

Revelation 13

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Preacher: Calum Jack

[0:00] So starting at chapter 13. The dragon stood on the shore of the sea, and I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear, and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud word and blasphemies, and to exercise its authority for 42 months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place, and those who live in heaven.

It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast, all whose name has not been written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb who was slain for the creation of the world.

[1:22] Whoever has ears, let them listen. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed by the sword, with the sword they will be killed.

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people. Then I saw a second beast coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon.

It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people.

Because of its signs, it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast. It deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast, who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

[2:39] This calls for wisdom. Let the person who is inside calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666. Maybe you've just come to Cornerstone or to church for the first time, and you're thinking, taxi!

You know, when you heard the passage read and thinking, oh my goodness, what kind of church is this? Or maybe you managed to get your head slightly around it and think, it's a bit Lords of the Ringsian, kind of has that kind of tone to it.

And actually, that's quite a helpful way of thinking about it, that actually, if we've worked our way through lots of this kind of material, we've discovered that Revelation is a specific way of sort of speaking about things.

It's highly stylized, and is very similar to other kind of material, that genre. And so, over the weeks, we've kind of figured out, you know, sort of what the kind of symbolism means.

So hopefully, as we go through it, if you're here for the first time, you'll kind of get to grips with some of that as well as we explain it. But I guess, if you've been watching the news recently, or if you watch the news in general, if you keep up with current affairs, I guess from time to time, there are

various questions that we will ask.

[4:01] Some of the stuff that's going on, you can figure out what's going on, but some of the things that happen, you think, what on earth is going on here? What is really going on here?

And of course, there are endless numbers of news outlets, Twitter posts, podcasts, and commentators who will take a stab at interpreting what is going on, interpreting the times.

I often sort of wish that I had the sort of the spirit, if you like, of the men of Issachar, that the Old Testament speaks about in 1 Chronicles 12, 32, because they had a very particular gift.

They were described as men who could understand the times. But as we look at the news, we're thinking, what on earth is going on? That's one question you're going to be asking. But I guess the second question, as believers, as people are seeking to follow Jesus in our everyday world, the other question that maybe the Holy Spirit prompts in us is, well, how do I live in this time?

How do I live faithfully following Jesus Christ in the midst of all that's going on? How can I be like, James encourages in James 1, verse 27, to not be polluted by the world in the way that it thinks and taking on its values and remain distinctive for Jesus Christ?

[5:20] Well, if you've been asking these very questions, then good. It's great you're here this morning because these are the two questions that I think are answered in this passage this morning. And I think this passage is meant to help us with that, to give us that is a Korean insight, if you like.

If you're not asking those two questions, then I'm glad you're here this morning because this is going to help you to think through, actually, I should be asking these questions and why it's helpful. I guess one of the things that's really helped us kind of think about our way through Revelation is what did it mean to those first century hearers to whom it was first written?

That kind of, I think, gives us the first foot in kind of understanding the book of Revelation. Because the first century believers, I think, would have been very tempted to view the real threat as coming from Rome and from the Roman Empire.

But actually, in this book, and in this chapter in particular, God helps them to sort of see that actually Rome and the Roman Empire is not actually your main adversary.

And what God does is kind of lift, in a sense, the curtain of reality and reveal the backdrop to all that is going on in the foreground of their experience, which is living in the Roman Empire and so on, and saying, actually, there's a bigger picture going on that you need to understand, out of which this is just a sort of outworking.

[6:52] And as we go through, we'll see that, you know, John the Lord is trying to demonstrate to us that the real conflict is not principally with the Roman Empire, but it is a conflict between, in a sense, the empire of God and the empire of darkness.

The rule of God and the reign of God and the rebellion of Satan. As Martin pointed out last week, of course, it's not a war, if you like, against two equals.

God is by far and the way much greater, and that gives us great confidence, even just in the knowledge of that, that he is sovereign, he rules, and the first chapters of that were kind of, of Revelation were helping us with that and reinforcing that.

But, of course, as we were introduced last week to the idea of the dragon, if you like, and then the dragon is kind of named, John tells us, the dragon's actually Satan.

Then we begin to kind of, that gives us, again, the first foot into kind of this passage and thinking, right, so what's going on here? So the passage begins with the dragon as it ended with at the end of last week's chapter.

