

Millenium

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[0:00] By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Thank you. What was Abraham looking forward to, does it say?

A city with foundations. Yeah, he's looking forward to a city. Yeah, a strong city, a deep city, if you like, a permanent city.

Now, I would say that what he is looking forward to is the Jerusalem that we're looking forward to. That is the heavenly Jerusalem. Not an earthly city, but a heavenly Jerusalem.

[1:11] And I would say that that text says that's what he was really, his faith was really pointing towards. Now, that may or may not be helpful as we go on through this evening.

I think we ought to read something from the book of Revelation, shouldn't we? Let's read in chapter 20. From verse 11 to verse 15.

Revelation chapter 20, verse 11 to verse 15. It's on page 1249 or thereabouts. Is there a volunteer to read this?

Yeah, Ray, thank you. 7 to 11, is it? Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 to 15.

Oh, 11 to 15, right. Oh, yeah. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them.

[2:20] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. And books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

The sea gave up the dead that were in it. And death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them. And each person was judged according to what he had done.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Thank you very much. We've been looking at these chapters for a little while. So you'd get the most out of this if you had followed the sequence up to this point.

But that little extract gives us a view of the end of the world. And it tells us that one day there will be a day of judgment. And it tells us that that's an awfully significant thing.

[3:30] That on that day of judgment, there are only two outcomes. And one is to go to the new heaven and new earth, which is in the next chapter.

And alternatively, to be thrown into the lake of fire. That's a very stark outcome, isn't it? And it isn't just here.

It's actually in lots of places in the Bible. But it's particularly stark here. And it's something that we need to know. If you're anything like me, one's mental processes most of the time are taken up with I don't know, have I taken the rubbish out?

Did I get the recycling in the right bins? Where's my socks? I mean, things like this. But we miss out on the point of life if we don't realize that every step we take through this life is heading us towards either heaven or hell.

And the Christian life doesn't really make any sense unless we put it into that context. This book, the Book of Revelation, was written to Christians in the Roman Empire who were just beginning to

face the reality of being killed for their faith.

[4:59] And the book aims to give them a right perspective on life and a right perspective on death.

And the book constantly says you've got to hold on to your hope in Jesus Christ. There's a fight to be fought and that fight is to hold on to your faith in Jesus Christ and to live accordingly.

And there are many obstacles to that. Many adversaries. In many ways you could say that this casts the Christian life in the role of a fight.

A battle. Part of the battle between God's adversary, Satan, and God's champion, Jesus Christ. Christ. And if we belong to him, we are in his army and we are fighting that same fight.

And it's really helpful for us to realize that that's the stakes we're living for and that's the way we're to live. And just to enlarge on that a little bit, you'll know in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, towards the end of it, he talks about spiritual armor.

[6:20] And I always think that the idea that we need spiritual armor says two things. It says, one, that without it we're a goner because we need spiritual armor because otherwise we're terribly naked and vulnerable.

And the second thing about the spiritual armor is, to my mind, when it goes through it, it doesn't have anything about pentagrams, smoke, magic spells, mysterious incantations.

It just says things like, this is your armor. Faith. The gospel. The righteousness of Christ. Living for him. Prayer.

They're just the ordinary things of the Christian life. But he says they function as armor. And if we have these things, we're going to be strong enough to defeat the devil.

But without them, we are just going to be turned into pulp. So that's a sort of introductory thought.

Now, for this evening, those of you who follow this, we've got to chapter 20.

[7:35] And chapter 20 contains various ingredients. But it seemed to me that there were various loose ends. And tonight and in the next couple of weeks, I'd like to try, if I may, to tie up the loose ends.

But just to say, how have we got to where we are now? I'd say that we've had a positive, straightforward, reverent approach. We've just listened to God's word, listened to the text, and not got too caught up in the details, but trying to get the broad picture of what's happening in this book. As we've gone through, I think we've seen a number of themes of theology of the Christian life, in other words, that we would find in the writings of Paul or the writings of Peter or the pipe writings of John.

And to my mind, they are well expressed in the sort of body of theology, which is called Reformed. And in particular, Reformed says God is sovereign.

God is in charge. God isn't taken by surprise by things. God has a plan, and he will most definitely make sure it goes through all the processes to the very end that he's designed.

[8:56] And his design is to have his people in heaven with him. So I would say that that's what we've been doing. As we've been going through, I've been quite concerned that it's not just like trying to solve a crossword puzzle, to be clever, but to be spiritually helpful.

But I think we still, there's some questions and loose ends that I'd like to try and tie up. I won't tie them all up, but for example, the bit that we've been looking at has got lots of different images in. So even in the bit that we read, there was a throne, there was death and Hades, there was judgment, there was books, there was judgment according to what they'd done, that the books were opened, which books are those?

Verse 12. And there's another book mentioned in verse 15, the book of life. And then there's the second death, and there's all sorts of images there which would be helpful at least to unpack some of them.

