

A Good and Worthy End

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we give you thanks and praise that you'd like to hear the prayers of your children. And Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle but deep power upon us this morning as we listen to your word.

We ask, Lord, that you would bring your word deep into our heart. And Father, you know how many of us struggle with whether there's any meaning in life or whether there's any hope. And we ask, Father, we give you permission to have your word come by the Holy Spirit so that we might understand that meaning and hope that you desire your children to have and to live out of and grow into.

And all these things we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Excuse me. Just as we're getting started, I had my second dose of the vaccine yesterday morning.

And so right now, this is working right? Yeah. And so I was fine yesterday, but I woke up a bit achy and a little bit with less energy than I would normally have.

And it feels a little bit as if there's a cloud between my ears and between my eyes and the back of my head. So anyway, I just let you know that that's just what's going on inside of me.

[1 : 15] But you know what? I'm not here to talk about me. Actually. Yeah. Anyway. Sorry. Let's stick to the topic. Look, if you, I don't know how many of you are listening very carefully.

There's no test. When Amy read the first part of the, read the text that I'm going to preach on, Haggai chapter 2, verses 20 to 23. But my guess is that unless one of you is a rare person who Haggai is like your favorite book in the Bible.

You read it all the time. You've memorized it. If you're like most people, it sounds a little bit like yada, yada, yada, yada, yada, yada, yada. Because it's all these weird things.

It doesn't seem to have anything easy to grasp onto. And it doesn't seem to have anything that sort of, it's hard to see how a text like this could even have a beginning of any meaning to any of us in our lives.

And so for Christians who are so well trained, you're not allowed to say that in public. But inside you sort of do. And that's one of the reasons why many Christians find reading the Bible boring.

[2 : 18] Or if they do read the Bible, they read the more interesting bits over and over again and leave books of Haggai into the wasteland that you never read. And so if we were honest, what we would say is that it seems as if it's a bug that should be fixed, that it's too bad that God couldn't go back in time and fix this bug so that his word was easier to understand and easier to understand how it applied to your life.

Because it seems to be a bug. But I guess one of the things, and I hope maybe this will help you with reading the Bible, it's actually not a bug. It's a design feature that God, in fact, intentionally put passages like this in the Bible.

And I'll explain why it's a design feature. On one hand, especially for the New Testament, but even not just the New Testament, if you were to read big bits of Isaiah or bits in Genesis, I've known people who've just read the New Testament by themselves with very little contact with Christians who become Christians just from reading the New Testament.

So on one hand, there is enough that you can understand from the Bible that it can change your life in an eternal sense. But on the other hand, sometimes you'll hear arguments about which came first.

Did the church create the Bible or did the Bible create the church? And more Anglo-Catholic types and Catholic types, and skeptics, by the way, and people who don't believe, you know, challenge the Christian faith, they'll just say, well, are these political decisions made by the church which

created the Bible?

[3 : 58] And other people, more likely Protestant types like myself, will try to say, no, no, the Bible created the church. And then somebody will pause and say, well, it's the classic chicken and the egg problem.

And it is a bit of a chicken and the egg problem, but there's a very Christian solution to the chicken and the egg problem. And that is that it's not that the chicken comes first and then the egg, or that the egg comes first and then the chicken, but that God created both the chicken and the egg. He created both. And so it is with this particular, with the Bible, is that God created a Bible, his word written, and he also created his people, his church.

And God, just as the Father did not intend for you and I to walk in the Christian faith alone, like we become a Christian one by one. We're not born a Christian. You need to make a decision or recognize a decision that you want to belong to Jesus, that you want to trust him as your Savior and Lord.

And you only do that individually. Your parents can't do it. Your grandparents can't do it. Your culture can't do it. It has to be an individual choice from the heart. But at the same time, God didn't design us to live by ourselves.

[5 : 03] He didn't design us to walk with Jesus by ourselves, but to walk with others. And so it is, when you come to texts like this, this is part of the reason why Christians should come to church on a Sunday. It's why they should maybe have small groups or mentoring relationships or something like that, because we need help to read the Bible.

And it's both that, it's not as if you come here because I have had God zap into me this perfect knowledge about how to interpret the Bible. No, it's not like that at all. You see, part of what happens in a church is that I will preach, of course, and try to explain the Bible.

