

Ordered Faith

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[0 : 00] Father, your word sometimes is, at least on the outside, very, very hard to us, hard for us to understand.

And Father, we know you, we trust you, we know that your son died on the cross for us, that he died out of love for us. We understand, Father, that every part of the Bible points to your son's death upon the cross, and that your son's death upon the cross points to every part of the Bible and makes it clear.

So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply fall upon us this morning. Make us disciples gripped by that gospel so that we will live for your glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Thank you. This week I had yet another interesting conversation at a coffee shop.

There's this fellow who sees all the time. We've talked a few times. He's a devout atheist, a sort of an aggressive atheist. And we've had a few conversations around that, just short ones in the Starbucks.

[1 : 17] But this week he paused and he said, you know, every day I come into this Starbucks and I see you. He doesn't see me every day, but every day I come in, you're always reading these really big fat books and studying.

Like, what are you doing? And I said, well, I'm, you know, I'm trying to prepare for my sermon, et cetera, et cetera. He said, do you read, like, other books? Like, do you just read the Bible and books connected to the Bible?

I said, no, no, I read a couple of newspapers most days. I read a novel a week, sort of on average. I, you know, watch movies and television. And that sort of reassured him that I was at least vaguely normal.

And then we had a little bit of a conversation about his expectations about what people would be like who read the Bible. But one of the things, so one of the things I've noticed just this past week, I've noticed it for quite a while, but it really struck me, two different things on television that I've watched this week.

The first one is on The Amazing Race. I don't know how many of you watch The Amazing Race. I'm the main one in my family who likes watching it. But one of the things I've noticed this year is the amount of prayer on The Amazing Race.

[2 : 24] And before you maybe get all excited and think that The Amazing Race is turning into some type of a Christian show, you know, it's very, very curious because it's always a very type of, and obviously, you know, in The Amazing Race, they have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of hours.

If you don't know what it is, it's a group of teams that are on a race around the world. And it's sort of everywhere they go, they get something that tells them where they have to go, and they have to complete some task. And as you make each stage or don't make it, you get eliminated until there's one team left that wins a million dollars.

And that's how it works. But it's amazing some people who, and their prayers seem to be highly, highly, highly utilitarian. Not in terms of Jesus, they might mention Jesus, but often it's just God. And it's often really very focused to help them get a particular task. And when I watch it, it's always very hard to figure out what on earth is sort of going on with them. That it almost seems as if, as we'll talk about a little bit later, that the God that exists is a God that exists just to meet their needs. And that's often what it seems to come across when you watch all of the show and just see the way they relate to each other and the way they talk. Another thing which happened just, I think, within the last week on prayer, I also watched this TV, a series of BBC movies called Wallander.

[3 : 42] And I think they're really superbly acted. It's all about a Swedish police detective. And in one of the older episodes that I was watching this week on Netflix, it was the episode after he had done a particular tragedy.

I'm not going to tell you what it is in case you watch the series, so I don't give any spoiler alerts. But a particular tragedy had befallen him. And he had gone through a deep period of darkness, trying to come to terms with how it was that he was able to do something like that.

And he's having a conversation with another police officer, former police officer. And the police officer asks him, did you pray? Do you ever pray? And if I was a really cool pastor of a big megachurch, at this point in time, this is where I would have it up on the screen, just as I would have some of these utilitarian prayers from The Amazing Race on the screen, I'd have this Wallander moment where he perfectly responds with a look of complete, he's just completely and utterly incredulous.

And he says to the cop, who asks him if he prays, he says, like, why on earth would I do that? Like, why on earth would I do that? Even though he's wrestling with the fact that he'd done something quite horrible, and it's been quite a shock to him that he would do something that was so, at least that he understood as being horrible.

Now, I'm obviously not a very, very cool pastor, because not only do I not have the video clip up there, but today we're looking at Revelation 16 and the seven bulls of the wrath of God, which is not particularly what cool pastors would talk about.

[5 : 23] But it would be very helpful if you turned to Revelation 16. And Revelation 16, which we could look at just all about end time things, and I'll make a little bit of a passing reference to it.

But Revelation 16 is a very, very interesting reflection on how it is that we live our lives. How is it that we deal with things that we've done that sort of purify ourselves about ourselves?

How is it that we fit in prayer, whether it's utilitarian or otherwise, or whether it's even worth our time to pray? And Revelation 16 is actually, when you sort of take some time, get over the shocking imagery in it, and spend some time looking at it and allowing the text, asking the question text and letting the question ask us text is actually a very, very profound introduction to how it is that, in fact, we structure and people structure our lives.

So Revelation 16, if you're a guest here, not familiar with the Bible, it's the last book in the Bible, it should be easy to find. Chapter 16, and here's how it begins. Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God. Now just sort of pause right here. Here's sort of my first point, if you could put it up, Andrew. And today I have sort of more talking points than I usually do in my sermon, and I apologize that they're not in the notes, but if you go on the webpage, I think tomorrow, if you don't have time, if those of you take notes, they'll be on the webpage.

[6 : 59] And here's the first thing to observe. Because he loves us, the living God warns us of the world's last night. I get that imagery from C.S. Lewis in an essay that he wrote once.

Because he loves us, the living God warns us of the world's last night. And so what's happening here, if you're familiar with the flow of the book, is that we have a series of judgments.

And if you go back and look at them, there were a series of seven judgments earlier on in the book where many of them led to a quarter of the earth being touched. And then there is, a little bit later, a series of seven judgments that involve a third of the world being touched.

And now this is the last cycle of judgments. And in these judgments, all of the world is touched. In fact, actually, I'm not going to talk about it today other than just to sort of point something out that this series of judgments is different than the other two.

As we get deeper into the text, you'll see that in this series of judgments, the only people who are affected by it are people who are in rebellion against God.

[8 : 16] So if you were doing a series of talks in the book of Revelation where you were concerned all about end time events, this is the sort of time when you try to fit in the rapture or the tribulation and all that type of stuff.

And I'm just going to mention that that's a feature of the text. I'm not going to actually talk about it very much, but I wanted you to notice it. And the reason I want you to notice it will be familiar in a moment. Well, the reason I want you to notice it is this, that all the way through these bold visions of what happens, these are ones that are, in a sense, talking about the world's last night, the end of the end of our created order before God brings in a new created order and there's a last judgment.

And all of the other different cycles of judgment, we can understand that on one hand they're pointing to something in the future, but also on one hand they're talking about something which happens right now.

But this series really is talking primarily about the end. But it's talking about the end in a way which is highly relevant to right now. And so it's going to be very, very hard, and I'm not going to attempt to do it.

I'm not going to attempt to try to figure out what part of these images are symbolic and what parts of the image are literal because, frankly, how could I possibly know the answer to that question?

[9 : 34] And, frankly, how could anybody possibly know the answer to that question? The important thing is to remember what's said so that if by chance, or if by providence, I should say, we are there as the world's last night finally arrives, if we are familiar with the text, then we can notice and understand what's happening.

And so that's going to be my focus on it because the focus is on how shall we then live? How shall we then live in light of the text? And so in all of these series of judgment visions, these seven, what we need to understand is that God has this written for us because he loves us and because he wants to begin a conversation with us in light of them.

It's upsetting to many of us because we don't really understand. In our age, we increasingly don't understand what conversations are. We're more familiar with negotiations that in relationships, often we're not really trying to have a conversation with another person to know the other person. We're trying to negotiate what we want them to do or what we want them to allow us to do. And this text, God is not interested in having a negotiation with us, but he is very interested in having a conversation with us.

And so this text, like all of scripture, every single word of scripture is an invitation from God for you and me to have a conversation with him.

[11 : 19] And that's what's happening here. And so because he loves us, because he loves us, the living God warns us of the world's last night. And that's what these visions are going to be all about.

Now, some of you might say, George, you know, okay, so I know you're going to sort of, I've heard that you're going to go through the text and you're going to talk about each verse here, at least read it and say a few things about it.

But I remember a few things about what Jeremy read. And while you've been talking, I've been sort of reading ahead a little bit. But, oh, George, come on. Like, this text is so out of step with Canada. Like, this text is so out of step with Canada. And it's so out of text, out of touch with spirituality. Like, it just sounds like doom and gloom religion.

Like, I don't even quite know why to bother with it. It just seems to be so completely and utterly out of step with how us modern or postmodern people understand and process and the language.

[12 : 27] It's out of step, George. And if any of you thought that, that's a really good thought because it is. It is.

But the question is, what is the text trying to do? And is it, in fact, opening up to us an area of conversation that many in our modern world are completely and utterly missing?

Well, let's continue reading. And we'll start to see. So, verse 2. So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth. And harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshipped its name.

Just pause. You'll notice the mark of the beast in a couple of the earlier sermons where the mark of the beast and all was mentioned. What this means is these are people who the mark of the beast shows that they pledged their allegiance to the beast, which is sort of like a false god, part of the false trinity.

And they pledged their allegiance to the beast and they worship him. And notice that these swords just fall on them. That's what I mean by...

[13 : 41] I'm not going to talk about that. I don't know what that's going to mean when the world's last night happened. I don't know what it means. But you should see it and know it, right? And then the next verse 3.

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea and it became like the blood of a corpse and every living thing died that was in the sea.

Now just sort of pause there for a second. This is not a very positive text, eh? At least not on the surface. Here's one of the things, you know.

If you go to a church that just wants to give you a positive hour and a half vibe every Sunday, then it usually means that it's not actually going to try to touch us at a deeper level.

And texts like this that are more angular and pointy, they touch us at a deeper level. And if we allow them, if we spend some time with them, they start to penetrate into how we actually see the world and understand the world and what it is that God is inviting us into a conversation about and where that conversation could end up going.

[14:48] And here's the thing. You could put up this next point. And I'll try to explain what it means. It sounds a little bit funny, but I think it's an important point. And it comes out in how strange and different the text is from what we would expect as Canadians a spiritual text to be.

And here it is, that meeting with the living God is not meeting myself. Meeting with the living God is not meeting myself.

Much of contemporary spirituality is really about meeting yourself. I'm not saying that it's every single person who meditates and every single person who does yoga and every single person who does a series of self-help seminars, etc.

I'm not saying that every single person who does it is doing this. And whether it's recognized or not, a lot of what happens, whether it's through exercise or through yoga or time in the wilderness, is actually just an opportunity for a person to meet themselves and discover how wonderful they are. And I'm not saying that to belittle, because, but it is, that somehow or nothing, I was really struck on the Saturday paper, I read the National, I looked at the National Post and the Citizen, and here the National Post would be sort of understood in popular parlance as a right-wing paper, whatever that means in Canada.

[16:18] And the Citizen is sort of a bit more left-wing or centrist, and I'm not going to get into a debate as whether which is right, which is left, but here's the thing, in both of them, they had lots of things about retreats, about mindfulness, about yoga retreats, about a whole series of things.

And it's not only been on the Saturday paper, but all this week, there's been a series of things about it. And, you know, I read it because I'm curious to try to figure out how people think, right? How do people think?

And it really struck me that at the heart of it, at the heart of it, and you can, I can understand, because I'm a Canadian, I breathe Canadian air, and I can understand the pull and the draw and the attraction of it, but it's really all a series of spiritual practices that will obviously help you to be more healthy or calm, etc.

There's a utilitarian aspect to it, but the God that you meet is yourself. The encounter you have is with yourself. And so, when we're used to looking at spiritual texts, if you were to go and maybe in the coffee shop or your office or your neighborhood and people are all excited about a new thing that looks really encouraging, and if you maybe think about it, I'm just throwing it out there, you can think about it, but is it really ultimately at the day just some different way to meet yourself?

And if that's what gets Canadians excited and we come to this text, and this text is not like this at all. Why? Because this text is implying, not implying, it's saying that there is a living God who's completely and utterly other and different than you and I.

[18:00] I mean, there's other texts here which talk about how close the living God is to us, so close to us that we can sometimes mistake ourselves for him, but it fundamentally is talking about the complete and utter difference of God and how different he is, and it's a conversation not with myself.

The Bible's not inviting me into having a conversation with myself. The Bible's inviting me to have a conversation and know the living God who's completely and utterly other.

And that's why the text is like this. I've been married for a very long time now, not long enough. I'm looking forward to being married to Louise for a long time unless Jesus comes back first.

And so it's been a long time, but here's the thing. When you're single, maybe this is just a single guy thing, I don't know, but it's easy to imagine the ideal wife, the ideal girlfriend, and it's easy to think about the ideal wife, the ideal girlfriend.

Ideal wife and girlfriend never tells you you've done something wrong, you've hurt her feelings, you've ignored her, you've been lazy, you've been self-centered.

[19:16] I don't know, maybe your ideal girlfriends were very different than mine. And then you meet a real person, and they're angular.

By angular, it means they have pointy bits that aren't bad pointy bits. They have bad pointy bits just like yourself. I mean, that's one of the things about marriage is discovering that you're both sinners, right?

And that's why you need Jesus to be the Savior and the Lord in your marriage. But, you know, with a real person, there's pushback. And so, if marriage is not about me marrying somebody who, and a lot of the way that modern people talk about marriage is they're looking for a soulmate.

And if you look behind and underneath the conversation, they're looking for somebody who will adorn and support their own particular, their projects around themselves. themselves. But it's not really a matter, but marriage is not about finding somebody who's going to just, just end up in the sense adoring you and allowing you to do what you want.

It's about, it's a deep encounter, a deep, it's an invitation to a lifelong deep encounter with the reality of another person. That's what distinguishes a quest for true marriage from just being enamored with a fantasy.

[20 : 45] And in the Bible, there's this invitation not to meet yourself, although when you meet the living God, you will understand yourself. I will understand myself in a, there's a, I will start to understand myself in a very true and deep manner.

There's an invitation for profound, deep self-knowledge in the gospel. But at its heart, it's an invitation to meet the other and other, the true and living God, the creator and sustainer and the end of all things.

Immense, and yet immensely loving and immensely true and always completely and utterly himself. and that's the invitation to meet him.

And these texts don't fit in with how we Canadians want them to fit in because it's beckoning us to a vastly different conversation than just a deeper journey into ourselves.

some of you might say, okay, George, that's sort of interesting, but one moment, George.

[22 : 03] Look at all these bulls falling on people. Like, I don't know, George, isn't it maybe a little bit like if God has to resort to threats like this that there's something lacking in him?

Well, that's a good question. Let's look a little bit further and see how the text works itself out.

Let's read verses four and following. The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water and they became blood. Just sort of note that the sea had become blood like a corpse and now this drinkable water, springs and rivers, they became blood.

And I heard the, just as a bit of an aside here, like in a modern, in the modern world, who is the one group, at least in terms of our popular imagination, that would like it?

Vampires. Not really making a joke, but it's true, right? Vampires would be excited if the rivers and the streams were filled with blood. And throughout most of the world's history, in cultures, there are dark gods and dark goddesses who exist to drink the blood of humans.

[23 : 34] And so, in a modern world, it's a world where vampires are at home. in the world of this text when it was written, it's describing a world where dark gods and goddesses are at home.

But it's profoundly unhuman, and humans can't truly live there. So, the verse four again, the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water and they became blood.

Now, there's going to be a change. All of the other bowls, every one of them, there'll now be a comment on the bowl. And the first comment is going to come from God's perspective.

Here's the comment. And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was. For you brought these judgments.

For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve. And I heard the altar saying, Yes, Lord, God, the Almighty.

[24 : 42] Actually, it should literally be Lord, the God, the Almighty. True and just are your judgments. Now, this is a real surprise. Excuse me.

This is a real surprise. This is, so the third bowl has come. It's now picturing a world where only dark gods and dark goddesses are at home and can roam the land.

it's profoundly a place where humans don't really fit. And the comment, the first comment on this comes from angels that this shows the justice and the truth of God.

It's a very, very, very puzzling reaction. It's a puzzling reaction to us. And why is it puzzling to us?

Part of the reason it's so puzzling to us is that probably every single one of us to some extent believes that the God that exists exists to meet my needs.

I don't really think he exists to meet your needs, by the way. He just exists to meet my needs. And you're all saying, one moment, he exists to meet my needs. Sucks to be you, George.

[25 : 58] He exists to meet my needs. And we might not even be aware of it, but that's so deeply ingrained in our culture and in the way that we approach the texts that it would be very interesting to see, to think, that as these, whatever these symbolize, whatever these visions are going to actually look like when they work themselves out in history.

And I don't know what's going to be symbolic and what's historical. I don't know that. But if we remember the text, it will become clear to us if we live through it.

And it's, I can easily imagine that there will be a whole pile of people writing books on the problem of evil and why it is that God is allowing evil and will spend our time trying to justify the evil in the world and how it goes along with the existence of God.

But this text is saying that what's happening here in the world's last night reveals and displays the truth and justice of God.

God is in the world's God. Because you see, if there really is a true and living God that does exist who's completely and utterly other, and if in fact our world is organized and my life is organized around such a way that I think that God only exists to meet my needs, and that can only be true if I think I'm greater than God and stronger than God, and if I am completely and utterly addicted to that belief, then I will find all of these things that are happening a profound offense.

[27 : 47] A profound offense. That's why I put the point for this in these words, if you could put it up, Andrew. Who or what failed?

The true and living God or a false God? Who or what failed? The true and living God or a false God?

This text, by the way, all of chapter 16, if you wanted to see a bit of a way that it's modeled, it's modeled on the Exodus story. If you go back and read the book of Exodus and see the different plagues and everything like that and how in Exodus God's people are protected from them and it's a revelation of his sovereignty and it's a revelation that the gods that the Egyptians and the Israelites themselves trusted in are shown to be completely and utterly helpless and bankrupt and for us in our age and we worship capitalism and socialism and central planning and individual planning and initiative and technology and technique and human creativity and we worship ourselves and our own ability to manage things and we worship our own understanding of the world and the universe that we don't really we rarely do things that are wrong that are our own fault and that we can control things and that bad things don't happen to good people and if bad things happen to another person it's because they're not really learning how to do things properly but people who've learned how to manage the techniques and manage the secret can do this and can do that and we can just meditate and we'll get centered and in this entire world all of these understandings have failed and the text is revealing that the gods that we put our faith and trust in are failing they failed my ability to control myself and have my own prosperity it's all failing and so the question is in the text is who's failing the true and living

God or false gods that we put our faith and trust in and this is a surprising and shocking thought and it's not where we thought we'd go when we began this text we did not think that it would challenge what it is that we put our faith in and our trust in what is it that we serve and love and obey and trust and hope in and that it would reveal that in fact we maybe worship ourselves in some way and see the world centered around us or just in service to us or having to bow to us or fit to us and on top of that we worship the government and we worship capitalism and we worship Canadianism as if somehow Canadians have some divine right to always be prosperous or always be successful or always be better than the Americans or always be better than the English or Europeans or Chinese or whatever it is and we have all of these things that we just sort of assume and love and worship and trust and hope and we don't identify them and this text is picturing a day when every God fails the true and living God reveals the failure of every false God that's what the text is describing it's asking us you and me to consider now some of you might say I don't think I live by faith George I don't think I have gods that I worship you know it's interesting you know in the amazing race I think you can see it often in the way people pray it's a little bit hard because you know maybe in the bigger context it's just they're really they do see themselves as giving themselves to God who is bigger than them and the God who is bigger than us does ask us to bring our needs to him and maybe if we were to see all of the film footage that's what we would understand is going on maybe they've just edited to make it look like they're trying to rub a genie in

a bottle to get the genie to do something for them it could very well be that that's what's happening with the editing of the show you never know with a show like

[32 : 00] The Amazing Race how they're making people look it could be completely opposite than what they really were happening in real life but even if you take that Wallander episode that I began the sermon with and one of the things which is sort of very very sustained throughout these very very well done series of nine different short BBC movies hour and a half movies is that the consistent atheism of Wallander and the consistent idea that there is no God that there's you die and that's just it which is partly why it so wonderfully acted like why on earth would I pray like why on earth would you even think that I would pray like why on earth would anybody pray but at the same time as he regularly wrestles with all sorts of failures you see that there are things that he does serve that he does love he does obey he does trust he does hope in that he has his own very high view of himself even as he lives selflessly that there's a series of things which he's completely and utterly committed to and the Bible here is going to suggest that we have that in fact every single person lives by faith this will start to come out in these next few verses verse 8 cost my time verse 8 the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and it was allowed to scorch people with fire they were scorched by the fierce heat and remember

I said that all of the bowls from now on will always include a response and how is it that people respond and they cursed or blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues they did not repent and give him glory the image by the way here on this seal is almost like an opposite of Pentecost the image is as if fire itself comes down and touches people and scorches them in Pentecost it was like tongues that appeared like fire that was the coming of the Holy Spirit that led forth in people singing God's praises and shouting God's praises in the tongues of every person who was there and now it's almost like a fell Pentecost it's a judgment Pentecost and the fire comes and scorches and suffering rather than inclining people's hearts to search for the living God and rather than this suffering leading people to recognize that the gods that they put their faith and trust in that they are failing that they are failing that they are failing that they are failing poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast the center of the beast's authority and its kingdom was plunged into darkness people nod their tongues in anguish and curse the

God of heaven for their pain and sores and they did not repent of their deeds just sort of pause here one of the ways remember you might not remember but when we were looking at the other cycles of judgment John could understand a contradiction just like you and me he can understand that the fourth bowl the sun is so bright and so powerful that some fire is scorching us and now all of a sudden it's dark he can understand these things so the way for us to read it and understand it I don't read that many fantasy novels but those of you who read fantasy novels where there's a quest involved what's one of the things that you have to do in the quest often you have to remember the words of the prophecy you have to remember the words of the ancient document or what the seer said or something like that and often what happens in quest novels fantasy quest type novels is that people keep forgetting the different things and so they get off track and they get brought back back on to track and that's the dynamic of the story goes and it's the same type of thing which is happening here with the

Bible it's just really a matter of us what will the world's last night be I don't know what what matters is remembering what matters is remembering that's what matters okay and when it seems to have different contradictions that's not a contradiction it's inviting us to understand what's going on and the image I used to use if those of you who have never met my daughter Victoria for instance if there's people who have never met my daughter Victoria maybe Louise and I would show you seven really good pictures of Victoria and if we showed you seven different pictures of Victoria maybe one of her looking very intent and focused maybe one of her laughing maybe one looking at one of her children maybe one of her just doing a task or whatever and if I picked seven really good pictures if you tried to take the seven pictures and manually put them all together to create one image you wouldn't actually recognize Victoria at all would you

I think she'd have seven noses that would throw you off right off the bat because in real life she only has one right she'd have maybe 13 or 14 years to do it but what would happen is if you look at all seven and then if you met my daughter Victoria maybe even after seeing them if you saw her in the Rito center without me or Louise or if you saw her out of the context you'd say that's George's daughter Victoria and not only would you be able to recognize you have a bit of a sense from seven pictures as to her nature and her character and so something like that's probably going on here how

it's all going to put together God's in control of that I don't have to sort that out I just have to remember the seven but here's the point notice the responses now remember in the third bowl we see God's commentary on what's going on and here we begin to see the responses of people to having in a sense their gods fail the revelation of their gods completely and utterly failing and what we see is this since every person the fourth point since every person lives by faith the question [38 : 04] I always need to ask is who or what am I putting my faith in since every person lives by faith the question I always need to ask is who or what am I putting my faith in you see faith is not a feeling sometimes we have faith we might feel something but faith is not a feeling and we're often not even conscious that we have faith but faith always has an object it's something maybe it's a code maybe it's an understanding of the world maybe it's Canada maybe it's a series of different things maybe it's myself but there's something that we in a sense an object that we put our faith and trust in and that we follow and that we live by and that helps us to understand the world and you see that's why a church should never be called a faith community no church should ever be called a faith community because that implies that we have faith and that the rest of the world doesn't operate by a faith do you not think that the faculty and the administration of the

University of Ottawa has faith do you not think that they have a certain way that they understand themselves that they may be trust in modernism or post modernism that they trust particular philosophers that they trust in things being secular that they trust in reason and that they trust with a certain understanding of justice and right and wrong that they have a certain type of way to understand the world and order the world and things that they want to obey and follow that helps them to frame the world and that they don't follow those things by faith whether they're conscious and can list them what they are or whether they're completely and utterly unconscious is it not in fact the case that whether it's the University of Ottawa or the Liberal Party of Canada or the Conservative Party of Canada or the people who write in the financial pages of the Financial Post or the people who write in the financial pages of the Globe and Mail or the people who write in the sports pages is it not obvious that there's a series of things that they understand the world by and that they live by and that they trust in and they organize their world by that they in fact are people of faith so it's not that churches are people of faith and nobody else has faith that's a completely and utterly unaware way to understand the world and so it's sad I find it very sad when Christians fall into this unaware way of understanding the world because the

Bible presents that everybody lives by faith everybody lives by faith and so the question for you and me is what am I putting my faith in in fact just as a bit of an aside what is doubt the Bible understands doubt as having faith in two things at the same time and that's what doubt is I have my faith in Jesus but I also have my faith in myself I also have my faith in having lots of money I also have my faith in my pension I also have my faith in science I also have my faith in these other things and doubt is having dual faith or triple faith or quadruple faith that in fact for many of us if or maybe our friends who seem to be losing their faith but the question for them not is how can I change how I'm feeling the question might be very well is to examine what other things in your life in my life am I starting to have faith in that are now starting to in a sense wrestle with my faith in God my faith in Jesus because we all live by faith so some people might say George so you're saying that faith is not a feeling that faith always has an object that we always live by faith but isn't repentance just about a feeling like isn't repentance about feeling sorry and isn't George usually when you have repentance in the Bible isn't always about feeling sorry about sex people often think that the only sin that

Christians believe in is sins around sex and that repentance is a feeling but it's not the very next text ushers us into what repentance is in light of faith let's continue reading at verse 12 the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east now just sort of notice that's what the bowl does and then everything else in the text is response okay what happens as a result of this water it's a natural barrier is dried up and what happens is a response and I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits like frogs for they are demonic spirits performing signs who go abroad to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the almighty that's what the people are doing they're gathering to fight

God what's God's comment verse 15 behold I am coming like a thief blessed is the one who stays awake keeping his garments on that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed so God's

response is that when you see the gods of the nations the gods of the people being judged and showed a fail look for me coming you know Gandalf speaking to people look for me coming same type of light look for me coming okay and then it goes back in verse 16 to how it is that people are responding we see in verse 16 and they assemble them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon it's another perfect place to show that we don't know how symbolism in reality goes Armageddon means mountain of Megiddo the problem is that Megiddo is a plain it would be like talking about the mountain of Saskatchewan the mountain of South Saskatchewan well there is no mountain there so what does that mean we don't know what it means but it's going to have some it's remembering the sign okay and so the response of the world to the gods failing are for people to gather in battle against God and so here's the fifth point we're almost done biblical repentance is changing the object of my faith to the person and work of Jesus biblical faith biblical repentance is changing the object of my faith to the person and work of Jesus you see what's happening here is that people don't want to give up on their faith in the gods that are failing so they in a sense gather to do battle with God but all the way through this text if you wanted to have a sort of a one verse summary of what's going on in the text it's what Jesus says in Mark chapter 1 verse 15 when he introduces his ministry and in Mark chapter 1 verse 15 the way he introduces his ministry is by saying the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God has come repent and believe the gospel it's Mark 1 15 the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God has come repent and believe the gospel and all the way through this text when it says that people don't repent the implication is that God wants them to repent and the way we repent is not by all of a sudden particularly feeling sorry and it's not necessarily about feeling sorry around doing bad things sexually that if in fact we always walk by faith and faith is always serving loving obeying trusting and hoping and hoping in something or some person or someone or some idea or some system or some ideology or some philosophy or some spirituality if that's what we're if that's the object of our faith repentance is turning from that and asking and calling out that we could put our faith and trust in the living God through the person and the work of Jesus that's what repentance is that's what repentance is and the invitation of the text is for us to ask God what is it that we in fact are putting our faith in and the Bible here is not saying that we only put our faith it's not teaching as a type of paranoia that we only put our faith and trust in Jesus and that means that we don't trust our wives we don't trust our friends we never trust our boss we never trust other drivers we never trust the government it's not like that at all the doctrine of creation prevents us from that it teaches us that what happens is that when that and when we put our faith and trust our ultimate faith and trust in the living God and in what his son does for us on the cross that part of what is to happen then is that is a work of healing and restoration and reformation and renewal within us that God orders our faith

[47 : 19] I don't put my highest faith in my wife she shouldn't put her highest faith in me but I should have a proper faith in my wife in light of my faith in God I should have a proper faith and respect towards government in light of my higher faith in God through the person and work of Jesus this is not just an invitation for us to all do it by ourselves but God himself has to do something excuse me let's just look very quickly at one more verse verse 17 the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying it is done the final point when I walk by faith in the one who said it is finished I can look forward with hope to the words it is done when I walk by faith in the one who said it is finished

I can look forward with hope to the words it is done these final words are a clear echo of what Jesus says from the cross as he's about to die and he says on the cross in John chapter 19 verse 30 it is finished my wife and I have had an offer we put an offer in another house and we bought it you can pray for us that we can get our house our current house ready and it will sell in time taking a step of faith and part of the reason I'm a bit coughing is yesterday we had a van and we have to declutter our house and get rid of some stuff and put some stuff so it will show well into a storage unit and so going through books and dusty things like that so I had a lot of dust yesterday and I'm a bit coughing as a result of it and the storage unit place that I was going to they have a free van that they'll lend you if you're going to move stuff into their storage unit and we had it from 1 till 7 and so I was there at 1 o'clock and the van didn't come the van didn't come the van didn't come the van didn't come and in fact it came an hour late hourly and in fact it was very very interesting the couple who brought the van late they didn't say they were sorry you know sucks to be you you had to sit there and wait in the car for an hour and they didn't say they were sorry nothing the man who was responsible for this he apologized to me and I said well it's not your fault nothing you can do about it

and then he said something which is quite remarkable which helps us to understand what Jesus does for us on the cross see it's not just purely a matter of our putting a faith in Jesus just purely by our own effort changing from putting our faith in something else to putting our faith in Jesus God still Jesus does something he accomplishes something for us because every time there's something that we do that's wrong every time that we do something that's wrong there's a type of debt and that debt in a sense has to be dealt with it has to be absorbed and these people having wronged me there was in a sense I'm out an hour I'm out an hour and that hour in fact in our case it would have meant a really big thing for us it meant one whole extra segment of us trying to get our house decluttered would have just been completely and utterly gone and the man says to me listen you've been really patient and I'm I'll take that hour into myself and I'll come an hour later so you can have the full length of time and in a sense justice is restored and there's a type of satisfaction because that man absorbs the cost of the wrongdoing of the first couple and all evil is something like that and what Jesus does for us on the cross is absorbs the consequences of our wrongdoing he has lived a complete and utter perfect and sinless life and he absorbs the cost of it and what we hear

Jesus say on the cross is it is finished and then he dies he absorbs the cost so that we can be reconciled to God and so it's not just a matter of me still being completely in control and I can now switch the object to my faith God himself does something to open the possibility that I very weakly not even really aware of all it is that I've done that keeps God at a distance and all it is that I've done that harm God and harm others and I'm completely and utterly oblivious of a whole pile of it and I make myself oblivious but I recognize that there's a need not only to have a faith and trust in the living God but that there has to be some type of a dealing with myself and Jesus when he says it is finished that is him saying that I have dealt with it on the cross for you and so it is that when I hear God say it is done I know that it is finished that everything that I've done that has kept me from God that has been paid with and dealt with by the person of Jesus please stand there's no better time than today to ask the Father to order your faith there's no better time than today to begin to put your faith and trust in Jesus and what he's done for us on the cross there's no better time than today to realize that part of the reason that God feels distant isn't that he is distant but that you've been putting your faith and trust in all sorts of other things other than him so I'm going to say a short prayer and if God's Holy Spirit is convicting you to pray to God in response to Revelation 16 if the Holy Spirit is pressing into you to do that my words can just be one way to help you respond and so I'll say a couple of words and then I'll pause and you can say them silently don't have to say them out loud as your response to God in light of Revelation 16 dear God

I do not always recognize what I put my faith in instead of you I am truly sorry I put my faith in Jesus and what he did for me on the cross please order my faith so he is my highest and deepest hope please pour out your Holy Spirit upon me to make me yours forever thank you Jesus amen