I would find that interesting and helpful to do anyway. And then as we've gone through, we found that there's lots of Old Testament references, and again, I'm intrigued by this.

[10:11] So I was looking at the book of the prophet Ezekiel, and I was surprised at how much John quotes from that, and I'm very tempted to say, let's spend an hour one evening having some sort of quick delve into the prophet Ezekiel.

And this is a question, is the short time, so for those of you here the other time, there is a short time of activity, as Satan mentioned, is that a prediction of worldwide persecution just before the final end, or is it something else?

So I'll touch on that a little bit this evening. I think that's a really significant question. And then if you've been brought up in Christian faith, you might well have heard about the Antichrist and the rapture and the Battle of Armageddon, and I have hardly mentioned those things.

I think because they're not very much in the text, actually, but you might be thinking, well, hang on, have I been cheated because he's missed them out? And then there's another question that popped up about those books.

Is it salvation by grace and judgment by works? And then this is the bit that I think we will look at this evening. You will have heard of this. What is this business about being pre-millennial, post-millennial, amillennial?

[11:39] You might have heard about this. You might have seen things on YouTube about this. You might have been sent clips from YouTube about this, and you might be right puzzled about it.

And what's this about pre-tribulation and Jacob's trouble? And one of the things you can't get away from is the place of Israel in God's plan. So that, I'd just like to try and address those a little bit as best I can in the next 30, 40 minutes.

Okay, that's what I'm going to try and do. It's a little bit different to what we've done before, because before I've just done the text. So let me give the introduction again. And I think the introduction keeps us quite safe.

Nobody's subjected to this before, and I think it is a helpful introduction. This book in the Bible is for our edification. It's for our survival and progress as Christians.

That's what it's there to do. It's not there to sort of stoke controversy and enable us to score points over people, but to build us up as Christians. It's sometimes called the apocalypse or the revelation.

[12:51] It is, that means unveiling. And what the book is doing is showing us the spiritual truth behind the obvious appearance. That's helpful for us as Christians, so that we know what the enemy is doing.

We need this sort of identification, this revelation. It is in the form of a letter, and a letter in its nature has relevance to the person receiving it.

So we need, we would do well to approach the book of Revelation thinking it was written to Christians in the Roman Empire in the first century.

What would it mean to them? How does it become relevant to them? And then think if it was relevant to them, how is it relevant to us? To work it that way. That's what you do with every other book in the Bible, isn't it?

You see, how is it relevant to them? And then how does that come to us? And it was written to a certain number of churches and the number of churches is? Seven. Yes, seven. And immediately we say that it's written to seven churches.

[13:58] That alerts us. Were there really only seven churches in that area? I think, no, that can't be right. And it alerts us to the fact that he uses numbers in a symbolic way, and the number seven, we get to realise, usually seems to mean the whole thing.

So he's writing, as it were, to the whole set of churches, but he's doing it by picking seven. And that alerts us that he uses numbers symbolically.

Letters are relevant to hearers. It's also in the form of a prophecy. It does specifically say it's a prophecy. And it tells them what is shortly going to happen.

There's different ways of interpreting that. The most obvious way is to say it is telling them things that are shortly going to happen. So they're shortly going to face persecution. They're shortly going to face an onslaught which they haven't placed before.

It could mean things that are quickly going to happen. Or it could be things that will happen. And with God, everything happens quickly. He will come.

[15:09] Jesus is coming soon. But he's always been coming soon. It doesn't necessarily mean in the next 36 minutes. But there's something immediate about the fact that he is coming soon.

And the book of Revelation gives us behavioral implications of the big picture. Seeing as we're living in a battle, seeing as we have spiritual enemies, then there are certain ways that we should behave.

There are certain things that we should set ourselves to do and certain things we should set ourselves not to do. In particular, we shouldn't be worshipping idols and images.

We shouldn't be taken in by the deception of the false prophet nor the intimidation of the power of state persecution. And that certainly applied to them.

And we have to think how this applies to us. It applies slightly different ways, doesn't it? We in this country don't face state persecution as such, but we face various pressures to change Christian ethics, Christian proclamation, a little bit more subtle.

[16:24] And the horizon of the book of Revelation is from the time of its writing to the end of the world. It has that whole span which I've drawn along there like that.

Okay, so these are actually very helpful principles. And I've also approached it by listening to his accent, his way of speaking.

So rather than saying, oh, what, you know, this is my example again which I will repeat because I think it works. Stuart McNary at Holland Road used to preach about fiat, which was in a Northern Irish accent.

Fiat. We walk by fiat. And it took some people months to realise he went, he's saying faith. Now if you'd misheard it, you might think he was saying fate.

Now that would be to mishear what he was saying, isn't it? Because you've got to tune in to the way he says things. And likewise, we have to tune in to the way the book of Revelation is written, the sort of way he says things.

[17:34] And he uses signs which point away from themselves to something else. We would be silly to say that he just says things literally. That would be to say that Stuart McNary was saying fate when what he was really meaning was faith.

