, the one that fights-- "who deceives the whole world. He was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him."

Friends, the satanic ideals that appeared for the first time in heaven--mysteriously, you know, theology--and I've said this here a few times before--theology recognizes three great mysteries. Of course, there are many. There are many mysteries that we come to in the Bible, but in theology, you'll find three classic mysteries: the mystery of piety, the mystery of the incarnation, and the mystery of iniquity. These ideals that mysteriously were conceived in heaven, in the heart of a powerful cherub, they didn't develop further over there. They moved. They changed their zip code, and they came down to our world with tragic consequences. Revelation 12:10 and 12, say, "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God, day and night, has been cast down.'"

And then, verse 12, "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them." Good until that point, right? But then look at this next part: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea. For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that his time is short." Imagine John the revelator seeing all this and hearing this, how clear it must've been at that time. "Oh, so this is what's been going on."

All the imagery, all the signs, the symbols that he's seeing in this vision being given to him. This harrowing description indicates that our small world became the center stage, the main place of a massive deception. The enemy's primary strategy and effort is to seduce, to deceive. I mean, look at everything in our world, friends. Look at media. Look at society. Look at what the ideals, the virtues are pushed down on human beings. Where's our self-worth? To the world, it's in money. It's in things. It's in diplomas perhaps, in a house, a car, a bank account, fame. In his efforts, no weapon is spared. No scruples observed. Each inhabitant of this planet is involved. You're involved.

If there's something that you need to understand, friend, is that, when it comes to this great controversy, when it comes to this battle, there is no way for you to opt out. We're all involved. One way or the other, we are all involved. There are no spectators here. There's no audience here. We're all involved. We're all on the stage. And that's why one of Jesus's greatest virtues and capabilities in

Scripture, you'll find Jesus, in the gospels, having this great ability of removing people from the audience and placing them on the stage or at least revealing to them that they were on a stage, for them to think better, for them to understand better, for them to know and see that they were involved, that there's no way to opt out.

Deceit, lies, pain, all sorts of low blows, abuses and mischaracterizations have made the human race personas of this evil plot and object of Satan's evil wrath. His motivation is personal. Did you know that? His motivation is personal. The Bible tells us that he knows that his time is short. He has little time. He's desperate. His aim has always been to cause God pain by destroying, perverting, mocking, deriding, and dehumanizing God's creatures. "How long, O Lord?" has been the prayer that rises up from distressed hearts that hopefully await the final resolution of this great plot, of this great drama.

So what we've done so far is create an environment to understand the context of the lesson, right? Here we have the problem. The world has been immersed, submerged into this great controversy. All of us are affected at home, at work, at school, at church. We are all affected 24/7. There is no way, there is no moment, there is no place where, in one way or the other, you are not affected by this great controversy, by this great war. In fact, you're here right now because of this great war. You study your lesson to prepare yourself. You read the Bible. You pray. You witness. That's part of this week's lesson too. We are all here because we've been involved in this battle. You, sitting down, me up here speaking, you at home, watching, you are involved in this planet.

Sunday's lesson is beautiful. It's entitled "A Vision of the End," and it emphasizes various scenes of the great controversy. Here we see the authors of the lesson going and emphasizing various scenes of the great controversy. In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ--and never forget this, all right? The full name of the book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ--we find the summary and the climax of the Bible as a whole. Talvin White--in Revelation, all the books of the Bible converge. Everything makes sense, from the book of Revelation. That's why the study of this book is so important. That's why we emphasize it so much here at this church because all the books of the Bible converge in Revelation.

It's there, after all, that the old serpent is finally unmasked as the devil. Chapter 12, verse 9, "So the great dragon was cast out, the serpent of old, called the devil, who deceives the whole world. He was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." He is explicitly, openly, unmistakably revealed and exposed here.

Friends, this book of Revelation was written to be understood. That's another big thing that we have to understand. Most of the times, most of the people will say that they kind of steer clear from Revelation. Has anyone here ever gone through that experience? Either you in your earlier days as a Christian or maybe right now, if you're coming right now, or perhaps you've heard this from someone else, but the book of Revelation can be kind of scary to a lot of people. It's not meant to be. It's not supposed to be, but a lot of people kind of fear it, but it was meant to be understood. As we find in its very beginning in verse 3, chapter 1, verse 3, "Blessed is he who reads and who hears the words of this prophecy." And this is in contrast to the book of Daniel that was told to be sealed up until the time of the end.