And many times people will say, well, I don't know if that George is correct, or why didn't you talk about this? Or, you know, the pushback. And that's partially how I learn. But as well, I need to be part of, in a sense, the larger church if I'm going to understand the Bible.

So when I read this text, I'll be completely honest. Other than one thing in it, which I sort of knew, and a couple of other things that I guessed, I had to depend upon reading people, in a sense, in the broader church, the wider church, to read some of their writings, including even people who are dead, to have a better understanding.

In fact, actually, one of the people that I did read actually is dead. He died about seven or eight years ago. And so I have to read these types of things. And it's not just like a local thing. I was sharing at the 915 service that my favorite commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus is written by a Kenyan man.

[6 : 25] And it was reading a commentary by a fellow in Kenya that really helped me to see the 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus in brand new ways, because he came at it in ways that I had just never seen before.

And it's been so helpful to me. And so it's actually one of the first books I'll look at if I was to teach on something from 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. So I guess what I'm saying is this, and I'm going to have a couple more things to say about it as we go along.

The fact that this is hard should lead us to say, Lord, that's really hard. I have no idea what on earth that means or what difference that's supposed to mean to my life.

But ask, Father, that you use it in my life in some way. And what I suggest for Christians is you should try to read the Bible every day, and you should think of Bible reading like brushing your teeth. Now, maybe I'm the only one in the room, but I have never had a mystical experience brushing my teeth.

It would be just like God to give me one this evening, just because, you know. But I don't have mystical... You know, but you brush your teeth because you should brush your teeth because it's good for you, right?

[7 : 29] And it's the same way that you read the Bible. And you read the Bible from the beginning to the end, and there's different Bible reading patterns, plans, and a lot of times you don't understand it. But there's still other things going on in his word that it might mean that a year later or five years later you get this big insight, or that later on in the afternoon, or sometimes right while you're reading it, it'll just confront you in a very powerful way.

But the fact that parts of the Bible are hard to understand is a design feature, not a bug that we wish that God would fix. So let's walk towards it.

We're looking at this text. One of the things, if you're a guest here, is that we preach through books of the Bible. We don't sort of just cherry-pick little bits that we like and sort of say, oh, don't read that part of the Bible because that's sort of naughty or hard or something.

We read through books of the Bible, in a sense, that's because they were written as books. So let's turn to Haggai chapter 2. You can find it on your phones as well, I suppose. Just don't check your Twitter feed or your Facebook posts or something like that if you're on the phone.

Haggai chapter 2, verses 20 to 23, just four verses. And here's how it goes. And I am in big trouble because I never started my stopwatch. So I'll just say I've only been preaching for two minutes.

[8 : 37] No, I'm just... Anyway, so here's how it goes. The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the 24th day of the month.

And we'll just sort of pause here. When there's very few verses, we can just sort of pause to have a look at it. So if you've missed any of the other sermons, here's what's going on. This is taking place in the year 520 BC.

And God has done like a miracle. The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem about 60 some odd years before this, captured the leaders of Israel and most of the people and carried them away into Babylon.

And then... But there'd been prophets who prophesied that they would return and that the temple would be rebuilt. And then the Babylonian Empire fell. And Persia, which we now call Iran, defeated the Babylonian Empire.

And this is part of the big miracle is that it would be almost as if... It's just as big a miracle as if the Ayatollah of Iran said that he wanted to rebuild Jerusalem and have a temple built.

[9 : 38] And we'd all go, what? Like, what? Be front page news for weeks, for months. And there'd probably be... Anyway, it's just like it's huge, right? So anyway, so the Persians take over and they allow...

In fact, they encourage some Jewish people to return. They come, they start to rebuild the temple. There's local pushback, as you can well imagine. And so they end up spending their time working on building their own little kingdoms.

And then Haggai comes about four months prior to this and he delivers a word that comes from God. And the word from God is you've got to start building the temple. And we've talked about that before. That's about four months prior to this.

And the heart of it is that God wants to dwell amongst them and shower his love upon them and have them be his people and have him as their person.

That's what God desires to do. And it touches their heart and they start to rebuild the temple. And then two months later, the first part of chapter two, we have another word that comes from Lord delivered by Haggai.

