

Second coming

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[0 : 00] A little bit of context, I'm not going to go back over the whole of Revelation again, but! perhaps just to give a little bit of context in the history of the whole Scriptures. If! we go back to the time of Abraham, there are promises made for blessing for Abraham's seed and indeed for the whole world. And the blessings sort of come under, you could describe them as a people and a place and under God's word and his blessing, something like that. And the way those promises get fulfilled follows that basic pattern. There's certainly ups and downs because at some point, as we go through the history, go through the time of Moses and the time of the kings, the split of the kingdom, such as the disobedience of God's people, that this idea of a people under his blessing, under his word, in his place, just can't carry on anymore because they're rejecting his word. And so he ejects them from the place, they go into exile, and the whole question of how these promises are going to be fulfilled comes under real doubt, you know, question, how can these promises be fulfilled? Well, God brings the people back from exile after 70 years, but it becomes very clear that the main problem which ejected them in the first place is still there, that they're back in the land, but they're still not under his word and blessing, although they happen to be in his place. So that sort of strangeness continues up until the time of Christ, so that's the time of Christ. And at this point, things take a sort of explosive step change.

And the temple and all of that, Jesus says, that's not going to work. It's never worked in the past, it's not going to work in the future. Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.

But the temple he spoke of was his body. And everything changes around Jesus Christ. For one thing, Gentiles come in, and we have the promise of the ultimate fulfillment of this, of God's people in God's place under his word. Holy people with his blessing. And, whoops, two S's. So that's where we're headed. And the book of Revelation comes in here. And the thing that I am pretty convinced of, and I think it's a fair thing, is that the book of Revelation is the sum and the fulfillment of all the prophecies.

It's, I can't think of the right word, but it sums up all the prophecies and projects them into the future. And this is the future, which is the kingdom of Christ. So this is just giving you a little idea of where it's all headed to and where we are, we're there. But we are bearing in mind all the things that the prophets have said in the past. For example, the prophet Daniel, who is there in the exile, isn't he? And he's looking forward, what's going to happen here? What's going to happen here? And the book of Revelation very much picks that up. So that's where we're going to go just now. And if you could find Daniel, chapter 7.

Could I have two people who volunteer to read for us, please? Ray?

[4 : 52] And Rosemary got there first, I think. So while you're listening, I would say that, so if Ray's going to read chapter 7, 1 to 14, and Rosemary could read 15 to 28. Okay, we're in Daniel chapter 7, page 893 or thereabouts. Daniel is, it's not an easy book, it's a very visionary book. And the first 14 verses, let's just see, this is Daniel in a vision seeing these things, and then he asks the meaning of them, and in verse 16, we get the meaning of what was in the first 14 verses. So they should cover the same ground with some degree of explanation. And I should also say that when Daniel looks ahead to this point, different colour. Things are quite detailed up to here, but when he comes to this point, there's all sorts of questions that Daniel doesn't answer. And in a sense, all of this gets seen from a distance, but not in detail. So we'll be prepared for that. If I put 4 there, you might notice. And then if I put 4 plus, that might match up something that gets read. Now then, I haven't finished yet, because they're still not going to read it until I've said. So everybody listening, when it says a list of things to do with sovereignty, kingdom, power, when it gets a list of that, just to make sure you're listening. Could you raise your hands when it gets to the list of things like kingdom, power, things like that. Okay. Right? Thank you, Ray.

Right, so chapter 7, verse 1 to 14. In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. Daniel said, In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off, and it was lifted from the ground, so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, Get up, and eat your fill of flesh.

After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard, and on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. After that, in my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast, terrifying and frightening, and very powerful. It had large iron teeth.

It crushed and devoured its victims, and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them, and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

[9 : 08] His clothing was as white as snow. The hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and thrown into the blazing fire. The other beast had been stripped of their authority, authority, but it was allowed to live for a period of time. In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days, and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All peoples, nations, nations, and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Thank you. I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things. The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth, earth. But the holy people of the most high will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever. Yes, forever and ever. Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying with its iron teeth and bronze claws. The beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up before which three of them fell. The horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the most high. And the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

He gave me this explanation. The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them, another king will arise, different from the earlier ones. He will subdue three kings. He will speak against the most high and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the most high. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey him. This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.

Amen. Thank you very much. It's a difficult chapter, isn't it? But anybody spot why it's actually very relevant to New Testament understanding? Did you see a bit there?

Um, it's a revelation about the beast from the sea. Yep. It's definitely got different beasts which are picked up in the book of Revelation. The first one is Leopard, Leopard, Leopard, Leopard, Leopard, Leopard.

[14:00] Yeah. Well, it looks like this one. Yep. Yep. Thank you. Oh, yes, we're supposed to use the microphone. Beg your pardon. Thanks. No, I should have remembered. Thank you for that. Is there anything else that you would pick up in the New Testament that's actually, turns out to be very significant?

The ancient days. Yeah, okay. The bit of, so, yeah, the bit about the ancient of days.

We're going to enlarge on that. I just remember that there was something in Revelation about the ancient of days. Don't just think of the book of Revelation. Think of the New Testament. Son of man. Yeah, Pete, could Pete have the microphone? Son of man.

Which bit about the son of man? Verse 13. Yeah. Say it again so that we can hear it.

In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming from the clouds of heaven. Okay. That is a crucial text. Jesus often refers to himself as the son of man, and presumably he's referring back to this. When we talk about the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, that's the quote that Jesus quoted at his trial, which was enough to condemn him.

[15:30] So, there's actually a very, very important text going on here. So, we're going to come and look at that. I might well have completely got the timing of this wrong again, but let's see. Let's start up again.

Hmm. So, on the screen is what we used last time. I'm going to whiz through this. We had some loose ends, some of which I'm going to try and fill in, a bit about the rapture, for example.

And probably worth saying that the book of Revelation is a book in the Bible. It's for our edification. It's for our survival and our progress as Christians. It's not meant to be just sort of a competition. It's an unveiling, giving us the truth behind the appearance. It's in the form of a letter, so it must have relevance to its first hearers. It's in the form of a prophecy, so it does look forward, telling them what is shortly going to happen. And as Daniel said this morning, the things are going to happen soon, although God's soon is not necessarily the same as our soon.

It gives behavioral implications of this. One thing in particular, that we're to be overcomers. We're not to give in to the world and all its pressures. We're to overcome. And the horizon of the book of Revelation is from the time of writing, back in the first century, to the end of the world.

[17:17] So I'm just going to whiz through this. My thesis was that it refers several times. It goes round and then presses the rewind button, goes from the beginning to the end of world history and then back again through a number of cycles. That's what those red arrows are. And we've been looking at the millennium. And my thesis was that that millennium is the time from now until the coming of Christ.

And I'm not going to stop and justify that because it will take too long. At the end of this time, Christ comes and his people meet him. So we were looking at what does the Bible teach about the coming of Jesus Christ? And secondly, what does the Bible teach about the plan for believers, both dead and living, at the time of Christ's coming? And you remember when I'd started this, I said it was a loose end. But actually, it's not a loose end at all. It's actually mainstream.

The whole thing about being a Christian is that we are looking forward to him. We are living in hope. And I had a number of texts, which I will just whiz through because otherwise we'll get bogged down.

The book of Revelation says, Amen, come Lord Jesus. The idea that there is this deep longing in the Christian's heart for Christ to come and for us to see him and meet with him and be with him forever.

So there were some texts about being a Christian. So for example, this one, 1 Peter 1.3, we are born again to a living hope. That's what being a Christian is. Somebody has a living hope.

[19:09] So we'll put this all up on the internet at some point. And that's where I got to last time. And so let's pick it up here. You will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. So that's the text we picked up from Daniel. And that's Jesus stating that at his trial. And I wanted to take some time to tease out this vocabulary of coming. So I have put Greek words there. Please don't be over impressed by them.

I'm not a proper Greek scholar. I just look it up and copy it off the internet or something like that. But there are some different Greek words. And I've just put down what they are. So in this one, coming

is this word, echomenon, or whatever that says.

And that was the thing that they said of him, he is worthy of death. So that must be quite an important thing for him to say. So let's look at some words and definitions. So here's a little quiz. Second coming. I think Daniel mentioned that this morning, second coming. And my question at the quiz is, how many times is the phrase second coming used in the New Testament?

So I put two arrows there. Is it between one and five? That's option A. Is it between six and ten? That's option B. Is it between eleven and fifty?

[20 : 50] That's option C. Or is it D, none of the above? So the question, hold on. So the question is, how many times is the exact phrase second coming used in the New Testament?

So hands up for A. Hands up for B. Six to ten. Second coming. Hands up for C.

Eleven to fifty. Between eleven and fifty. Second coming. Hands up for D. None of the above. And actually none of the above is correct because the phrase second coming is never used in the New Testament.

It's always his coming. The nearest thing to second coming is in Hebrews 9.28. He will appear a second time for salvation.

That's the nearest thing. But the phrase second coming is not used in the New Testament. Jesus is simply spoken of as coming when the Son of Man comes.

[21 : 49] So this means that we perhaps have to adjust our idea of what coming refers to. So I'm going to put a long arrow there. We pray your kingdom come, don't we?

Your kingdom come, your will be done. And we pray your kingdom come. And the old Puritans would have enlarged on that and said, well, we're looking forward to the final coming.

But we're also asking for God's kingdom to increase now in perhaps in sort of subsidiary stages that there's a process as well as a culmination.

Your kingdom come. So I'm going to take that thought of a longer arrow which has a final end to be sure but also has landmarks along it.

Landmark, intermediate events and a final culmination. And I would like to try and persuade you that that's probably a better understanding of the coming of the Lord.

[22 : 49] It's quite a subtle idea. Let's take it a little bit further. So if it doesn't say second coming, it does certainly say coming. So there's this word, echomai, which I picked up on before, which means it's a traveling word, to travel and to get somewhere.

And there's a load of those references which we'll come to in a moment. There's a second word which you might have heard of, but it's worth remembering that this word is here.

It's, now I don't, if you say it in English, you'd say parousia. I think if you said it in Greek, you'd say parousia. But this is used 24 times in the New Testament.

The coming is 604 times. So I have to be honest, I didn't look them all up. I started looking them up, I thought 604 is going to take me forever. Well, it wouldn't take me forever.

It would just take me 604 references, wouldn't it? Parousia is parousia 24 times, which we'll come back to in a moment. There are some other words.

[23 : 57] So apocalypsis is used 18 times. And of those 18, these, 1, 2, 3, 4, no, 1, 2, 3, I must have missed one out.

Five times it's used for Jesus. Let's look at these, shall we? 2 Thessalonians 1, verse 7. 2

Thessalonians 1, verse 7.

This doesn't look as though it says that. Oh, yes, it does. Yes, I'm looking for apocalypsis, aren't I? Could, where's the microphone got to at the moment? Is it at the back there?

Could Jack read us 2 Thessalonians 1, verse 7? I guess you've got to read verse, from verse 5 maybe.

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right. And as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

[25 : 11] God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you, and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

Could you possibly read verse 8 as well, please? He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Thank you.

That seems to me, although the word apocalypsis is used, it seems to me just the same as what we were singing about when we sang about he comes with clouds descending.

A final revelation, arrival, coming from heaven, and this brings in the day of judgment and indeed the day of blessing for his people.

That's what it goes on to say in verse 10. He comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at at those who have believed. So there's this other word apocalypsis, and there's another word epiphania.

[26 : 23] So if we were Anglicans, we would celebrate the Feast of Epiphany at some point or other, and it means to manifesting, showing, appearing.

Fenero is to show. So let's look at these. There are six uses of this. Let's look at one of them. 1 Timothy 6.14.

1 Timothy chapter 6. Could, Pete, could you read this for us, please? 1 Timothy chapter 6. Could we do 12 to 16?

1 Timothy chapter 6. 12 to 16. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you are called when you have made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who, while testifying before Pontius Pilate, made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time.

[27 : 59] God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honour and might forever.

Amen. Amen. It seems to me that that is a different word just meaning the same thing again.

Appearing, it's a different Greek word underneath. But the idea is the same, isn't it?

Live in the light of what we would call the second coming. Live in the light of his coming. Live in the light of a time when he descends. Live in the light of the time when he comes back.

So that's, let's do 2 Timothy 4.1. We might as well do this as well. It's the same idea.

Could Rosemary read this for us, please? 2 Timothy 4, verses 1 and 2. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.

[29 : 08] Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

Thank you very much. Same thing again here. Live now in the light of his appearing, meaning his coming, because at that time he will judge the living and the dead.

And because that's going to happen, now this is how you're supposed to live. For Timothy, his particular calling to preach the word, to be prepared in season and out of season, to correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

We're all called in different ways, but whatever we're called to do, we should be getting on and doing it because there is the coming of the Lord Jesus, the appearing of the Lord Jesus, the revelation of the Lord Jesus.

And it just seems to be different words, saying the same thing with the same emphasis again and again. And I suppose my point is simply to say, let's not go for a scheme of interpretation which divides his coming from the last day and puts a load of other things in between.

[30 : 30] It all just seems to be one huge event with multiple things that happen in it. Right. Let's see whether we can do this.

So this is the coming word, which I mentioned before, ekomai, ekomenon. Let's look at Matthew 10, verse 23, because Jesus speaks of his coming in this text.

Right. Right.

Should we go to this row? Roger, please could you read for us Matthew 10? Shall we say verse 22 and 23?

This is Jesus speaking to the 12. Getting that? Yep. Very new Bible.

[31 : 52] Yeah, he's running in, doesn't it? Very good. It's not mine. Right. 22 and 23.

Sorry. Here we go. Jesus said, You will be hated by everyone because of me. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Thank you very much. So that text speaks of the coming of the Son of Man, does it not? And he is speaking to the 12 apostles, because that's what it says in verse 5.

The 12 Jesus sent out with the following instructions. And he speaks to them and says, You will be hated by everyone because of me.

[32 : 52] That was true of the apostles, wasn't it? And when you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. That links to the experience of the apostles.

And then this verse, I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. So that, let's take it at face value.

It says there is a sense of the coming of the Son of Man. While the apostles were still witnessing and being persecuted. And actually, they hadn't really got very far before this event happens.

So my question is, what event do you think he's referring to? Because I think this demonstrates what I said before.

There is a final, ultimate coming of empower and judgment. But there are landmark, what did I say? Intermediate landmarks, which demonstrate the same thing, in which Christ is doing the same thing.

[33 : 58] Would anybody dare to suggest what intermediate landmark could be referred to? Jesus. Yeah, Steve? I haven't got a microphone here, but I was just going to say, is it the triumphal entry?

Well, there's the thought. So we've got one vote for the triumphal entry, one vote for the cross. And do we have any votes of a judgment nature in the lifetime of the apostles?

Fall of the temple? Well, I was going to say, the fall of the temple. What earth-shattering event might he be referring to? And I think that these are all good candidates.

It's the cross, the coming in power in Jerusalem, the triumphal entry, and the destruction of the temple. Because that is a sort of end-of-the-world event.

We look back from our point of view and we think, oh, it was the destruction of the temple. Well, but if you look at it from an Old Testament point of view, all the promises of God, all that God had invested in this particular kingdom, smashed.

[35 : 19] You know, this is an earth-shattering event. And it's an earth-shattering event of judgment by the Son of Man. Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it again in three days.

It's a mighty act of his enthroned power. So, personally, I would go for the, I'd put the cross, resurrection, ascension, or the judgment on Israel in AD 70.

But... Did the sacrifice system cease? The sacrifice system ceased, yes. So, it's a colossal change of things.

The liberal scholars would say Jesus thought that he was coming back within the lifetime of his disciples, but he was wrong. That's what the liberal scholars would say.

But I don't think that's right. He is... He means what he says and what he is referring to is this earth-shattering, the events around his cross, ascension, exaltation, act of judgment.

[36 : 24] I think that makes sense. I've referred to the words at his trial and we won't go any further. But just to remark that these are the words that come from the book of Daniel.

So, we need to go back to Daniel to get the full impact of what Jesus was saying and this matter of his coming. But before we do that, let's pick up on this second word, parousia, which is not a verb of motion.

It is a statement of presence. So, Paul uses it. Let's look at it, this word of parousia in Philippians 1.26. Siouxs. read this for us? Philippians 1, 25 and 26, just to get a complete sentence. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith so that through my being with you again, your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Thank you. He's talking about when he comes to be with them, through my being with you, verse 26, that's the word parousia. And in 2.12, perhaps Ray could read this for us please, 2.12, same word is used.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

[38 : 29] Yeah, thank you. The two words, the opposite, in my absence, when I'm not there, and in my presence, when I am there, that's parousia, that's my presence. So there is a, all words have a sort of stretchable, what do you call it, what's the correct word for it, this sort of, pardon? Semantic domain.

Yeah, they have a stretchable area of meaning. It doesn't always mean just one thing. But here, this is meaning presence as opposed to absence, I'm with you, I'm there in person. So we would say,

better to be in the assembly with your parousia than to be watching at home on YouTube. Yeah? That means being, actually being there. So that's one end of the meaning of it, of the spectrum of meaning. But it's also used for a royal visit. So the, you know, when the king came to be present with us, we would say he had a visitation from the king. What was the king's parousia?

Now, I tried to look up a quote for this, but I was unsuccessful. So I'm just going to repeat what I have heard second hand, and I hope this is correct, that the royal visit, the citizens would make everything ready and go out and greet the visitor and then escort him back to the city. They would go out to greet the royal visitor and escort him back to the city.

I really ought to find a sort of definite example of this. But this is what I understand is this particular use of parousia. So you can see the relevance of it. So Jesus' coming is referred to as a parousia. 1 Thessalonians 2.19 uses not epiphania or apocalypsis or ecommonon, but it uses parousia.

[40 : 48] 1 Thessalonians 2.19. Yeah, thank you. Any other volunteers to read? Mark looks likely candidate.

1 Thessalonians 2.19. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Yeah, thank you. The presence word is meaning in the sight of. And the coming word is the parousia word. This is rather a lovely text, isn't it?

He's saying to a church, you know, when the Lord comes, what will be the thing that was most, you'll say, oh, that's great. That is terrific on that day. He says, what's our hope and our joy and our crown on that day? He says, it's worth seeing you guys. You know, I've worked so hard.

I tried to teach you. I tried to look after you and I prayed for you. And here you are in heaven. We're all here together. This is fantastic. And that's what he's saying, isn't it? This is my hope, our joy, our crown in which we will glory in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ in his parousia when we get the royal visit. And it's you guys. I shall look so forward to meeting you.

I can't help but reflect of all the people that have been sitting in this room over the past 50 years and more. And the people that just came for three months or the people that came for a year or the people who came and stayed a long time but have died. And I think one day we'll meet again.

[42 : 56] One day we'll be there. That would be terrific. It would be terrific to see Pastor Les, to see Chris Fry, to see Mrs. Henderson, whom I used to, when I was in my 20s, used to get in my A40 every Wednesday evening and trot round to Hollingbury to pick up Mrs. Henderson to bring her to the Bible study and prayer time. And we'll see George Long, who used to sit there going, yes, that's right.

And Mr. Clark, who said, I was a dirty old engine driver, but the Lord loved me. All those people we will see. And we'll see Ha-He and Q, won't we? And it's, won't that be terrific? This will be our joy and our crown on that great day. A time of reunions. I'll tell you the story of when, I've probably told you this before, but just not that long ago, was invited to the 70th birthday of a colleague with whom I started teaching. I started my teaching career and he was a year behind me. And he wrote me a letter and said, Philip, I was so grateful to you because I had some really difficult classes and you intervened and took the difficult kids out and I wouldn't have survived otherwise. I had completely forgotten that. But he said, come to my 70th birthday. I'm going to be singing some songs for a charity to raise some money for

Ukraine and we'll have some sandwiches and so on. And I thought, I'm just definitely going to go to this. I've had his Christmas cards ever since then and I'm jolly well going to go. So I got in the car, arrived a bit late. I thought, well, anyway, it'll be, you know, it'd be like 12 of us sitting around with some sandwiches and they'll be sitting there playing the piano. And when I got there into this magnificent Baptist church, there were 200 people there and there was a choir and he was playing and it just, they were singing, Christ will hold me fast. And it was just like entering heaven.

And I wept because it was just like, you know, seeing the people that you haven't seen for however many years. And it was just glorious. I'm just such a silly emotional person, but I, it just, it got me, I have to say. Anyway, joy and crown of the parousia. So looking at other words, so the word rapture, rapture, which it's usually, in English you would normally mean taken up with pleasure. I was in raptures as I opened the box of chocolates or whatever it was. When Christians use this, there is a specialized meaning of believers being taken up bodily out of the world. And it's usually put into a theological pattern, construct, template, that the Christians have taken up with the rapture, while the world continues under some different conditions. And this rapture is separated from

Christ's coming by various, depending on what scheme you're working under, seven years or tribulation or something like that. And I have to say, you only get that meaning out of the Bible if you first put it into the Bible, then you get it out again. If you didn't put it into the Bible first, you would not get that meaning out of it. The, the word is *arpazo*, and it usually means to take or to seize. It's the word that's used by Jesus when he says, no one will pluck me out of my hand. No one will pluck you out of my hand. It's a sort of forcible taking. It's used by Paul. It's used 13 times in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul says, I was taken out of the body. In Revelation 12, 5, it's used of Christ's ascension.

[47 : 20] In 1 Thessalonians 4, 17, it's used of Christ's final coming on the day of judgment.

So it is used once to mean, and once only, meaning what happens on the last day. So I'm not going to use the word rapture because it just confuses everybody. People make a big thing of it, but the Bible doesn't make a big thing of it. It just says, as we were singing, we will meet the Lord in the air on his parousia. And I would say it's, if I wind back, it's this, where the royal king, the king comes, and the citizens go to meet him, and then come back with him on his visit. That's the way I would see that. We'll meet the Lord in the air as he comes back to do all the things he's going to do, to judge, to make all things new, to make a new heaven and a new earth, all in one wonderful, great event. You're allowed to disagree with me. I'm trying to be persuasive. So let's take a few minutes just to go back to Daniel, Daniel the book, I mean, and we'll see if we can get some, a little bit more focus on what happened in chapter 7. How many beasts were there? Four. And which beast was the most extraordinary and puzzling? The last one, yeah, the fourth one. The fourth one seems to have extra things going on with it, doesn't he? So I think I've tried to deal with the context right at the beginning. Daniel is in exile, and the theological question that spiritual people would have had in their minds, and would be wrestling over and praying over and searching the scriptures over and asking the Lord about, has the God of Israel been outmaneuvered or overcome by the gods of Babylon and the idol worshipping nations? So is, I mean, let me put this, it sounds very disrespectful, but this would be the question, is God out of his depth when it comes to Babylon? And of course the answer is a resounding no, absolutely not. And the book of Daniel answers that. So for example, in Daniel chapter 2, verse 20, as this topic is in, I don't know what to say, it is up for discussion as it were. In Daniel 2, verse 19, in the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Daniel praised the God of heaven and said, praise be to the name of God forever and ever. Wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons. He deposes kings and raises up others. So none of these kingdoms that have taken Israel into exile have just managed to do it despite God. This is part of God's sovereign working. He rules all the nations, not just Israel. He is the God over all the nations, not just Israel. And he brings one down and rings another up. And this is his sovereign hand. Sovereign meaning he can do exactly what he wants and nobody can thwart him. So it's a lesson in God's sovereignty. And I would like to persuade you that this lesson is spelt out in the next chapter. So let me see, what was the chapter 2? Now then, I don't think I've got a reference, but we can work this out. There is a dream that Nebuchadnezzar has, am I right? Yep.

And the dream, first of all, he says, I'd like an interpretation. And I think this is what he says. He says, and the wise men say, yeah, we'll interpret it. You tell us the dream. And he says, aha, I want to know that you really got this from God. So you tell me what the dream was, and then I'll believe your interpretation. So Daniel has the dream interpreted, given to him, plus the interpretation. In verse, chapter 2, verse 31, your majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue, an enormous dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. And while you were watching, a rock was cut out, not by human hands.

[52 : 32] It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on the threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the earth. So that's the dream. So I think I've got the statue there on the screen. And there's one, two, three, four sections to it. So it's four again. And this is followed by, what's the thing that follows the four sections? Something completely different. The rock. Yeah, not cut out by human hands. So this is the, this, whatever the statue is, is smashed up by the rock. And there is an interpretation of this in verse 36 that these, the, this statue with its different sections represents different kingdoms. So in verse 38, he says, you, Nebuchadnezzar,

are the head of gold. After you, another kingdom will arise. And then a third kingdom, one of bronze. And finally, a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, which will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw the feet and toes are partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom. Yet it will have strength, strength of iron, as the toes are partly of iron and partly of clay. So this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And as you saw the iron mixed with the baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and not remain united more than iron mixes with clay. And in the times of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people.

It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but in itself will endure forever. This is the meaning of the rock cut out of a mountain, not by human hands, a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold to pieces. So just putting that on the screen, there's the rock. And it smashes the statue. And the interpretation is that the rock kingdom crushes all the others. And let me just quickly see how I'm getting ahead of myself. This is a kingdom that will never be destroyed. I'll tell you the standard interpretation, which I think is right, is that these four kingdoms, one, two, three, four, and in the time of the fourth kingdom, there is another kingdom set up which lasts forever. And let me see if I can get this right. So the Babylonian kingdom, Medo-Persian kingdom, the Greek kingdom, and the Roman Empire. And in the time of the Roman Empire,

God set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, a kingdom not made with hands. It's a different sort of kingdom, but still outlasting all the others. And that's what we celebrate at Christmas, the setting up of that kingdom. Obviously, it doesn't all just happen at Christmas, but that's where the rock sort of begins to impact on the Roman Empire. And that's the perspective of Daniel, the four kingdoms and the final cataclysmic innovation, which changes everything.

And that's what I'd like to suggest we bring to Daniel chapter 7, which had four beasts, one, two, three, four. And the fourth beast is different, rather like the kingdom was different.

In Daniel chapter 7, there's other things said about this fourth kingdom. It has, well, we read it all, didn't we? The fourth kingdom is particularly sinister.

[56 : 44] And there's this little horn which threatens the people of God. And it's certainly historically true that in the time leading up to the birth of Christ, there had been, well, it was occupied by the Roman Empire, wasn't it? We know that. And there was a time of fierce conflict when Antiochus Epiphanes, Roman, I think I'm saying the right thing, a Roman commander.

They were, they were, when I was on the great side, she was spout, she was born with generals. Right. And Antiochus Epiphanes was one of the generals. Okay, Antiochus Epiphanes was one of the generals. He was Greek. He was Greek? Okay, thank you very much. Yeah, I'm not very good at remembering history.

But we have this fierce attack on the people of God and the temple being desecrated. So I think this is the territory we're in with these four beasts.

But the Ancient of Days has an answer. In the first chapters, it was the rock. In these chapters, well, what's the answer to this conflict in chapter 7?

[58 : 16] So we had in verse 8 this horn with its eyes like a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully. And what's the, what is God's response to this?

Or what is the response to this rebellious action? Verse 9?

Yes, the Ancient of Days. What does he do? What activity does he embark on? He took his seat. What sort of seat is it? A judgment seat.

Yes. And in verse 10, what sort of proceedings start? A court. A court. Yes, the court was seated. And what sort of information did the court use? Books. The books were opened. This is all in the book of Revelation, isn't it? We found all this quoted. Now, what I would, the way I would sort of go with this now is to say, like I put on the board here, there's a number of things that happen.

[59 : 28] And from Daniel's perspective, it's difficult to see which happened exactly at Christ's ascension or the destruction of Jerusalem and which happened later and how long a period there is between there.

I would say that Daniel can't see that. It's sort of, from such a distance, he can't see the exact, what am I trying to say?

You know, how, it's prophetic perspective, isn't it? Yeah, if you're looking at a mountain range from a distance, you can't actually see which mountain is ahead of which other mountain.

So I think there's that sort of thing going on here in Daniel. But it's very clear that the Ancient of Days takes his seat. There is a judgment activity.

The beasts get dealt with. And then in verse 13, what happens in verse 13 and 14?

[60 : 35] Thank you. And what is he given? Yeah, thank you.

This is the coming of the Son of Man. And what he, and where does he come to? Let's just be quite clear. Where does he come to? To God's presence.

He comes to the Ancient of Days. He comes into power and authority. This is what Jesus is quoting. You will see the Son of Man coming into power and authority. He is given authority, glory, and sovereign power. And all the peoples of the earth will worship him.

This is why Jesus could say, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go into all the world and make disciples. This is a reference. This is a reference at least to his ascension.

[61 : 45] To his going into heaven. To his enthronement in heaven. That's the primary reference of this. And it is this enthroned, glorious, sovereign Christ who then acts in judgment, who acts in glory, and who will one day act to judge the living and the dead, to make all things new, to make a new heaven and a new earth.

Does that make sense? The enthronement of the Son of Man. And God's answer to the nations and the beasts is the thrones, the court seated, the books open, the beasts thrown into the fire, the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.

To the Ancient of Days being given power, peoples of every nation worship him. And that is his glory. And that's the understanding we have to read back into all the New Testament references when it speaks about the Son of Man coming.

That's why Jesus could say, you will see the Son of Man coming in his glory at the fall of Jerusalem. That's why Jesus could say, you will see the coming of the kingdom when he goes to the Mount of Transfiguration.

There are some here who will not taste death until they see. I think it says the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. This is his being given glory and authority and power which he will wield down through the centuries and ultimately at his appearing.

[63 : 30] Does that make sense? I think I do well to stop there. I think that just gives the...

Perhaps it's worth just looking at the very last sentence here. This idea of the kingdom, we sort of skate over it because we just think, well, that's what Jesus did.

He talked about the kingdom. If we just stop for a minute, he's talking about this kingdom which smashes the other kingdoms. He's talking about the kingdom which is the answer to the rebellion and chaos of the world.

In those days, he will set up a kingdom which can never be destroyed. It's just such a huge idea.

And Jesus says to his sort of struggling disciples, fear not little flock.

This is a wonderful encouragement. Fear not little flock. It has pleased the Father to give you the kingdom. To give you the kingdom. Maybe that's a good place to stop.

[64 : 36] I did have more. Thank you.