You remember how, in Daniel, God tells him, "Look, Daniel, this isn't for you. You're not really going to understand it right now. Seal up this book till the time of the end." But in contrast to that, Revelation, the instruction we find is "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." This book was meant to be understood. The word "revelation" itself, it's a Latin word "revelati," but it comes from the Greek, the biblical Greek, "apocalypse" or "apokalypsis," which means "to remove the veil of the future," an exposition of the final events as an ending to the conflict that has dragged on for so long.

The symbols of this book are extracted from the pages of the Old Testament. Almost entirely of the 404 verses of Revelation, do you know how many contain direct or indirect references to the Old Testament? Two hundred and seventy-eight. Of the 404 verses, 278 contain either direct or indirect references or allusions to the Old Testament.

I'll give you an example. In the chapters, in the scenes of chapter 4 and 5 of Revelation, it's based entirely on the coronation of Israelite kings. You can find this more thoroughly if you want and if you study Deuteronomy 17, or then, 2 Kings chapter 11. You'll see that that is the wording that you find here in Revelation chapter 4 and 5. The curses of the covenant, you see that also. You'll find that in Leviticus 26. Those are the backdrop of the vision of the seven seals. The 144,000 upon the sea of glass, singing the song of--who? Moses and the Lamb. They reflect Exodus chapter 15. And after all, what is, friends, a sea of glass mingled with fire, if not a reference to another Red Sea, indicating the final victory in this new Exodus for God's people?

Do you see? Do you see how you'll find the book of Revelation? It's quoting the Old Testament. It's in reference to the Old Testament. That's why you got to know the Old Testament. This is what the lesson is teaching us here on Monday. The plagues of Revelation chapter 15 and 16, are a clear reference to what other plagues you find in the Bible? The plagues of Exodus. The plagues in Egypt for God's overwhelming victory over Pharaoh. The scenes of Revelation chapter 16 through 18 are built upon the historic victory of Cyrus and his armies, who dried up the Euphrates in order to conquer Babylon. The end-time Babylon will also fall. Is there any doubt of that? But now, by the actions of Jesus, for whom Cyrus was a type, the trumpets, the locusts from the pit, Sodom, Egypt, Mount Zion, Babylon, the Euphrates, the Battle of Armageddon, all of these, all of this imagery, all of these symbolisms are extracted from the history of Israel in the Old Testament, and so to communicate His will and His plans for the future of His people, God uses the language of the past.

In fact, friends, the prophecies of Revelation are built on the biggest--or built upon the biggest events of sacred history: the Creation, the flood, the Sabbath, the exodus, the plagues, the covenant, the Babylonian exile. The references, the use of these events are intended to edify our faith based on God's redemptive acts of the past because here's the thing: If I know that God has already done this and this and this in the past, well, won't I know that He will also do this and this and this and this in the future?

The same God that opened the Red Sea, the same God that made the sun stop in the sky, the same God that made an ax head float is the same God that will lead us through this period of time that we're living in right now. That is the crux of the book of Revelation. It's to give you with absolute certainty that the same God that led the children of Israel, that led the first century church, He is the same today, right here, right now, and He can get you through your Exodus also. His interventions in the future will be similar to those of the past. That is the guarantee. His power is never extinguished. It's never over. It never expires.

The great lesson, friends, of Revelation is that God punishes the oppressor, and He frees the captive. Nothing, absolutely nothing can stop Him from doing what He intends to do--nothing. What He has already done is the guarantee of what He is yet to do, and that's why we can rest. That is why we can rest the ultimate rest because our future is in good hands.

Look at what the lesson says. This is in the lesson of Sunday: "What followed from these verses," Revelation 1:9, "are visions about the future of this world. An awesome panoramic view of history would be portrayed before him, basically what's to us the history of the Christian church but was to him yet the future." It's talking about John. "And, yet amid the trials and tribulations that would come, John was shown how it all would end. 'Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the

first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.'

The great apocalyptic vision John has recorded in Revelation helped John confidently to rest in God's provisions and promises." And it could do the same for you. It can do the same for us because I'll tell you, friends, we're living some very dark days. On Monday, "The Countdown." The lesson continues on this day to go back through other events of sacred history described in Matthew 24, and in the book of Daniel. And this provides more insight into how God dealt and deals with the great controversy because this is a great question: "How can I rest if I'm in this controversy? How can I rest if there's wars, if people are divided, if people seem to hate each other, if the worlds are already throwing up its demons to say that things are not going well, how do I rest?"

