

Bugged by the Millennium

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Date: 12 December 1999

Preacher: Phil Meulman

[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 12th of December 1999 the preacher is Phil Muleman his sermon is entitled Bugged by the Millennium and is from Psalm 37 I'm just going to pray Heavenly Father we worship you and thank you for your word to us help us to think together on its meaning and application for our lives in Jesus name we pray Amen They tell me that if I want to fly out of Australia on New Year's Eve I can get a pretty cheap ticket it seems that no one wants to be flying the moment the clocks tick over to the 1st of January plenty of people want to party but they don't want to go flying Well there's this along with stacks of other varying forms of panic about equipment breakdowns by many people because they are scared or fearful of the Y2K bug

Incidentally I've checked both my computers and my mobile phone last night to make sure that they're okay and protected from this dreaded Millennium bug but I wish I personally could be protected from that other Millennium bug the one that causes all sorts of frenzy making this New Year's Eve out of making this New Year's Eve out of something different to all the other New Year's Eve that I've ever lived through so far and will probably live through in the future What's the big deal about the Millennium?

Radio this year has promoted the Millennium Baby Competition Who will have the baby born at midnight on the 1st of the 1st 0-0 Who will have it?

They've been having big competitions about that if you listen to any of the contemporary rock stations Architectural creations are being and have been built to celebrate the beginning of the 3rd Millennium to show humanity's proven abilities Aren't we great?

Today I was reading a school newspaper and they were advertising in that time capsules that you can put in for the Millennium so people can know what you're doing and so on What were you doing at the eve of the 3rd Millennium?

[2 : 4 9] Well out in the world we're not immune from the Millennium bug but it seems that even in the church we're not immune from it either Everybody is getting excited about an event which has already happened if historians are correct You see the birth of Jesus probably took place about 3 or 4 BC So the 2000th anniversary of Jesus' birth should have been held 2 or 3 years ago if we're right by historians Now it's not that I wish to minimise the birth of Jesus in any way at all It's probably one of two events in human history that are most important to me But I along with most if not all of you celebrate Jesus' birth every year I sing Christmas is a birthday party every year for the past 10 years it seems So why is this year different?

How does the clock at Greenwich here in Melbourne in Sydney in Singapore ticking over from 11.59 on the 31st of December 1999 to midnight on the 1st of the 1st year 2000 affect us?

How does it affect us at all? If any in any way at all Well I don't think it does really No more than waking up this morning made a difference to the rest of your life So what is it that captures our imagination and makes us wonder if things are going to be different in the next millennium?

Well I think probably because we are unhappy with our lives I think that's a reason And when I say we I mean humans in general We see images of war and terrorism almost daily on the TV don't we?

Our workmates are made redundant sometimes with little hope of re-employment Young people are injecting themselves with illicit drugs Drivers take ridiculous risks on the road far too often ending up in disaster Just look at the news this weekend Relationships are increasingly difficult to maintain with one in three marriages ending in divorce and two out of three re-marriages ending up the same way Families are becoming increasingly isolated from their extended families parents often having to juggle two careers as well as keeping the home together Business tycoons seeming to care seem only to care about maximising their earning potential regardless of the consequences to ordinary individuals

[5 : 54] Third world debt is crippling millions of people in Africa and other developing areas of the world I've heard that this year that America cancelled third world debt and I read a letter I can't remember where it was the other day saying that America is looks like they're taking out loans again or Africa's taking out loans again so this whole cycle is just going on and on and on Well it's little wonder that we can't make up our mind whether to be fearful or hopeful for the future In fact one social commentator has said this Hope seems to consist almost entirely in maintaining one's individual health and relationships within a fairly limited circle of family and friends Belief in any kind of afterlife is extremely limited The attitude he goes on to say