[10 : 42] And then now we have the part just before this and this, about two months after that second word or four months after the first, we now have on the same day two different words that come in. We looked at the other word yesterday and now we look at this final word that comes on in mid-December, 520.

And here in this particular case, the word is just to this man by the name of Zerubbabel. Look at verse 21. Actually, just before we read it, what's going on here in the text is, and this is, by the way, one of the problems when we want like simple, clear, digestible stuff.

Usually simple, clear, digestible stuff has no nuance, no depth, nothing intriguing. And what's going on here is that in a sense, three riddles are being posed.

And these three riddles, I'm going to try to show them to you what they are. These aren't just Jewish riddles or Christian riddles. They actually touch on riddles of human existence that, especially when you come to the third one, but especially the first and the third one, you'll see that in fact, every religion, every spirituality, every ideology has to wrestle with these riddles.

They're real riddles. They're riddles of the human condition that are just real. But the fact is that most of us never think about these riddles. We just live unexamined lives. And so once again, the Bible here, the Lord is inviting you to live an examined life and consider these three riddles.

[12 : 24] So let's begin. Verse 21. Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I'm about to shake the heavens and the earth. Now just sort of pause here.

Some of you here are nerds. You all know who you are. Most of you who are nerds are probably more techie type nerds. And I love techie nerds because it's so many things that have to be fixed. There's also a few grammar nerds in the place, and there's also a few theology nerds. And so for those of you who are theology nerds, this is a little nerdy thing. Whenever you see in the Old Testament, just about every time in the Old Testament when you see shake the heavens and the earth, it's actually technical language for, here's the nerdy part, a theophany. In other words, it's language that says that God is going to actually show up. In a sense, he's going to no longer be invisible, but visible and actually come to the earth. And that just as when Moses, God comes down to reveal the law to Moses, it's like there's earthquakes and thunders and lightning and the whole earth shakes. [13:31] That ends up, in a sense, becoming a type of a picture for the rest of the time of what it's going to be like when God, one of the ways to understand God showing up, like actually showing up. And the heavens and the earth are all shaken.

And so here's going to be one of the riddles. The Bible here says that God is going to show up. And as we see in a moment, that when he shows up, there will be a completely new earth and heaven afterwards.

We don't see it very much here, but we see it in the rest of the Bible. And here's the thing that actually touches every single one of us, actually especially for Canadians, because the fact of the matter is, is if you follow science, science tells you that everything eventually dies. That's science. The second law of thermodynamics wins. Everything dies. And on the other hand, most secular people and also religious and spiritual people, they ignore what science says and in fact are often captivated with different views.

visions of a perfect future. And whether it's developed by a type of human consciousness or by government or by technology or by spiritual practices or whatever, that there's going to be some time when there'll be a peace and harmony on earth.

[14:54] And once again, people who tell that ignore the science bit, pretend it doesn't actually happen. The science bit means that part is foolish. It can't happen. But in fact, there seems to be something hardwired about human beings to have hope and to have some type of a sense that what happens down the road matters to how I live today.

That there's some type of... Like, you know, basically, if you were to discover that when you leave here, you get a bit of a pain, you go to the emergency room and the doctor says, I'm really sorry, there's nothing left we can do.

You only have 24 hours left to live. You better call your family and see if they can get here before you die. And the threat of death removes.

Like, how can there be hope and meaning if I die? We don't tend to think of it. So this is actually talking about something very real, a real riddle about how will the end come about, so to speak? Will it come about as natural processes? Or will it be an end that's caused by God showing up and bringing all things to a proper end? But then look at verses 22. It starts to get a little bit deeper and it actually takes a bit of a dark turn.

[16:10] Now, once again, this dark turn is often mocked in the world, but it shouldn't be mocked because it's real. We all know that there are some places in the earth which are very, very, very evil.

There are some systems which are very evil. There are some governments which are very evil. There's some, not just the state power, but the culture and religion is part of it and spirituality is part of it.

And it's just, there's something very, very evil. And that has to be accounted for and it has to be dealt with and understood. And that's when it starts to move into this little bit of a darker thing. And it goes like this. Look at verse 22. So verse 21, I'm about to shake the heavens and the earth. Sentence continues. And overthrow or overturn the throne of kingdoms.

I'm about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations and overthrow the chariots and the horses and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, everyone by the sword of his brother or sister.

[17:13] Now there's a couple of things here which are very, very interesting. You might notice that there's a, those of you who are grammar geeks, you might notice that there's a singular throne but plural kingdoms.

And in fact, some Bible translations try to get around that by having a plural for thrones so that it matches kingdoms because it's not really good grammar. But actually, if you think about it for a second, and this is a very important thing.

It's one of those things that people make fun of. But it's not something that we should make fun of but that we really need to enter into and think about. You see, later on in the New Testament, Jesus reveals that there will be an antichrist.

And later on, we discover that at some point in time, there is the beast, the whore of Babylon. And that in a sense, what you see is that beneath or underneath or above the thrones and the kingdoms of the world is a devil, the devil.

That in fact, there is a singular throne behind the thrones. Now, the Bible here has some nuance here, if you think about it for a second, but it has lots of nuance in the other parts of the Bible.

[18:24] The Bible is not saying that every single country, you have to understand that the devil is actually the one who's running the country. There's common grace that God restrains evil.

And people really do pass better laws than existed before. There can be real improvement and change in society. And we should pray for people who work on Parliament Hill and people who work in the bureaucracies that they will do their job very well, that it will help us to move towards just laws rather than unjust laws, wise economic policies rather than foolish ones.

But let's be honest. First, when we look at the world, don't you often look at some governments and systems and smell sulfur? Now, sulfur is the language, the stink of where the devil is.

I mean, how could you not look at, just to give the simple example, how could you not look at Nazi Germany and not see the overwhelming stench of sulfur? How could you look at racism in the southern states and not smell sulfur?

How could you read about the slave trade and not smell sulfur? And there's other things that go on in our society now, both in Canada and outside, because it's not a matter of all those bad people who live behind us or all those bad people who live in different countries.

[19:52] But there are times when in Canada you can smell sulfur, that in fact it's not a foolish idea to believe that there might be something demonic and devilish behind the throne.

And so what this text is saying is, look at this, is that the God is going to show up. There'll be a time when God will show up. Verse 21, he's going to shake the heavens and the earth. That's his language that he's going to show. And he can't show up and not shake things.

It's not as if when God shows up, we all just reach out his hand and say, oh, God, glad to have you. Here's an extra seat at the table. Let's have a beer. No, no. He comes. Everything gets shaken.

And then, and he's going to come to overthrow the throne of kingdoms.

That there will be a final dealing with that demonic entity. And not just the ultimate demonic entity, but all demonic beings, which harass so many people in Canada and to the ends of the earth who wear talismans and do other types of things to ward off evil spirits and evil eyes.

And the lesson here is that when God shows up, those are overthrown. And then he says, I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations and overthrow the chariots and their riders.

[21:11] And the horses and the riders shall go down, everyone by the sword of his brother. Now, hopefully I'll remember to do it. I didn't do it at the 915 service.

It slipped my mind. But what you need to see here, see, one of the things that happens when you do, remember I said it's really important just to read the Bible, even if you don't understand things? Because what happens when we read the Bible and you read it regularly is the Bible starts to put in patterns in your mind.

You're not conscious of it necessarily, but it's just, it's there. And then maybe one day you're reading a particular text and all of a sudden the pattern comes to consciousness and you realize all along that there's this pattern.

And what we see here is this pattern, which is all the way through the Bible, that it's not just that God is going to show up and that when he shows up, he just uses his power to deal with evil.

But that when he shows up, one of the things that he does is in a sense remove the restraints of common grace so that the inherent self-destruction of evil is allowed to happen.

[22:21] See, last week, one of the things that we talked about is that sanctity or holiness, being close to God, is its own reward. But it always brings other blessings or good in its wake.

And in a sense that the Bible also says is that in many ways, sin or evil is its own punishment. But it also brings other woes in its wake.

And that there's something about the very nature of evil and lies to consume and compete, to consume itself and to consume others.

How did the Second World War start? The Second World War started when Stalin and Hitler made a secret agreement in the middle of August to divide up Europe. And then Nazis began their assault on Poland.

In about three weeks, I think it was, somebody will correct me whether it was two and a half or three weeks later, the Soviet Union moved in to start to take up the parts that they were going to take up. But then, of course, at some particular point in time, Hitler turns on Stalin.

[23 : 22] And in some ways, you see in that simple thing a very, very prominent thing of all evil. We have all maybe met or, if not met, have read of people who tell lies and then become so good at telling lies and so frequent at telling lies that you start to realize that they can't actually any longer tell what the truth is.

That the lie becomes so closely part of them that they've lost the ability to understand the truth. And once lies overtake a person, it ruins economies, it ruins governments, it ruins families, it ruins your life.

That there is something that comes about evil. And that's sort of what's seen here. That it's not just that God comes and uses his power, but he removes the restraints of common grace so that evil turns on itself and brings destruction.

Now, I'm a child of immigrants. I was born about 13 months after my parents came to Canada. My parents are lower, lower, lower, were lower, lower, lower working class, like just a step above poor, as low class as you could get.

[24 : 39] They had a grade 8 education and they came to Canada seeking a better life. And I was born about 13 months after they came. And part of the reason that they chose Canada was because they knew one person in Canada.

I mean, that's still probably very true for many people who come to this country as immigrants or refugees. And the funny thing is, is they knew this fellow from their community and who actually later on became their brother-in-law, my uncle Joe.

And he couldn't decide whether he was going to go to Australia or Canada. But then about six months, well, a bit more than six months because he had to come, he got a job offer in Canada. If he'd gotten the job offer in Australia, my parents would have immigrated to Australia.

Why? Because if you're an immigrant, it's really handy if you can get out and you get off the boat and you know one person. That's a lot better than knowing zero people. And that's how I ended up coming to Canada.

Now, part of all of this, and this is in many ways like I'm a very typical white Canadian, I can tell you the names of my, I've never met my father's mother and father. My father's father died when my father was only four.

[25 : 47] And because travel was so expensive back then, my father's mother died before we were able to go back to the old country to meet her. So I never met, but I could tell you their names.

But my parent, my mom's mother and father, they eventually immigrated to Canada because all five of their children had come to Canada. And when the fifth one, their baby, came to Canada, they decided they wanted to be in Canada.

So they came to Canada. And so I knew Gilbert and Victoria very, very well. I have lots of memories of both of them. But I can't tell you Gilbert's parents' names or Victoria's parents' names or Molly's parents' names or James' parents' names.

Those are the four sets in a sense of grandparents. I can only go back two generations. Now, I think I'm a very typical white Canadian. At the earlier service, we had somebody here who was from Africa.

And I asked him, we can be a bit informed. I said, how many generations back can you go? And he did this. Eight. He can give you his forebears for eight generations.

[26 : 54] And there's large parts of the world that are very interested in this. Now, I mention all of this because, you see, one of the things that the Bible teaches is the Messiah is going to be human. And humans have forebearers.

And even though I don't know the names of James and Molly's parents, they do have names. And you could go back and back and back and back and back and back and go on because that's how human beings work.

This next verse, if the first thing is talking about God is showing up, the second, this last verse is going to give a very puzzling thing that the Messiah is going to come at the end. And that the Messiah coming at the end is going to be part of God shaking the heavens and the earth. And so just look at verse 23. And part of the reason that we don't recognize it is that it uses some technical, once again, theological nerdy language. So you theological nerds, there's theological nerdy language here.

So that's the first one is on that day. And in the Old Testament, when you see that, it usually is referring to something about the God bringing all of the world to an end. And then you'll notice in this verse, three solemn declares, declares the Lord of hosts.

[28 : 06] And I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant. And here we have two more technical words. The first one, take you. Some of you who have more Presbyterian backgrounds, that's the word for election.

And so there's this idea of election, that God has chosen him. And that, of course, is emphasized by them then saying, my servant. If you go back and read the book of Isaiah and other places in the Old Testament, that's a name for the Messiah, my servant, declares the Lord.

And make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts. And chosen is once again technical language of choosing the Messiah, the agent by which he's going to bring about this remarkable change.

And so what you see here, which is very, very interesting, is that, well, first of all, here's where another one of the patterns comes up.

It's often the case that we look at a text like Jesus saying he's going to come back soon, or Paul saying he's going to come back soon, or Old Testament language about the coming soon. And then you don't see it happening soon, so you think that it's actually not, that we've tried to, they've tried to explain it away after it was a failed prophecy.

[29 : 17] But that's not what's happening at all. It's actually something which is very wise and really speaks to the human condition. You see, it's part of the human condition to both think and plan for the future and also to think and plan for the day.

And so what you see is if you go back and you read 2 Samuel and you read many of the different Psalms and you read other parts of the Old Testament, that what you see is you see this regular sense of immediacy and indeterminacy.

That, in other words, part of it is that it's going to be something that happens today, but on the other hand, there's something about it that implies that it's going to happen also sometime in the future.

And so it is for Christians that we, in sense, are encouraged to learn to live.

As if Jesus will come today, that a Christian who lives as if Jesus will come today is living a wise life. But the Bible isn't saying that we should always just live as if Jesus is coming today.

We should also live as if Jesus is going to come in 20, 30, 40, 50 years. And just as a wise person is toggling between their retirement and managing their career, they plant gardens that they hope will be able to harvest in the future.

[30 : 32] They make investments and they listen to sound investment advisors that you know you're going to let the money ride for five years or 10 years. And just as you do those wise things for the future, you also deal with the day.

You live within your budget in the day. And so the Bible here is actually showing that the nature of Christian hope and the coming of the Messiah, and it sets this pattern before you. It's not a mistake. It's actually a design feature.

And it prepares you when you hear Jesus say that no man knows the day of the hour, and when you hear 2 Peter say that a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day, that we are called to live as if Jesus will return today.

But it would be very appropriate if our council, we're doing things to try to get royal seminary established so that it will thrive for 20, 30, 40 years. And that's part of the biblical pattern of how you live.

But here's the riddle. How does the Messiah connect to God? Now, this is more of a riddle for the Jewish people.

[31 : 35] Because, you see, they basically thought that the only way to understand it is that somehow God is doing everything, but the Messiah sort of is there, but I guess watching or whatever. But the language is more as if there's somehow a joint acting.

But how can somebody act like with God as if they're equal? And there's a bit of a riddle here. But that's nothing compared to the biggest riddle, which is what I'm going to close with. I hope I'm still in the frame and all that.

I haven't moved around very much. We all know that if God shows up and he brings in a world that's good, that's beautiful, that's true, that's loving, that's perfect.

Well, what happens to evil? How do you deal with evil? How do you deal with wrongdoing? How do you deal with lies? How do you deal with hatred?

How do you deal with racism? How do you deal with prejudice? How do you deal with hatred? So the basic way that most systems of thought try to think this through is that that's very simple.

[32 : 48] God just comes or the Messiah comes and just kills all the evil doers and kills the liars and kills the racists and kills the hateful people.

And that's actually sort of fundamentally the primary way that we sort of understand that. But you see, if you think about it, and this is very, very true.

If you look at history and you look around the world today, you'll see that what has to happen there is there has to be a denial. If I believe that, I need to deny that I have ever loved a lie, that I have ever loved hatred, that I have ever loved evil.

And I need to pretend to myself that I've never done these things. And so what often happens with these different systems is you develop a system where you're... And by the way, short critique of white fragility, that bestseller, this is what white fragility does.

She puts herself in a place as if she is without sin to attack other white people. It's the classic religious thing. It's the classic ideological thing.

[33 : 58] It's all white people's problems. It's all black people's problems. It's all rich people's problems. It's all poor people's problems. It's all Africans. It's all North Americans. It's all the Chinese. And so what we do is we create these others.

And it's as if, well, they're really bad. They're really terrible. They're really evil. And we're not. And if you're aggressive enough about it, they can't attack you. And then you try to redefine evil so it doesn't look as if what you're doing is evil.

Whatever you're doing is a lie. Whatever you're doing is just unjust. So you redefine your own actions. You redefine the other person's actions.

And you try to create facades and manage it so you don't have to actually have people say, George, you have a problem with evil and lies and hatred just like every other human being on the planet.

So how can God let me in? See, so God's going to show up.

[35 : 06] He's going to shake everything. He's going to dethrone evil. The Messiah is going to come up. The line that looks as if it had died with the invasion of Babylon. But in fact, God is in a sense by this text saying, I have never let my plan to have a Messiah come back ever die.

It can be submerged. It can have a different appearance. But there will in fact be someone in the line of David who one day will be the Messiah. God only works on plan A.