Look back. That's what the lesson is doing on this day. "On the Mount of Olives, Jesus answers His disciples' question." And I can imagine these men just terrified at the prospect of what Jesus is talking about because they ask Him, Matthew 24, verse 3, they say, "When will these things be? When will it come to pass? And what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of age?" Well, then Jesus provides a great apocalyptic exposition, and that's the famous sermon that we find here in Matthew 24, a timeline that covers the events of His days, all the way down to the very consummation of time.

One thing that we have to keep in mind--and the reason why God is doing this--is found in the truth revealed in Amos chapter 3, verse 7. Again, it's a verse that a lot of us know by heart. It says, "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants, the prophets." You see, friends, contrary to the pagan gods, to the mystery religions, because that's how they operated--the MO of those pagan gods is that they would act in secret. No one knew what they were doing. So contrary to them, the God of heaven, the only true God, He reveals Himself. He is transparent. I mean, isn't that one of the great things in the world today, the lack of transparency? You never know what's going on in someone's mind. You never know what's going on, be that your boss, your employee, be that at church or churches. You never know people. It seems they're not transparent. The God of the Bible is painfully transparent sometimes--sometimes painfully. Always transparent. He lets us know what's going on.

You know, we frequently hear of "bearers of new light." Have you ever been around someone like that, someone that comes along with the most fantastical new idea or new theory? People trying to sell their ideas that usually go beyond the clear, "Thus saith the Lord"? This was also foretold by Jesus because, in Matthew 24:4-5, He says, "See that you're not deceived. Many will come in My name."

Friends, everything that we need to know is already revealed. We don't need any weird, wacky theories. We don't need any imaginations or fantastic calculations or mental gymnastics. We don't need people trying to tell us that Jesus is coming back in five years, seven years. He's coming back at the end of this--we don't need that. Our church, more than any other, should know the dangers of that kind of mentality. Our great need is not to know fantastic speculations but to accept, believe, and live what has been revealed in Scripture.

What we need to know, friends, doesn't involve imagination but serious applied study. That's why it's important to study. And there's a reason for this. The reason is that we're not meant to sit idly by, just coming up with weird theories as to what happens next. You know, usually when I encounter people that are like that or, you know, groups that are like that, people that kind of go around, you know, "Well, this is going to happen then. This is going to--" it's kind of like, you know, they have their crystal ball on their head, and usually I see that--when it comes to groups like that, they're not doing a lot of missionary work. It's just a whole bunch of sitting around, talking about weird theories that really you can't argue with because you can't argue with the lack of logic. But that's what I usually find. They're not

doing a whole lot of missionary work, and that's precisely where the lesson leads us to because the very next day, it's called "Marching Orders."

On Monday's lesson, it ends with "In this cosmic conflict, we are more than just observers." You're not just an observer or spectator. "We are to be active participants in spreading the gospel to the ends of the world, which means that we, too, will face persecution." "Marching Orders." That's what Tuesday is all about. Well, we learned that the depiction of the events given by Jesus that will soon take place on this planet forbids us from being idle, from being indifferent, or from being mere curious spectators. You can't. You cannot be a Christian. Every Christian is born in the kingdom of God as an evangelist, as a missionary.

So the question is "Have you been born in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of heaven?" If you say, "Yes," praise the Lord but know that you should be born as a missionary and as an evangelist, and if you haven't--and I'm not saying that you have to go up and preach. You don't have to do what, you know, preachers do. Or maybe you don't have the gift of singing, or maybe--you know, find your gift. There are so many ways that God can use you to be an evangelist, to be a missionary, but you need to be one.

Friends, the world has been consumed by the "audience mentality," the mentality of the audience. TV, Internet, sporting entertainment, all of these things, they're extremely proficient teachers that educate multitudes, multitudes, millions to only passively observe what the few do. You'll have hundreds of thousands of people seeing and watching and observing and commenting and coming up with theories as to what the 10 people or the 20 people on the field are doing. And that conditions these audience towards alienation. So many of us have been educated to take on this audience mind-set: distant, cold, alienated. On the best of chances, people like that become fans.