He uses signs. He uses images and symbols. Mostly, but not all, from other parts of the Bible, which means that we need, if we're to understand it, we need to understand other parts of the Bible. He uses symbolic names and numbers and times and places and themes. And the symbols are theological. You have to go back to say what was the basic theological thing that was happening? For example, in the plagues of Egypt, the theology of judgment. And then he can use the same ideas of locusts and saws and thunder and hail in his book and say this is judgment in the contemporary world to which he was speaking.

Time, he uses theologically. He's also prepared to use things that look like apparent contradictions. Things he hears versus things he sees.

[18:49] So he hears the lion of Judah has prevailed and then he sees a lamb. Yeah.

And he hears 144,000 and he sees a number which no one can number. There's two ways of saying the same thing. And he uses what I say is like a collage where you stick loads of different things up in no particular order and you just take them all together as a sort of mixture or a recipe. Many perspectives on one subject. Right. I think those principles safeguard us from all sorts of muddles as we go through.

Anyway, what have we seen? The seven churches, the lamb upon the throne, the seven seals of world history, the seven trumpets for repentance, the war between the dragon and the woman and her seed.

We were introduced to the agents of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet and the image of the beast. We saw final judgment in various ways, for example, a harvest. We saw seven bowls of wrath.

[19:57] We saw the prostitute Babylon gloriously defeated and I've still got the clever animations for that. And then we were seeing the triumph of the rider on the white horse and images at the end.

That's what we covered. And I would say that we've gone around the same thing several times from the beginning of Christ's ascension into heaven to his final judgment.

And we've gone around that several times looking at it from different perspectives, different pictures, but not boom, boom, boom, one after another. That would be a hopelessly clunky way of understanding the book.

That's just to repeat what I've said before, but I think that that's a helpful set of principles. Now then, given that that's the approach that I've taken thus far, and I'm not going to go through the whole book all over again, godly believers have different interpretations of the book of Revelation and the future.

And this needn't be a problem. I have not made it my task to be always contradicting other Christians as we've gone through.

[21:22] I've just tried to say what it actually says, but I think we'd all be helped by realising that there are different views. And we don't have to fall out over this.

I've got many good friends in the Brethren, and Brethren people would almost certainly be taught a different way of doing it than I've done. But we're still brothers and sisters and we serve the same Lord and we have fellowship together and this isn't such a big deal.

It doesn't have to be a huge problem. We'll all be in heaven together. Now Steve, the other evening, the other morning said doctrine matters, which I absolutely agree with.

But it's worth just tweaking that and saying not all doctrine is as important as other doctrine. There are some doctrines that are absolutely fundamental and crucial.

There are other doctrines that are still true, but we don't necessarily have to fall out over them. So for example, I think it is a true doctrine that churches should be self-governing and independent.

[22:29] Anglican people would say, no, the way to do it properly is to have a hierarchy. Well, okay, I think they're wrong, but we don't have to fall out over it.

I don't have to be constantly on at them about it. Although, if they always assume they're right, I do like just to say, well, hold on, not everybody agrees with this. So, and it isn't just that there are primary doctrines and secondary doctrines, it's there's a whole scale.

And in any particular case, we have to say, what is actually at stake here? Is this worth falling out over? Is this something we need to take a stand on or what? So, I'll just point that out.

And eschatology, which is what this is, the teaching of the end, we can all agree there'll be a day of judgment. We can all agree Jesus is coming.

We can all agree we need to be ready. And those are the fundamental things. we can respect and work with gospel believers.

[23:34] Now, sometimes differences can be used as levers to divide unnecessarily. So, it might be an insignificant difference, in fact, but it can be used as leverage to promote division.

And I don't think that's the right thing at all. So, you can have a particular difference with a Christian and that doesn't matter. But sometimes it can be pushed and made into a major thing, when actually it's a minor thing.

And then that does become a problem. And if you have been fed some of the YouTube videos, different views, some of them can be quite aggressive, actually, and can be quite disrespectful towards people such as most UK evangelicals that don't take the same view.

So, how you hold those differences is important. But even having said that, there are better and worse views, and we're allowed to discuss them and debate them without disrespecting one another or belittling one another.

And hopefully this will lead to us being better Christians. I know there are better Christians than I, who I know are wrong on such and such, but they live better than I do, and so I have to respect them.

[25:10] And let's, as we try and resolve issues, let's trust and pray that it will make us better Christians, because that's what we're aiming for. So, in this particular issue, there are different views of the millennium.

That's the thousand years that's in chapter 20. The thing is that different views of the millennium nearly always go hand in hand with what to me is a fundamentally different view of the way the Bible works.

So, it's not a big issue in itself, but if, as and when Daniel is preaching or other people are preaching in the Old Testament, it rather changes the way that the Bible is handled. And that's what I try to explain a little bit. In other words, the way we go from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In other words, how prophecy works, how the Old Testament prophets are understood what they're on about.

In other words, how the revelation of the Bible progresses. So, the truth doesn't change, but it is gradually unfolded.

[26:36] And like Daniel was saying this morning, there's a sense in which the Old Testament uses infant school methodology so that when we grow up we will have a mature understanding.

So, let me give you an example of this. When our kids learnt the violin with Mrs. Small, who was lovely, she said, this is how you play the violin. You hold up one hand, you grasp the violin, you hold up the other hand, you get the bow, you put the violin under your chin, you put the bow on the violin, and that's how you stand correctly to play the violin.

And when our kids did violin practice, they had to do like that. Now, that is training. It's what you do with children.

When you've got the hang of it, what it's getting at is so that when you're a grown-up violinist, you just do the like that. You don't have to do this, this, this, and this.

It's training. And the Old Testament is like that. It trains us in a way that when the New Testament comes and freedom in Christ comes, we don't have to go through all the paraphernalia if we get the point that it was getting at.

[27:55] That's true of the food laws, it's true of the days and seasons and things like that. Anyway, and here's another thing. How central is Jesus Christ to God's plan?

I think that's a profound question. We were looking on Friday evening at John's Gospel where I think it's Nathaniel says we have found the one about whom the law and the prophets spoke. I think that's a strong statement. What do the law and the prophets speak about? Answer, Jesus. That is what they're all about and everything else falls around the centrality of Christ. Now I would say that if you misunderstand, you think it's about Jesus Christ and it's about something else. That would be a misunderstanding.

So let's get to it a little bit. The technical terms are going to be premillennialism, postmillennialism, amillennialism, and dispensationalism.

[29:08] I'm sorry to be doing technical words but that's where it is. And for the sake of argument, what I got to last time was to say this is Christ in his first coming and in his resurrection and ascension.

This is Christ in his role as judge on the end of the world, the last day. And what I tried to persuade us of last time was that this intervening time can be described in many ways but in Revelation chapter 20 it's described symbolically as a thousand years and various things happen in this thousand years and not least that in this thousand years the nations are undeceived and therefore they can come and believe in Jesus Christ which is a huge development.

That's what putting it very simply is what I was putting forward last time. So the thousand years is the millennium and these different views work like this.

So this is the framework that I've produced. The beginning of the thousand years, the end of it and the period in the middle. The period in the middle have various things happening.

I've put a view of orange for opposition to the gospel or trouble or as the word that people use is the Greek word is thlipsis, it means trouble or tribulation.

[30:43] Tribulation makes it sound a little bit more dramatic doesn't it? But in the framework that I've advocated we've got the main thing is this line of progress here and at the end of it Christ comes and we meet the Lord in the air and then is the day of judgment.

That's the pattern I've been producing. So to put a little bit more detail on at the beginning of this Satan is cast down so that has an effect on the believers guilt and shame.

In terms of opposition Satan is hurled down and angry it's a short time. It says in one of the other chapters he's angry because his time is short so he's not absent. Regarding mission Satan is bound and regarding the unbelief of the nation Satan is unbound it says for a short time.

That sounds more confusing than it's meant to be but these are the things that happen at the start of this period and at the end of the period is the last day Christ coming the church meets him in the air the day of judgment and all things are made new.

Is that okay? That's really what I was trying to persuade us of at the previous time. Right now let's do this one.

[32:02] It's called post-millennialism and it post means after and it's the post-millennial coming of Christ. So the post-mill refers to when the coming of Christ is.

And in post-millennial coming, there's the millennium, Christ coming to earth is post-millennium, after the millennium, and this view, see the book of Revelation says various things.

This is one of the things it says. Let's sort of assume we're emphasizing this view. It emphasizes the growth and the triumph of the gospel. It downplays the opposition rather.

It possibly includes Israel as a promise of the conversion of Israel possibly. Oh, I don't know. That was a little bit quick. Here is a quote from Wikipedia and you might think if he's descended so low as to quote Wikipedia, he probably doesn't know what he's talking about.

But I just did a Google search. I think this is not too bad. 1658, the Savoy Declaration was a declaration for the Congregationalists, I believe.

[33:21] And it says, As the Lord in his care and love towards his church hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages for the good of them that love him and his own glory, so according to his promise we expect that in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.

So the Savoy Declaration is post-mill and it's optimistic. It's saying there will be a day in which the gospel goes out and that was the picture I gave.

So that, as I said, there are a number of different views of this time in the book of Revelation, but this is one and if you emphasize that, you're emphasizing a positive view.

And we're told that John Owen articulated this, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Hodge. Davis argues that it was the dominant view in the 19th century but was eclipsed by other millennial positions by the end of World War I due to the pessimism and disillusionment engendered by wartime conditions, which is interesting, isn't it?

I mean, this may or may not be correct, but this is what the guy wrote. And it's interesting that theology gets influenced by the culture and the context in which you do it.

[35:01] So everybody felt we're just getting better and better and then World War I happened and everybody said, no, this is, no, that can't be right. So it's just an interesting fact, isn't it?

That's the post-mill position. Christ coming to earth is post-millennial. And the positive about this is very optimistic.

It says, let's go and do mission because mission work is going to succeed. That's what God is promising for this age. So I think Errol Hulse, who used to be the radical pastor at Cookfield Baptist Church, I think he would have been on this page.

And he was a South African. He'd say, let's go out and preach the gospel. It's going to be successful. People are going to be converted. He would have said it like that.

And he was very enthusiastic. And people were converted, weren't they, under his preaching. So something good to take from that, that there's a positive aspect.

[36:10] And you can find passages in the Bible that have this positive view, like Isaiah 2. Behold, the mountain of the Lord will be raised above all other mountains, and the nations will flow to it, saying, come, let us hear the word of the Lord.

There are passages in the Bible which have this positive view of the days that we're in. I would say there's other, various things go on together.

The wheat and the weeds both grow, but the wheat grows. Okay, now then, this now gets more complicated. So that was post-mill. Now I'm going to do pre-mill.

I am not an expert on this. I had to look this up as well. Well, so this time, let's see if I can get my, Christ's coming is before the millennium.

Pre-mill means before. His coming is pre-millennial in this view. So there's the millennium, the red arrow, and Christ's coming, that's the purple arrow, is before the millennium.

[37:17] And I've got this orangey, it's not very orange, is it? That bit of tribulation.

So in this view, tribulation is not spread throughout the whole period, but it is a particular distinct period. And this version is pre-mill and post-trib.

So this all gets very technical. The coming of Christ is pre-mill, but after the tribulation. And pre-millennialism is the normal diet for many American evangelicals.

So you wouldn't be surprised if we met American believers and they were, they just said, well, of course, everybody believes this.

And they would, some would be pre-mill, post-trib. And I'll do another one in a moment. So in this case, the coming of Christ is future.

[38:26] The millennium is future. A distinct period of tribulation, which some would say is seven years. I don't know where they get that from, but anyway, seven years is future. The rapture of believers, so when believers meet the Lord in the air, that's in the future.

future, the thousand years is going to happen here on earth. And Israel comes into this as well, in this sense that Israel, the promises of Israel are fulfilled in an earthly sense.

So you could, so people might say, the Levitical sacrifices will be reinstated. The temple will be rebuilt, like it says in Ezekiel, and it'll be a thousand miles wide and a thousand miles long and a thousand miles high, or whatever it says in Ezekiel.

It's all going to be literally fulfilled on earth. And even when I say that, you probably think, is that really how we're supposed to understand the way prophecy works?

So I don't think it is personally. And in this view, we're sort of a bit pessimistic, because the next thing we're heading for as we come down here is this seven years of tribulation.

[39:50] And there is a Christian outlook, which instead of being optimistic, like Harold Hulse, is pessimistic, which just says, well, things are just going to get worse.

We might as well just bury our heads somewhere and hope it all goes away soon. So that would be a pessimistic view. And I'll just say again that Israel crops up in this.

And I'll try and say something about that in a moment. Right, that was pre-mill post-trib. Now then, this is pre-mill pre-trib.

So in this one, let's see, the rapture, that's when people go to meet the Lord in the air, is before the tribulation.

And then they come back with the Lord when he returns. And then there's the millennium. So that's the order of events. It looks complicated, doesn't it?

[40:56] I think it looks complicated because it is rather complicated. And I'm open to correction on this because I'm not an expert. But if you listen to In Our Time with Melvin Bragg, anybody listen to In Our Time?

Oh, you should. You should. It is the Rolls Royce of Radio 4 Broadcasting. It is absolutely fantastic. Do you remember John Barrow who used to worship here with us?

He's on there as a professor of cosmology. They do some fantastic programs. They've done a whole program on the rapture. And they get some experts.

They usually know what they're talking about. But anyway. And the session on the rapture tells us that this teaching, and I think probably this particular scheme, came about from J.N.

Darby, 1800 to 1882, who was the founder of the Brethren, the Plymouth Brethren. This is a fairly recent way of construing things.

[42:05] And I think the positive is that he wanted to take the Bible seriously, and he wanted to take solidity, that God's ultimate plan is solid, not sort of wafty around like, I don't know, like wisps of smoke.

And he's right in that. But I don't, personally, I think he's sort of taken the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle and put them together in a slightly skew-whiff order.

The Schofield Reference Bible, from 1909 and onwards, included references and explanations which followed the teaching of J.N.

Darby. Have you got a Schofield Reference Bible? Your dad had. I think Les Hill had a Schofield reference. It was a very popular Bible aid.

And it contained this teaching. I think Chuck Misler, did you listen to Chuck Misler? He's a really nice guy and he's got some really good gospel teaching.

[43:18] I think he would have taught this. John MacArthur, he's very famous, just died this year I believe. He would have taught this.

And here is Kevin DeYoung and his summary of this. Kevin DeYoung does not teach this but he is teaching in America and he says this.

This is the features of, what did I call it? Pre-mill, pre-trib. An imminent rapture, imminent meaning at any time, at any moment.

So he says to his congregation, some of you grew up with these songs, We Wish We'd All Been Ready. That's a great song. Days were filled with guns and war and everyone got trampled on the floor.

I wish we'd all been ready. Larry Norman. So I was brought up with that because at any time the rapture would come and Christians will disappear and be brought up into the sky with Christ.

[44:32] Once the church is removed, God unleashes his judgments on the earth for seven years. I didn't know the song was intending that. But anyway, there is a rise of the Antichrist, there is one world government.

The Jewish people will be preserved and successfully evangelized. At the close of this seven year tribulation, Christ returns. He does battle together with his saints against the forces of evil at a final battle called Armageddon.

Evil is defeated. Satan is then bound for a thousand years. Jesus reigns in Jerusalem for a thousand years as the earth enjoys unparalleled peace and prosperity.

After those thousand years, the devil is released for one final battle in which he is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire, final judgment and then the coming of the new heavens and the new earth. So Kevin de Young says to his congregation, some of you will have been brought up on this and you just assumed that that was what it was.

and because it was so complicated, I think he would have said this, you would prefer to steer clear of the book of Revelation because it is so confusing.

[45:51] Now, let's assume that he knows what he's talking about and that is the sort of standard teaching teaching. And if you get sent to you or subscribed to YouTube videos from American evangelicals, that is almost certainly the position that they will be coming from.

And if you're anything like me, you go, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, at various points there because I think it's taking the pieces of the jigsaw and sort of putting them all in funny places.

Unnecessarily complicated. I think what he's describing is pre-mill, pre-trib.

Sorry, I can't hear. Can you use the microphone? Steve was saying he thinks it's more than that. It's more than that.

Yeah. Oh, dispensationalism is more than that. Yeah, but this is the dispensationalist take on revelation. That's what I was taking.

[47:19] Yeah. Then please do ask. And if you think I'm pulling the wool over your eyes, please just shout out and say so. I was going to say on dispensationalism from what I've read, there's a whole series of these prophecies that need to be fulfilled.

And what they will argue is that they've actually all been fulfilled now. So Christ can return at any moment. And they will give a list of those prophecies and how they've been fulfilled in our time.

I think the most questionable thing is when there are prophecies about Israel defeating her enemies and that is copy and pasted into now and said this now justifies whatever action the current unbelieving Israel takes vis-a-vis the conflict in the Middle East which I think is profoundly unhelpful because there is a vast difference between Israel's role in the Old Testament and where she is now.

And just to, you're probably going to go to sleep before I finish but at least I can say this. In the Old Testament it was always conditional on her being obedient. she didn't think that. She thought I'm here I can do what I want. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. And what a shock for Jerusalem to be destroyed and the people taken into exile because there's always conditional obedience.

[48:56] And currently the nation of Israel is in a complete state of disobedience because they're not believing in Jesus Christ. So none of the promises can be claimed on behalf of present day Israel because she is not in obedience.

She is nowhere near the place where God's promises apply to her. So I think, you know, you might want to question me on that but I think that is a fundamental principle.

I brought this book along, *Who's Promised Land?* by Colin Chapman. And a large part of it just traces the political history history of Palestine, of that area.

And I've read it through and I think the thing I came away with, it is far from simple. It is far from simple. So people say, you know, we've been here so many thousand years, it's always been now. Well, it really hasn't. It has been far more complicated than that. And so if anybody wants to borrow that, I'm open to offers, but I don't want to lose it.

[50:08] But anyway. So that. I was converted in a church that held to that period. I don't know if it's a general church, it probably isn't in America, but there are means, they're theology.

And I think quite a lot of Pentecostals as well would hold to that kind of view. Well, that's interesting. Yeah, so Jack's saying that in the church that he was converted in, there was an Arminian theology. Arminian theology means that the bottom line of whether somebody becomes a Christian is whether the human being decides it or not.

And he was also saying it's linked with Pentecostal theology. I guess a lot of Pentecostalism comes from the States. So would you have been taught this blessing or are you not even conscious of whether you were taught it or not?

Yeah, we were taught it or not. Yeah, okay. Well, as you see, I'm saying I don't think this is quite what the Bible teaches.

[51:21] So this is the, I'll just put up that picture again. Yeah, yeah, that was just putting it again. Okay, so answering, does anybody else want to comment?

I'm going to keep going to the bitter end now, so you can all fall asleep, I shall keep going. So what do you say to people about this? What's the best fit to Scripture?

So I think there are two things I've probably got time to pick out this evening. Dispensationist number one, to take Scripture seriously, you have to take it literally.

I think that is a principle that people would stick to, at least I've heard that said. And the second thing is, God has a definite and separate strand of promises to ethnic, national Israel, including an unconditional gift of land in the Middle East.

And the church is a blip in the fulfilments of those promises. That's a dispensational view. So I'll just read that again because it's rather shocking, isn't it? God has a definite and separate strand of promises to ethnic and national Israel, including the unconditional gift of land in the Middle East.

[52:37] So, unconditional. And the church is a blip in the fulfilment of those promises. That doesn't sound right, does it?

But anyway, yeah. And if to take the different view, as I'm doing, and as we historically would have done in the church here, is referred to as, oh, you believe in replacement theology.

This is what they're referring to. I don't like that term. I think what we believe in is explosive fulfilment theology. Because the promises go when we get to the New Testament and they're explosively fulfilled.

But anyway, this is, I think, a pejorative term, replacement theology. Without wishing to trespass on your patience, but I'm going to do it anyway, let's just have a quick look at those two thoughts.

To take scripture seriously, you have to take it literally. Now, there are many places where facts are reported and we're to take them at face value. If it's factual reporting, take it at face value.

[53:50] So when it says Jesus turned water into wine, if you'd been a chemist there, you would have done a chemical test on the water and it

was literally water and you do a chemical test on the wine, it really was wine.

When Christ died on the cross, he really did die, not like the Muslims say that he sort of fainted or somebody else took his place. We take that literally. Christ's resurrection is not a metaphor, it is a literal fact, it's not make-believe, it's not something that only the disciples experienced in their heads, it's something that Jesus experienced himself.

And the final state is not disembodied floating on clouds but a very tangible new heaven and a new earth. So something very solid about the future.

But the nature of scripture is that God stoops to use human language in a way that human beings can understand. Calvin said God lisps with us.

So like you talk to a baby and you say din-dins, wiki-wiki, tickle-tickle, like that, you're speaking baby language because the baby understands that.

[55:04] God speaks our language, he stoops to use our language. And how do we use language? Well, do we always use, you know, I'll eat my hat if we always use language literally.

And, you know, you could have knocked me down with a feather if, and somebody told me, giving up smoking is like a monkey on my shoulder. You've got a bee in your bonnet about something or other.

And she's got a bun in the oven. And I thought, that's interesting, really, she's doing some cooking. I don't know, why are you telling me that? Why are we having a baby shower if all she's doing is cooking something?

And when Jesus says, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and they say, oh, he's talking about bread. Jesus says, you silly men, obviously I'm not talking about bread.

In Genesis 3.14, it says of the snake, you will eat dust all the days of your life. That's metaphorical, isn't it? It's referring to Satan, it's saying that he'll be in a position of humiliation.

[56:20] It's not a biological and nutritional statement, is it? Snakes don't eat dust, do they? The trees of the field shall clap their hands. What does that mean?

That means creation rejoices, doesn't it? Because trees don't have hands, do they? Unless it's my unbelief that is preventing me from seeing something that is true, but I've never seen a tree with hands.

Scripture can and does express serious truth using metaphor and symbol. So, I don't think we have to take everything literally, and in fact, the book of Revelation, as we've seen, delights, this is his accent, delights to use symbolism.

Second thing, God has a definite and separate strand promises to ethnic, national Israel involving the unconditional gift of land and the churches oblique in the fulfilment of those promises.

I don't think that's right. And let's just check Abraham. I'm going to say that the Old Testament looks forward to the New Testament and the world to come using the only language that it has available, which is Old Testament language and Old Testament vocabulary, and it uses that and stretches it almost to breaking point.

[57:43] So, if Ezekiel wants to talk about the glories of the kingdom to come, he'll say it's like the temple, only the temple multiplied so much that you couldn't possibly build a real temple like this.

It's going to be a thousand miles high, a thousand miles wide. That's how great the kingdom is going to be when Messiah comes. It uses Old Testament language and just sort of pushes it to the utter limits.

So, that's what I think is happening. I've got two quick, no, I've got one quick example, which is Acts 15, verse 13.

And then I've got a slower example, and then we'll sing something. Acts 15, 13. This is about the conversion of the Gentiles.

This is Jewish people getting together and saying, what's happening with the conversion of the Gentiles? And in Acts 15, verse 13, James spoke up.

[58:47] Brothers, he said, listen to me. Simon has described us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from among the Gentiles. That's what's been happening. We've been seeing, instead of Yakov

Rabinowitz being converted, we've seen John Smith converted.

And we've seen Gentiles coming into the church. And he says, this is what the prophets said. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this. And what did they write? They wrote this. After this, I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent.

Its ruins I will rebuild and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things, things known from long ago. He says, this is what's happening. And I ask, did they take literally the idea of a tent being built up? So did Peter say, not only have Gentiles been converted, here's John Smith and here's Colin and all these weird names that these people have.

And by the way, there was a tent. we saw this tent being built. Real tent. He doesn't say that at all, does he? It's taken figuratively. The rule of David, the rule of David's greatest son, is being built up. [60:13] And we're seeing Gentiles converted. Does that make sense? Yes. right. All the promises are explosively fulfilled in Christ and gospel mission.

The promises made to Abraham are fulfilled in the gospel, not in a separate strand, independent of Christ, to do with national Israel.

And we read this. What was Abraham looking forward to in the promises made to him? He was looking forward to a city with foundations. That's what he was looking forward to. His faith is the same faith as ours.

And the children of Abraham are those who walk in the footsteps of faith of Abraham. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but who is one inwardly, whose circumcision is not in the flesh, but the circumcision of the heart.

The New Testament radically redefines what it is to be a Jew, if you put it like that. Now, please can we look at Genesis 13, 15 to 17.

[61:25] This is the last thing. So, those of you who are still awake, well done. Genesis 13. Genesis 13. Have I got this right?

I don't think I have. No, that's not right. I think I meant Genesis 18.

I think I've got this completely wrong. Genesis 13. Hmm? Okay, yeah. Yeah, all the land.

Yeah, let's take Genesis 13, 15 to 17. All the land that you see, I will give you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that anyone can count the dust, then your offspring can be counted.

Go and walk through the length of the breadth of the land, for I'm giving it to you. So, that's a gift of land. And as it's portrayed there, it's a promise of a specific place, uncountable blessing, and it's got an I will.

[62:39] Now, the I wills of God are really important. I'm going to do this. I'm not saying I might do it, all things being equal, I'll do it.

I will do this. And there are no conditions attached to it. It is, I am going to give you land. I'm going to give you offspring. And it's going to have God's people in God's place under his word with his blessing.

That's what the promise is like. Now then, now we go to... Yeah, I'm sorry, I'm getting myself mixed up.

There's another I will here. So, there is something sovereign about this promise. I'm going to do it. What God has in mind, he will certainly achieve.

Yeah, that makes sense. Let's hold that thought. What God has in mind, he will certainly achieve.

Now the question is, what does he have in mind? Now we come to Genesis 18, 18 and 19.

[63:53] And who's got the microphone? Could Pete read us this, please? Genesis 18, 18 and 19. Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Thank you. There are two so that's in that text. I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.

I have chosen him so that his people will be taught and will do what is mishpat and tzedakah.

That's really key terms. That is doing holiness. That is doing righteousness. That is what we would say the fruit of the spirit.

[65:09] That's I have chosen him so that his people would do holiness.

Let's put it that way. And then the next thing, the next so that is so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised. I have chosen him so that his people will do holiness.

So that I will bring about my promises. Now do you notice that is that that says it's really saying conditions isn't it?

It's saying the I will, I will have my people. There will be a place for them. They will be taught holiness.

They will live holiness so that my promises are fulfilled. I was trying to think, I went to sleep last night trying to think of an example of this.

[66:10] Pastor Murrily in Sri Lanka posted on his posts that his daughter has got a, has got, in America has now got a private pilot's license.

So you could say he paid for her to go to America. He paid for her to have pilot lessons. license and she's got her license so now he can go flying with her across the Nevada desert or something like that.

So he says that's what I have in mind to go flying with my daughter. But there are things that have to happen. She has to get her pilot's license. She has to be taught her pilot's license.

She has to get her pilot's license. Presumably she has to find a plane. So there's various things that have to happen. that's what's envisaged. But there's various things that have to happen.

And without those things it won't happen. The promises to Abraham are certain this is going to happen.

[67:23] There'll be people. They'll have a place. They'll have a land. But it's also true that they will be holy people. And that's how the promises will be fulfilled.

And it takes a bit of getting a head round doesn't it? But what it doesn't say is when unholy people who don't believe me and don't trust me are in a land that's my promises fulfilled.

Because it isn't. I would say that the promises are fulfilled in the world to come. When we have a place to be.

When we are holy people. That's the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. And just like it said, he is actually looking forward to the heavenly city.

That's really what the promises are about. And to say that earthly, that there are unbreakable promises about the earthly Jerusalem with unholy people in it, people who've forsaken Christ and are actually quite cruel and selfish, that's nonsense.

[68:34] that's not fulfillment of these promises. The promises are fulfilled when there are people who do holiness. I think... Yeah.

that's what the blessing comes. Yeah.

And he says, one seed which is Christ. Christ. So, I think we wouldn't go far wrong if we said that the promises to Abraham go through Christ.

And there isn't a sort of byway which says, the promises are also fulfilled in the earthly Jerusalem. The promises, to be sure, in the Old Testament, God's headquarters was Jerusalem.

But in the explosive fulfillment, the Jerusalem that now exists is in bondage with her children. And the Jerusalem that is our mother is the heavenly Jerusalem, which we're looking forward to, if that makes sense.

[69:43] We are going to sing. I've taken your time and your patience. Thank you very much for listening. And we're going to sing about this city.

Do we know this song? Yes. Do we know what key it's in? No.