

The 1000 years

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] I got out of bed, caught the bus to work. Days are made of things like that, aren't they? Ordinary things. This is what our lives are made of.

Little bits of life. I saw somebody, I said hello. I opened my Bible, I had my prayers. I went to work, and so on and so on. I did some gardening.

You name it. You did those things, and life is made up of those things added up altogether. I want to ask a very profound question, which is, what makes any of those things worthwhile?

Now, the momentum of life moves us along, and we could almost think that those things made themselves worthwhile.

Why are you studying so hard? I'm studying hard to get a good degree. Why are you studying to get a good degree? So that I can get a good job. Why do you want a good job? So I can get lots of money and please my parents. Why do you want to make a lot of money and please your parents?

[1 : 12] Because, well, why? What is the ultimate thing that gives any of these things meaning?

So I want to say something that I think your conscience will agree with, and certainly the Bible will agree with, that all these little things are only worthwhile if they fit into a bigger scheme.

If there is something or someone who says, yes, I care about that, what you said to that person at the bus stop matters because it fits into a bigger scheme of things.

And is there a bigger scheme? Now, the Bible is enormously comforting because it says, yes, there is a bigger scheme, and there is a big mind and heart overarching all of this.

And that's fitting into that scheme is the thing that matters and makes everything worthwhile. So that's what I want us to look at today. We're going to be looking at chapters 19, 20, 21 of the book of Revelation.

[2 : 28] It's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. The more I've thought about it, the more I've thought, oh, I'm struggling to put all these pieces of the jigsaw into a meaningful shape for everybody this morning.

I'm going to do the best I can. But let me say just now, whether you think I've quite got all the jigsaw pieces in the right place, the big point is this, that the God who made everything will bring the world to an end, and he will evaluate everything because he cares.

And he will say of some things, these are vile, offensive, and will end up in a place suitable to their vileness. And there are other things in which he will say, this is so valuable, even if it was just a small, even if it was giving a cup of cold water, because of the way that fits into the big scheme of things, I value that so much, I will ultimately demonstrate how valuable that is to me.

And we have two destinations, the Lake of Fire and the Holy City. And it's how our lives fit into that when we're brushing our teeth, when we're getting up in the morning, when we're catching the bus. That is the message of the Bible to us. How do our lives fit into that big picture? Well, let's dive into the book of Revelation.

[3 : 53] So if you've been here before, you will remember this introduction. It's the last book in the Christian Bible. It's famous for its visionary depictions. There's a lamb and dragon and beasts and armies and battles.

And there's women, a beautiful bride and a prostitute. There's the city of God and Babylon. And overall is the throne in heaven. And these signs and symbols reveal to us the reality.

We only see on the surface, but the Bible says this is the reality of life as it really is. These are the true things. And also, I've introduced each session by reminding us we need to get the accent of the speaker, like my Northern Irish friend who said, fiat, meaning justified by fiat.

We walk by fiat, meaning faith, but with an accent. And just to remind us that John has a way of speaking and a way of saying things. He gives, for example, numbers are quite a big thing.

And in here, we will see the number 1,000. And that crops up, I think, at least three times. You've got it there. If you have your Bible, chapter 20, it says in verse 3, until the thousand years were completed.

[5 : 15] And it says it in verse 5, until the thousand years were completed. And it says in verse 7, when the thousand years are over.

And I think it's actually the same wording in the original, despite the translation making it sound a little bit different in each case. So what's 1,000? And I think the nearest I can get to it is 1,000 is a big number.

So we're invited to think of the span of history as three and a half years, which is quite a small number. And here, I believe we're invited to think of the span of history as 1,000 years, which is a big number.

We'll see whether that interpretation of his accent fits. You remember another principle of interpretation, the way he does things further on in the book is not necessarily further on in time. So we have this rewind button, which he presses very often. And in this, we have 1,000 years, and then we have it followed by a short time.