He does not need plan B. He did not say, oh, gosh, what am I going to do? The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. I have to come up with a new plan. And so here we have Zerubbabel, not named a Jewish name.

He's under the authority of Persia. He doesn't run anything or own anything. He hasn't even been a particularly great person or anything like that. But he responds to this offer to be with him and that God will do whatever it needs for him to be with him.

And he responds to that. And God says, listen, Zerubbabel's existence, that's the significance of the signet ring, is a sign that even if there's no more kingdom, even if there's all these other things, is it might go underground, but that human line will continue until the Messiah comes and he will be born of that human line.

[36 : 17] But if you understand the problem of how you can have God show up and deal with evil and not annihilate you, you'll understand how only the gospel solves it. I mean, one of the things is we can look at alcoholics.

We're drug addicts as a bit of an example for this. That the evil of their alcoholism, the evil of their drug, becomes in a sense fused to their personality, their identity.

And our pride is fused to us. It's almost as if you were to watch something like Venom and how does it you have this parasite that's so completely and utterly connected to you as a human being that to remove the parasite will kill the host.

And only the gospel provides the answer. And the gospel says that God showing up and the Messiah showing up are the same person. And the Messiah is going to come the first time to deal with evil in a way that allows people to be part of my kingdom.

And the second time he comes, it will be to bring in my kingdom. And when Jesus dies upon the cross because he is the image of God, God, the Son of God, in a sense when he dies on the cross, when I put my hands in Jesus and trust him as my Savior and Lord, it's as if all of the lies, all of the evil, all of the prejudice, all of the shame, it's as if it's sucked out of my body, separated from me and sucked out of my body onto him.

[37 : 49] And he carries the penalty that that deserves. But then if that was all that the Messiah did, I would just be a withered, empty husk.

But at the same time that as Jesus dies upon the cross, and in a sense, all of that which is so closely identified with me is taken away. At the same time, his life comes into me.

That's one of the wonderful things if you read the Gospel of John. That in a sense, the light comes into you. Life comes into you.

The waters of life come into you. The truth comes into you. The miracle of the new wine and the shep, that comes into you.

And you now have not a shattered husk of a person, almost intangible like a ghost, but a solidity and reality to it that comes from the Gospel.

[38 : 54] And so this text is sitting before us, and it's a very good one. How would your progressive politics deal with the problem of evil? How will Marxism deal with it? How will psychology deal with it? How will make America great deal with it?

How will Biden deal with it? How will this religion deal with it? How is it going to deal with these problems of evil and actually really deal with it so that at the end of it, evil is dealt with in a just way and there really is goodness in life, and only the Gospel provides an answer to that?

Just one final thing and close. One of the things which is so wonderful about this text is not only to remind us that we are to live as if this might be the last day, that maybe even during the Lord's Supper he will return, but on the other hand, to also live so that we are looking forward to seeing our grandchildren married or our grandnieces married or that we build some type of movement of the Gospel that builds and builds over the decades ahead.

But if you know that through your repentance and through your acts of service, your labor for the Lord is never in vain.

Your financial generosity, your standing for justice, your caring for the poor, your teaching Sunday school, your serving coffee, your bringing a casserole, anything done for the Lord is never in vain.

[40 : 21] Why? He will return. Maranatha. I invite you to stand. Please stand. Matt's going to come up to lead us in some intercessions and you can sit in a moment, but let's just stand for a moment and let's just close this with a prayer.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that the Messiah is, that in fact God, the Son of God is the Messiah, that it's you yourself who have dealt with the evil that we cannot deal with, that only you, Father, only you can separate evil and lies and hatred from us without unmaking us, but actually giving us life.

Only you, Father, can open the door to you and make us so that we can fit with you and be in your kingdom in a way that doesn't just sort of gloss over evil, the evil in our lives or the evil in others, but that only you, Father, have been able to deal with it in the person of your Son.

And we ask, Father, that you would grip us with the truth of the Gospel so that we have a secure stand to examine, place to examine our own consciences. And Father, we give you thanks and praise that you are always working on Plan A, that Jesus will return and build within us hope, Father, that our sacrifices and labor for the Gospel, the local church, and world mission are never in vain, Father, that they are never in vain.

And finally, Father, come Lord Jesus. May he come soon. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus, God's Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen.