

# OpenTheo

## Introduction and Definitions



### **When Shall These Things Be?** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg defines eschatology as the study of final and last things, including the visible and physical second coming of Christ to Earth, the coming judgment by mighty angels, and the changing of the order of the world as we know it. He explains that although different interpretations exist, the majority of Christians believe in the future visible return of Christ to Earth. He also cautions that while some familiar Christian words might hold different meanings, it is important to consider the possible biblical foundations behind them. Finally, Gregg discusses the term "millennium," which refers to a one-thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation 20.

## Transcript

Eschatology, and I guess the first order of business is to define what is meant by that word. Eschatology comes from two Greek particles. One is the word eschatos, which means last thing, and logos, some would pronounce eschatos and logos, they can be translated or pronounced that way.

Nobody knows exactly how the Omicron in the Greek was pronounced in ancient times, but I tend to give it a short O pronunciation. So eschatos and logos. Logos is the ordinary Greek vocabulary word that is often translated word.

In the beginning was the word, is the word logos. But it also means subject. Any word that in our English language that ends with the suffix ology, as in anthropology or biology or whatever, has ology at the end.

That's from the Greek word logos. Word or subject, we usually use it to mean the study of a certain subject. And so eschatology is the study of final things, or last things.

What things at the end are in view in certain passages of scripture that are related to eschatology is actually much more controversial than most people know. It is not my desire to add to the controversy, although what I have to say will of course not meet with the approval of everybody's view. I can't meet with the approval of everybody's view.

In fact, my understanding of these things does not even meet with the most popular

view that is out there at the moment. The views I hold were held for the greater part of church history by the majority of Christians, but those views have fallen out of favor in the past hundred and fifty or so years and are not the most popular views today. The question of course is not what did, what was taught through the majority of church history by the majority of Christians, because any number of heresies might be defended on the basis that the majority of Christians through most of history held to those views.

We don't wish to defend heresies, but just as a matter of perspective, there have been different views on this subject held at different times in history, and many Christians today are only aware of one set of views, and that's what we want to examine. The principal concern of Christian eschatology has to do with the coming of Christ, and by this we do not mean his coming the first time of which we read in the Gospels, but his coming at the end of the age, which is still anticipated by the vast majority of Christians. I say the vast majority of Christians because there are some few, very, very small minority, and I am not ranked among them, who believe that what Jesus spoke of when he spoke of his coming, what we usually call the second coming, was actually fulfilled, has actually happened long ago.

Obviously those who hold this view do not have the same scenario in their mind related to the second coming of Christ that we do. Most of us think of Jesus coming visibly to planet earth at the end of the age, coming in judgment with his mighty angels, changing the whole order of the world as we know it, changing history radically and everything being put right and so forth. This is what I think most Christians, regardless of their eschatological framework, most Christians view the second coming in these kinds of terms.

As I say, there are a few people out there who think that all references to the second coming or to the coming of Christ in the future are no longer future for us, that they were future from the point of view of the writers of scripture, but that at some point since the scriptures were written, but prior to our own time, these scriptures were fulfilled. They do not believe, and they are not suggesting, that Jesus visibly came to earth and did all the things that we usually associate with the second coming of Christ. They take the scriptures on these subjects a little less literally than maybe some of us do, and apply it to some major hinge in history, some major turning point in history.

The most common view among those who take this position is that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was the second coming of Christ, the coming of Christ in judgment. Now, I personally do believe that 70 AD was very significant, and I believe there were many scriptural prophecies fulfilled by that event. I am not currently of the opinion that that is what was referred to, however, in all the passages about the second coming of Christ.

There, as you will find, there are some of the passages in the Bible which many people

apply to the second coming of Christ, which I do personally think would apply more naturally to the events of 70 AD, but I simply have not come to the point in my own study of scripture to accept the notion that what happened in 70 AD was the second coming of Christ, and there will be no other. This is the view of some persons, but very, very few, and I don't think I can follow them in their interpretation. I still hold very much to the view that most Christians seem to have always held, and that is that the second coming of Christ will be visible and cataclysmic.

It will change the whole world order. It'll change history forever. Sin will be put down, the devil will be dispensed with, and essentially we will have nothing else to worry about beyond that point, because we will be glorified at his coming, the dead will be raised, we will be raptured to meet the Lord.

All of these things have historically been associated with the second coming of Christ, and for good reason. The Bible associates those things with the second coming of Christ, and so I'm going to, of course, proceed on the view that the vast majority of Christians, regardless of their other eschatological commitments, almost all Christians believe in a future, visible, physical second coming of Christ to this earth. When Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives in Acts chapter 1, the disciples learned for the first time, it would appear, about the second coming of Christ.

There are some statements Jesus made to his disciples while on earth about the coming of the Son of Man, and whether the disciples were to understand those as references to what we call the second coming of Christ or not is very disputable. The disciples, after all, right up until the time that Jesus was caught up into heaven before their eyes in Acts chapter 1, right up to that moment, they did not know that he was going away. In fact, just before he ascended, in Acts 1.6, they said, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? They thought it was time to get down to business and setting up the kingdom such as the Jews expected.

They didn't know Jesus was going to be leaving, and this was just before he left. They became aware that he was leaving at about the exact moment that he left, which means that they could hardly have had the view of a second coming of Christ prior to that, because we speak of the second coming of Christ as a return from where he is gone. He went to heaven in probably the year 30 AD and has not appeared since, not physically.

So when we talk about the second coming of Christ, we do so from the frame of reference that we know that he went away and coming back is an issue. The disciples did not know he was going away, and therefore it can hardly be that they had a conviction about his second coming during the time that he spent on earth with them. However, when he ascended to heaven, we know, it says in Acts chapter 1, it says in verses 9 through 11, Acts 1, 9 through 11, Now when he had spoken these things, while they watched, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, whom all agreed were angels, who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven. This provides the first inkling probably to the disciples that there would be what we call a second coming. Jesus, at the very time that they first realized he was going away and saw him go away, it was announced by angels that he would eventually come back, that his coming would be in like manner as they had seen him go.

Most understand this fairly literally, that he will come back physically. He will come back visibly, just as he went away visibly and physically. And in fact, there are many who even believe when he returns, he'll return to the very same spot, the Mount of Olives.

If you think the scripture teaches this, you may be surprised how little there is to base that assumption on. It is assumed that he will return to the Mount of Olives based on the interpretation of a very questionable passage. Not questionable in its truthfulness, but questionable as to its meaning in Zechariah 14, a very difficult chapter to interpret.

But some believe that when Jesus returns, he will in fact come to the Mount of Olives, the very mountain from which he left. So this is the concept of the second coming of Christ that most of us hold and that I personally believe the scriptures give us occasion to hope for. It is called the blessed hope of a believer in Titus 2.13. It is a blessed hope because it's the thing that will change our present circumstance of pain and suffering and trial and testing and mortality and sickness and weakness and the prospect of death.

All these things which we live with on a daily basis, all of these things we put behind us. At the second coming of Christ, this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and then shall be fulfilled that saying, O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? It will be a wonderful transformation for us. The Bible says in Philippians 3 that Christ will transform our lowly body into the likeness of his glorious body at his coming.

So we certainly look forward to this second coming, and it is the blessed hope of the believer, and it is therefore appropriate that we have some understanding of it in a biblical manner. Now there are people, I should make clear that eschatology does not only refer to the actual event of the second coming, but events surrounding it, things related to it. Eschatology would have to include subjects related to the events just prior to the second coming, and including the second coming, and even including what will happen after that.

These would all fall into the category of what we call eschatology. And there are people who believe that the Bible gives us an elaborate portrayal of the times just prior to the second coming. These people are probably the most often listened to, the most often heard on the radio, and their books are most frequently available to us.

And we get the impression from these people that the Bible tells us a great deal about what the world will be like, what signs there will be, just before Jesus comes back, alerting us to the fact that he will soon be here. This is somewhat disputable, but we will have occasion in these studies to look at those issues. And you know, a lot of people say, well, I don't really care, it doesn't really matter to me exactly whether I understand properly the end times.

I mean, aren't things going to pretty much happen the way they're going to happen? That is possibly true, although it does say in 2 Peter 3 that we should hasten the coming of the Lord, which might suggest that there is a role for us to play and responsibility for us to fulfill that may, if we fulfill it diligently, may cause the coming of the Lord to be sooner. That is 2 Peter 3.12. Actually, in 2 Peter 3 verses 11 and 12 say, Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, meaning this world and the universe, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Now, if we are to be looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, and if this is supposed to result in our own holy conduct and godliness, according to Peter, then it is clear that our understanding or our expectation of the second coming has some practical impact on the way we live. Exactly the degree of that impact is not agreed upon. Some people believe that if you have a wrong eschatological system, you may become complacent, and you may in fact become lukewarm and maybe even backslide.

Other people believe that there are things that need to be accomplished by Christians, which if we don't understand that they are prerequisite to the coming of Christ, we may be lazy about this, and we may not hasten the coming of the day of God as much as we could if we were aware of what it takes and what is expected of us. But I will say this. Many people have said, well, even if I don't understand end times prophecies, it's not ultimately going to prevent them from being fulfilled.

God is going to do what he is going to do, and therefore I don't mind just waiting around and watching and see what he does. Well, I'm not sure that that's the right approach to take to prophecy. In the ninth chapter of Daniel, we read that Daniel was himself reading some scriptures that were available from a previous generation.

He was reading the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was contemporary with Daniel, though Jeremiah was an old man when Daniel was a child, and therefore by the time Daniel was reading Jeremiah, Jeremiah had died. But the book of Jeremiah was available to Daniel in Babylon, and it says in Daniel chapter 9, verse 1, in the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of

the years specified by the word of the Lord given through Jeremiah the prophet that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

It's a reference to Jeremiah chapter 25, where Jeremiah actually predicted that the Jews would spend 70 years in Babylon. Verse 3, then I set my face toward the Lord God to make requests by prayer and supplications with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And then it gives his lengthy prayer, and his prayer is essentially that God would forgive the iniquity of his people and restore them from Babylon and let them return to Jerusalem.

In other words, he's praying for God to fulfill actually what God predicted. He read from Jeremiah that God had predicted that the Jews would return from Babylon. In fact, Jeremiah had even predicted when they would.

Said their captivity would be 70 years. Daniel realized he was living near the end of that period of time, and he could have just sat back and said, well, my goodness, God is going to cause all our people to return to Jerusalem. I'll sit and watch this and marvel.

Instead, he fasted, he prayed, he put on sackcloth, and he begged God to fulfill his promises. Now, that would seem rather unnecessary inconvenience to put someone to, if indeed the prophecy is just going to be fulfilled anyway. I mean, if God just said he's going to do it and it's going to happen, why bother yourself with fasting? Why put on sackcloth and pray and do all that? Why not just watch it happen? That's a good question.

I don't know the answer, except that I suppose that Daniel believed, perhaps as John Wesley did, that God does nothing but in response to prayer, and that even though God has determined what he will do, he has determined that he will do it because of people's prayers and not because of something else or not without them. In fact, Daniel had more reason to be complacent than we do. He was looking forward not to the second coming of Christ.

He was looking forward to the return of his people from Babylon to Jerusalem. But in that case, he had an actual date that the prophecy had said it'll be after 70 years. And he lived at that time at the end of the 70 years.

So he could have been more complacent than we because we're not even told when Jesus will come back, and yet we are told to hasten his coming by our activity and by our living and so forth. So it does seem that it's not quite the right attitude to say, well, you know, it could happen this way or another way or yet another way, and it doesn't really matter to me. I'm just going to sit and watch.

God's going to do what he's going to do. It may be, in fact, that God expects us to participate in bringing to pass the prophecies related to his second coming and hastening his coming, and therefore it certainly behooves us to get some idea of what it

is that was predicted and see if there's any guidance from Scripture as to what we're supposed to do about it. First of all, we're going to use this introductory lecture here just to introduce some basic definitions, some basic concepts, because there's a lot of specialized vocabulary that people use when talking about eschatology.

They use words like tribulation, rapture, Antichrist, millennium. These are just a few of the more commonly heard words that really are kind of simply part of the eschatological vocabulary of people, and it's probable that you already attached some meaning to those words when you heard them just now. It's probable that you already have some concept of what is meant by the rapture or the millennium.

If you do not, it is only because you haven't heard much about eschatology yet. You'll certainly hear a lot about these words here, although what I'm going to suggest is that these words, though they are familiar to many Christians, the meanings that are attached to these words are often, I believe, without biblical foundation. I believe that although there are good meanings to those words and biblical meanings to them, I believe that many Christians have the wrong understanding of them.

So I want to start out essentially with just definitions. Before we can have an extended discussion on a subject, we need to acquaint ourselves with the specialized vocabulary. Just as I had to begin this lecture by telling you what eschatology means, since that's the subject we're talking about, let's talk about the words in the Bible that refer to the coming of Christ.

Now, I had almost said the second coming of Christ, and I even used that term several times already this morning in this lecture, the second coming of Christ. It's a very common thing for Christians to say, although you'll never find a reference in the Bible to this expression, the second coming. If you get a concordance, or nowadays you can do it with a Bible computer program and find it a lot quicker, just look up second coming and you'll find that the expression is not found in Scripture.

Although, of course, you do find many references to the coming of Christ, it is perhaps significant that we never find an expression, the second coming. It does say in Hebrews that he will appear a second time, and perhaps that's where the word coming has been gathered by Christians into their vocabulary. Perhaps I'll give you that verse, since that's about all we've got to go on for affirming the word second as a reference to the event we're talking about.

It is in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 28, it says, So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, to those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation. And so we get the word second from that passage in all likelihood, but the reason I'm making a point of saying that you won't find the expression the second coming is because you do find the word coming, the coming of the Son of Man, many times. And the assumption of many when they read these passages is that when you

read of the coming of the Son of Man, you must be talking about the second coming.

What I'm going to suggest is that the Bible uses the word coming or come with reference to Christ in more than one way, and not always with reference to just a first coming and a second coming. There are many comings of Christ depending on how that word is used in what context. For example, in the book of Revelation in chapters 1 through 3, especially in chapters 2 and 3, we have the seven letters to the seven churches.

These are actual churches that existed in the first century. Only one of them is in existence today. Six of the seven no longer exist.

Many of them have been gone for hundreds of years. They are ancient churches. In many cases, the cities they were in aren't even there.

Ephesus, for example. Not only is there no church of Ephesus, there is no city of Ephesus today. And it is said in the letters that Jesus dictates to the seven churches.

Six of these churches are told by Christ that he will come to them. He either announces it or threatens it. He says, if you don't repent, I will come to you and I'll remove your lampstand.

Or he says, if you don't repent, I will come to you and fight with you with a sword that proceeds out of my mouth. Or he says to one of the churches, behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any men hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and suplicate with him and he with me.

Six of the seven churches are told by Christ that he will come to them. It's either a threat or a promise in each case. But what's interesting is that none of them to whom these promises are made are around today, are here.

None of them are here. In other words, he must not be referring to his second coming in these cases, because when his second coming does occur, they won't be here. They're not here to experience it.

He's not coming to them. They are history. And therefore, it's likely that what his reference to coming to these churches is not a reference to his second coming.

Now, in some cases, the wording, I will come and fight with a sword out of my mouth, it might convey to us notions of the second coming. But for example, when he told the church of Ephesus, I will come to you and remove your candlestick from its place. That must have happened because it's gone.

The candlestick is gone from that place. He must have come and done that. When the passage, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him, is very clearly not a reference to the second coming.



It's talking about an individual experience. Now, I'm suggesting to you that even among the six of those seven letters where Jesus said he will come to them, it doesn't always mean the same thing. The sense in which he would come into those of Laodicea who would open the door to him is a different sense of his coming than the sense that he came to Ephesus and took away their candlestick.

Our lampstand is a more modern translation than candlestick. I'm more used to King James. But the point I'm making is that Jesus is said to come even in the book of Revelation several times is said to come in ways that are not necessarily referring to the second coming.

And sometimes even in those chapters, his coming is different from other times in those chapters. The word is quite flexible. So what I'm going to suggest to you is that when you read in the Bible of Jesus coming, it may not always be that it's referring to his second coming, although from our perspective, because of our expectation of the second coming, we may tend always to apply such passages to that event.

When Jesus said to the disciples in Matthew chapter 10, when he sent out the disciples in on one of their first missionary journeys, he said, When they persecute you in one city, flee to the next, for you shall not have gone over all the villages of Israel before the Son of Man comes. Now, that's Matthew 10, 23. He said, You will not have gone over all the villages of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

Now, some people could apply that to the second coming, I suppose, although the disciples certainly have had time since in the past two thousand years, Christians have had time to reach all the villages of Israel. Jesus seemed to indicate that their time would be short for this project, and they shouldn't waste their time trying to evangelize villages that were non receptive, that they persecute you, flee to another and keep going because you will not have reached all the villages before the Son of Man comes. Sounds like he's saying, Don't dilly-dally because you've got a short time, a limited time.

You will not be able to reach all the villages, so reach as many as you can. Yet, if he was talking about his second coming, which, as it turns out, is now something like two thousand years since, certainly, I don't know whether all the villages of Israel have been reached now or not, but there has been plenty of time. There's been no hurry in two thousand years.

In fact, even probably within ten years, all the villages of Israel could have been reached, depending on how long they've spent in each one. But there are other interpretations of what he meant when he said, Until the Son of Man comes. Some people believe it just means, you know, I'm sending you out on a short-term mission.

I will come and join you at the end of the outreach, and that'll be the end of the outreach. So go for it, and don't waste any time, because you won't get done with the

whole job before I come. That is, before I come and meet you at our rendezvous point, and your time is out for this particular outreach.

Some have understood him to mean that, and it could mean that. Others have felt that until the Son of Man comes, and this place refers to the destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth in 70 AD, which is viewed as a coming in judgment of Christ against the nation that crucified him. And they suggest that if that is his meaning, it would be sensible, because that was the end of the Jewish Commonwealth.

The Romans came in and wiped out all the Jews, banished them. There were no more villages of Israel. And he says, you know, you reach as many of these villages as you can, because you won't reach them all before the Son of Man comes.

In other words, that ends your opportunity to reach these villages of Israel, because that's the end of their existence, when the Romans would come and destroy them. So there's a lot of different suggestions as to what may be meant, but the point is, we have there a reference to the Son of Man coming, even though most, I think most Christians would agree, it's not referring to the second coming in that particular place. Look also at Matthew chapter 16.

Matthew chapter 16 and verse 28. Matthew 16, 28. Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Now, as persons living at the near the end of the 20th century, and anticipating the second coming of Christ, when we read a verse that talks about the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, the language suggests to our minds immediately the second coming of Christ. But he can't be referring to the second coming of Christ here, unless he missed his prediction. Because he said, some of you standing here will not taste death before you see the Son of Man come.

Now, there are indeed some people who don't have much respect for Jesus, and who feel like he was predicting his second coming, and that he thought that his second coming would come within the lifetime of those people, and he just was wrong. It turned out to be much later. But we who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he was a true prophet, not a false prophet, must not allow that interpretation to be held very seriously.

We must assume, if we have any respect for Christ as an inspired speaker, that he did not mistake, and what he said did come true. That within the lifetime of some of those standing there, something occurred, which he referred to as the coming of the Son of Man in his kingdom. Now, many commentators believe that he's actually referring to the experience of three of them in the very next chapter, where he took them on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they saw Jesus transfigured there.

And they say, well, that is the fulfillment of what he predicted. That happened eight days or seven days later, after six days, according to Matthew 17.1. And some are satisfied to say that was the Transfiguration. Others say, well, the reference to him coming to his kingdom is actually a reference to the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost, and establishing the spiritual kingdom at that point.

And indeed, there are arguments that can be made favoring that interpretation. Yet others believe that he's referring to his judgment coming in 70 AD, judging the nation that crucified him, judging Israel by the Romans. This is yet another opinion.

I don't know of any evangelicals who believe that Jesus is here talking about his second coming, because as I said, if he was, then unfortunately he was very much mistaken. But if we accept that Jesus was not mistaken, and I have no problem accepting that, that Jesus was not mistaken, then we must necessarily say that the coming of the Son of Man, as he used the term here, does not refer to his second coming, but refers to something else. We don't have to agree among ourselves as to what it does refer to.

For the point I'm trying to make right now, I'm simply saying it means something other than the second coming, just as when Jesus said, you will not have gone through all the village of Israel before the Son of Man comes. It seems clear to me, at least, that the disciples could not have understood these predictions as about the second coming, since, as I said earlier, they probably didn't have a concept of the second coming. They didn't know he was going away, much less coming back.

Therefore, when he talked about the Son of Man coming, they had a concept in their mind of that which was probably different than ours. Now we might say, well, they had the wrong concept. They didn't know as much as we do.

In fact, Jesus did speak about his second coming to the disciples, but they didn't have the frame of reference yet to understand it as we do. That is possible. That is possible, certainly.

But we don't know for sure that that is the case. We hope that Jesus spoke in language that his disciples could understand, because it was his intention to not conceal things from them, but to reveal them to them. Remember, he said to them, the reason he spoke to the masses in parables, but explained all things privately to his disciples, is because to them, the disciples, it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and to the multitudes, it was not given to know.

Jesus indicated his disciples were particularly privy to his secrets and his meanings. In fact, he said in the upper room, I don't call you any more servants, but friends, because a friend does not, I mean, a servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but I have told you everything that the Fathers revealed to me. So Jesus indicates that he was not keeping secrets or speaking in dark sayings to his disciples.

And if he said to them, you know, the Son of Man will come while some of you are still living, it's unlikely they would have had any concept of that meaning the second coming, as we think of it, because as I said, the idea of him coming a second time was absolutely superfluous. He was already here. Why should he have to come back? They didn't know he was going away.

Therefore, it is important for us when we read the scriptures to ask ourselves, how did Jesus expect his disciples to interpret his statements? Not how did Jesus expect Christians living in the 20th century to interpret his statements? Because he did not, Jesus didn't even write these down and say to his disciples, preserve these things for people in the 20th century, because they're going need this. Jesus actually just spoke them to his disciples as if they were his audience and his comments were directed toward them. And we can appreciate the fact that much of what he told the disciples has continuing relevance to all time for all disciples, but it still must have meant something to them.

And whatever he meant, I believe must have been in some sense intelligible to them. They might have not fully grasped it, of course, until later on, but it must have meant something. And so I want you to be aware that we will encounter expressions in the Bible, whether those occasions in the book of Revelation I mentioned to the seven churches, or these times when Jesus speaks of this coming of the Son of Man as something that is more or less imminent, something that would happen in their time.

Or let me show you something in the Old Testament to show you that the Old Testament writers set a precedent for the kind of language that Jesus used. Jesus, of course, was speaking in a Jewish society that was well-schooled in biblical Old Testament language usage and figures of speech. If you look at Isaiah 19, verse 1, I don't think you'll find a commentator who disagrees with what I'm about to say about this chapter.

That is, that this chapter predicts the military overthrow of Egypt, and the military force that overthrew Egypt in this connection was Assyria. When Isaiah wrote this, Assyria was conquering all the lands of the Middle East, even conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and Egypt was conquered by Assyria also. This was predicted by Isaiah, and this is the chapter where he predicts it.

We will not go into detail in the chapter, but let me simply show you what he says in verse 1. Isaiah 19, verse 1. The burden against Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt. We can read far enough right there.

The Lord comes, riding on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt. The actual fulfillment of this was not the second coming, nor even the first coming of the Lord. In fact, I don't know of any commentators who believe that God literally, visibly, and physically came to Egypt in the fulfillment of this.

Rather, it's a figure of speech that speaks of God, of visitation, of judgment from God. Figuratively, as if God is riding his war chariots, heading up the armies that came against Egypt to destroy them. Now, the armies were actually the Assyrian armies, and the Assyrians were not in any deliberate sense following God's orders, but the teaching of the Old Testament is, and of the New, that armies march, whether knowingly or inadvertently, at the command of God.

God is the one who uses the armies of one nation to judge another nation, and this he does with or without their knowledge of it. He can work behind the scenes or without them realizing it. What is being taught here in this chapter in Isaiah is that God is sovereignly bringing the Assyrians as an attacking force to bring judgment on Egypt, whom God is angry with and believes is worthy of judgment.

But the language of the Old Testament, the figurative language, is God is riding on a chariot, riding on the clouds, and coming as if he was heading up the armies himself into Egypt. Now, this language is very similar to many statements in the New Testament about Jesus coming on clouds. And because of the similarity in the language, it has been argued by some that some of those references in the New Testament to Jesus coming on clouds may not be a reference to his second coming any more than Isaiah 19.1 is a reference to his second coming.

If the Lord comes on a cloud to Egypt in Isaiah 19 and comes on a cloud to Jerusalem in, say, Matthew 24, is it not possible, some would argue, that if God coming on a cloud to Egypt was simply the armies of the Assyrians coming in and conquering Egypt, that Jesus coming on a cloud to Jerusalem might be the armies of the Romans coming and conquering Jerusalem? This may be very foreign to our frame of reference and the way that we usually think about passages, but we have to, I think, if we're going to be reasonable and simply not too prejudiced, have to admit there is a possibility of that being the case. Even some of our favorite scriptures about the coming of Christ may, in context, have to be seen as something other than the second coming of Christ. Now, in saying that, I'm not trying to discourage you from believing in the second coming of Christ, which I personally believe is still future.

I believe there are certainly references in the New Testament to the second coming of Christ that is yet future, what we call the second coming. But what I'm suggesting is that the term coming of Christ in scripture is used more broadly, more generically. To simply speak of the coming of the Son of Man does not necessitate that the second coming, or what we call the second coming, is always in view.

The context must decide. Now, in the notes that I've handed out to you, I have given you the principal Greek words that are found in the New Testament that are relevant to the subject of the coming of the Lord. The first and most important of these is the word *parousia*.

It's from two words in Greek, para, which is the preposition with or alongside. We talked about para-church organizations before, organizations that are alongside the church, para. Ousia is the Greek word for being, and so parousia is actually a being with.

Sometimes it's translated presence. Sometimes it's translated coming. Now, in English, the word coming and the word presence are very different in meaning, but scholars, in order to help us understand the meaning of this word parousia, have sometimes pointed out that we could compare it to our English word visit, because if my parents tell me that they're looking forward to my visit when I come down at Thanksgiving to see them in Southern California, what are they referring to as my visit? Well, first of all, my arrival there.

They're looking forward to my arrival, but there will be a subsequent staying for a little while. Also, my visit encompasses my arrival and the whole time of my presence with them as well until I leave again. And that is what the word parousia apparently means.

It refers sometimes to the initial arrival, and in other contexts, to the ongoing presence of Jesus. And not only Jesus. Actually, the word is a generic term in the Greek and is used of other persons other than Jesus.

It is used of Paul in 2 Corinthians 10, 10 and in Philippians 1, 26 and in Philippians 2, 12. In these cases, it talks about Paul's coming to the saints there, his coming to visit them. The word parousia is used in those passages.

Also in 1 Corinthians 16, 17, Paul talks about how he was relieved by the parousia or the coming of Stephanus and Fortunatus. And also in 2 Corinthians 7, verses 6 and 7, he was comforted by the coming of Titus. Again, parousia is used.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, 9, Paul speaks of the coming of the man of sin. Again, the word parousia is used here. Now, although you can translate these as the presence or the coming, and in English we think of coming, since it is a form of the word come, we might think of it as a verb.

Actually, in this sense, it's a noun. The coming. Remember, if a word can be the subject of a sentence, it's a noun or it's a pronoun.

In this case, a noun. The parousia, the coming. There are verbs also in the Greek that speak of the Lord coming, but it depends on whether coming is being used as a noun.

The coming of the Lord. Or as a verb, the Lord is coming. In the case of parousia, this is a noun.

And it is used, although it's used of Paul and of Stephanus and Fortunatus and Titus and of the man of sin in various passages, it's also used very frequently of Christ. In your notes I've given you, I have every occurrence of the word in the New Testament given to

you. You can look at these on your own.

You'll see that in most cases, when it speaks of the parousia of Christ, in most cases it would appear it's talking about the second coming of Christ. Though not necessarily always. And since the same term is used also of other men and other persons besides Christ, it should guard us against the assumption that whenever you find the word parousia, it must be talking about, it must be a technical term referring to the second coming of Christ.

Not necessarily. But it is the most common term in the New Testament Greek for the coming of Christ. And as I say, it's usually translated coming, though it can mean presence.

A second word of importance relevant to the doctrine of the second coming is the word epiphaneia. Epiphaneia is a Greek word that means a shining upon or a shining forth. In the New Testament, it's more often than not translated by our English appearing.

Once again, appearing sounds like a verb because the word appear is a verb, but this is used in a noun sense. The appearing of Christ. And you'll find it in 1st Timothy 6.14, you'll find it in 2nd Timothy 1.10, although there it's actually a reference to the first coming of Christ when he appeared the first time.

You'll find it in Titus 2.13 where it says the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Titus 2.13. This is generally understood to be a reference to the second coming of Christ also. Now, there's a difference in what is suggested by the word parousia than the word epiphaneia, because the parousia speaks of his actual coming and presence with us. Epiphaneia, speaking probably of the same event, speaks of a different aspect of it.

The fact that when he does come and visit us, he will appear. We will see him. He'll shine forth from heaven.

It will not be an invisible reality. It will be something where he will shine forth and appear to us. Okay, and then there is another noun that is used with some regularity or repeatedly in the New Testament, usually associated with the second coming of Christ, and that is the noun apocalupsis.

This comes from the two Greek particles apa or apo, meaning away from. That's the Greek preposition. It means away from, apa, a-p-o, alpha p, omicron.

And the other word is calypsis, which actually means a covering or a veil or a veiling. So, apa, which means away from, and calypsis, which means a veiling, it would be pulling away a veil, is what it means. It means an unveiling.

It is most often in the New Testament translated by the word revelation, a revelation or

an unveiling. The idea is like that of an artist who's made a statue and he's got a tarp over it and no one's ever seen it yet except him. He's pulled it out for the public unveiling and he pulls away the veil and suddenly everyone can see what was already there under the cover, but they didn't see it until the cover was pulled away.

So, that is the word apocalupsis. Its meaning is a removing of the cover, a removing of the veil. And actually, the last book of the New Testament, which we call the book of Revelation, in the Greek New Testament, its title is simply the apocalupsis, which is this word, this noun.

And in the Catholic Bible, I think they just call it the apocalypse, which is just the English transliteration of the Greek word apocalupsis. And that is the revelation. There are times when the word revelation appears to be a reference to the second coming of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1.7, Paul told the Corinthians that they come behind or lack no gift, that is gifts of the Holy Spirit, that they will lack in no gift and waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ or the apocalupsis, apparently referring to his second coming. And there are many other references in Scripture to the coming of Christ, and many of them use the word apocalupsis. So, all the references, I believe, are there in your notes that I've given you.

So, you have in the notes I've given you all of the New Testament occurrences, the word parousia and epiphaneia and apocalupsis. These nouns are the most commonly, probably the only nouns used in the New Testament, and they are frequently used in reference to the coming of Christ, the coming that we usually call the second coming. Now, there are also verbs.

There is, in particular, the verb erkomai. Or erkomai, I don't have the accent here, and I don't remember where the accent is on that. I don't remember the rules of Greek accenting very well.

Very challenging for me to remember. But it's either erkomai or erkomai. I think it's erkomai.

But this verb is just the ordinary word for come, and it's used many times of the coming of the Son of Man. The references I mentioned earlier, in Matthew 10, 23, when Jesus says, you shall not have gone to all the villages of Israel until the Son of Man come. That's a verb, not a noun, and it is erkomai in that place.

In Matthew 16, 28, which we saw earlier also, where Jesus said, some of you standing here will not taste of death before you see the Son of Man coming. That's used as a verb. Erkomai is the verb.

It is also used, of course, of persons other than Jesus. It's the regular word for come in the Greek language, and the most common one that you will find when you find the word



come used as a verb in reference to Christ's coming. So, these words, you might say, well, I could do without knowing all these Greek words.

Maybe you could, although what I want you to know is that when you find these words, they often do refer to the second coming of Christ, but sometimes they don't. We're not talking, when we talk about the coming of the Son of Man, or the appearing, or the unveiling, necessarily, it's not necessarily a technical term for the event that we look forward to as the second coming of Christ. These words are often used in speaking of that event, but the same words are often used in other connections not speaking about that event.

And therefore, the challenge for us is to recognize what passages in the scripture are, and what passages are not speaking to us about the event that we call the second coming of Christ. And it's not always hard to figure that out. Sometimes it's quite easy.

Other times, it's a little more difficult. Now, having talked about the vocabulary of the word coming, or the coming of Christ, I want to talk about another important set of vocabulary words related to eschatology. And these words are all related to the single word millennium.

The word millennium does not appear in scripture, but the concept of a millennium does appear in scripture, just like the word trinity does not appear in scripture, but most, certainly all Orthodox theologians believe that the concept of the trinity is in the scripture. So with the word millennium. Actually, millennium comes much closer to be found in scripture than the word trinity does, because in Revelation chapter 20, there are six times that Revelation 20 uses the expression a thousand years or the thousand years, the one thousand years.

The word millennium comes from two Latin words. These are Latin terms, not Greek. And the Latin word milla means a thousand and anis means years.

And so the word millennium is from the two words milla and anis, which means a thousand years. It's a little bit anglicized in its present form, but it's from the Latin root. Therefore, millennium, it simply means one thousand years.

It doesn't mean anything else, but that just a thousand years, but in Revelation 20, we find the thousand years, which is referred to as the millennium. As a matter of fact, Revelation 20 is the only place in the Bible that speaks of a thousand years or of the so-called thousand year period. That's called the millennium.

I don't mean to suggest that the concept of the millennium, what is usually referred to as the millennium, is a concept found only in that chapter. There are many Old Testament passages that speak of a kingdom age ruled by the Messiah. And many people associate, most people associate these with the millennium.

But the expression millennium, meaning thousand years, is taken from Revelation 20 because only in Revelation 20 do you find the reference to the thousand years. Now, having said that, there are three words based on this word millennium that I want you to be aware of, and you will need to know them for future reference. Very important if you're going to understand what is at issue in the study of eschatology.

There are basically three camps. Each of these camps have sub-camps, but we'll try to make it as simple as possible. One camp, one school of thought, is that which is called the pre-millennial school, pre-millennial eschatology or theology.

People who hold to this view are called pre-millennialists or pre-millenarians, either one. You don't have to write that down, but just so that when you hear either of those words you know it's the same thing. If you hear someone talk about a pre-millenarian, it's the same thing as a pre-millennialist.

And the word pre-millennial is, well, you know what the prefix pre- means. Pre- means before, and millennium means the thousand years. So, the pre-millennialists believe in something before the thousand years, and that something is the Second Coming of Christ.

So, the pre-millennialist believes the Second Coming of Christ comes before the millennium. It can be said they believe in a pre-millennial coming of Christ. Okay, so keep that in mind.

These schools, the name pre-millennialism and the other names refer to when they believe the Second Coming of Christ will be. The Second Coming of Christ will be pre-millennial according to the pre-millenarian view, and that means that Jesus will come back and then the millennium will come. Now, this is based on a number of considerations, perhaps not the least of which is the fact that you find in Revelation 19 what appears to be the Second Coming of Christ.

John sees Christ on a white horse riding with a sword proceeding out of his mouth, smiting the nations and so forth, generally understood to be a reference to the Second Coming of Christ in chapter 19 of Revelation. And then in chapter 20 we have the binding of Satan for a thousand years for a while, and since one has already read on this supposition, has already read of the Second Coming of Christ in chapter 19, the assumption is that the events of chapter 20 must chronologically follow that. So, if Jesus came back in chapter 19, then the events of the binding of Satan for a thousand years in chapter 20 must happen after Jesus comes back, meaning that Jesus comes back before those events.

He comes back pre-millennially. And this is a very popular view today. It is not the view that has most widely been held historically by Christians, but it is probably the most widely held view at our time.

Now, another view to consider is called post-millennialism. Post-millennialism. The person who believes this is called a post-millennialist or a post-millennarian.

And the word post-millennial, or millennialist, or millennialism, is formed the same way that the word pre-millennialism is. Pre and post simply meaning before and after, respectively. So, if a pre-millennialist believes in a coming of Christ before the millennium, then a post-millennialist believes in the coming of Christ after the millennium.

The post-millennialist believes that there will be a thousand years of peace, and righteousness, and security on the earth, where people beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, where no war or sin is tolerated, where the world is essentially a Christian world government under Christ. But they believe all of this will happen before Jesus comes back. They believe this will be accomplished through the missionary efforts of the church.

That the church, which has made great strides in reaching the world since the time of Christ, is going to make greater strides still. And that the church will be, in the end, a glorious church that has conquered the world through the preaching of the gospel. Not through the sword, not through politics, but through the power alone of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That the hearts of men will eventually no longer be able to resist the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the truth. And that virtually all people will be saved in some later generation than this. This is not universalism.

This is not the view that all people will be saved no matter what. This is the view that the missionary efforts of the church will be enormously successful, more than we've ever seen, at some future time. And that almost every person on the planet will be converted.

And those who are not converted, because post-millennialism does allow that there may be some individuals who are not converted. But under this view, those who are not converted will nonetheless be under the influence of a Christian culture and society. They believe that, post-millennialists believe, that the governments will be run by Christians.

That the schools will be run by Christians. That the media will be run by Christians. And that we will live in a Christianized world.

They consider this to be not done through humanistic endeavors or human cleverness or wisdom or power, but accomplished by the power of God through the gospel of Christ. And they believe that this is predicted. Therefore, a post-millennialist believes that this future millennium is indeed future still.

But it will happen before Jesus comes back. Or just put it in the way the term suggests,

Jesus will come back after the millennium. Post-millennial return of Christ.

Then you have the third view for our consideration. And that is amillennialism. By the adding of the letter A before the word millennium, this is in the Greek language.

I don't know about Latin because I'm afraid I'm pretty illiterate about Latin. I'm not even very literate in Greek. But I know in the Greek, if you put the letter A before a word, you negate the word.

So that agnostic, that is agnostic as we've usually pronounced it, which is spelled G-N-O-S-T-I-C, is a heretic of a certain heresy that was prevalent in the early church in the second century. If you put the word A before agnostic, you get the word agnostic. Well, the word agnostic means one who knows.

The word agnostic means one who doesn't know. The first person to use this term apparently was Sir Thomas Huxley, I believe, who called himself an agnostic. And it became a fairly common term for people who don't want to be identified as atheists, but they don't want to take a stand for belief that God exists either.

They'd rather just be non-committal and say, well, I don't know if there's a God. And that's what agnostic means. But it's formed simply by putting the letter A before the word gnostic.

And that is commonly done in Greek. And so an amillennialist, just putting the letter A before the word millennial suggests no millennium. Now, an amillennialist is not necessarily denying that the events of Revelation 20 are going to happen.

What the amillennialist is denying is that there will be a literal thousand-year reign of peace on earth. They are denying that this is what Revelation 20 is talking about. The amillennialist believes that Revelation 20, along with the rest of Revelation, is highly symbolic and that the numbers and the descriptions and so forth are highly symbolic.

And the amillennialist believes that when Satan is bound for a thousand years at the beginning of Revelation 20 and released again at the end for a little while, only to be destroyed by fire out of heaven in Revelation 20 and verse 9, that this is a very symbolic way of talking about what Jesus accomplished at the cross in reducing Satan to powerlessness because of the death and resurrection of Christ. And that the destruction of Satan at the end of the period is the second coming of Christ indeed. But that the thousand years between the binding of Satan and the destruction of Satan in Revelation 20 is simply a symbolic way of referring to the whole period between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

Now, if we argue, well, but it's been 2,000 years already between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ, so certainly the thousand years cannot be a reference to the church age as we know it. Yet, the amillennialist says you're being too

literal. You see, no one is suggesting that the church age will be a literal thousand years or that it would even be approximately a thousand years.

The number 1,000 is not being used as a literal nor as an approximate number. It is being used as a symbolic number. A thousand years simply means a long, long time without any commitment as to how long a time that is, according to this view.

And there are reasons to make this statement. I mean, the Bible says God owns the cattle on a thousand hills without meeting a literal thousand or even a proximate thousand. A thousand hills just means an awful lot.

God says that he keeps covenant to a thousand generations. Not very many people would press for a literal interpretation of that. The scripture says a day to the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day.

Once again, it's not necessary, in fact, not very reasonable to suggest that thousand years there is literal, but rather just a very long time. And the amillennialist says, well, the thousand years in Revelation 20 is also just a very long time. It might be any length of time, but it's a long time, and that's all that is suggested by the use of the word.

And they suggest, therefore, there's not a literal thousand years to be anticipated. The thousand years is a symbol of something, namely the whole period of time between the first and second coming of Christ. And so, amillennialism means no millennium.

Now, some amillennialists have objected to that label and would rather be called realized millennialists because they believe that what the view of the amillennialism is not that there's no millennium, but that the millennium has been realized in history, that it's already here, that in a sense it began with the first coming of Christ and it exists and continues until the second coming of Christ. Now, we will later on examine the millennial question in more detail. We're going to save that for a lecture further down the line here.

And we'll talk about all the three views and the implications and the actual specific claims of each of those views. But I just want you at this point to know this terminology. It's very important that you know it because it has to do with more than you think.

If you are an amillennialist or a post-millennialist or a pre-millennialist, it will make a very large difference in the way you understand almost everything from Genesis to Revelation, possibly beginning with Genesis chapter 12 and the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12 verses 1 through 3, because the pre-millennialist believes that the fulfillment of those promises will be in the millennium, after Jesus comes back. The amillennialist believes that those promises already have been realized in the church and that is also the millennium as far as they are concerned. The post-millennialism is not cohesive on this.

Some post-millennialists think almost essentially the same way as amillennialists do

about it. Others feel like this is yet to come. But the point is that the promise to Abraham and the rest of its fulfillment and the promises and the prophets related to this fulfillment are interpreted differently depending on whether one believes in a pre-millennial return of Christ or not.

And therefore, more is at stake in our interpretation of Scripture than simply our understanding of Revelation 20 when we talk about being a pre-millennialist or a post-millennialist or an amillennialist. Some people say, well, I'm just pan-millennial. And they say that means that it's all going to pan out in the end.

And that's true. It probably will all pan out in the end no matter what you believe about it. But if you're on a journey, it doesn't hurt to know where you're hoping to end up and how to get there.

My family and I are going to British Columbia next month to do some teaching at YWAM up there. And my children, some of the older ones, have been there several times with me before. And the younger one has only been there a few times and is not very familiar with it.

As I drive there, I've been there many times. I know the route. I can picture the place.

I've been there. It's very familiar to me. And I know the route.

I could hardly get lost on the way because I know where I'm going. I know the direction there. I know what turns have to be made and what roads have to be taken in order to get there because I know where I'm going.

My youngest children don't have a real clear view of how to get where we're going. It doesn't matter. They'll get there anyway if they're in the car with me.

As long as I'm directing it, they'll get there. And they could be pan-millennial in that respect. They don't care what roads we take.

We don't care how long it is or what happens between now and then. We know we'll get there because Dad's driving the car. And so I guess your view of the importance of knowing eschatology depends on whether you see yourself as a rider in the car or a driver in the car.

If you're a person that has to make decisions and make choices relevant to arriving at the destination, then it helps to know something about the route, the landmarks, and the actual location of the destination. It helps if you're on a journey to know where you're going. If, of course, you're just a cruiser in this Christian life, if you're not a participant, you're just cruising, then it doesn't matter how you get there or where you're going.

You'll eventually just sit and watch God do His thing. I'm glad Daniel didn't think that

way, because if Daniel didn't intercede and pray as he did, that prophecy of the 70 years might never have come to pass. Fortunately, there are some Christians who believe that they are active participants with God in getting the job done that needs to be done and getting to the end result that God says we're supposed to get to.

But without an understanding of eschatology, we're not going to be very clear on what that end result is we're even looking at or what steps, of course, need to be taken to get there. Now, I want to spend the rest of this lecture acquainting you with the most popular view of eschatology today. I'll say right at the beginning, it is not the view that I hold.

I used to hold it. It's like most people, it was the only view I ever knew for many years, including the years of my ministry. In the beginning, I spent at least six to between six and eight years in this viewpoint, and my change did not come from reading a book by someone else of a different viewpoint.

My change came very gradually, which is why I'm not able to tell you exactly the number of years I was in this viewpoint. I was taught this viewpoint from the beginning as most of you were, and most Christians are these days. But in my own study of scripture over the many years that followed, I began to have problems with some aspects of this particular system.

And I began to, in my own attempts to understand scripture, began to lose confidence and begin to chip away at some of these points of this system. Eventually, I realized that the whole system seemed to be flawed, and something else began to form as an alternative in my own thinking, because all people who are going to be rational and diligent students of the Bible have to find some way to systematize all the information in the Bible. There has to be some paradigm that everything fits into.

And there are different paradigms. Pre-millennialism, post-millennialism, and all millennialism are separate paradigms. And everything has to be made to fit into the structure of the paradigm that is true.

Well, I want to talk to you right now about the most popular paradigm. As I say, it's the one I no longer hold, but it's the one you're most likely to hear the most places if you listen to teaching or read books about eschatology. This modern system is called dispensationalism.

You've already heard this term before from me or others, but until now, if you've been aware of what dispensationalism means. If I asked if you were a dispensationalist, you'd probably say, no, I don't even know what the word means. But then if I told you what dispensationalism is, you'd probably say, oh, I guess I am.

Because most evangelicals today, probably most, I don't know the exact percentages,

seem to be dispensationalists. Though this is a view that arose in the 1830s and was not known prior to that time in the church, it has become the most popular view in the last 160 or so years. Let me tell you what the distinctives are of this system.

For one thing, it is premillennial. Now, I just told you a moment ago what premillennial is believed. They believe in a coming of Christ before the millennium.

But I want to make it clear that not all people who are premillennial hold to dispensationalism as a system. In other words, dispensationalism is a subcategory of premillennialism. Is that clear? That a person might be a premillennialist without being a dispensationalist, but a dispensationalist has to be premillennial.

Now, we sometimes therefore call it dispensational premillennialism. It is the most famous today. The most popular form of premillennialism today is dispensationalism.

But just so you'll know, we're not adding a fourth category. We talked about premill, postmill, amill. We're not adding a fourth view.

This is actually a subcategory of the first one we considered, which is premill. Dispensationalists are premillennial. Now, it's not just their view of the millennium, though, that's important.

In fact, it's their views on other subjects that make them distinctive. The reason dispensationalism is called dispensationalism is because they believe and emphasize a system of dispensations. And to the dispensationalist, a dispensation means a period of time during which God specifically tests mankind with some command.

Invariably, man fails to fulfill the command and judgment comes. And then God starts a new dispensation. A dispensation is sort of like a self-contained cycle, really.

There's like seven of these cycles, seven dispensations in the system of dispensationalism. Each one begins with basically a command from God by which people are being tested in their obedience. In each case, the dispensation ends with disobedience to the command and judgment.

And then comes a new dispensation. The seven dispensations of the modern system are as follows. The first dispensation is considered to have been, it began with the creation and ended with the fall.

Obviously, a very short dispensation because we don't know how long it was, but it seems like it may have only been a few days long, but between the time God created man and man fell. This dispensation is usually called the dispensation of innocence. The reason being that before man fell, they did not have a knowledge of good and evil.

When they fell, their eyes were opened and they knew good and evil, but before that,



they were innocent of these things. So the first dispensation from the creation of fall is called the dispensation of innocence. The second dispensation is from the time that man fell to the time of the flood.

And the flood is the notable judgment, of course, that ends that dispensation. The fall is the beginning, but what is the command that related to this? Well, there was no exact command during this time. People were just expected to live according to their conscience, the law of God written in their hearts.

And they did not do very well at that. And that's why the flood came. But this dispensation from the fall until the flood is called the dispensation of conscience.

The third dispensation is from the flood of Noah until the time of Abraham, which is probably about 500 years. The only command we have during that period given to mankind is that which God gave to Noah in Genesis 9. Following the flood, he said that you should not eat blood. And he said that if man sheds blood, he should have his blood shed by man.

This is considered to be the first instance of God imposing government of some people over other people or law enforcement. You know, earlier than that, Cain had killed Abel, but there was no one really there to enforce it or to punish him. There was no human government.

But when God said, okay, from now on, if someone murders someone, I want other people to penalize him and shed his blood. This requires that certain people exercise at least law enforcement or penalties on other people, the beginning of human government. And therefore, this period of time from the flood, when this command was given until the time of Abraham, is called the dispensation of government.

And it's not so much that there was a distinct judgment that in this period, the judgment was that mankind failed and therefore God abandoned that dispensation and started something new. And that starts with Abraham. This is the fourth dispensation.

And it starts with Abraham and goes through the Exodus to the time that Moses led the children of Israel to Mount Sinai. And the Ten Commandments were given and what we call the Sinaitic Covenant was made in Exodus chapter 19 and 20. This period from Abraham to Moses then is called the dispensation of promise because essentially God made promises to Abraham, reconfirmed them to Isaac and Jacob, his sons and grandson.

And the people of Israel lived with very little revelation from God during that time, except that they had a promise from God that he made to Abraham. And so from the time of Abraham until the establishment of the nation at Mount Sinai is the dispensation of promise. The fifth dispensation begins at Mount Sinai and goes all the way up to the

day of Pentecost.

Or it might be thought to end at the cross, which was only, you know, 50 days before Pentecost. But in other words, it goes from the time of Moses to the time of Christ. From Mount Sinai to Pentecost, this is called the dispensation of the law for obvious reasons.

The law was given at Mount Sinai and we ever since Christ are not under the law, but under grace. And therefore that period of Mosaic law from Sinai until the coming of the Christian age is called the dispensation of law. The sixth dispensation is called the dispensation of grace.

And this begins with Christ either at his cross or at Pentecost and goes until the rapture of the church on this system. That is the whole age of the church is the dispensation of grace beginning when Christ came and died for our sins and rose again and sent his Holy Spirit beginning from that period of time until Jesus actually finishes with the rapture of the church. That is the dispensation of grace.

And the final dispensation on this system is the millennium, which is called the dispensation of the kingdom. Because this view holds that Jesus, though he came offering the kingdom of God to the Jews, they rejected it. Therefore, he withdrew the offer, pulled away, postponed the kingdom and will establish his kingdom at his second coming, which kingdom is equated with the millennium in the view of the dispensations.

And this is where the premillennialism comes in. They believe that, you know, at the second coming of Christ and the rapture of the church, we've got the end of the present dispensation, which is the dispensation of grace. But then comes another dispensation after Jesus comes back called the kingdom age or the dispensation of the kingdom, which is the millennium for a thousand years.

And that is how the seven dispensations are described by dispensational theology. Throughout history, there have been other dispensational schemes even before this one arose. There were people hundreds of years ago that believed in four dispensations or two dispensations.

I mean, almost always there have been those who believed in the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation. The word dispensation didn't arise with modern dispensationalism, but many theological concepts did arise with modern dispensationalism. And the seven dispensations I just told you about are those identified by C.I. Scofield in the Scofield Reference Bible as the distinctive dispensations of the modern system.

Now, more importantly than these are the unique theological propositions of dispensationalism. When they were offered in 1830 by John Nelson Darby, they were very controversial. Actually, they still are, but they have to a large extent taken over the

field so that many evangelicals have heard no other system.

But basically, when Darby introduced these ideas in 1830, they were contrary to all the teaching of the church prior to that time, and he admitted it. He indicated that he had rediscovered truths, that only the apostles had known. This is a little bit like what Joseph Smith said when he started the Mormon Church.

He said that only the apostles had known the things that were now later revealed to him, interestingly, about the same time, 1830, around the very same period of time. Joseph Smith got his rediscovered truths, and John Nelson Darby got his rediscovered truths. Joseph Smith in America, and Darby in England.

But both of these men believed that they were seen for the first time since the apostles. The doctrines that the apostles had in fact believed, but which had been lost to the church and were now being rediscovered. So, these views that I'm about to outline for you are the dispensational distinctives that arose in 1830, which were not taught by anyone in the church to our knowledge, at least not in any mainstream movement of the church until 1830, and not before that.

One of those is the uniqueness of the nation of Israel. We live in a time where not only is Israel in the news a lot, Israel is mentioned in the pulpit a lot, because interesting things are happening there. The nation of Israel was dispersed throughout the world in 70 AD, and remained dispersed throughout the world until the early part of this century, when many Jews began to return to their ancestral home of Palestine or Israel, a home which had in the meantime been occupied for many centuries by Arab people, that we call Palestinians today.

And the Israelites began to purchase land with money, and move back to that land. They'd buy the land from the Arabs or from whoever owned it. And so, a large number of Jews in the early part of this century migrated back to their ancestral home.

However, it was still not the land of Israel, it was just Palestine. But after World War II, when the horrors of the treatment of the Jews in the concentration camps in Germany were found out, after Hitler died and the Allied troops moved in and were able to take a look at what had happened there at Auschwitz and some of those camps, a general horror went out throughout the world at how the Jews could have been so mistreated. And it was realized that their presence in other countries without having a homeland of their own made them continuously vulnerable to this kind of thing.

They were always a foreign people in someone else's land. And it was thought by many that the only way to prevent such a Holocaust from occurring again would be to give the Jews a homeland that they could be in where they would not be officially persecuted by the government, but they would be the government. And therefore, a strong sentiment arose that the Jews should be given back the land that they had had a long time ago in

Israel.

Many Jews were already living there because, as I said, they had purchased land with money in Palestine and the Jewish population of the region was quite large. And basically, the United Nations on May 14th of 1948 made a decision that Israel would control that land and that it would be a sovereign nation, the nation of Israel. And that is considered by many to be the modern rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948.

Since that time, of course, there have been modifications of the boundaries and the borders because of conflicts with the surrounding Arabs and even the internal Arabs because the Palestinian Arabs who were there for hundreds of years before are not so quick to want to give up the territory. And there's been a lot of war and strife as we know, and that's why it's in the news so much. But the dispensationalist believes that that land is perpetually Israel's, that the nation of Israel, the race of Jews, literally own that land and are significant to end times prophecies.

They believe that the return of the Jews to Israel is an essential part of the fulfillment of the end times prophecies. And they believe that what happens in Israel is probably the most important indicator of the end times. Many will say that the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 was the most significant prophetic event in history or in modern history, and that it is an indicator we're living in the last days.

According to dispensationalism, the nation of Israel is God's chosen people no matter what they do. They believe that all the Jews will eventually be saved. Most of them believe this will happen during the tribulation period, but it is believed that the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament all belong to national Israel.

This is the distinctive teaching of dispensationalism. Before dispensationalism arose, the church always taught that many of the promises to national Israel have been fulfilled in the church spiritually, and that the church is indeed the spiritual seat of Abraham and the heirs according to the promises. The dispensationalists revived the notion held among the Jews that those promises belong to ethnic Israel, not to the church.

And therefore, the dispensationalists continually argue that the church and Israel are not to be confused. When the Bible talks about Israel, it's talking about the nation of Israel. When it talks about the church, it's talking about the church, and these two should never be mistaken for one another.

And they feel like sometimes Christians try to steal the promises from Israel to give to the church, because they believe that Israel must also be literal Israel. And that brings us to a third distinctive of dispensationalism, and they say we have to hold a literal interpretation. They say anybody who is not dispensational is compromised in the area of literal interpretation.

They say that you must interpret the Bible literally in order to do it justice, and that if you depart from a literal interpretation of Scripture, you will be left in a sea of subjectivity without any anchor, without any boundaries, and you can come up with almost any interpretation you want to. Therefore, they say to preserve the purity and integrity of biblical information, we need to take everything literally in the Bible, and only they, they argue, do so. Dispensationalism argues for a literal hermeneutic, as they call it.

Hermeneutic means system of interpretation. They believe that they are the most literal interpreters of the Bible, and that this leads to their distinctive prophetic viewpoints. And another thing is they believe in a seven-year tribulation at the end of time, and a rapture before the tribulation.

Christians have always believed in a rapture, but historically Christians believe the rapture happens at the second coming of Christ. Dispensationalism introduced the idea that the rapture actually happens seven years before the second coming of Christ, and in those seven years between the rapture and the actual second coming is a period of horrible tribulation described in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, and also in the majority of the chapters of Revelation. This is a distinctly dispensational viewpoint, namely that Revelation talks about a seven-year tribulation which is preceded by a rapture of the church, and which ends with the second coming of Christ.

This is distinctively dispensational. They also believe that when the Millennium comes, it will be a rebuilt temple and sacrifices in Jerusalem again, that Jesus will re-establish a Jewish temple, Jewish animal sacrifices during the Millennium. This comes from a literal interpretation of some Old Testament prophecies like Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48, and other passages.

So these are the distinctives of dispensationalism. As we study through different prophetic topics, I'm going to make many references to dispensationalism, not because I believe it, but because I do not, and because almost everybody seems to. And I'm going to show you what I find to be reasons for challenging this popular modern notion, which is called dispensationalism, with these distinctions.

The literal interpretation of prophecy, Israel's continued uniqueness separate from the church, being God's chosen people in spite of the fact they're not in the church, the seven-year tribulation, the pre-tribulation rapture, the Jewish Millennium with its Jewish ordinances and sacrifices. These are the distinctives of dispensationalism that we will need to keep in mind and be aware of as we consider alternate interpretations of certain passages of Scripture. At this point we need to close this session.

When we come back we'll be talking about the interpretation of Scripture generally and comparing the literal hermeneutic with the non-literal hermeneutic. In other words, the dispensational versus the non-dispensational ways of looking at prophetic Scripture.

We'll come back to this after we take a break.