The question is "What is God's plan for those who are living in the times of the end? What is God's plan for us living today? For you? Because he has one for you. You're not meant to sit in the middle of nowhere, doing nothing. At this point in history, friends, we're not at the point where we should be running off yet. The cities need us. People need us. The world is dark. The world is sad. The world is lonely. The world is terrified, and billions perish. We're called to be a light in the dark, but how can we be a light if we're just spectating, just an audience?

Friends, God's Great Commission cannot become the great omission in your life. As Revelation 14 describes it, three angels' messages, as an invitation to act, to jump into the action, to warn others, at this point in history, as I've already said, our purpose our marching orders are defined by God Himself. According to Jesus, those living in Noah's time, in Noah's days, they occupied themselves with the periphery of life, even though they were living on the cusp of a great emergency. Eating, drinking, buying, selling, marrying, and giving in marriage--you know what's curious is that Jesus doesn't mention the great sins of those times.

He's not talking about murderers, about drunkenness. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about normal thing: eating, drinking, working, planting, reaping, sowing, marrying. Why? Why does he mention these legitimate things? What's the problem with these things? You know what's the problem? Indifference. Not recognizing what was truly important, especially in the context of eternity. The disciples of Jesus are taught by Him to establish correct priorities. We are challenged to relate to the world appropriately.

Friends, what's sinful here, it's not really practicing those activities, eating, drinking. You know, the world has always been bad. It's always had sins. It's not particularly worse than it's been in any other point in time. The world's always been bad, but what marks this time, what characterizes the time that we live in is that people nowadays are more indifferent. They're cold. They're untouchable.

You know that the contrary to love, the opposite of love, it's not really hatred. It's indifference. It's not caring. And, friends, many, many today--and, look, preaching to the choir here. Many of us cannot live a life of ultimate rest--how could we--if we're indifferent, if we don't care? Sometimes it comes up. We are like that sometimes as a mechanism of defense, a defense mechanism. We've been treated so badly, we've been deceived in the past, we've been hurt so badly, but, friends, the disciples of Christ don't look back. They open themselves up to a world that is needing them. We have the privilege of being used by God.

How should the disciples of Jesus relate to the world around them in the last days? Well, read Revelation 14:6-12. Look at what it says: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the eternal, the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and springs of water.' And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, the great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.' Here is the patience of the saints. Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Is this the description, right here that I just read, is this the description of a normal day-to-day event? As a life just back to normal? Life as always? A walk in the park? Something that can be just neglected and not considered as relevant? Or is this the description of urgency of a crisis, one that we can participate in being instruments of salvation? That's why this precedes--in the lesson, I love the structure of this week's lesson because this right here precedes the next topic, which is "Rest in Peace." Only then can we understand this part: Throughout centuries, the followers of Jesus have awaited his return as the flame that burns in their hearts and as the final resolution of this great drama of the great controversy.

For centuries we've been waiting for this. We talk about it. We preach about it. We pray about it. We read about it. We study about it. My dad--I'm a third generation Adventist. My dad was believing this 50 years ago. My grandpa--this has been taught for centuries. This is the culmination of history, the fulfillment of the glorious hope. Now, here's the thing: This hope, it's not only ours. It's not only yours.

You know who this hope belongs to the most? God. God wants this thing to end just as much or more--of course, more than you do. God wants to turn the page more than anyone else. He wants to do away with this evil that installed itself into His universe and, in particular, to our world.

Friends, the Second Coming of Jesus is God's final answer to the problem of death. This lesson on Wednesday makes a connection between the idea of the eternal Gospel, the three angels' message, and one of the great truths that has been obscured and buried by the enemy's work of deception, which is the state of the dead. The main text used here for the transition is Hebrews 11:13-16, that says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar--" they were witnesses from far off-- "were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."

Friends, we frequently see tombstones that have that classic saying, "Rest in peace." After all, the paradox is very evident. Are the dead truly resting in peace in the grave, awaiting Christ's return for the resurrection? Or are they in heaven already or in hell already as is usually preached by many in the world today? You know, friends, it was pagan beliefs that introduced the idea that the dead in death don't truly die, and that clearly denies any kind of biblical teaching. Otherwise, you wouldn't really have true death, would you? Think about it: If you go to hell right after you die, I mean, you're just talking about eternal life in hell, right? In that case, you're not talking about death but eternal life in hell or eternal life in heaven or a period of life in purgatory if you go through some other options out there.

But in the Bible, the dead are truly resting, awaiting the perfect morning when the dead in Him will rise first. The beautiful text of Psalm 116:15, provides comfort to those who will wait to see their loved ones, those who have had their loved ones stolen from them, taken from them, by the sleep of death. Psalm 116:15, says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." How can you say "precious is the death"? Only in God. The same thing in Revelation, "Blessed are they who have from now died in the Lord." How can you be blessed when you die? Only in God because we find the truth in John chapter 11, if I'm not mistaken, the story of Lazarus, what Jesus tells Martha, "If you believe in Me, you will have eternal life. You will never die."

Even those who die will not die. What kind of logic is that? It's only the logic that comes from God. Friends, our hope regarding the resurrection is based on the Resurrection of Jesus himself. His Resurrection is, first of all, central. Without it, everything else would be darkness and death. Despair would have the final word, and the proclamation of the Gospel would be madness. Without the Resurrection of Jesus, it would be madness. So it's central.

Second, it's comforting. The Resurrection of Jesus is comforting. Without it, the presence of death, in the presence of death, we would see no meaning. The apostle Paul affirms that Jesus is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. That's in 1 Corinthians 15. He is the pledge of all who sleep in Him, the certainty of our trust. He is the refuge and the fortress. "Because I live, you will live also," Jesus says, in John chapter 14. "Because I live, you will live also."

So it's central, it's comforting, and it means power. It was the Resurrection of Jesus that drove, that gave that first impulse of the apostles to leave Jerusalem and to go to the end of the world. It's powerful. Preaching the death and the Resurrection of Jesus is powerful. It constitutes a challenge. It's central, it's comforting, it's powerful, and it constitutes a challenge. It gives us the task of telling the story. This glorious event needs to awaken us, and it needs to awaken the sense of urgency and sharing with others this living hope that we possess. Look at the comfort that we have since we know about Jesus's Resurrection.

And, finally, Thursday's lesson, "Rejoice in the Lord Always." I love this one. One of the most recurrent exhortations that we'll find in the Bible is the one to rejoice in God, to be grateful, to live an attitude of gratitude. An attitude of gratitude. Philippians 4:4-6, says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Friends, what Paul is telling us here is to always rejoice in the Lord. In tribulations and trials, despite of the circumstances that surround us during our pilgrimage, we have to rejoice. Now, that's a hard teaching. How do I rejoice? How do I rejoice when bad things happen? When relationships break, when I'm betrayed, when I am hurt, how do I rejoice? Is God speaking about a form of masochism? "Thank you. I'm hurting. Thank you. I love it." No, the Bible does never tell us to rejoice or to give thanks for all things. You know what the Bible tells us? To "Give thanks in all things, for that as the will of Jesus

Christ," of God and Jesus. It's not for the things that happen, but you can rejoice in the Lord always, and, again, say rejoice, even in the worst, most harrowing experiences of life.

You know, according to psychologists and to psychiatrists, anxiety is the great evil that plagues our society today. It's taking the place of depression, even. After all, depression is always preceded, always preceded by anxiety. In this text in Philippians, the apostle is exhorting us, telling us to rest in God. Friends, "Where God leads, He provides," says this old proverb. His goodness, His love, His mercy, are infallible anchors, and once I reflect these things, once I dwell on these things, well, it's kind of hard to be sad. It's hard to be in darkness if there's light around you, right? It's hard to be sad when you surround yourself and fill yourself with the joy of the Lord. David was able to do it. So can we. Psalm 23, known as the gem, the gem of the Psalms, reveals that our path is always in His presence, that the great God can never be surprised. He's never helpless to come to our need.

You know, friends, Psalm 23, is known as the nightingale of the Psalms. Why? It's a very common bird in South America. It's able to sing in more than 30 different tones and keys. It also sings during the night where there's no more heat or light. It's said that its ballad is always a prelude, an invitation to celebrate the dawn. What a powerful symbol for the divine comfort that we have in God. Psalm 23, in Psalm 23, Jesus is introduced as the shepherd, the guide, and the host. As the shepherd, He provides, as the guide, He leads, and as the host, He prepares a table in front of our enemies. And, friends, He continues to prepare a table in the front of our enemies.

You know, I'll end with this: One of my favorite realities of Psalm 23, is that Psalm 23 is a perfect lesson on how to rest, how to truly find the ultimate rest. In Psalm 23, you see a shift a little bit in the literature. Look at what it says, right? Psalm 23, it says, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." You see how the psalmist is referring to God? These are all good events. God is leading him and guiding him. Life is good and marvelous. It's sunshines and roses.

You know, "He's leading me towards still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness." Do you see how things here are comfortable? At this point of the psalm, things are good, and he's talking about God in the third person: "He leads me, He takes me, He calls me." He, He, He. But when things get hard, when things get dark, he changes the way that he refers to God: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for--" "He is with me" or "for You are with me"? "For You are with me." It becomes more personal. "For You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

When things get tough, God gets closer. That's how you rest. That is the ultimate rest. When things get tough, God gets closer. My dear friend, I invite you to rest in God. Rest in the Shepherd, He who is the pastor of the stars, who sustains the worlds by the breadth of His hand, who has become personally responsible for you and for me. He invites us today and always to find rest, perfect, complete, comforting rest amidst the trials, amidst the storms, amidst the hurricanes of life. Christians don't dwell in a land without storms. Christians don't have houses in stormless lands, but with the God that we have, we are invited to dwell in a land that has storms that can never knock down our house that God has built up.

May God bless you. I'd like to pray with you right now. Please bow your heads. Dear Lord, thank You so much for this lesson. That was such a great inspiration on the reality that we need to rest in You, Father. Thank you so much for providing in Your Word, in the Bible, such a beautiful understanding of the fact

that we need to find ultimate rest in You. Thank You, Lord, for the various aspects of rest that we've studied, but ultimately, Lord, help us understand that, when things get tough, You get closer, and that is the only way that we truly rest of having You close by.

Father, we want to hold on to You. We want to hug You all the days of our life, and we want to dwell in Your house forever. Bless this church, Lord. Bless not only the local church here of Granite Bay, but bless the worldwide church. Allow us to dwell on this land. Allow us to understand the moment in time that we live in, allow us to understand that You are instructing and guiding us to be instruments. We are under marching orders. And, finally, Father, allow us to dwell in this land of storms but with our eyes in heaven on you. I thank you, and I asked you these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen and amen. May God bless you, and have a happy Sabbath.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select that digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts, wherever and whenever you want, and most important to share it with others.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Nita: I'm Tlingit Indian from Sitka, Alaska. My Tlingit name is Wisdashdiclaw. It was a very depressing time for the people of Alaska. A lot of alcohol abuse was taking place. And, unfortunately, my mother got caught up in the alcohol. It made myself and my siblings grow up in a pretty horrible environment. It was really hard to understand God. It was really hard to understand what love was. I ended up having a child in my 12th grade and leaving home when I was 15 years old, but somehow, somehow, we made it, and I became a loner. I became a hermit.

So I went up to the biggest marijuana county, to Humboldt County, and started my new career. Things weren't right though. No matter how nice I kept thinking life was, living up on top of the mountain, not having to worry about wearing clothing, just waking up and watching the plants grow, searching still, for more and more, I went to the post office, and I was standing there by myself. I looked down, and here was this--what is called handbill, a postcard, and the letters on it grabbed my attention, and it said, Revelations. I'd never heard Revelation taught before, and I thought, "Gosh, that would've been so good."

I looked at the time and the day, and I said, "Wow, that's today." And for six weeks, I sat there in the front seat of that building and could not believe the things that I heard. And I found this hunger that I had in my heart for decades, being filled. I was actually like a starving child, you know, wanting to get in to learn more about Revelations. And I chose to be baptized on April 3. Even though I chose to serve God, I kept falling. I was going to Bible studies all--four times a week and, just, so hungry to learn as much as possible. God, just, overnight had me studying the Word of God through AFCOE, and the miracles that happened through AFCOE is so incredible. The only preacher I was listening to was Pastor Doug Batchelor, who I didn't even call by his name. I called him "the caveman." And then here, all of a sudden, I'm sitting in front of him in his classroom, learning from him.

On October 11, I sat there, though, in my room, saying, "Lord, here I am, studying Your Word, but what am I doing here? What do I need to do? What is it You want me to do?" And that night, about 1 in the morning, God spoke to me, and He said, "I want you to write a note to Pastor Doug and tell him what you do." I sat there, and I says, "No, I'm not going to write it. I'm not going to write a note." And I said, "Okay," so I ripped off a piece of paper, and I wrote on the note, and I said, "I'm an experienced fashion

designer. I can sew anything. I can make any patterns. If there's any way that I can be of any service to you, God told me to be bold and tell you." And I walked up, and I handed him the note, and he didn't know what it was, but he said, "Thank you," and four hours later, I got a phone call from Amazing Facts. Pastor Doug told me that I was an answer to their prayers. They had been looking for a wardrobe stylist for their new film that they're producing.

