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John 5:17 - 5:47



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses John 5:17-5:47 and the Sabbath. He notes that God's character defines morality, justice and goodness, and that the Sabbath is an important concept. Jesus broke the Sabbath, arguing that David eating showbread was not different from the disciples breaking the Sabbath. The passage mentions foundational truths and repentance, and that God will raise the dead and judge the world. The final line of the parable suggests a lesson.

Transcript

We got part of the way through chapter 5 of John last time, and by the time we were low on time, I could see there was way too much material to try to finish in that session. And the smaller part of this chapter is a miracle that Jesus wrought, and the larger part is essentially a monologue of Jesus. It began with something of a dialogue, but then it morphed into a monologue, which goes all the way to the end of the chapter.

It began with the healing of a man at the pool of Bethesda who had been sick for many years and weak and could not move himself very efficiently. And he was at a pool that had at least the belief attached to it that from time to time an angel would stir the water of the pool, and then whoever was paying attention and got into the water first after the stirring would be healed of whatever his problem was, and that was at least the belief of this man and those who were there at the pool. They had seen the pool stirred many times, and he had always tried to get in, but he was slow, and so there was always someone who got in the pool before he did.

One has to wonder how many times he had seen this happen, and how many healings were observed through this means. Obviously if that belief prevailed about the pool, and if on many occasions the water had stirred and someone had been the first in, it would be well observable whether that person was healed or not. And if that had not been the case, it seems like the sick people would have given up their hope of that and gone somewhere else.

So it must be that some people were healed there, but this man was not really one who

had a lot of hope of being one of them, but he had no better options than to wait and hope for something. And Jesus asked him if he wanted to be well, and the man said that he had not been able to get into the water first when the water was stirred, and Jesus just told him to get up and to take his bedroll and go on home. And the man felt strength in his body for the first time, was able to get up, and he was carrying his bedroll.

But of course the main reason for telling this story is not because it was a healing, there are many healings of Jesus that go unmentioned in the Bible. This one is mentioned particularly because as we find at the end of verse 9, that day was the Sabbath. And so this precipitated a conversation, a conflict really, between Jesus and the Jewish leaders who had very strong scruples about observance of the Sabbath and very strong opinions about what constituted a breach of that law.

And carrying a bedroll was one of those things that was a breach. Also healing on the Sabbath, a man who did not have a life-threatening condition, that is if it was not a life and death emergency, a physician was not allowed to do healings or apply his trade on the Sabbath day. Jesus obviously healed, though no one could argue that he had done any work, he just commanded the man to get up and walk, I mean talking isn't work, so how could that be called working? Well, something happened, something was worked, a healing was worked, something was accomplished through Jesus' effort and therefore he was working on the Sabbath as far as they were concerned.

When he was confronted about this, he said in verse 17, my father has been working until now and I have been working, therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill him. Because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was his father, making himself equal with God. We covered this verse last time, but because of the shortage of time we didn't say everything that might be said about it, and even tonight we won't because I wanted to cover the rest of the chapter.

But I do want to point this out, that it might seem to us not obvious that speaking of God as your father would be making yourself equal with God. Isn't it rather commonplace for people to call God their father? The Jews generally did not refer to God as their father, at least not in a personal sense. There are a few times in the Old Testament where Isaiah speaks of Israel collectively as God's children, or God's son collectively, and God as the father of the nation.

But it was not heard of for people to speak of God as their personal father. And that's what Jesus had done, my father. He didn't say our father, my father works until now and I work.

And so Jesus was, of course, making some kind of special claim to sonship, but even so, is that really the same thing as making yourself equal with God? I call God my father, but I'm not making myself equal with God. Yet, you see, in the context, what he was saying is, my father doesn't rest on the Sabbath, and therefore I don't rest on the Sabbath. My

father works 24-7, and therefore I work 24-7.

Now the Jews knew that God doesn't take the Sabbath break off. What Jesus was saying is that he has the same prerogatives God has. The rabbis already, before Jesus' time, had discussed the issue of whether God keeps his own laws, notably whether he keeps the Sabbath.

And you know, this is one of those things that underscores what I try to get across to Sabbatarians, Seventh-day Adventists and such, when we talk about this subject. They consider that the Sabbath is a moral law. Why? Well, because it's in the Ten Commandments.

And certainly, all the other commandments in the Decalogue are moral laws. So, they just presume that the Sabbath is a moral law. But they don't really consider carefully enough what constitutes a moral law and what constitutes a ceremonial law.

God might mix moral and ceremonial laws in the Old Covenant. In fact, he did. Throughout the Book of Exodus and Leviticus, you find intermixed together commands that are moral and commands that are ceremonial.

But they're not of the same character. A moral command is one that reflects the character of God himself. God is righteous, and that righteousness consists of certain character traits that could never be violated without violating who he is.

Like justice, like mercy, like love, like faithfulness. These are things that are part of God's character. He could never be unfaithful.

He could never be unjust. He could never really be unloving. Because what? God is love.

How can he who is love ever be not himself? God is justice. He is mercy. He is faithfulness.

All these things are really descriptions of who God is. Now, God could never change what he is. And therefore, the norm of what righteousness is, which is defined by God's own character, will never change.

And therefore, all laws, if they are moral, must reflect the character of God. That's why Jesus castigated the Pharisees when he said, you've kept the minor issues. You've paid your tithes of mint and anise and cumin, but you've neglected the weightier matters of the law, which he listed as justice and mercy and faithfulness.

Why are those weightier matters? Because they are what God is. They are moral issues because God's character defines morality and justice and goodness. And so, laws that embody that are moral laws.

A ceremonial law is a law that does not necessarily have its roots in the character of

God. But a ceremonial law is something that depicts in a symbolic manner some truth or some reality. As, for example, the animal sacrifices foreshadowed the death of Christ.

Ceremonial laws are not laws that are rooted in morality, but in depicting in a ritual way some spiritual truth. So that if God chose, he could have neglected to give that particular ritual. I mean, he didn't have to give a ritual to depict that truth.

God didn't have to say, rest on the Sabbath day. He said he wants Israel to rest on the Sabbath day to commemorate that God rested on the Sabbath day when he created things. But if God had, in fact, rested on the seventh day and had never told anyone ever to keep the Sabbath, that would not violate his character.

There's nothing that made it incumbent upon him to necessarily say, you have to remember the day I rested. He could as easily say, I want you to rest on the sixth day because that's the day I created man, I want you to remember that. Or, I want you to rest on the first day because that's the day I created light, and that's an important thing.

He could have said, I want you to rest, he could have picked any day of the week and given a reason for it. It's in a sense, therefore, arbitrary. A ritual is something that God chose to depict something, but he didn't have to.

Because it wouldn't violate his character to have done otherwise. And so for God to give a command, thou shalt steal, would violate his character because stealing is unjust. Murder is unjust.

Adultery is unfaithful. These are all characteristics that God is not, and therefore they are immoral. And what about the Sabbath then? This matter that the rabbis argued about, does God keep his own laws? The answer is quite simple.

Yes, he keeps the moral laws because they describe his own character. He can't be other than he is. He of course keeps the laws of justice and mercy and faithfulness and those things that describe his own holiness.

Does he keep the Sabbath? No, he doesn't. He works every day. That's what Jesus said.

The Sabbath then is not a moral law. If God can violate it, the rabbis didn't understand that. They thought of the Sabbath as a moral obligation.

Therefore they came up with ways to say that God doesn't break the Sabbath. But the truth of the matter is, and Jesus declares it here, the Father does the same work on the Sabbath as he does any other day of the week. He does not keep the Sabbath holy.

He did observe a rest on the seventh day one time. But he has not observed the Sabbath on a regular basis afterwards. Therefore the observance of Sabbath, if God can neglect it in himself, cannot be a moral obligation.

Because he could never violate anything that was moral and good and righteous. So Jesus himself here and in other places categorizes the Sabbath law as a ceremonial law. He did that on other occasions too by the way and so did Paul.

What did Paul then liken the Sabbath to? He likened it to food restrictions and festival restrictions. These are clearly ceremonial things. These are not moral things.

Likewise, Jesus did the same in Matthew chapter 12 when his disciples were accused of breaking the Sabbath. When they picked the grain and rubbed it in their hands and they were accused of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus did not say that they were not violating the Sabbath.

Some people say, well maybe they were just violating the Pharisees' traditions about the Sabbath. Maybe or maybe not, but that's not the argument Jesus gave. Jesus just took it as a given that they were breaking the Sabbath and said, but haven't you read what David did when he was hungry? How he ate the showbread that was only for the priests and he wasn't a priest so he violated the showbread law.

Jesus is clearly saying that what David did eating the showbread is not much different than what his disciples did in breaking the Sabbath. Did David break a tradition or a law? A law. There was a law of Moses that only the priests were to eat the showbread.

Was it a moral law or a ceremonial law? Ceremonial. Tabernacle ritual. David had broken a ritual law, a ceremonial law, by eating ceremonial food that was supposed to only go to the Levites.

And Jesus said his disciples had done something similar. How so? They had really broken a law. Which one? The Sabbath.

So that was parallel to David breaking the showbread law. A ceremonial law. See, Jesus and Paul always treated the Sabbath as if it was ceremonial.

And Jesus did that here too. He says, my father works all the time and I do. Now what he's saying is, you Jews have always known that God works around the clock.

That he does as much work on the Sabbath as he does any other day of the week. And therefore, if he does, I can. Now that's the implication that made himself equal with God.

He was not talking about his ontological equality with God in some theological sense. He was just saying, if God has the right to do it, I have the right to do it. Now obviously there are things that God has the right to do that you and I don't have the right to do.

God has the right to take vengeance. He tells us not to do it. Don't avenge yourself.

That's God's product. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. It's not okay for us to take vengeance, but it's okay for him to.

He has rights that we don't have. So for me to say, well, if God does it, I can do it, is in a way saying I have sort of an equal status with God. At least if we're talking about something that God alone has the right to do.

To the Jewish mind, God had the right to work on the Sabbath, but we don't. And Jesus said, well, I'm not you. I'm more like him.

I'm not restricted like you are. I'm under no more restriction than he is. That's placing himself not on a human level, but on a divine level.

Making himself equal with God in terms of his privileges or in terms of his duties or his activities. He can do what God can do and what nobody else but God is allowed to do. Because if God works on the Sabbath, so can Jesus.

That's putting himself on God's level. And that's what they were upset about. And so, verses 19 through 23, the last verses we took last time.

He gives this parable of the apprentice's son. He says the son doesn't know what to do unless his father shows him. But his father does show him.

Because the father loves the son and shows him everything he does. And he teaches him how he does it. And the son does it the same way the father does it.

He's talking about the normal practice of a man teaching his son the trade. The son doesn't intuitively know how to build tables out of wood, but his father, who's a carpenter, will teach his son. Jesus was no doubt reflecting on his own upbringing.

He grew up as an apprentice to a carpenter. And he learned the trade from that carpenter, his father, his legal father, Joseph. So he's saying, that's how it is now with me and God.

When I was a boy, I learned my father Joseph's trade. He showed me how to do it. And when I make tables, I do it just the way he showed me, not a different way.

He was a good carpenter. I learned his way to do it. I carried out all his trade secrets.

The family business was safe in my hands. Because once he died, I could still make the same quality of goods he did, because I did it his way that he showed me. So now I'm working with my other father, my father in heaven.

And now I'm doing his work, and I do it his way. So this is what Jesus is explaining here. He's not acting as one who's a rival to God, but one who's appointed by God and authorized by God to do his work the way he does it.

And he says this at the end of verse 20. And he will show him greater works. That is, the father shows the son what he does, and the father's going to show the son greater works

than have already happened, that you all may marvel.

Now what are these greater works? I believe they are the works that the Jews believed were God's work alone, and that is raising the dead and judging the world. Jesus, for the next 10 verses, is going to talk about his role as the judge and the one who raises the dead. Now these are, of course, eschatological phenomena.

At the end of the world, the Jews believed, the Pharisees at least did, that God would raise the dead and judge all people. Christians believe that too. What the Pharisees believed was the work of God, Jesus said, that's what I'm going to do.

The father's given me authority to do those things. He's turned that business over to his son too. And I do it the way he shows me.

Now these two things together are going to be the center of attention in the next 10 verses. I just want to point out to you that the raising of the dead and judgment of the lost go together as two sides of a coin. In Christian theology, according to Hebrews chapter 6, these are some of the foundational truths, apparently some of the earliest truths that Christians are expected to learn.

Because in the opening verses of Hebrews 6, the writer says, therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to maturity or perfection, not laying again the foundation. Now when you're building a house, you don't keep laying the foundation over and over and over again. You lay the foundation properly one time, and then you go on and build on that foundation.

The writer is saying, you people need to go further than just the foundation. So let's stop relaying this foundation over again. Let's go on to maturity and not stick around with the basic principles of Christianity.

It's time to go on from the milk to the solid food. That's what he says, of course, in the previous verses at the end of chapter 5. Now he lists what he calls the foundational things, or what he calls the elementary principles of Christ. What are they? There are six things he mentions.

Repentance from dead works and faith toward God. Certainly those are foundational. You don't even become a Christian unless you have repentance and faith.

That's in fact the way you enter the Christian life, is through repentance and faith. That's definitely foundational. And he says also, the doctrine of baptisms and the laying on of hands.

Well that's also pretty foundational, because as soon as a person became a believer in the New Testament times, they were baptized and had hands laid upon them to receive the Spirit. We see an example of that in Paul's behavior in Acts 19, in the first seven

verses. When he meets some people in Ephesus, he baptizes them in water and lays hands on them.

That apparently was the initiation rites into the body of Christ for new believers. So these are truly elementary principles. I might add, that although they are said to be elementary, here many modern Christians don't have any concept of what they are.

These Christians that the writer of Hebrews is writing to, he complains in chapter 5 that they're like babes. They can only drink milk. They're not ready for solid food.

That's what the whole discussion in the five verses previous to chapter 6 are saying. And he says that those who drink milk are just unskilled in the word of righteousness, and they are babes. And he's actually a bit frustrated with these people, that they haven't grown more.

And he says, so let's go on from these basic things. But when you look at the things he calls the basic things, modern Christians, including Christians who have been Christians for 40 years, could they explain to you what the doctrine of baptisms and the laying on of hands is? A great number of Christians, I'm afraid, could not. In fact, even what repentance is.

Many Christians have hardly heard much about that. And much of what they've heard about faith toward God is strange, instead of biblical. There's whole churches that call themselves faith churches, and what they call faith isn't the same thing the Bible calls faith.

So these basic things that the babes in Christ, the immature, the writer assumed they understood these things. Our modern Christians, a great number of them, don't understand even them. But what else is in that list of these foundational things? The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Now this would be eschatological things. But not a lot of detail. There's nothing here about tribulation or rapture or antichrist or any of that stuff.

What there is, is the ultimate outcome of things. When a person became a Christian, it wasn't long before they learned as a basic foundational truth, God is going to raise the dead and judge the world. These are the two eschatological things that everyone knew.

I don't know how much they knew about antichrist, and how much they knew about tribulation and rapture and those kinds of things. But they knew there was going to be a resurrection of the dead and an eternal judgment. And that's what Jesus, these two things are joined together in Jesus' discussion too.

The Jews knew that God could raise the dead, and they believed only he could. They knew he would judge, and they believed no one but he could. And Jesus now is going to

say, but actually, I'm going to do those things.

God has actually turned those activities over to his Son. That may seem like God's business, but I'm taking over the family business. The Father has handed over the family business to the Son.

And showed me how to do it. And so I'll do it right. I'll do it the way my Father does.

But it says in verse 21, For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. So just like my Father is the one who raises the dead, so am I. I will raise the dead. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

So not only raising the dead, but judging. These two activities. The Father raises the dead, and he's given me the right to raise the dead.

The Father actually isn't going to judge anyone. He's turned that over to me too. Raising the dead and judging people on the last day.

He says he's committed all judgment to the Son. That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Yeah, they'd better if he's going to be their judge.

If you don't honor the judge, you can just imagine if you're on your way to court one day, because you had a traffic ticket, and you're going to challenge the ticket. And you're reckless, and you cut off somebody in traffic, and in a really nasty way. And you get to the courtroom, and it turns out he's the judge.

The guy you cut off. The judge is the guy that you cut off in traffic. That's not a scenario you want.

You'd better be good to the judge. He said, he that does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Further, he says, most assuredly I say to you, verse 24, he who hears my word, and believes in him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment.

That is, judgment in the negative sense of condemnation. But has passed from death to life. Most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. Meaning, that God is the possessor of life. He doesn't derive it from some natural source.

He is the source and the wellspring of life. He has life in himself. He's the giver of life, of all life.

So he's given the Son that prerogative to be able to give life to whoever he wills to. To

have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he's the Son of Man.

Now that because he's the Son of Man is rather interesting. Because earlier, Jesus has made reference to himself as the Son of God, which is why they wanted to kill him. But now he says, okay, I can raise the dead, because I'm the Son of God, and God has given me that prerogative.

To have life in myself, so I can give life to whoever I want to. But I can also judge, because I'm the Son of Man. My ability to raise the dead is due to my being the Son of God.

My ability to judge is due to my being the Son of Man. God has turned over all judgment to the Son. Why? Well, he says here, because he's the Son of Man.

There used to be an old Christian tract in the 70s about the judgment day. And it had all these people waiting in the outer room of God's courtroom on the day of judgment, waiting for their moment in court. And they were all talking about how they weren't sure who the judge was going to be, but they knew that he had to be benevolent.

He had to, because of all that they had suffered. And he shouldn't be able to judge me. I was born in a slum.

I was raised in poverty. Another person says, well, he shouldn't be able to judge me, because I was rejected by my family, and I was hated by my friends, and betrayed by close confidants. And they all had these different things that they had endured.

And they said, well, the judge, he's not really qualified to judge me. I've been through all these things. And they said, the only way he could judge me is if he would come down and go through all that.

And then when, of course, they were called into the courtroom, the judge was Jesus, and they realized that he had, in fact, qualified, because he was the Son of Man. God in heaven, of course, has every right to judge whoever he wants to. But it is true that the Father, until the Incarnation, the Father could not be said to have really been in our shoes, really experienced temptations as we have.

How could he really know firsthand how to judge sin when he's never been tempted to sin himself? The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4, in verse 15, we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. So, our high priest, which is a little different than judge, but still, Jesus is both, he is not unsympathetic because he has gone through the same testing we've gone through. But he passed the tests.

So he is qualified. When Jesus said about the woman in adultery, let him that is without

sin be the first to cast a stone at her. He's basically saying, who's qualified to condemn her? Who's righteous enough? Who is uncompromised in their own lives so that they could judge this woman for her failures? And no one in the crowd, including the oldest, was qualified to do that, and the crowd kind of faded away.

And then Jesus, the only one who is truly qualified, just said to her, I don't condemn you either. Go and sin no more. But it's obvious that what Jesus is saying is, in order to judge sinners, someone has to have had some connection, has got to have had some temptation and resisted it successfully.

God's got the right to do whatever he wants to do. But he turned things over to Jesus to judge, because Jesus has been here and done that. And one preacher I heard say, he thinks the first thing Jesus said when he went back up into heaven after the ascension was, man, those guys had it harder than we knew.

Because he'd been through it. And the Bible says he learned obedience through things he suffered. He learned what it costs to be obedient to God.

He never had any problem being obedient to God when he was in heaven before he came to earth. When he came to earth, he had to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood in his struggle against sin. He found out, and he is therefore able to be a merciful and compassionate high priest, and a merciful and compassionate judge, at least a knowledgeable judge, who knows what we face.

That's why God has committed all judgment to the Son, because he's the Son of Man. Yeah, he's the Son of God, too, and that gives him divine privileges, but as the Son of Man, it gives him human sympathies. Or we might say empathy.

Verse 28, Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice, as Jesus' voice, and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done the evil thing, to the resurrection of condemnation. You'll notice a similarity in the words in verse 28 and the words in verse 25. Because in verse 28, he says, Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice, and come forth.

In verse 25, he said something kind of similar, but not identical. He says, Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. Now, in both cases, he talks about dead people hearing his voice, and the result is they come alive.

In both places, he says the hour is coming. But in one case, he says, and now is. In the other case, he does not.

It's clear that in John 5.25, Jesus is speaking about two things. He said, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who

hear will live. So, dead people will live as a result of hearing the voice of Christ.

The time is coming when that will be true, and there is a sense in which it is now true also. Well, what does it mean in the sense of the hour is coming? What is the future instance of the dead hearing the voice of Christ, and coming to life? Well, that's what he tells us in verse 28. The hour is coming.

He doesn't say, and now is. This is the part that the hour is coming. This is the future part.

That those who are in the graves will hear his voice. This is a physical resurrection on the last day, and will come forth. So, that's the sense in which the hour is coming, in which the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.

But what's the now is part? In what sense is it now true that the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and come to life? Well, he's already said that in verse 24. He said, Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes in him who sent me, has everlasting life. He shall not come into judgment.

He has passed from death into life. This is not the last day. This is now.

This is those who hear my words now. And if they come to life, from hearing my words, then they have passed from death into life. Of course, spiritually.

He's not talking about physically. So, he says there's two senses. One now, and one later.

In which dead people hear my voice, and come alive. The part that is now, is people who are spiritually dead, they receive the gospel, and they pass from death into life. Spiritually.

Paul uses that language also in Ephesians chapter 2. He says, You who were dead in trespasses and sins, he has made alive with him. He's talking about when you're converted. When you're born again.

You were dead before, in trespasses and sins. Now you've come alive when you were born again. That's what Jesus is talking about here too.

You hear my words? You believe in it? Then you pass from death into life. Now. Spiritually.

You experience the power of the resurrection. The power of the age to come. Now.

Personally. But there's another sense in which the hour is coming. In which the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Man and live.

And that's the physical resurrection. There's two resurrections. One spiritual, that is happening now.

There's one physical, that is happening later. This explains what is otherwise very difficult to explain. In Revelation chapter 20.

And verses 5 and 6. This is of course the chapter about the millennium. Which is the most controversial chapter in the Bible. Some have said.

Because all theological systems. Gravitate toward one or another millennial position. This is the only chapter that mentions the millennium.

This is the only chapter in the Bible that mentions the thousand year reign. So whatever your millennial position is. Is going to have to be coming from this chapter.

And of course many are pre-millennial. And believe that the millennium happens after Jesus comes back. That Jesus is going to come back and set up a millennial kingdom on earth.

That's the pre-millennial system. In which case everything that happens in the thousand years. Is considered to be future.

After Jesus comes back. What we have here. In Revelation 20 verses 4. He said he saw the souls of those who were beheaded for Christ.

Enthroned and reigning with Christ for the thousand years. But it says in verse 5. The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power. Now these two references to the first resurrection.

There is no place in the Bible that speaks of a second resurrection. But the first one implies there is more than that one. Or she wouldn't call it the first one.

No sense calling something the first one if it's the only one. The first resurrection implies there is at least a second resurrection. Though that's not stated.

The mention of the second death implies there is a first death. Although it's not mentioned in the passage. You've got a mention of a first resurrection and a second death.

Those who have the first resurrection are exempt from the second death. Now we don't have any question about what the second death is. Because we're told that directly at the end of the chapter in verse 14.

It says then death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. So the second death is the lake of fire.

After the judgment those whose names are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. Verse 15 says so that is the second death. And those who have the first resurrection don't experience it.

So there's a first resurrection and a second resurrection. Those who are pre-millennial and who believe that this thousand years is describing conditions after Jesus returns. Believe of course that when Jesus returned prior to the millennium.

He raised the righteous dead. Because that's made clear in scripture that Jesus is going to raise us at his coming. So that they believe that the first resurrection refers to the resurrection of the Christians.

Which occurs at the second coming of Christ or at the rapture. Because remember in the passage about the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4. Paul says the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet him in the air.

That's the rapture. Resurrection and rapture happen together. So on this view the pre-millennial view.

Jesus comes back before the millennium and obviously raises the dead and raptures the church. So that's the first resurrection. But as you read the passage about the millennium at the end of that.

After the thousand years is over. You find in verse 11 a great white throne. Him who sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.

There's no more place found for them. I saw the dead small and great standing before God. Books were opened.

Another book was opened which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to their works. By the things which were written in the books.

The sea gave up the dead who were in it. And death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged each according to their works.

Then we have again the resurrection and the judgment together. The dead come out of the graves. The dead come out of Hades.

The dead come out of the sea. And they're judged. So these two eschatological things still join together.

They're raised from the dead to be judged. And therefore on the pre-millennial view. The only view that many Christians today have ever heard.

The first resurrection is the resurrection of the Christians before the millennium. And the second resurrection is the resurrection of the non-Christians. At the end of the millennium of which we just read.

That fits pretty well. It fits pretty well if you don't compare any scripture to scripture. If you study the rest of scripture.

You really cannot have it that way. The reason is because in the rest of scripture it's plain. That Christians and non-Christians will rise at the same time.

One of those places is here in John 5, 28 and 29. Jesus doesn't know of two resurrections. One where the Christians are raised and then a thousand years later.

The non-Christians are raised. What does he say in verse 28? John 5, 28. Do not marvel at this.

The hour is coming. Okay. Whether it's a literal hour or just meaning a short time.

Obviously it's not a long period of time. The hour is coming in which a couple of things are going to happen. All the dead.

All who are in the graves. Will hear his voice and come forth. Now who? The righteous or the unrighteous here? Well he explains.

Those who have done good to the resurrection of the Christians. Okay. So that's the resurrection of the Christians.

And those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Oh it's the resurrection of the non-Christians. Well which is it? Jesus said there's one hour in which everyone in all the graves is going to come out at the same time.

Some are going to go to the resurrection of life. Some to the resurrection of condemnation. We all have read the story of the sheep and the goats.

You remember how that begins in Matthew 25, 31. Jesus said, When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. And he'll gather all the nations before him.

And he'll separate between them the way a shepherd separates between the sheep and the goats. And to the goats he will say one thing. And to the sheep he'll say another thing.

Obviously these people are being judged. And it says, Then the goats are going to go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life. Sounds like that's the judgment.

When does that happen? The beginning of the first verse of the parable says, When the Son of Man will come in his glory. He's going to raise all the dead. He's going to call all the nations.

The sheep and the goats come to judgment the same day, the same time. And go off to eternal destiny separately. There's only one resurrection, one judgment that Jesus knew about.

Look over at John 6. John 6, 39. Jesus said, This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. Verse 40.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him, that's Christians, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Well look at verse 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Who? The one that comes to him, the Christian. How about verse 54. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

These are Christians, the ones who have eternal life, who eat his flesh and drink his blood. So when are the Christians going to be raised from the dead? On the last day. Now some people think they're going to be raised seven years before the last day, or one thousand and seven years before the last day.

You see, the word last day means the day after which are no other days. The last day is the final day in the sequence of all days. There are no days after that.

It's the end of the world. It's the end of history. It's the last day.

After that, what? In the new heaven and earth, there's no sun, moon, or stars. There's no day and night anymore. It's all day.

I mean, there's no more days after that. There's one day coming. It's called the day of the Lord, the day of Christ, the day of God, in various passages in Scripture.

It is the last day, and it's the day that he's going to raise the Christians. But when's he going to raise and judge the non-Christians then? Well, look at John chapter 12 and verse 48. Jesus said in John 12 and verse 48, He who rejects me and does not receive my word.

So this is the opposite group. Not the ones who receive him, who eat his flesh, drink his blood, and have eternal life. Not the ones who the Father draws.

The others, the ones who reject him. That one has one who judges him. For the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Would that be the same last day? How many last days might there be? So what's going to happen? The Christians are going to be raised up on the last day. Anyone who thinks they'll be raised seven years earlier than that, three and a half years earlier than that, a thousand years earlier than that, is not paying attention. Jesus said it four times in one chapter just to make sure you didn't miss it.

He's going to raise us up on the last day. What else is going to happen on the last day? He's also going to judge the wicked. You mean the wicked and the righteous are going to come out of the graves on the same day and be judged at the same time? Isn't that what he said in John 5, 28 and 29? Of course.

He reiterated it here about the last day. Pre-millennialism teaches there's a resurrection of the righteous before the millennium and a resurrection of the unrighteous at the end of the millennium. But Jesus knew of no such gap between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked.

It's in the same hour. The sheep and the goats are there before him at the same time, facing judgment. There's not a thousand year gap between there.

What do we do with Revelation 20, verses 5 and 6 where it says, this is the first resurrection. If there's a first, certainly there must be a second. Especially verse 5 and 6 both.

It says, the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. And those blessed ones who have the part of the first resurrection, the second death has no power over them.

That reference to the second death might have tipped us off. Because the first death is certainly natural death, physical death. The second death is something different.

Something not natural. It's the lake of fire. It's not natural, normal death.

There aren't two deaths that are just alike. There's not one death for the righteous and another death for the wicked. The first death is natural death.

Everyone has that. That's a universal thing. But there's a second death that not everyone has.

Now this is in the same context with the first and second resurrection. There's a resurrection that everyone will have. And there's one that not everyone will have.

The first resurrection can't be one group of dead bodies come out of the grave at one time. And the second resurrection is a second group come out of the grave at another time. Because that's all going to happen at one time, Jesus said.

So what is the first resurrection? Being born again is the first resurrection. John wrote

Revelation. And he also wrote the Gospel of John.

And there's only one place in the Bible that could possibly explain the meaning of Revelation 20, verses 5 and 6 about the first resurrection. And that is in John's other major work. In John 5, verse 24.

The hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. The first part is the now is. Actually I was quoting verse 25, but verse 24 tells the now is part.

He that hears my words and believes in him that sent me has eternal life and will not come into condemnation. That person has passed from death into life. That's the first resurrection.

You and I have already had that. Not everyone has that. Just like not everyone has the second death.

The group who has the first resurrection will be the group that doesn't have the second death. Now the second resurrection everyone is going to have. Just like everyone has the other death.

One of the deaths is universal. The second resurrection is the physical resurrection that includes everybody's bodies. So the first resurrection is spiritual.

The second is physical. And the physical one involves everybody at the same time. It's a fairly simple concept.

Of course it makes it more difficult to sort out Revelation 20. You have to deal with all the content of Revelation 20 which we won't do now. We don't have time to do now.

But certainly the decision in favor or against premillennialism has got to be determined on this question. How many resurrections are there? There are two. A first and a second.

But what is the first? And what is the second? Is the first one a physical resurrection of Christians? And the second one is a physical resurrection of non-Christians? Or is the first resurrection the spiritual resurrection of believers? The second one is the universal resurrection of all bodies from the graves. Notice that in verse 28 and 29 Jesus refers to all who are in the graves will come forth. In verse 24 he is more generic.

The dead. You see the dead can refer to dead bodies or dead souls. In this case it refers to both because it is a statement that the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live.

Currently it is the dead souls come to life. In the future it will be the dead in the graves, the bodies. So the resurrection is a general resurrection.

It includes everybody according to Jesus. Jesus says in verse 31, If I bear witness of

myself, my witness is not true. Here is an example of what I call a limited negative.

He means if I alone bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. It sounds universal. If I bear witness of myself I am lying.

Well he is bearing witness of himself so he must be lying. But no, he says if I alone bear witness of myself then my witness cannot be regarded as true. Why? Because it is a principle of the law.

In the mouth of two or more witnesses every word will be established. Nothing can be determined by one witness. So he says don't trust me if you don't have any confirmation of what I am saying other than me saying it.

But he says in case you haven't noticed there is confirmation. There are other witnesses. He says there is another who bears witness of me and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true.

This is almost certainly a reference to the Father. And Jesus is saying I call a second witness and the witness of two is indeed true. The witness of two witnesses establishes it.

There is my witness and there is another witness, my Father. Now this is a verse that to my mind pretty much cancels out the validity of what is called modalism. Or oneness doctrine, the oneness Pentecostal doctrine.

I don't have an axe to grind against oneness Pentecostals as far as I am concerned. They are true Christians, or at least they can be. I don't think their doctrine precludes that.

But they, instead of believing there are three persons in the Trinity, they believe there is one person in the Trinity who changes hats, so to speak. In the Old Testament he is the Father, in the New Testament he comes to earth as the Son, and after Pentecost he comes into the church as the Holy Spirit, and it is Jesus all the way. Jesus is the only person in the Trinity.

They are called Jesus only. They say that Jesus and the Father are not two separate persons. Jesus and the Father are just different modes in which God manifests himself.

It is also called modalism. That the Father became the Son and then became the Holy Spirit, but it is only one person all through. That is really a pretty convenient way to solve the mystery of the Trinity, if only it were true.

It would be nice if it was, because the Trinity is a difficult doctrine. It would be nice if I could just go that easy. Well, there is only one God, one person.

He is the Father, and he is the Son, and he is the Holy Spirit at different times, different ways. I am a Father, I am a Son, I have parents, I am a Son. I have children, I am a

Father.

I have been married, so I have been a husband. I can be a husband and a father and a son all at the same time. Just different roles I play in different situations.

One God. It would be so nice if that is all there was to the Trinity. And that is no doubt why the doctrine is so attractive to people who hold modalism.

The problem is, Jesus said, I am one witness, and my Father is another witness. That is two witnesses, not one in two different hats. He is saying, if I alone am bearing witness to myself, then you cannot trust me.

But if there is another one bearing witness in addition to me, not another me, not me in another costume, but another person besides me bearing witness, then you have got to listen. So Jesus makes it very clear that as difficult as it may be for us to fathom, because He also is one with the Father, and He made it perfectly unclear in John 14. He says, do you not know that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? And if you have seen me, you have seen the Father.

It sounds like He is the same, but He says, but the Father is greater than I. It would be nice if just half of the statements about the Father and Son were omitted from the Bible, so we could just go, either He is different then, or He is the same as. It is not made that easy for us. But one thing we can say is, we cannot make it easier by saying, He is just one person who goes through different modes.

Because then His argument here would be invalid. If He is saying, I and the Father are one in every respect, then He cannot say the Father is another witness besides me. There are two of us, He is saying.

Even more than just the Father and me, there is more than that. He says, you have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth, yet I do not receive the testimony from man. Once again, that is a limited negative.

Of course He receives testimony from man. He means, I do not receive testimony only from man. I have got better witnesses on my behalf than just men.

But He does receive the witness of men too, of course. He says, I do not receive the testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. John says, He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in His light.

Actually, in John chapter 1, the author made it very clear, repeatedly, John is not that light. He came to bear witness to the light. John is not the light.

But Jesus said, well, He is not the light, but He is a lamp. He is a light bearer. He is not the light itself.

Jesus is the light, but this is a word for lamp in Greek. He is not the light. Light emanates from a lamp.

A lamp brings light, but it is not light itself. It is an object merely. Light is something more amazing than the object that bears it.

But I have a greater witness than John's, for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the very works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me. So He has got how many witnesses? He has got Himself. He has got the Father.

He has got John the Baptist. And He has got His own works bear witness that He is telling the truth. And the Father Himself who sent me has testified of me.

You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. So I don't expect you to hear His witnesses. You have never heard Him speak.

However, His voice has spoken. John the Baptist bore witness to it. He had heard the voice.

He had seen the witness. And He bore testimony to it. These people were not there and didn't see it or hear it.

But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. But these are they which testify of me, but you are not willing to come to me that you may have life.

Now this is so important, because what He says about Jews can be true of Christians too. He said, you search the Scriptures. But He said in the previous verse, you don't have the word of God abiding in you.

You don't believe. His word is not in you, but you've got the Scriptures in your head. You comb through the Scriptures.

You master the Scriptures. But you don't have the word of God living in you. The Scriptures are the word of God inscripturated, reduced to writing.

The word of God is really that which proceeds out of the mouth of God. Jesus is the word of God. Jesus is not just figurative to say He's the word of God.

He is the word of God. The word of God is something spiritual. He is that light, and in Him was life, and that life was light.

He's talking about something that is contained in the Scripture, just like it was contained in the mouth of John the Baptist. The Scriptures bear witness of Jesus. That's yet another witness He mentions.

He's got Himself. He's got the Father. He's got John the Baptist.

He's got His works. Now He's got the Scriptures bear testimony to Him too. How many witnesses do you need? You need two or three witnesses to confirm that, but we've got five here, and some pretty powerful ones like God as a witness.

You don't need too many extras besides that, but you happen to have a lot more besides that. And He said these Scriptures, they are there to testify about Me, so that you would come to Me and have life. You're trying to find the life in the book itself.

You're trying to have a relationship with the book, instead of a relationship with Me. The book isn't there to substitute for Me. The book isn't there for you to have a relationship with the book.

The book is there to bring you to Me, so you can have a relationship with Me, and you're not doing that. You've become enamored with the book alone, and not the person that the book is telling you about. It's like looking at a road sign, and not going any further, because you're so enamored with the road sign.

You really want to go to the place that says, Seattle, 38 miles, or something like that. Oh, I want to go to Seattle, but that sign is such a lovely sign. I wonder how they made that sign.

I wonder how long that sign's been there. What kind of font is that? I can see it quite well. I wonder how big that font is.

You're analyzing the sign. You don't get any closer to Seattle as you analyze the sign. The sign is there to tell you how to get to Seattle.

And you want to be in Seattle, but you're thinking that just looking at the sign that's talking about Seattle is the same thing as being in Seattle. The Scriptures are a sign pointing you how to come to Me, and you're all about them, and you're not all about Me. This is something for us evangelicals, because we do affirm the inspiration of Scripture.

We do look to the Scriptures, in a sense to draw life from them. But the question is, are we trying to draw life from a mental knowledge of the meaning of words? Are we trying to encounter Jesus in the Scriptures? The Scriptures are a living thing if we encounter Jesus in them. But people who don't know Jesus and aren't looking for Him can learn the Scriptures.

A friend of mine told me he had a professor in school who was an atheist who had memorized the Gospel of John and could quote it. I don't doubt it. There's been many people who have memorized whole books of the Bible.

I wouldn't be surprised if some non-Christians had done so too, just to show off to

Christians or for whatever, but they're not there to find Jesus. Here, one of the books that tells you the most deep truths about Jesus, the guy could memorize it, but not know it. Not know Jesus.

Just like the Pharisees. I wonder how he felt when he read this passage, when he quoted this passage from memory. You search the Scriptures.

You think there's life in them. Well, there can be, if they lead you to me. If you stick with your... just being enamored with a book and don't find me, then, of course, you've missed the whole point.

You won't come to me. The very one that your Scriptures, that you're so searching so thoroughly to master and understand, they're talking about me and they're saying, look, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. And I'm right here and you won't come over me.

You're too stuck in the particular level of religious interest that you have. He says, I do not receive honor from men. What he means is, I'm not looking for my honor primarily or solely from men.

And this differs from the Pharisees, as he will point out. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. That must have stunned them.

I mean, these people were as religious as they get. And they were as close to God, at least in their estimation, as their religion could make a man be. But Jesus, you don't have any love for God in you.

I have come in my Father's name and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, him you will receive. Now, some people think this is a reference to the Antichrist.

I don't know why, but it's a very common dispensational teaching that Jesus is here saying that the Jews will receive the Antichrist as the Messiah when he comes. Well, there's no reference in the Bible to an Antichrist coming, posing as the Messiah. There's a reference to a man of sin in 2 Thessalonians, but there's no mention of him ever posing as the Messiah.

There's a reference to a beast in Revelation 13, but there's no reference to him posing as the Messiah or the Jews receiving him. There's a reference to a little horn in Daniel, but it never says he poses as the Messiah or the Jews receiving him. There's actually no passage in the Bible that ever says that there will be a man posing as the Messiah and he's really the Antichrist and the Jews will receive him.

And yet it's a standard doctrine of dispensationalism where they get it from this verse. Where Jesus said, you don't receive me when I come in my Father's name. Someone else will come in his own name and you'll receive him.

This is all they've got. But couldn't it simply be saying you will receive just about anybody who comes in their own name. There's me, the one who comes in his Father's name and doesn't promote myself.

I'm coming and doing what my Father said to do. I'm promoting my Father's kingdom and my Father's will. And you don't like me, but anyone may come in his own name and you'll receive him much more readily.

That is at least as likely to be the meaning of his statement as anything more specific about some particular person coming. How can you believe who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from God only? Now, see, Jesus said, I, in verse 41, do not receive honor from men. That's not where I look for my affirmation.

I don't look to men to affirm me, to validate me. But you look to each other for validation. You look to each other for approval.

You look to each other to affirm one another. How are you ever going to believe something that's not popular to your group? As long as you're hoping for them to approve of you. As long as you're seeking honor that comes from each other, you can't think outside the box.

You have to go along with the group because you're afraid of being disapproved of by your religious peers. How can you believe what I say? You're not free to believe. You're a slave to the opinions of your fellows.

You have to care only about God. He says, how can you believe who receive honor one from another and do not seek the honor that comes only from God? This is the key to being a believer. You have to care only about God's approval of you and not man's.

The fear of man brings a snare. It says in the Proverbs. You fear what man thinks of you, you'll be trapped.

You can't really be free to do things that men might disapprove of because you're such a slave to their approval. I don't want someone else doing my thinking for me. One of the advantages I found by not being salaried by any organization is no one can tell me what I have to think.

I only have to please God. If I don't look to any man but only to God for my support, then I just have to keep God happy, no one else. As long as God is happy with me, he'll support me.

But if I'm looking to man for my support, then I have to be careful not to believe and teach things that they don't approve of. They may dock my pay. I've told you previously about a pastor I knew who wanted to believe or at least considered the possibility of believing something different than his denomination.

He told a friend of mine that he couldn't even consider it because he'd lose his job in that denomination. He couldn't do that because he had to believe what the denomination required. He sought the honor that comes from man rather than the honor that comes from God alone.

And I'm not saying that the particular doctrine was a major doctrine that a Christian is obligated to be right about. It's just that attitude scared me to death. I'd hate to be able to think, well I think the truth lies over here but I dare not consider it because then my salary will dry up.

I have to have the honor and the respect of my denomination, my leaders. I have to have my peers on my side because otherwise I might not be able to pay the bills. It's so much more wonderful and freeing to say, well I don't really care if anyone agrees with me except God.

I just need to follow my conscience before God and trust that He approves of what I'm doing. Then I'm free. I can believe whatever God wants me to believe and not have to worry about what people think.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, we're not free like that. How can you believe when you still have that attitude of wanting the honor of each other and not of God alone? And verse 45, Do not think that I shall accuse you before the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust.

That must have struck them between the eyes because they believed they were Moses' disciples. I mean, if I felt myself to be a disciple of Jesus and some man came to me prophetically and said to you, you know, you're going to be condemned on the day of judgment and you know who's going to accuse you? Jesus is. I think, wait a minute.

He's the one I've been following all these years. I mean, he's my friend, right? I mean, how can you say Jesus is going to accuse me? He's the one I'm counting on to commend me, not accuse me. I'm looking for His approval in this.

That's how they were with Moses. They were Moses' disciples. And they thought Moses was the one who's, you know, he was their homeboy.

You know, he was going to stand up for them when they stand before God. Jesus says, actually, it's the other way around. He's going to accuse you because he spoke about me and you won't listen to him.

That's what he's saying. You're not listening to him. Don't think that I shall accuse you before the Father.

There's one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will

you believe my words? Moses spoke about Jesus.

And we don't have time now because we have to close to consider all the ways in which Moses may have done so. Certainly many things in the law that Moses gave in the ceremonies themselves pointed forward to Jesus. The Passover and the sacrificial system and many things spoke of Jesus in, you know, in acted form.

But probably he has in mind Deuteronomy chapter 18 where Moses said to Israel just before he died, in Deuteronomy 18, he said the Lord will send another prophet like Moses that the people will be obligated to listen to. And he says in Deuteronomy 18, 18, God says through Moses, I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren. I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

And it shall be that whoever will not hear my words, which he speaks in my name, I will require it of him. Okay? Whoever does not listen to that prophet who is like Moses, Moses said God will require it of him. Moses is the one who is telling these people listen to this new prophet, the Messiah, Jesus.

Because if you don't, God is going to hold you guilty. And who is going to come up as the main witness against you? Moses. He is going to say I told you.

Why didn't you hear me? Why didn't you listen to me? And so Jesus said if you would believe Moses, you would believe me. But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Now this is something that we need to understand about Israel in the time of Jesus. When Jesus came, there were people that were ready for him.

And there were people who were not. The people who were ready for him were the ones who already were faithful to God. Already believed Moses.

Already believed the prophets. There were people like that. There was a remnant in Israel who were faithful.

They listened to the prophets. They kept the law. John the Baptist's parents clearly were of that sort.

If you read the description of them in the beginning of Luke chapter 1 it says John the Baptist's parents they were blameless in all things concerning keeping the law. They were righteous people. There were Jews who were faithful before Jesus came.

They are the ones who became the believers in him. But the ones who were apostate they were already rejecting the spirit at least if not the letter of the law. And they are the same ones who rejected him.

He says you can't hear me because you didn't hear him. You're already postured in a

way to misunderstand and disbelieve because you've been disbelieving Moses all this time. And so how can you believe me? You can't.

So that Jesus' appeal was to those who already were obedient. If you remember the story Jesus told in Luke 16 about Lazarus and the rich man and they both died and Lazarus was in Abram's bosom and the rich man was in hell in flames. And the rich man said to Abraham send Lazarus back to warn my five brothers about this place so they don't come here.

And Abraham said well they have the law and the prophets. They have Moses. Let him read them.

And then they won't come here. And the man said oh but they don't believe that. But they'll believe if someone comes back from the dead.

Now what's the final line of that parable? And it's no doubt the lesson of the parable. If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets neither will they believe even if one rises from the dead. So the point he's making is even the most stupendous miracle Jesus rising from the dead is not going to have any impact on those who already have rejected Moses and the prophets.

Those Jews that were already apostate. These people had rejected Moses and they were already under the judgment of God. And that judgment meant they were blinded and they could not believe.

Even one who rose from the dead would make no impact on them. Because they already had postured themselves against God by rejecting his earlier revelation. And that's what Jesus indicts them of.