[8:05] And what we're seeing is, in general, let me give you an insight into where we're going, is that this passage this week is showing us how Satan, if you like, is at work in two areas in life, not just two, but two in particular in this passage, in the political sphere, but also in the religious sphere.

And then there's very specific kind of application to how we live faithfully as believers in the passage in verses 10 and verses 18, where we're called to patient endurance, to faithfulness, and in verse 18, and to wisdom.

So that's kind of where we're going, seeing how Satan is at work in the backdrop, working in the foreground of our life, and our experience in political realms and in religious realms.

So let's work our way through it, first of all, in the political sphere. We have, as we said, the dragon, who we know from chapter nine is Satan. He's standing on the shore, and before him, out of the sea, comes this beast.

Now, why does he come out of the sea? Well, in the Old Testament, the sea sort of represents chaotic forces. And so this beast comes out of the chaotic forces, arises with 10 horns.

[9 : 26] We know that the horns are symbols of strength and 10 crowns. The crowns represent authority. So there are 10 horns, 10 crowns. This is a beast that is powerful. This beast has seven heads, which could be a reference to the seven hills on which Rome is built.

And each of those heads has a blasphemous name. Now, of course, the Caesars, we know from history, claimed divine titles. They claimed to be the Son of God, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the very titles that are given to God himself.

And so they were uttering blasphemies. And so that's possibly what is meant here. There are also here, as we've been discovering in this passage, strong parallels with other books in the Bible, Ezekiel and so on, and Daniel as well.

And this passage is no exception. If you were to flick over to Daniel chapter seven, you would see that Daniel also has a not dissimilar vision in which the three animals who are talked about in Revelation 13 here in verse two are also mentioned.

In verse four, there's a lion of Daniel chapter seven. In verse five, there's a bear. And verse six, there's a leopard. And those most likely were referenced to the Babylonian empire and then the Medo-Persian empire that came after it and then the Greek empire that came after them.

[10 : 55] And then, of course, there's a final beast, which is in verse seven, probably the Roman empire, which came after them. So the beasts then, we learn in Daniel seven, are description of human powers, which end up being agents of Satan.

And if you're new to all of this and thinking, it's a bit strong, isn't it? It's a bit much. Well, let me give you an example from the lips of one of the Caesars of the Roman empires.

This is from an edict given. It was a little bit later than this material is written, but it gives a sense of what was said. This was said by Diocletian, one of the Roman emperors. He said this, it is our will that the Christians be utterly destroyed from the face of the earth.

It is our will that the Christians be utterly destroyed from the face of the earth. You also hear the emperor Julian, who wrote a tractate against the, what was called against the Galileans, against the Christians, in which he said, and here the venom behind it, you Christians do not understand that wickedness consists not in outward acts, but in the disposition of the soul.

Your so-called wisdom teaches men to be fools and cowards. So Christianity was seen as weak because it valued things like humility, self-denial, compassion, grace, instead of the values of the Roman empire, which is pride, self-exaltation, self-advancement, power, sexual promiscuity, and the like.

[12 : 27] And the like. Now, when we look at these passages, again, if you're new, you're sort of thinking, is this going to be one of those, the government is out to get you, head for the hills, stock up on your tinned and dried fruits, and so on.

No, that is not where we're going, just to give you, in case to leave any worries that you have. But you can see how, given the kind of hostile context in the Roman empire, that this passage would have made total sense to the first hearers.

They could sort of begin to say, actually, God is sovereign. He is reigning. But Satan is in the world, and he is also having an influence in the political sphere, and we are experiencing that in our experience.

But you can also see how Revelation has a timeless wisdom, how these things have kind of, they go through cycles in history. We have seen them repeated throughout history in the way that Christians were treated.

For example, if you're old enough, you'll remember how it was when in the communist Soviet Union, Christians were imprisoned, Christian leaders were imprisoned, exiled, and so on.

[13 : 40] How it is presently for believers in some areas in China. Pastors are being arrested, churches are being bulldozed, or presently in North Korea, or in some of the states in North India, for example, where there are presently calls on people to face the death penalty for helping a Hindu convert to Christianity.

We see how there are, at times in different places, political systems that systematically oppress, imprison, or kill those Christians.

But actually, it's not only in those kind of very extreme cases. I think also we can see how governments at times can work maybe more, and Satan can be at work more subtly in societies,

where the ruling authorities are not making such harsh judgments, but are making rulings that are utterly contrary to what Christians believe, to the rule of God and the word of God. And that maybe is more familiar to us, where it can make it very difficult to be a Christian in society. Now actually, I think we need a corrective and be reminded that actually government is a good thing.

It is a God thing. It's God's idea, and we know that from Romans chapter 13. Paul makes it very clear. If you want to flip over to Romans chapter 13, and I'll just read that very briefly.

[15 : 13] Paul reminds the Christians in Rome itself, let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so bring judgment on themselves.

For the rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority?

Then do what is right, and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for the rulers do not bear the sword for no reason.

They are God's servants, agents of wrath, to bring punishment on the wrongdoers. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment, but also as a matter of conscience.

[16 : 15] That is why you pay taxes. For the authorities are God's servants who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them. If you owe taxes, taxes of revenue, then revenue.

If respect, then respect. If honor, then honor. So we're therefore called to understand that these things are that authority in itself is not wrong.

It is how the authority is used when the problem starts. And we're called to respect the office of government and those who are in it. We may struggle with those, the office bearers, but still we have to respect the office.

And we do have, you know, scripture tells us that elsewhere also, we have liberty of conscience before God and an obligation before God to actually to yield to his higher authority when the lower authorities are not following his rule and his will and his way.

But what is interesting in these passages is the way in which actually Satan imitates and what was the word you used, Scott?

[17 : 25] Parody? Yeah, it's a good word, a parody of God and his rule and his reign. And we see it mirrored in these passages as he is the one who is giving authority to the beast and to his followers.

He is, we see him using that beast to divert from God's good, God rule and reign. Producing a counterfeit government, if you like, or way of governing that will woo and will amaze and will thrill and will inspire and will draw the gaze of societies to follow them.

But it is, in a sense, mirroring God's good reign in verse 2 by imbuing power and authority to wield in its behalf. In verse 3, appearing to have resurrected.

That's an interesting reference potentially to Nero who, at the age of 30, committed suicide, but there were rumours that he had risen from the dead. And there were a couple of pretenders who were pretending to be Nero risen from the dead, but they were shown to be false.

also is mirroring God's rule in verse 4 as people marvel and worship, not the true and living God, but the Caesars and so on.

[18 : 46] And so you can see these parallels in the way that Satan is parodying the way that God's good rule and reign.

He's giving authority. He's reaching out to every tribe and nation and language, verse 7. And it's seemingly invincible as well. And so God is corrupting, not God, Satan is corrupting that which God has made, which he's been doing from the beginning.

There is, in a sense, in this passage, an unholy trinity, if you like, between the dragon and the two beasts, defacing, destroying, distorting the beauty of God's design, confusing people, causing people to follow and adore them in the opposite direction of the living God.

I mean, know that that's the strategy of Satan because he's been doing that since the very beginning. We saw that in our series in Genesis. And again, we've seen this, that which is patterned here, and again, echoed through all the ages.

In certain times and certain places, the worship of God is explicitly banned. And people are called to worship the state or their leaders.

[20:07] They erect huge statues of themselves to be worshipped and adored. People to give homage to their beloved and benevolent leader who is usually nothing but a tyrant and a dictator.

and of course that happens both in the sort of left, if you like, political sphere as well as in the right political sphere.

Hitler, the most extreme example on one side and there are plenty of other examples on the other.

So what is being taught here? Is it that we are not to put our trust in any political party or person?

Well, I think it's a little bit more nuanced than that, isn't it, when we know the whole of the scriptures.

What it is teaching though, I think, is not to put our ultimate trust or hope in a party or a person.

Because actually, I think we are called to take our part in the political process. We live in a democracy, therefore we have the right to petition and right to and speak with our politicians.

[21:16] I think Christians should be involved in every sphere of life where they can in all good conscience work. Therefore, I think Christians should join political parties where they feel that they can.

I think that Christians should seek to be elected where they feel that they can. All the while knowing, and it was really refreshing to hear Tim Farron speak in these terms, that even though he's a politician, even though he's part of a party, his trust is not ultimately in politics.

As a believer, he trusts in a higher throne, although he's seeking to work with the lower throne, if you like. His allegiance, our allegiance, is to him, to Christ, and to him alone.

And here's the rub with that though, isn't it? Because Satan hates that. You can hear the malice in the statement by Diocletian. It is our will that the Christians be utterly destroyed from the face of the earth.

And the character of that is seen in a sort of governance that is not godly governance in verses like verse 5. It's proud and it's blasphemous.

[22:30] It has power to carry through its wicked ways, but mercifully, as we see here, only for a season because it is for a specific time that it is allowed to reign.

And we know from previous chapters, if you've not heard before, that when it mentions a specific number of days and so on, it's meaning that this is a limited season in which they will be allowed to do these things.

Martin Luther, in commenting on these kind of things, said, we need to remember that even the devil is God's devil. He is on a leash. He is limited. But the Christians in the first century and Christians throughout the ages know full well the experience of the claws and teeth of the agents of Satan as they, verse 7, waged war on the people of God and at times have conquered them.

And verse 8 is really solemn. It's all the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast, all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the worlds.

It's really solemn because what it's saying here is that there are no neutrals. There are no spiritual Switzerland's. There's no, I'm not a follower of Jesus myself, but I'm spiritual.

[23:47] There's no, I'm not a follower of Jesus myself, but I'm moral. There's no, I'm not a follower of Jesus, but if it works for you, then that's great. This passage is saying that if we do not belong to Christ, if we've not bowed the knee to him and trusted him as saviour and Lord, then ultimately we are being duped by, unknowingly or unknowingly, bowing the knee to Satan, directly or indirectly.

And that's kind of an arresting truth that's written here in these verses, isn't it? Especially if you're new to all of this. Let me encourage you, if you're not a follower of Jesus today, maybe today is a day to give your life to Christ.

We'll hear a little bit more about that in depth in the second section. But whilst looking at these solemn verses, there are even more solemn things to be said in verses 9 and 10.

In other words, the verses are saying, and so do not be surprised with all of this going on, if you end up going into captivity, if you are imprisoned or you're expelled, or even if you are killed for the faith.

And we've seen that time and time again throughout history. Jesus taught that that would happen.

He said, if it happened to me, it will happen to you. If they hated me, they will hate you. John is only tapping into a long stream of teaching that goes back to Christ.

[25:22] So we've seen that God is kind of lifting up the curtain on human history and showing us the backdrop of this kind of spiritual tussle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil.

And the way in which we are caught up in that. The way in which that works out in the political spheres, not just in the Roman era, but through time and time again, as it's repeated, that pattern repeated through history.

So we're asking the question, what on earth is going on? This is what God is saying is going on.

And actually, even if you're not a believer, thinking, when you think about the sheer evil of some of the things that go on in our world, I actually think, where does that come from?

Is it just from the human heart? Or actually, there's just something behind it? The Bible says there is something. Okay, but secondly, then, how do we respond in the midst of that?

Well, it's really clear. I don't have to make up the application here today. Verse 10, we're called to patiently endure. The early letters of the book were there to encourage us, the believers, to overcome, to be able to be victorious in the circumstances they are living.

[26:42] And actually, the rest of the book of Revelation is about that, is how to remain faithful, how to overcome, how to keep faithful to him.

And one of those is with our expectations and our responses. And here is our responses to patiently endure. Kevin DeYoung comments, it seems God is less concerned to have a strategy to change their godless empire than he is to not let that godless empire change them.

Let me read that again. In these verses, it seems that God is less concerned to have a strategy to change their godless empire than he is to not let that godless empire change them.

They are to patiently endure and remain faithful. Because the reality is that all through the ages, believers have found themselves, and this is not having a chip on our shoulder or kind of being paranoid, it's just a reality, is that believers have found themselves maybe overlooked in their department or in their workplace when it comes to promotion because of their Christian values. because they're not prepared to lie, because maybe they want Sundays off, because they're not prepared to join in the toxic conversation and views, whether it's of immigrants or members of the opposite sex.

[28:06] They're not prepared to conform to the latest trends and views on sexuality and gender and sign this and sign that and so on. we're to patiently endure, understanding that that's part of the cost of being a Christian.

That's part of taking up our cross daily and following him. And yes, there is a price to pay, but actually there is joy.

There is joy in being faithful to the one who has been so faithful to us and who enables us to be faithful to him in the midst of the circumstances, the trying circumstances, that we might find ourselves because of the political sphere and political age of any age.

But let me be sort of specific and ask, what is the crunch point for us this morning? What's the crunch point for you in these things? What are the things that you are challenged in thinking, yeah, I need to patiently endure in this circumstances?

Yes, I need to walk faithfully in this circumstance. What is the place where we are being challenged to walk the narrow path and not the broad road?

[29:21] The places where we're being challenged in our endurance, challenged in our faithfulness because there's something else that we really want and it might be success or promotion or significance, a bigger paycheck, a certain relationship, pleasure, comfort, ease.

if we just compromise a little and that's all we need to do to get it. Where is it that the Holy Spirit is just challenging us right now and thinking, here's the area that I want to encourage you to remain faithful to me?

Now, this letter is not just a prophecy. In many ways, it's a pastoral letter, isn't it, as well as a revelation. It's helping those early believers, every generation of believers, step into the victory and the new life and remain in it and stay steadfast and faithful to it, which we've received through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How to remain faithful, whether it be under the cruel hand or subtle subversion of this first beast as it works its ways in the political sphere.

So that's the, in a sense, hopefully explains the first beast. But what about the second one? As we come across in verse 12, working in the religious sphere, leading people away from the true worship of God to false worship.

[30:51] We see that beginning in verse 11. This creature, this beast, comes not from the sea but from the earth. In other words, I think it's probably a little bit more familiar than the previous one.

Less obviously a beast at first. And we see that in verse 11. This beast has only two horns and it's like a lamb. Also, a similar vision is given in Daniel chapter 8.

But actually, its true nature is revealed when it speaks. Because it speaks like a dragon. And it is given, verse 12, authority on behalf of the first beast.

It's in a sense almost like minister of propaganda, creating a religion that will give credence to the corrupt state. But the challenge is that it looks like a lamb.

It looks like it could be, you know, true. It may have looked very similar. It may even have used similar words but actually meant completely different things by those words, whether it was words about love or morality or God.

[32:00] And use of other religious languages and themes. It looks like a lamb but actually it is the voice of the dragon. It is a false religion. But it can be hard to discern the difference between the two sometimes.

Verse 13, we see this minister of propaganda, if you like, this false lamb, mirroring, verse 13, the true prophets of God, like Elijah, who at the behest of God rained down fire from heaven.

But also begin to see something of its schemes, verse 14, as it raises up images or idols to be worshipped. Begin to see the old patterns repeating themselves. Actually, we know Satan's schemes really well.

He has a limited series of things that he does and here's one of them, creating images and idols. Idols maybe at times made at the hands of men and women, whether it was statues of Caesar or Stalin or King Yong-un.

Or whether they were idols as in Ezekiel's day, chapter 14, verse 4, where he speaks about the idols of the heart, which are less obvious. But actually, you're thinking, what are those?

[33:15] And again, those of you around, a lot will be familiar with that. But if you're new, you're thinking, what are the idols of the heart? G.K. Chesterton once said, when we stop worshipping God, we don't worship nothing.

Actually, we end up worshipping anything. What happens, he was describing, was when we take God out of the creator's place in our lives, we don't replace it with nothing. Actually, we replace it with created things.

We extract from that place that God was supposed to take and give us the meaning and the purpose and the value and sense of being and so on that we extract from God.

We begin to extract them from these created things. We take good things and we make them into God things in our lives. And actually, the problem with these is that they were never meant to be in that place in our lives.

And so, they make great servants. They're good things, but they make poor masters. And they're always demanding more. So, for example, if it's success, then success is great for a time.

[34:12] We gain meaning and value and purposes and sense of worth and so on from it. But actually, and the accolades come, but when the accolades begin to dial away, then we actually think, well, I need more.

And so, we work harder. And it's saying, yeah, keep in order to be satisfied. It always asks for more. We take good things and we make them God things.

They become idols of the heart. Ultimately, we become slave to them. It could be family life. It could be work, career, popularity, happiness, success, fitness, health, sex.

All of these things are good in themselves, but if we make them into an ultimate thing, they ruin us.

John, in another letter, not this letter that he wrote here, but in 1 John chapter 5, he said this.

He said, we know that we are children of God and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true.

[35:14] And we are in him who is being, is true by being in his, by being in his self, the Son of God.

He is the true God and eternal life. And then he says, dear children, therefore, keep yourselves from idols. We know we are children of God.

We know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. That's what we're reading in Revelation 13. But we know who the true Son of God is. We know where the throne is. We know the one who we can trust in.

Therefore, we keep ourselves from idols. And then finally, verses 16 to 18. These are verses that have sent believers in a tailspin, whether it's about barcodes, about chip implants, about vaccine certificates, and any other number of speculations about the number of the beast and so on. When you look into it, the number of these could initially have referred to Nero. For example, you know, the kind of Greek numerology, if you attach a number to every letter, and if you, you know, Caesar, Nero, or whatever, you put it all together, then if you translate it into Hebrew, then you end up getting the number 666.

[36 : 34] The only problem is with that is that you have to misspell the name of Nero in order to get that number. So it is possible that isn't actually what it is, but, you know, it could have been. I wonder if the most likely thing is that actually the number 6, it's one less than 7, isn't it?

7 is the perfect number. It is God's perfect number. And so, in the same way as the angels cry, holy, holy, holy, because God is so ultimately holy. You know, if a number was attached to God, it could be 777, because it is three times the perfect number, utterly perfect.

Well, here is the one who is playing the parody. Here is the one who is the great pretender, who is imperfect. And so he is 666. 666. And the number on the head and the hands, well, they don't have to be visible.

In the same way as, you know, we learned early in Revelation and also in Ephesians that the Holy Spirit is our seal, our guarantee of our inheritance. This seal in our lives is an invisible seal. So these two could be an invisible seal on their lives. But they're on their forehead and on our hand. They're affecting their thoughts and their actions the way that they think about things and the way that they live.

[37 : 50] In contrast with in the Old Testament where, you know, the believers had means of having the scriptures on their head and written on their hands. So that in their thinking and in their acting, they would walk in the way of God.

Here is the one who is the parody, the counterfeit, who is putting his mark to say, no, no, this is how you think and this is how you should live. So what is the call of us who are following the Lord?

When the political sphere can be under the dominion of Satan, when there can be false religions and false prophets all around. Well, of course, the call is verse 18 is to be wise, isn't it?

We need to be wise. We need to think about things. How does the gospel shape my life? How does the gospel affect my thinking in all of these contemporary issues in life?

Thinking with godly wisdom, not worldly wisdom. Being discerning about those who masquerade as angels of light, whether it's, you know, the cults, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and the like, who will point in a very different direction to a very different Christ with a very different gospel.

[39 : 06] But there are other Christian movements that also, that can appear like a lamb. But ultimately, they end up speaking with the voice of the dragon because they don't speak with the voice of Scripture.

They undermine the authority of Scripture and say, oh, no, no, we know better now. That is the voice of the dragon when that is uttered. And don't take seriously how to apply that and think, oh, that can't be so.

Liberal Christian movements that move along just with the latest trends in society. We need to be wary of them. We need to be wise about them. We need to be discerning about whether they are following and propagating a genuine faith.

We also need to be wary of legalistic counterfeits, ones which lead us away from the gospel by faith alone into a gospel of works.

Subtly. We need to be wise and we need to be discerning. We need to discern the philosophies of the age and how they are sort of shaping maybe the church and the way that we're going and leading us away from Christ.

[40 : 20] We need to be discerning about the way that rampant entitled individualism, so pervasive in the West, is causing such misery in people's lives.

But it can be a subtle woo to us who are believers. Or a trend to selfish, unfettered, greed-based and intolerant economics. How that is affecting our society, but also how it can subtly influence us. We need to think about where in the absence of God, truth and reality, right and wrong, are just obliterated.

And how we learn to walk faithfully for him. I think, interestingly, in thinking through just the way that society is, and thinking through, maybe you're a seeker and sort of thinking, actually, you know, I

It's so individualistic. It's so self-absorbed. It seems incapable of giving me the answers that I need. And I think that is true. Because as society moves away from God and increasingly revolves around the self and around the individual, who of us is able to have sufficient wisdom to be able to determine how to live our lives?

But mercifully, this book, this chapter reminds us, actually, there is one who is the wisdom of the ages, who we can look to, whose ways are good and whose ways are true, in whom we should trust and put our faith.

Actually, wisdom is part of the package that we get that is imbued to us as we follow Christ. That is not only wise in itself, but he walks in the way of wisdom. And therefore, we also, as we follow him and stay close with him, we'll find ourselves walking in the way of wisdom.

[43:08] Our final song has these words in it. There's a peace that outlasts darkness, hope that's in the blood. There's future grace that's mine today, that Jesus Christ has won.

For he is more than able. So let's stand and let's sing our final song that reminds us of these truths.
And it's the point. And of all the three things. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And
I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And
I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And
I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to do that. And
I'm going to do that.