Female: Action. Two, three—

Nita: Amazing Facts has changed my life in the direction that God wants me to go. And now, out of all the knowledge that was taught to me, I'm able to go out into this world and share the Gospel and finish the work for Jesus Christ.

Doug Batchelor: Friends, it's because of God's blessing and your support that thousands of others like Nita, have found Jesus and everlasting life.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Jason: We were going to church every other week. About 19 years old, things really started to make sense for me. I started to go to church for myself, and the pastor wanted to study with me. Well, we came to this study about baptism, and I kind of just shrugged, looked, put my head down, and I said, "I'm not ready." He looked me in the eye and said, "Jason, you'll never make yourself ready. This is something you have to do." I put a lot of things behind me. The drinking and smoking and all that stuff stopped. All throughout the time, well, I've been learning about God. It was just me and God.

It comes around up to about August, and I meet this girl. I'm about two years in a relationship. We're talking about marriage and everything. We didn't pray. We didn't study together. We were arguing a lot, but we were engaged. I started drinking again, and that was a slow downward spiral in the different things, and my devotional life started, really weaseling away. We broke up in 2008. It was heavy for me because, again, being with somebody for that long, it's almost like a divorce. I started to fall back away even more. I remember looking in the mirror, just looking at myself and saying, "What are you doing? How can you do this to God? He's brought you so far." And, you know, God really heard my cry.

There was a testimony telling at my church, and there was a call, and kids started getting up. A bunch of high school kids started getting up for calls of baptism. I'm back doing the PA system at this time, and I feel, just, like this urge. Just, my heart just, like, ripping out of my chest. And I just had this feeling just to go up. I get up to the front, and I meet the pastor with open arms. I realized that there is so much more to life than just living life for myself. And, you know, falling away, it's not a necessity, but God can work through anything in the bad to make it the good. That's a promise He makes.

Announcer: Together, we have spread the Gospel much farther than ever before. Thank you for your support.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Female: Well, my conversion story is when I was in the Philippines. I just graduated as a nurse, and afterwards, I did not have any religion, and one time I found myself inside a small church, Catholic Church in Manila and before a big cross, and I was kneeling before, and I could hear Jesus telling me to enter the convent, save myself and also my family, and I said, "Lord, I would like to follow You all the way."

At that point, I seemed to be happy externally, but because inside the convent we don't read the Bible, we don't study about the Word of God, we pray the rosaries, we also, at the same time, study the lives

of the saints and also our founders and the encyclicals of the Pope and the Virgin Mary, and so I do not know the truth, and I had this torture of conscience, the guilty feelings that cannot be resolved, so I will confess to the priests in the confessional box, saying, "Father, forgive me. Since my last confession was last week, since then, I have committed the following sin, including the root cause, why am I falling and falling in that same sin over and over again?"

And still, for 21 long years, I struggle and I struggle, and I struggle. I realized that I was totally empty. I was totally helpless and hopeless and so depressed and so desperate that I would like already to end my life. I was working for five years as dean of the University of San Agustin College of Nursing in Iloilo City, one of the islands in the Philippines.

After five years, I received a commission from my parents to help my sister who was being a battered woman. This is one of the reasons why I came over to United States. It is because my sister needs my help. As I was working in the hospital in New York, my boss, Serafin, he was so gracious enough to give me an invitation to the "Millennium Prophecy." As I was listening to Pastor Doug Batchelor's presentation, my heart really was beating so fast, and my mind--I'm able to grasp the truth that this is the truth that I've been longing to hear all my life that I have been seeking for so long. My personal relationship with Jesus, I can see Jesus as my personal Savior. He is not only the Savior of the whole world, but He is my personal Savior. He was the one who delivered me mightily from the depths of sin from the miry clay.

Pastor Doug Batchelor has been used by the Lord in my conversion. The Amazing Facts, I owe to them. The Lord really blessed this ministry, and I'm so proud that I was able to attend this "Millennium Prophecy." My life has never been the same. It has given me that peace, the joy that never--I have never tasted in my life, and now I'm set free to be able to work for Him and to follow Him.