The attitude When you're dead you're dead seems to sum up the lack of any hope in any meaningful experience of transcendence Another commentator has said this The point is that when society is unsure about what the future holds that is when we're worried about a millennial fever or post-modernism and things like that people look for answers in the past As such paganism and the New Age movement derivatives are on the rise within our secular society We have New Age festivals going on all the time now You see them advertised virtually daily Some years ago commenting on the rise of reworked music tracks You know we've got this suddenly all these songs are reappearing on the hit parade You might hear one later on tonight A guy called Bono from U2 has said this commenting on reworked tracks

He says When the future dries up we reinvent the past People are unsure whether to look forward or back for the answers Yet in almost total contrast to this confusion and uncertainty we read the timeless wisdom contrasted in the words here of scripture These words that we read here in Psalm 37 tonight Let me You don't need to look it up I'm just going to read to you some verses from it Verses 3 to 4 of Psalm 37 says this Trust in the Lord and do good so you will live in the land and enjoy security Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart These words are not uncertainty They are not futility and they are not hopelessness

This is the language that speaks to our innermost yearnings He will give you God will give you the desires of your heart Of course God is not going to grant desires that are selfish and wrong but commit your way to the Lord and He will do this He will make righteousness shine like the dawn and the promise from God is that He will make wrong He will make wrong things right and that He will cause those who trust in Him to do and to seek good There is no mention in these verses of what is in store for us around the corner in this passage because the future is no more meaningful than the present if we don't include God in our lives and so God as He speaks to us in this passage is saying it doesn't matter when you live but who you are as you live in whatever time it is

He says how you live how you live is what's crucial He indicates that there are only two types of people within this passage and that is the righteous and the unrighteous or the good and the evil but in whose eyes not in people's eyes in God's eyes God decides who are the good guys and who are the bad guys and we can certainly see evidence of that in our world today can't we and this psalmist talks about anger being one of the indicators and when he goes on to say he says leave anger and wrath to God leave that up to God verse 7 of this psalm be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him do not fret over those who prosper in their way over those who carry out evil devices verse 8 refrain from anger and forsake wrath do not fret it leads only to evil verse 9 for the wicked shall be cut off but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land don't let your anger and your impatience eat you up inside don't let the hurt keep doing damage within each of us

[11 : 42] God will deal with the evil in the world in His time but perhaps that's our problem our problem is we know what's inside our own hearts and minds we know the evil thoughts that we have greed selfishness anger and resentment and so this psalm if we were to read it in its entirety and maybe even what we've read tonight scares us a bit because it says that God will deal with wickedness and we're full of it we're full of wickedness and that's what the Bible calls sin so what hope is there what justification is there for all of us coming together each week and singing behold the Lamb of God what hope is there for us coming together each week and singing how great thou art what hope is there for each of us coming together and singing our God is an awesome

God when he's going to deal with all of us sinners hope well the fact is that we do have hope and our hope lies not in Jesus birth of 2000 years ago as important as that is but in his death which was 30 or so years later our hope lies in Jesus' death I want to read to you some other verses of scripture from the New Testament in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 tells us what God did God made Jesus his son his son Jesus to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God friends Jesus was the only one who never did anything wrong he was the only one he was the only man who ever lived who deserved to inherit all of God's richest treasures because he was truly righteous he was sinless listen to these words again

God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God and when Jesus died on the cross an amazing work was happening there it tells us that in this same passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 that God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ through Jesus that is not counting their trespasses our trespasses our sin against them and a little bit further back in this passage it says if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation everything old has passed away see everything has become new in Christ everything has become new and in verse 20 of this passage he says we are ambassadors for Christ since God is making his appeal through us we entreat you or implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God

God through Jesus Christ has been reconciling himself to us taking away our sin a few weeks ago we saw here in this church the Prince of Egypt and that's the story of Moses and the Hebrew people's exodus from Egypt towards the promised land but they never actually made it in that time but anyway they get there eventually and within that movie we see it's a fantastic movie and it's an even better book to read but we see Moses grows up he's a child and he was an Egyptian he was brought up an Egyptian adopted I guess and there's a moment in that movie where he realises he's not an Egyptian and he realises he's a

Hebrew and I call that particular moment a defining moment it's a defining moment for Moses in this movie is when he realises that he's not an Egyptian but a Hebrew like all the other slaves that he has probably been involved with mistreating as well it's a defining moment when he realises that in the movie Superman Christopher Reeves has this defining moment when he realises he's actually a super human and he goes to the ice cave in the North Pole and he takes his Superman suit and the ice castle builds up and he realises there this is a defining moment where he moves from boyhood into Superman status and he puts on his blue suit it's a defining moment within that movie and a defining moment is a point in time where who you are becomes very clear suddenly you understand the sort of person you are how you will react in a given situation and it can be the difference between living a fulfilled life and one where you are always wishing you had made the other choice one

[17 : 31] British news presenter says this that when Neil Armstrong you know you guys might be a bit young for this but he was a guy who landed on the moon when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon it was man's defining moment of experience and he said that during a TV show a countdown of the most popular TV moments and McDonald this guy's name was so proud of what humans had achieved I had hoped that the crucifixion was and I was so ashamed of what humans had stooped to but oh the wonder of what God achieved for human experience that day when man stepped on the moon it was a defining moment for human beings well as I see it each individual has at least two defining moments in their life you may be bugged by the millennium as many people are but this could be one of your defining moments in history in your life it could be the time now when you make a decision about who

Jesus is and how you're going to respond to who he is to him and I want to suggest that whatever you want to make of the millennium it should be what you want to make of your life right now as soon as I perhaps finish speaking make your defining moment one where you make the decision to let God rule your life and this isn't I'm not talking about organised religion here it's about letting God organise your life it's faith and hope for a glorious future not necessarily on this earth but in eternity with God trust that God will uphold the righteous and that he will deal with the wicked and the unrighteous because friends the other defining moment will be when we stand before the throne of God in heaven and he decides whether or not to let us in he's the one who's going to make those decisions and the first defining moment will affect the last your choice now for or against

God will affect his choice for or against you now it's more than ten years since you two announced that they still hadn't found what they were looking for and when you listen to Bono these days it seems that he still hasn't found what he's looking for but you don't have to be like that at all your search for meaningful existence can end today and your journey with God can start now I found what I was looking for and his name was Jesus Christ make this don't wait for New Year's Day your defining moment decide today that you're going to accept the forgiveness the love and the acceptance that God holds out waiting for you and with the knowledge of God's all embrace in love with you through whatever trials and circumstances come your way then let me assure you there's no need whatsoever to be bugged by the millennium we're going to play a song our sound system doesn't seem to be working so we've got to go to a portable tape system and this is a song by a band called

Third Day music might not be your cup of tea might be your cup of tea and this song is called Sky Falls Down Wilma's going to put it up in the overhead and what this song does it picks up some of the fears that people have as we approach the end of this century and this millennium but the writer this band they're a bunch of Christians they're not worried about it because they have a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the guy who writes this knows that when God's son comes back he's coming back for him now they spelt it son up here sky falls down it crumbles into the sea the sun goes out he's coming back for me where is it sorry it's the last line of the first verse it says because I know that the sun is on the way they spell it s-u-n but I also think you could spell it capital s-o-n referring to Jesus for Christians the great hope that we have is that if we have a relationship with God we have an eternal future in heaven with him and we don't have to worry about anything for the future I mean sure the world still goes on but we don't have to panic about the millennium we don't have to worry about those things because we have that assurance with God

Warwick asked us to pray a confession earlier tonight where we confess our sins and things in our lives which are wrong and as Christians we confess and we have assurance of God's forgiveness because of what Jesus has done on the cross in Jesus' death we are made right with God when we put our trust in him our father God we thank you that your word teaches and gives us confidence and assurance and Lord we know that you are the judge and that you will judge us righteous or unrighteous on that day and Lord we pray that we would know where we stand before you tonight and Lord if there are people here who don't know where they stand Lord I pray that they would go home knowing clearly who you are and how we should be serving you and following you we ask this in

[23 : 48] Jesus name amen amen amen amen amen amen