[6 : 21] So chapter 20, verse 3, there's 1,000 years, and after that, a short time. I confess I'm a bit puzzled whether he means us to see an exact sequence here or whether he's saying both these things are true.

There's 1,000 years of one situation and there's also a small component of another situation. Well, I don't know what the answer to that is. He uses symbols, and particularly uses symbols and pictures from the Bible.

And in this one, we're going to get this rather grizzly picture of birds feeding on dead bodies. And please will you look with me to Ezekiel chapter 39.

So if you can find Ezekiel, don't worry if you can't.

It doesn't matter. I can read it to you. In Ezekiel 39, there is a depiction of a huge battle. And in verse 17, the Lord says, Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says, call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals.

[7 : 41] Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood.

You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice, I am preparing for you.

You will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are drunk. At my table, you will eat your fill of horses, riders, mighty men, soldiers of every kind, declares the Sovereign Lord.

So it's a very unpleasant picture. But you notice that it's put in terms of a sacrifice. So in a sacrifice, sin is focused on some particular object.

And sin is dealt with as it's focused to zap that particular object. And in a sacrifice, in an atoning sacrifice, the object of the sin should be the Israelite or the offerer, but an animal is offered instead.

[8 : 50] So typically a lamb. And the lamb bears the sin instead of the offerer. But in this case, that doesn't happen.

The person themselves bears the sin. And so he talks about these armies, these vast numbers of people who are themselves the offering.

and this very gruesome picture of dead bodies being eaten up. So there's a symbol from the Old Testament that's going to pop up here in what we're looking at.

So that's the introduction. And my plan to put the jigsaw together as best I can manage it. Number one, let's look at all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that are in front of us.

So we'll just survey what was read to us. And then we'll focus on the bits that talk about what leads up to the final end. And then we'll look at what the final end is.

[9 : 55] That's the sort of plan I've got. I'm not quite sure I can keep it quite as neat as that, but I shall try. Okay, that's what we're going to try and do. So like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle? Well, we'll just try and get them into order and we can see the picture of it.

Right, so let's do a survey first of all. So we're going to start very quickly. Chapter 19, verse 11. Here is a piece of the jigsaw.

It's a picture of a rider on a white horse. And his name is Faithful and True. He judges and makes war.

His eyes are like blazing fire on his head and many crowns. It's said in verse 15, out of his mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down the nations and he rules the nations with an iron scepter.

So I think I've got a picture. Yes, there's a picture of a rider on a white horse. Any idea who you think this rider would be? I think that, yes, the Lord Jesus.

[10:58] The idea of the sword coming out of the mouth, the idea of ruling with a rod of iron is a depiction of the Messiah, of Jesus Christ.

Yeah. And this picture says that he is making war. He is ruling the nations and treading the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

So all of these are very violent depictions and I can't possibly capture them all, but at least I've got a rider on a white horse there. And he has an army with him.

It says, where does it say? It says it in verse 14. The armies of heaven were following him and they're dressed on white horses and following him.

So there's the rider on the white horse. I meant to say to you before Rosemary read, look out for the repetition of gather. There's a lot of gathering going on.

[12:00] And in the second thing here, we're told, sorry, just finished the first one. On the first one, verse 16, his name is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Second picture, verse 17, and I saw an angel standing in the sun who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, come gather together for the supper of God that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals and mighty men, of horses and their riders, of the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.

So that's picking up on the gruesome picture from Ezekiel. So there's the picture and they gather armies for that.

So that's, sorry, that's 17, gathering birds with a sacrificial feast. And in verse 19, then I saw, you notice that each one is beginning with a sort of then I saw.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

[13:13] Now, the beast refers back and I think enough to say that Satan uses two agents, two forces, two beasts.

One of them uses force and the other one uses deception. And I think in John's time, he would say, this is the situation we live in. We live in the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire sometimes forces people to deny Jesus Christ by killing them. And sometimes the Roman Empire deceives people by telling them, oh, we've got better magic, we've got better devotion, we've got a better lord in Caesar.

And there's a false prophecy angle. Well, that's, I think, a brief description of the beast, verse 20, and the false prophet, who's sometimes also another beast, who performed miraculous signs on his behalf.

With these signs, he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning fire. So we've got this other picture of a fiery lake of burning, did I read it right?

[14:35] Burning sulfur. The old word is brimstone. So if you've got an old Bible, it will say fire and brimstone. But they've translated it as sulfur. So this is the ultimate end of the beast and the beast and the false prophet.

And then he also mixes it with the other picture of the huge sacrifice. And he says, the rest of those were killed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider and the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

So I think this is what John does. He gives us multiple pictures of the same thing. He says, on the one hand, it's like a slaughter. On the other hand, it's like a lake of burning fire that people get put into.

Let's carry on. So verse 19. Yeah, that was the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together.

So I've got Satan and the beast and armies there. 27. Where am I going?

[15:50] Yeah. 20. So in chapter 21 to 6, we've got the thousand years, which we're going to look at in due course. 21 to 6, we've got Satan bound for a thousand years and three references to the thousand years.

20 verse 7, we have, when the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth and gather them together for battle. So I think what we're having is the rewind button pressed multiple times. We've got a picture of moving to a gathering for a final battle, the outcome of which is that Jesus Christ defeats his enemies.

There is a huge slaughter. Enemies are thrown into the lake of fire. Chapter 20, verse 11.

Sorry, have I missed a little bit out? I've missed out verse 10 because we've got the lake of burning sulfur again. The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.

[17:07] They'll be tormented day and night forever and ever. 20, verse 11, and I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.

Earth and sky fled from his presence. There was no room for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and the books were opened. Another book was opened which is the book of life.

The dead were judged according to it. They are done as recorded in the books. And at the end of this, verse 14, death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death, he tells us.

So there's ordinary death and there's a second death which is this destruction, this awfulness of the lake of fire. He says, if anyone's name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The dead are raised for judgment, books are opened, there's a lake of fire. And just taking this on, which I think is to the end of the sequence, 21 verses 1 to 8, the alternative, the glorious alternative to these horrible, these horrible things.

[18:16] And I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

So we have the holy city. God says, I make all things new. I think that it also mentions at the end the lake of fire.

Verse 8, chapter 21, verse 8, verse 6, has an invitation. Even at the end of the book of Revelation, here is an invitation.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To him who is thirsty, I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

It's a wonderful invitation, isn't it? Even now, God says, look, look at all this. I'll give you water to make you alive so that you won't die of dehydration and thirst.

[19:25] You can come and drink this water even now, even though we've got to chapter 21. You can drink this water. And then this encouragement and challenge to the people of God.

He who overcomes will inherit all this. I will be his God. He will be my son. And the warning, the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

This is the second death. Okay, so we've just gone through that very quickly and it's a bit bewildering, isn't it? But there are some repeated points.

There's a repeated point about the lake of, the fiery lake of burning sulfur, which is a horrible, horrible thought, isn't it? God says, let me try and explain to you people on earth what place I deem is suitable for the vileness of irreverence and inhumanity and unbelief.

And it's a lake of burning sulfur. It's almost too awful to speak about, isn't it?

[20:47] But that's a picture I want you to have of the end of all things. There's that picture fixed. What else?

And he's talked several times about a gathering, a final showdown of armies clashing with each other. So what have I got here?

There's the heavenly city. These visions are mostly to do with the final end. And there are different ways of putting it.

So it's put us in 1905, do I mean 1915, as treading a wine press. So this is the picture of somebody treading grapes, but the grapes, it looks like the grapes of people being trampled, the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

It's put as this sacrificial feast with the birds eating dead bodies. That's verse 19:17. It's put as defeat in a final battle.

[21:57] Verse 19, gathered to make war on a final showdown. Showdown meaning, that's a phrasal verb, isn't it?

A showdown meaning a battle. The battle that ends everything. All the tensions that have been built up are finally resolved in this last battle.

That's what I mean by a showdown. It's also said to be, I'm sorry, I tried this morning to mend this, but I was unsuccessful. The lake of fire and it's also referred to as the second death.

It's also referred to as judgment by books. And what I would like to put to you is that these are not several different things.

It's several different ways of saying the same thing. Several different ways of saying the same thing. Because we often speak about the day of judgment. But the day of the last battle is another way of saying the same thing.

[23:06] The being thrown into the lake of fire is another way of saying the same thing. The second death is a way of saying the same thing. So these judgments are mostly to do with the final end. And those are the negative, the extremely, appallingly negative pictures.

And there is a wonderfully positive picture which is the new heaven and the new earth. There's no more death. There's no more sorrow.

There's no more sighing. There's no more tears. God wipes all those things away and he says, I make everything new.

There's an exceedingly positive, amazingly wonderful picture of what he has in store for his people. No more death. And again, we've got multiple ways of saying the same thing. So he says it's a city and he says it's a bride. I saw the holy city coming down from heaven, out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

[24:19] So it isn't just the negative things where he gives multiple pictures, it's the positive things too. He says this is a bride. A bride is all about relationships and personal beauty. And the city is about a community and about activity and a solidarity and the presence of God.

And he gives these very, very positive pictures about the people of God. And he goes on further than that in the next chapter. So I suppose we have to wait for the next chapter to dwell on that. Okay, so just sort of gone through that. And I'd like now to focus on chapter 20, particularly on verse 1 to 6. Okay, are you with me so far?

I haven't all gone to sleep. Okay. Right. Right. So this is this bit, this thousand year period that leads up to the end. Now my visuals have gone a bit squiffy, but the picture is put against a three-decker universe.

So we have heaven and then earth and then the abyss under the earth. So he assumes that. And let's just follow this through in a little bit more detail.

[25:32] So this is the fourth vision, chapter 20, verse 1. And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, holding the key to the abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.

He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the abyss and locked and sealed it over him to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.

So the angel comes down from heaven and holds the key to the abyss and I hope that Satan gets put into, chained up, out of the realm of the nations.

Now let me just pause and say, do you remember last week he gave us another picture of this period of time? He said Satan was cast out of heaven and goes around on the earth persecuting the church of God and trying to eat up the woman and her children.

Do you remember that? So this is another way of seeing Satan's activity in this thousand year period that he's talking about.

[26:52] So the fact that they give very different pictures I don't think worries me too much because John loves to do that. He loves to give us pictures that make us think, how does that fit with that?

I mean, for example, he says Jesus is a lamb and he also says he's a lion. Now you've never ever seen a lion who's also a lamb, have you? It seemed to be completely contradictory. Well, he's giving us two angles here on Satan's activity and this one says Satan is bound for a thousand years.

So let's... Okay, we've done that bit. Verse 4. The next thing that he sees is thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.

I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.

They came to life or they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. So let's see if we can get those. So those are the thrones and I've put them...

[28 : 07] I've put them in heaven.

I think that's correct. Here's some... Here's a martyr. Here's somebody who was beheaded for Jesus who lives and reigns during this period.

And we're told in verse 5 that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. So if I click, we might have that.

So these people are raised in a sort of first resurrection and these are the nations...

No, I think I've got my clicking out of order. What I would like to put is the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. So what I would like to say is at the end of this thousand year period, the rest of the dead come to life.

[29 : 12] So these people live now and reign but they're Christ's people because they testify to him. But at the end of this period, everybody will be raised.

This is the first resurrection, he says. End of verse 5. And in verse 6, he says, Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.

The second death has no power over them but they will be priests of God and of Christ and reign with him for a thousand years. You might remember how many times John says that people are blessed.

How many times does he use the word blessed in the book of Revelation? Yeah, that's right. A shrewd guess. Seven times. And this is blessing number six.

He says, Oh, what a brilliant position to be in. To be... These people, they were killed for believing in Jesus but they are raised and they are now enthroned with him in heaven and in some sense they reign and rule even now.

[30 : 31] During this time, verse 3, Satan does not deceive the nations.

So I put the nations there. So there are the nations. They are undeceived. Before this time, they were deceived. Before this time, Chinese people were totally deceived.

African people were totally deceived. European people were totally deceived. And they worshipped idols and they had no idea about Jesus Christ. But in this period of time, things are different.

In this period of time, God so works that the eyes of Chinese people are opened to see the truth about Jesus Christ.

They are undeceived. The eyes of African people are opened. They see the truth about Jesus Christ and are undeceived. The eyes of European people are opened. They see the truth about Jesus Christ.

[31 : 35] They are undeceived. And Satan's grip on the nations is released in some sense. I've got a verse for it in a minute.

Oh, dear. Oh, dear. So during this thousand years, God so works that people of all different nations come to Jesus Christ.

That's the situation we're in now, isn't it? Turkish people, once deceived, the light comes, their eyes are opened, and Christ brings them gloriously into his kingdom.

I did try to mend this, but I was defeated. I'll try again this coming week. So there's the nations.

They're undeceived. And the rest of the dead come to life at the end of the thousand years.

That's the second... These people are not hurt by the second death, but these people are. The rest of the dead come to life at the end of the thousand years.

[32 : 47] And I... Do I click anything else? Second death doesn't have power over the saints. Okay. So that's... I think that's a... I've tried to put together the picture of the different things that are said about this thousand-year period.

And... Yeah. So I want to think a little bit more certainly about what happens here.

Is that okay? That makes sense so far? Sort of. Right. So what do we get?

We get, in this thousand-year period, the martyred saints reign with Christ. Christ. Please will you turn with me to Ephesians. And I didn't put the verse, did I?

I'm looking for we reign with him. So chapter 2, verse 4.

[34 : 01] Ephesians chapter 2, verse 4. But because of his... You there? Chapter 2, verse 4? Let me hold on a sec. Ephesians 2, verse 4.

He says, But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Do you see what that's saying? Saying something very similar to John. It's not exactly the same because he says us. Does somebody want to just go and...

We had somebody enter the building and go through there. You just need to go and see where he's off to, please. The difference being that John says it was those who died who are raised with Christ and seated with him.

[35 : 20] And Paul in Ephesians says actually it's true of all Christians. Christians. We're all raised with Christ. Don't worry, Richard's got it under control, I think. We're all raised with Christ and seated with him.

And it's a truth. A truth perhaps we don't think of enough because you know where you're sitting, don't you? You're sitting in Brighton. You're sitting in Calvary Evangelical Church and you're sitting on a blue chair.

But simultaneously it says we are seated with Christ. We are seated in heaven. That's an amazing thought, isn't it? We have a sense in which we already rule and reign with him.

We're far more conscious of the defeats and the humiliation of being sitting on a blue chair in Brighton. But it's also true that we reign with him.

We need the eyes of faith to see this, don't we? We are already seated with Christ in heavenly places. So that's one comment on that. Here's a second comment, Mark chapter 3, 27.

[36 : 44] Mark chapter 3, 27. This is Jesus talking about the conflict between him and his power and Satan and his power. And he says in this conflict that the strong Satan is being robbed of his possessions.

And the person who's doing the robbing is Jesus. he is managing to extract people from the power of Satan and pull people out of his kingdom.

And Jesus puts this in a sort of parable form. He says in 3, 26, if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand, his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up or binds the strong man.

Then he can rob his house. So here's Jesus saying when people become Christians it's because they're strong opposition.

Satan has been tied up and his power has been limited so he can't, oh, that's mine. No. Jesus says, oh, it's mine because the Satan is bound. And I think that is the same picture that John paints, isn't it?

[38 : 06] Of a whole period where Satan is bound and nations are undeceived. Nations can get pulled into the kingdom of Jesus Christ which is what's happening now.

The nations are undeceived. Of course, the other component of this picture which I haven't, which I'm now mentioning is there's a thousand years of undeception and there's a short time of deception.

Now, what are we to understand by that? So we could understand by that that this is a chronological sequence, that there will be a long time in which the work of mission goes on and then a short time in which there's huge antagonism to the gospel which leads to a final showdown. So that could, many commentators would say that. You could say that further on in the book doesn't mean further on in time. So what he's doing is giving us a mixture and he's saying that there will be a huge missionary work going on as the nations are undeceived but sort of at the same time there's a mixture into that.

It's not the whole thing, it's not the majority of it, there's a mixture of a stirring up to oppose Jesus Christ and that will go on and that won't disappear and it will be brought to a head in a final showdown.

[39 : 31] So he could be meaning that. I'll leave that to you to think. Now what happens when the thousand years are completed? Well the undeception ends.

So it is not forever that Satan is bound and the nations can come to Jesus Christ. It's not forever. It is for a certain period of time.

Not forever. forever. The Apostle Paul would say now is the day of grace. The day of grace does not go on forever. It is a limited period.

And like any limited period offer the encouragement is take advantage of the offer while it's still going. Have you had emails telling you about bank holiday offers?

Closing date midnight 27th of May? Something like that? Act now. Have you got those emails? B&Q;?

[40 : 35] I don't know, maybe you've not signed up for B&Q; or anything. The gospel is like this. The day of grace does not go on forever. It is limited. There is a time when that offer will no longer be open.

And the Bible, God says, act now. This may be your last opportunity. Who knows when, you know, sorry you're too late.

Act now. Open your eyes. See Jesus Christ. See that he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and get yourself right with him.

Act now. The undeception doesn't last forever. At the end of this period it is very clear that all the dead are raised. Now some of the dead have been raised in the spiritual sense of the first resurrection and are alive with Christ.

But all will be raised at the end. A general resurrection. So this box is the final resurrection and what goes on in that.

[41 : 41] Sorry, the final judgment. So I put some scales to indicate we're talking about judgment. the nations are deceived into initiating the last battle.

Each of these is a statement about what happens when the thousand years ends. And in verse 11, I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.

Earth and sky fled from his presence. There was no place for them. So everything that we accept as steady and fixed, God says, well, it actually wasn't steady and fixed.

It was because I held it like it was and I can wind it all up and make it all new. So let's go a little bit more detail into verse 11.

Chapter 20, verse 11. So we're not looking at the battle, so much as the judgment. I saw the dead, verse 12, great and small, standing before the throne and the books were opened.

[42 : 49] Now I don't know whether I actually managed to put any books in here, but perhaps I didn't. This is a sort of mathematical diagram. Here's a box, people come into it and they either exit to the holy city or to the lake of fire.

Now, what determines what goes on in here? There is judgment and it's to do with books. Now, the Greek word for book and scroll is the same.

So when the scroll were opened and had seven seals, that was a book. So these books are scrolls, so no particular difference between books and scrolls here. I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened.

So we've got books opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. So we've got multiple books. Let's see what's in these books. The dead were judged, you've got this verse 12, the dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

So one of these books has got all the record of what you wrote in your diary. I got up this morning, I brushed my teeth, said hello to the man at the bus stop. I looked at Facebook on my phone while I was travelling to work.

[44 : 10] I sent a couple of texts. All of those things are recorded in this book of what people have done. And this will be looked at. God will say, bring your work.

He'll look at those things and he will judge accordingly to the holy city or to the lake of fire according to what they have done.

Now there is another book and this is called the book of life. Verse 12, another book was opened which is the book of life. And in verse 15, if anyone's name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

So this seems to be a different book and these books seem to work together. And I like to suggest to you that the book of life is a book that was written a long time ago in which Jesus Christ wrote down the names of all the people that he would die for and all the people that God in his deep mysterious sovereignty chose and said these are the people I will bring into my holy city and I'm

determined to get them there.

And I know what obnoxious people they are. I know what they're capable of, but I'm writing their names down in the book of life. Now we've got two books here you see, so that's a little bit of a puzzle isn't it?

[45 : 32] I mean, John loves to puzzle us. Would you like to see the same puzzle in John's Gospel? Let's see if we can find the right place in John's Gospel chapter 5.

John's Gospel chapter 5 verse 24 gives a picture of what happens now to people who hear and believe.

It says in verse 24, whoever hears, are you there? John 5, 24, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, he has crossed over from death to life.

That's grace, isn't it? It's saying if you hear the word of Christ, you believe you have gone from death to life and there is no condemnation for you.

That's what it says, isn't it? And he also says in verse 28, John 5, 28, a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.

[46 : 58] Those who have done good will rise to live, those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. So that's talking about works, isn't it? What people have done.

Those who have done good will rise to live, those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. So you have the same puzzle. Salvation is by grace.

If you're a believer, there is no condemnation. that's already passed. Our lives will be looked at. Now, how do you square that?

I think you square it like this. That if somebody has become a Christian, they've put their trust in Jesus Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone, God that must have an effect in their lives.

Because the person who says, I've become a Christian and just lives exactly the same as they did before, is deeply mistaken. A Christian person, their life changes.

[48 : 18] And what God is doing is looking for the signs that your life has changed. changed. And there must be signs, and there will be signs.

If you put it another way, as fruit, if we abide in Christ, we will produce fruit. It won't be perfect, it won't stand on its own, but it will be indicating to our Heavenly Father, yeah, that is genuinely one of my people.

And the things that we do matter. we won't be saved by the merit of our works, but we will be saved as God looks and says, yes, that was really the work of God in that person.

And that person, you can see because they changed. Look in that book, yeah, they got up in the morning, they prayed, they brushed their teeth, they were thinking of how they could be a blessing at work, they caught the bus, they opened their Bible on the way, they sent some texts, but the texts weren't nasty texts, they were trying to encourage somebody.

All those things, all those little things adding up and they're written down in that book. And what's in the book of life and the book which records the deeds of the person, they match up.

[49 : 45] If you're a believer, if you're not a believer, all the things that are done will just demonstrate your irreverence, your unbelief, if I may say, your contempt for the God who made you.

It'll all be there in the book. And there are two destinations from this on this day, the lake of fire or the holy city.

So let's try and draw this to a conclusion. So let's first of all say life matters. the life that we live now is not just nothing, it's not just a bit of evolutionary randomness, it really, really matters.

There will be a day of judgment when the almighty God looks at our work and gives us gold stars or pass, fail or whatever it is, he will look. It does matter. The cup of cold water you give to somebody because they belong to Jesus Christ really matters.

there is a heaven and a hell. Well, it doesn't actually say heaven and hell, does it? It says a holy city and a lake of fire. There is this period now which is a day of grace, a day of opportunity, a day of God's kindness, a day of invitation internationally where God says, time-limited offer, act now, take me up on this, do take me up on this promise.

[51 : 15] Make use of it. And mysteriously, I think, at this present time, whether we live or die, we are with Christ, and in a sense we are already in heaven.

The fact that we are forgiven sinners is only half the story. We reign with him, even now. We have this enormous dignity and privilege, even as you sit there on your blue chair, you're seated in heaven.

And then as we look to the future, redemption is coming. Lift up your heads, your redemption draws near. Lift up your heads, one day the skies will resound with his praises.

One day every eye will see him. One day he will say, come blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared from you before the worlds were made. One day he will say to each of his children, come on home.

Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing.