

# OpenTheo

## The Return of Christ



### **Beyond End Times** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the popular belief in the return of Christ and discusses the different interpretations of biblical prophecies related to the end times. He emphasizes that while there are varying interpretations, the return of Christ is generally not controversial among Christians. Gregg also discusses the common belief in a two-stage event of Jesus' second coming and sheds light on the popular but unfounded myth of looking for signs of the end times. Ultimately, Gregg encourages listeners to focus on the core beliefs of Christianity and not to let differing eschatological views overshadow them.

### **Transcript**

I am often consulted these days about eschatology, which is not, in my opinion, my specialty. I like almost every subject in the Bible more than I like eschatology. But I talk more about eschatology than almost any other subject.

And the problem there is that my views on eschatology are somewhat different from the mainstream and because they're peculiar, I'm often asked to expound on them. And also the fact that I wrote a book and that book happens to be about revelation, which most people think is about eschatology. When I'm invited to speak by people who are familiar with my book, they always want me to speak on revelation or eschatology.

It's interesting because I don't think that revelation is about eschatology. I'm a preterist about that, but that's a different issue. But not an entirely different issue.

One of the things that Chris wanted me to speak about when he invited me and requested I prepare this series is how do we know, for example, what is and what is not about eschatology. If I would suggest that I don't believe the book of Revelation is about the end times, of course one of the many questions that people would have, reasonably enough, would be, well, if revelation isn't, what is? You know, if that book, which certainly is generally regarded to be about the end times, if you say that isn't, then is there anything that is? And if so, what is it and how would you know what it is? And I've never actually taught this series before. I've taught a great deal on the general topic of

eschatology, but Chris asked for four specific subjects for me to prepare topical lessons on.

And although I've taught series on eschatology, I never had really taught on these specific things. I'm glad he asked me to because it's been a long time since I've been asked to teach a series on something where I didn't just pull out old notes from teaching it a hundred times before and actually had to create something fresh, which is not to say the information is new to me now. It's just a new arrangement of the information into some topical groupings.

The first topic is about the physical return of Christ at the end of time. And when Chris approached me about this, I think it was last time I was here he first suggested it, he thought it'd be profitable since I have taught at this school a number of the books of the Bible that have to do with prophecy. In fact, a great number of the books of the Bible have passages in them that some people would equate with.

Did I teach Thessalonians to this year or was it the previous year? See, the Thessalonian epistles are the Thessalonian epistles are definitely eschatological. Did I teach Ezekiel here? Yes, I see some of these books. Daniel too? I don't remember what I taught this year.

I taught here every year and I teach different books each year, so I don't remember what I taught when. So this student body has actually heard my ideas, my understanding of a number of parts of the Bible that are classically grouped as eschatological in nature. I assume everyone knows what I mean by eschatology and eschatological, which means the study of the end times.

Eschatology goes through cycles of popularity. It seems like every generation, at some point before the generation passes, the Christians get all excited about the near coming of Christ, and then books and tape series and so forth circulate on them, and people get all excited about it and feel like they understand it, and maybe they do. It's very possible that some people understand it better than I do, but obviously as a teacher I have no choice but to teach it as I understand it.

Now, my understanding of the end times and of the second coming of Christ is I at least have this advantage over some. Maybe there's people who know better than I do about it, but there are some people who know less, because I used to be on the other side of the issue and was able to defend and expound it, so I'm very familiar with the view that I don't hold. Whereas many people are only familiar with the view that they do hold, and so I have that advantage.

I want to interact with the view that I don't hold, because it is the most popular view. Now, I also want to say this. There's almost nothing about this subject that isn't controversial.

On this subject, the only thing that isn't really very controversial is the fact that Jesus is coming back. I mean, all Christians historically have believed that. Now, even today there are some who deny that, who count themselves Christians.

They're called fully realized preterists, and they would say that every verse in the Bible that anyone has ever thought was about the second coming of Christ is really about something else. It's really about the judgment coming of Christ in 7 D.A.D. and to destroy Jerusalem. And that viewpoint is called fully realized preterism.

The people who hold that view are a very small minority. For the most part, they're labeled as heretics by those who aren't in their camp, and it is a view that I think is quite wrong. I don't know if I'd call them heretics in the sense that they couldn't be Christians, because, I mean, they hold to all the other classic doctrines of Christianity, justification by grace, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, all the things that you believe as a Christian.

And, in my opinion, one's eschatological views are among the things that are the least important of the many things that Christians believe. That doesn't mean they're not important. I mean, everything is important.

Everything God has revealed has a measure of importance. But not all things are equally important when it comes down to living a life pleasing to God. Some issues are very practical, and if we don't understand them, we'll live wrongly and end up sinning.

Other issues are more in the realm of theological, I want to say speculation, but, of course, most people wouldn't say their views are speculative. They'd say they get it from the Bible. The thing is, some areas of theology, people interpret the Bible differently, and it really is in the realm of abstraction.

I mean, really, when it comes down to it, whoever is right and whoever is wrong about the details surrounding the second coming of Christ, not much is going to change. It's going to happen the way it's going to happen. And someone's going to be surprised, but by the time we find out who that is, it's not going to matter to any of us anymore.

It's like when Jesus comes back, we'll know who was right, but we won't care anymore. We won't care about the controversy anymore. So, we need to keep it in perspective.

The coming of Christ is generally not controversial. People of many eschatological systems all agree Jesus is coming back, and I certainly do too, and that's what I want to talk about. However, over the years, as the students who've heard me teach on some of those books I mentioned have heard me say, I believe that some passages in the Bible, which are popularly applied to the second coming in modern evangelicalism, are really not about that, but they're about something else.

Now, people get nervous about that when some of their favorite end times passages are said to not be about the end times. And some people go so far as to extrapolate that if I

think that this passage, which they believe is about the second coming of Christ, isn't about the second coming of Christ, then maybe I don't believe in the second coming of Christ. But I do, and I always will, because the Bible teaches very plainly that Jesus is going to come back.

At least plainly to me. Now, as I said, there are some fully realized preterists that say all the verses that sound like they're about the second coming are really to be taken more or less figuratively, symbolically, and they're really talking about a judgment that occurred in history and not something that's in the future. I'm not going to interact with those people too much in this lecture because they're few, and they're not very... I think they're not very influential.

But a partial preterism, as opposed to a fully realized preterism, is growing in influence in the evangelical world today. And for those who don't know that word, preterism is a word that simply speaks of the interpretation of a prophecy as having been fulfilled in the past. Preterism comes from the Greek word preter, which just means past.

Now, a person who believes that a prophecy is going to be fulfilled in the future is a futurist. So, preterist means past-ist. Someone who thinks that something was fulfilled in the past.

A futurist believes it's fulfilled in the future. Now, all Christians are at least partial preterists, though most would not give themselves that label. Because if they believe that Revelation is about the future, and the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 is about the future, they would put themselves in a class called the futurists.

And if someone else believes Revelation and the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled in the past, those people would be called preterists of some variety, at least partial preterists. But the fact is, all Christians are partial preterists. Because there are some parts of the Bible, some parts of the prophetic corpus of Scripture, that all Christians agree have been fulfilled in the past.

For example, Micah 5.2 You Bethlehem, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, from you shall come forth him who is to be the ruler of Israel, whose going forth is from of old, even from everlasting. That's a prophecy. Are you a futurist about that prophecy? I doubt it.

We believe that prophecy was fulfilled 2,000 years ago, when Jesus was born. So, we're preterists when we look at that prophecy. There's over 300 Old Testament prophecies that all Christians are preterists about.

Because we say Jesus fulfilled them. There's also additional prophecies in the Old Testament that talk about the fall of Tyre, or the fall of Babylon, or the fall of Damascus, or the fall of Edom, or Moab. And everybody's a preterist about those, because there is

no Moab or Edom, or, you know, these kingdoms don't exist.

They fell in history. And so, when Christians read those prophecies, they are uniformly preterists in their approach. Those prophecies have been fulfilled in the past.

No one's looking for a future fulfillment. As a matter of fact, I dare say, that if you list all the prophecies of any kind in the Bible, all Christians believe the majority of them have been fulfilled in the past. So, all Christians are, to a very large degree, preterists in their approach to prophecy.

But partial preterists. The only one who's not partial preterists would be the fully realized preterists. They believe all the prophecies were fulfilled in the past.

And, like I said, that's a fringe. It's heterodox. It's not considered to be mainstream Christian.

And they're not here. So, I'm not going to speak to them, and I'm not one of them. But I'm a partial preterist.

But the part I'm preterist about is larger than the part some people are. There are many scriptures that some Christians apply to the future that I would not. But I'm also a partial futurist, because there are some scriptures I apply to the future.

So, the label is relative. We're all partly futurists and partly preterists. Now, a person like myself is likely to be called a preterist if they take a preterist view of the book of Revelation and of the Olivet Discourse primarily.

And also of probably a fair number of other prophecies from the Old Testament that lots of evangelicals would apply to the end times. But which a person like me would say, no, that already happened a long time ago. And it can be proven that it did.

The prophets said it. You look at history, it happened. You don't have to look for a future fulfillment of that one.

And when I talk through Daniel and Ezekiel and Thessalonians, and certainly I didn't teach Revelation here this year, did I? It's not a previous year, but you probably saw it on video or something. But when you see my teaching on that, you say, well, a lot of this stuff, I've always thought this was a set coming, and Steve said it happened before. The question certainly arises, well, okay, if there is something, if it's true that a lot of these prophecies have been fulfilled in the past that we thought were future, but you say there are some that are still future, how do you know which are which? Since the ones that you say were fulfilled actually look like, to me, and are popularly believed to be future, how do you distinguish between the two categories? That was Chris's concern when he asked me to prepare this series.

I think he wants to know himself, but he also felt like having had a chance and had these things taught here that it would be good for the students to have some way of knowing that. So that's what I want to talk about now. I want to talk about the scriptures that are indeed futurist.

Now, this series is called Beyond the End Times, so I'm not going to talk about the end times. We're going to start the series at the end of the end times. The end of the end times is Jesus comes back.

The time just before that we would call the end times. Jesus comes back on what he refers to as the last day. There's a last day, there's no more days after that, that's the end.

There's no more end times after that. They're all before that. So, beyond the end times would include the coming of Jesus and whatever happens for eternity after that.

And on this, I haven't really taught that much, although I've had opinions and understanding of certain scriptures in certain ways, but I haven't really put together a series like this previously. So, the first thing we're going to talk about is the second coming of Christ. We're also going to talk about the judgment and rewards that occurs at that time in a second lecture.

And the third lecture is going to be about where we're going to spend eternity and what we're going to be doing there. And believe me, there's going to be none of the sentimental, traditional stuff there. We're not going to sit on clouds and play harps in heaven for eternity.

Many of us would feel it's not worth it to go there. I mean, really, we're asked to give up a lot in order to get there. And if getting there means we play harp, I don't even like harp music.

Sorry if you do, but I don't. It's just not what I would die for. But the Bible does have a positive teaching about what we're going to do.

It's very different than the mythology of sentimental tradition. Also, we're going to have a lecture, and this is going to be my favorite, I think, the fourth one, about this state of the lost, the eternal state of the lost. Now, I'll tell you right now, I've got no objection to believing in eternal torment, which is what I've always believed growing up and always taught.

But you may be surprised that there are evangelical Christians who have - there's actually three different views out there. You can divide them into smaller subgroups, but there's three essential beliefs by evangelical Christians about what is going to happen to the lost. And the belief in eternal torment is not universally held among those who believe the Bible.

And we're going to talk about those views and what the biblical case is for each, and case for and against each view. And to me, that's going to be an important one because it's going to be - it's going to have probably more surprising things in it than most of the other lectures. Now, on today's lecture, I want to talk about the second coming of Christ.

And the main thing I need to focus on, since many things can be said about the subject, is what passages really do talk about the second coming of Christ. What features of a given passage will tell you that this is indeed the future second coming that it's talking about and not some previous thing like the fall of Jerusalem or something else in the past. Before I do that, I want to address briefly the popular - not all of it, there's a lot of it - I want to talk about some of the main features of the popular modern mythology about the second coming of Christ.

That is to say that the subject of the second coming of Christ is popularly attached to certain ideas which were never there historically in the church until a couple hundred years ago. Now, our students have heard enough about this, but some here are not students and may not know this. There are four issues I want to just really deal with real quickly.

First of all, when Jesus comes back, is he going to be in one stage or two? Now, the popular view, popularized by novels and popular eschatological writings and popular teachers, is that Jesus' second coming is not one event, but it's two events. He's going to come back for the saints, and as a separate event, he's going to come back with the saints. Now, by the way, in the scripture you do sometimes find the Bible refers to Jesus coming back with ten thousands of his saints.

The Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints. So, coming with the saints is a biblical expression. You don't find anywhere in the Bible that you read of him coming for the saints.

That's just an expression that teachers use. And they say if he's going to come back with the saints at some point, he must previously have come for the saints. Because if they come with him, they have to be with him before he comes.

So, they have to go there before they can come back with him. So, there must be, if he's going to come with the saints, a previous coming for the saints to take us up to heaven and then bring us back with him at a later point. So that the second coming is seen as a two-stage event.

Now, I just said that the expression Jesus coming for the saints is not an expression found in scripture. But many of you know there is, in fact, scriptural teaching that when Jesus comes, Christians will rise to meet him in the air. And that is what the popular teaching refers to as coming for the saints.

The Bible doesn't use the expression he comes for the saints, but it says, The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air with them. And thus shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4, verses 16-18. One of two passages in the Bible that talk about the rapture. The other is in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 51 and 52.

Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. He means die.

But we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. For, he says, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise. Then we, which is a different category than the dead, must be those living, then we shall be changed.

And that's the resurrection and the rapture. These two passages, 1 Corinthians 15, verses 51 and 52, and 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 16-18, are the two passages in the Bible that actually mention the rapture. And that is, of course, Christ coming and lifting the saints into heaven with him.

I anticipate this as literally as any Bible teacher or Bible believer does. But the question is, does that event happen at a different time than Jesus coming all the way to earth? This is one thing that's controversial, and it's a controversy that didn't arise until 1830. Because before 1830, there was never any teaching in the church of a two-stage second coming.

The second coming has been taught in the church since the time of Christ. But a two-stage second coming began with John Nelson Darby. Actually, a few years before Darby, a guy named Edward Irving taught something similar to that.

So, Darby didn't completely invent the idea of two stages, but someone in his time did. He knew Irving, and it was Darby who popularized the view of a pre-tribulational rapture. So that the coming for the saints would be seven years before the coming with the saints.

Jesus is going to come in two stages. To come for the saints, then there will be a seven-year tribulation, then at the end he'll come with the saints. The first of these events is usually called the rapture, and the second is theologically referred to as the revelation.

This idea of a two-stage coming, I believe, is not justified scripturally. True, the Bible says Jesus will come with 10,000 of his saints. But the suggestion that he had to come seven years earlier to take his saints to heaven so that he could come with them is non-secular.

Basically, Jesus could come back right now with 10,000 of his saints. Because there's at



least that many who have died and are with him at this moment. And if he would come back right now without lifting any of us off the ground, he could come back with 10,000 of his saints.

There's no suggestion that he has to take all the living saints away some years earlier in order to come with all his saints. What I believe the Bible teaches is that when Jesus comes back, it's one event. The resurrection, the rapture, the judgment is an event, a single event, not two in scripture.

There's no place in scripture that divides it into two, which is why no one in Christianity ever saw two until 1830. Someone had to think it up. There's nothing in the scripture that says it.

I say that as one who taught it myself for eight years, or six of those eight years I taught a pre-tribulational rapture, and defended it. If you had wanted me to defend it back then, I could have given you 20 scriptural arguments. I still remember them.

None of them valid. Because none of them actually really teach that. They are arguments that if you have been taught that that is true, you can read that thought into the passages.

But until you are taught that it's true, there's no reason to see it in the passages. It's not an idea drawn from the passages. It's an idea imported into the passages.

I didn't see that for a lot of years. I taught it, defended it, debated it. And finally I saw the light.

I saw my arguments were all fallacious. I moved to something a little more consistent with what the Bible actually says, which is that the resurrection and the rapture occur on the last day. And the last day is the last.

There's no days after that, or else it wouldn't have been the last. And Jesus said four times, for example, this is just, I mean there's much data in scripture, we won't look at it all, but in John chapter 6, verse 39 and 40 and 44 and 54, four times in John 6, Jesus said of his people, I will raise them up on the last day. Now, just in case you wonder if that's a different day than the day that the wicked will be raised up.

He says in John 12, 48, he that rejects my word has one that judges him. The word that I have spoken to him will judge him in the last day. So you've got the Christians will be raised in the last day, and the wicked will be judged in the last day.

There's one day that's the last, and everybody's going to be judged on that day, and raised on that day. There's certainly nothing in the Bible to contradict that, but there is much to confirm it. We won't worry about that right now, because that's not my main theme today.

But I just want to say that the idea of a two-stage coming of Christ, I won't object to anyone believing it. You just need to, if you do believe it, you need to know the status, the biblical status of your belief. You're believing something that cannot be found in scripture, unless you import it into certain passages.

It is not there, which is why it took the church 1,800 years to come up with the idea. By the way, people were reading the Bible all those years, including great scholars. In the original languages, they never saw it.

And it's not just that they were dull. Some of them were smarter than you and me. But the point here is, that's one of the things I would call a popular modern mythology about the second coming.

Another of the mythologies about the second coming has to do with the idea of signs of the times. Certainly, it is in the popular mindset of evangelicals that there is such a thing as signs of the end times. And of course, most evangelicals would like to look at events that are happening in the world today and say, these are the signs of the end times.

Where do they get the idea that there are signs of the end times? I've heard preachers say on the radio and other places, Jesus told us to be looking for the signs of the times. God wants us to see the signs of the times. Well, I thought, I wonder where it says that in the Bible.

And I did find in the Bible the expression signs of the times one time. It's in Matthew chapter 12, where Jesus said to the Pharisees, you hypocrites, you can tell from the signs in the sky whether it's going to be raining or clear tomorrow, but you can't discern the signs of the times. Meaning the times they were living in.

They didn't recognize that they were living in the Messianic, the inauguration of the Messianic age with him there. The signs of the times, the only time that expression is found in scripture, refers to the times that Jesus was here at the beginning. And the Pharisees' failure to see it was something he scolded them about.

There's no place in the Bible that talks about signs of the times just before Jesus comes back. Now, where do people then get the idea? They get the idea by applying Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation to the end times. And, of course, there are things there.

You've got wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places and false Christs and false prophets. And, you know, everyone knows that list. And then people like to add to that, you know, the ozone layer, getting holes in it and nuclear war and, you know, conflict in the Middle East and so forth.

None of those things are mentioned in the Bible. There's no mention of an Arab-Israeli tension in the Bible. It's one of the mythologies.

Now, there is Arab-Israeli tension in the Middle East. Of course, we know that. But to find a verse in the Bible that says there will be in the end times conflict between Arabs and Israel, help yourself.

I'll give you \$100 for every verse you find on it. I know. I've talked through the Bible verse by verse at least 16 times.

They're not there, you know. I haven't missed any of the verses. It's nothing there.

It's mythology. It's popular stuff that sensationalism sells books. It convinces people that we're living in the time that Jesus is about to come.

Now, do I deny that we're living in the time Jesus is about to come? I don't know. No, I don't deny it. In fact, I kind of think Jesus probably will come.

I truly have hopes that he may come in my lifetime. I really do. And I don't think it's necessarily an unreasonable thing to hope for.

But I have to temper that with the fact that every generation of Christians, and there's been 50 generations since Jesus was here, every one of them thought that Jesus would come in their lifetime. And so the chances that I'm right and they were all wrong, I don't know how good those chances are. But it seems more likely, by the law of averages, every generation has been wrong so far.

Maybe I'm wrong, too. But I know of no reason why Jesus couldn't come back in my lifetime, and I want to make that very clear. I hope for a soon coming of Christ.

But I don't see anything in the newspapers that would indicate this, with the possible exception of putting two and two together, that if the world gets more dangerous, there may not be a world left for Jesus to come back to. So, I mean, maybe that general thought may point to the direction, maybe we're near the end of the world. But there are things that could happen to prolong it a lot longer.

Centuries more, for all we know. The reason that most people say we're living in the end times is there are things happening in the Middle East and in China, and used to be happening in the Soviet Union, not happening there anymore, and things that are happening in Europe, which people say, these are signs of the times. There's a ten-nation confederacy forming in Europe.

No, there isn't. It's a lot more than ten. But their interpretation of certain verses makes them want it to be ten, so they put on glasses and say, this is ten.

I thought there was thirteen. Well, it's going to be ten. Why? Because we want there to be ten, not thirteen.

Well, we'll see. And Mao Tse-Tung said he could field an army of 200 million men. Well,

they say, in the end times, an army of 200 million men is going to come from China and invade Israel.

Really? Where does it say that? Well, isn't it in Revelation somewhere? Well, there is a statement, something about 200 million men in Revelation chapter 16, but there's nothing there about China. There's nothing there about them invading Israel. It just says there is an army.

It doesn't say where they are, where they're going, or who they're fighting, and it says their number was 200 million. But you see, there's such a tendency to sensationalize, to take something from the newspaper and say, this is something the Bible is talking about, and that proves that we're living in that time. This is what I call newspaper exegesis.

You use the newspaper to decide what the Bible is talking about, instead of letting the Bible decide what the Bible is talking about. To me, I used to be a newspaper exegete, too, when I was in this system, but I decided it was safer, especially after too many false alarms, to say, well, maybe the Bible should interpret the Bible, instead of the New York Times interpreting the Bible for me. For one thing, things changed too much.

And 30 years ago, I was told, and I believe I was telling others, that what was happening in the geopolitical sphere was signs of the end times. But it wasn't, because you know why? Almost everything in the geopolitical sphere has changed since then. And now someone else is saying, yeah, the way it is now is signs of the end times.

And you know what? If things change 180 degrees in the next 30 years, there will be someone writing books saying, you know, this is exactly the way the Bible said it would be in the end times. It doesn't matter what's happening. It's always exactly what the Bible says is going to happen in the end times to those who are looking for the signs of the times.

What I'm telling you is, the Bible doesn't say there even will be signs of the times. Jesus said, it's going to be like the days of Noah, when Jesus comes out. He said, people will be eating and drinking, getting married, buying and selling, he said.

He said that in Luke 17, he said it in Matthew 24. And he said, it will be just like the time of the flood, because the flood came when they were all unaware of it and took them all away. Now, the people were not living in a world that was going crazy with nuclear war in Noah's time.

What was happening was, people were getting married, eating, drinking, buying property, selling property, acting like this wasn't the last day of their life, in other words. They didn't know anything was about to happen. It caught them totally by surprise.

That's what Jesus said, they knew not until the flood came and took them all away. They were oblivious. But you say, well, that's the unbelievers.

Certainly the Christians will know. Well, not according to Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 24, to his disciples, therefore watch, for in an hour that you do not think, your Lord will come.

Now, of course, you say, well, what do you do with the earthquakes and famines and all that stuff? They're mentioned in Matthew 24 and there's that stuff in Revelation too. True, and that gets to a point of controversy I can't delve deeply into at this point. I did in this book over here and in some of my tapes that are available here.

But the main thing about Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, is that Jesus said that the things he described happening, all those things that we call signs of the end times popularly, he said this generation will not pass until all these things are fulfilled. Which means that all those signs happened in that generation. Now, the futurists, of course, don't like that.

So they say, no, he means the last generation of the future. The generation that sees Israel become a nation, that generation won't pass until these are fulfilled. But there's no possible way to responsibly make Jesus' words mean that, because there's no mention in that passage of Israel or Israel becoming a nation.

So to make Israel become a nation the beginning point of a generation that would see these things fulfilled is 100% arbitrary. There's nothing in the passage about Israel becoming a nation. But here's more.

The expression this generation is found in the teaching of Jesus five times in the book of Matthew. And if you look at all the times, it's in chapter 11, it's in chapter 12, it's in chapter 23 and 24, you'll find that every time he said this generation, he meant his own generation. He referred to this generation as the one that rejected John the Baptist.

This generation is the one who rejected Jesus. This is the generation that are like children playing in the streets saying, we piped and you didn't dance, we played the dirge and you wouldn't mourn, because John came and you didn't mourn with him. And I came and you didn't rejoice with me.

Matthew 24 is not the only place that Jesus spoke of this generation. It's the last of five instances recorded and all the other four he meant his own time. Which is reasonable to assume he meant it in Matthew 24 as well.

Especially when he told his disciples, you will see this. When you see this happen, and when you see this happen, when you see this happen, then know it's happening. The time is near.

He was talking about something they would see, something that he declared in no uncertain terms would happen in their generation. And the most responsible way to understand that, I think, is in the context. The disciples had asked him initially, the

reason he gave all this talk, was they said, Jesus had said, do you see the temple here? Not one stone will be left standing on another that will not be thrown down.

And they said, Lord, when will this happen? What will be the sign that this is about to happen? And he gave what we call the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13. This discourse was in answer to their question, when will the temple be destroyed? And he answered that. It happened in that generation, in 70 AD, just 40 years after he said it.

So, it's one of the most remarkable fulfillments of prophecy in the New Testament. There's a lot of remarkable fulfillments in the Old Testament. But if you want to find some remarkable instances of Jesus predicting something with specificity, and it coming to pass exactly as he said, the destruction of the temple in that generation, and all the famines and earthquakes and the wars that happened in that time, which you can read about if you read the history of the time.

Josephus records it, and he was not a Christian. He was not promoting one view or another of Matthew 24. He was just recording what he saw.

He was there. If you read the history of it, all the things that Jesus said that his disciples would see as signs did happen. They did see them, and it did happen in that generation.

Many people don't know much about that event, and therefore they assume that those things didn't happen. They've never read the history, and therefore they think that must be future. Same thing with Revelation.

In the book of Revelation, at least five times in the book of Revelation, John says, these are things that must shortly take place. The time is near. This is about to happen.

And he's even told by an angel in Revelation 22.10, Don't seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is at hand. And Daniel had been told to seal up his prophecy, because the time of fulfillment was not near. The angel said to Daniel in Daniel 12, Seal up the words of this prophecy, because it's not for now.

It's for a future time way off. But John, by contrast, was told, Don't seal up this book, because the time is at hand. He was specifically told, and his readers through him were told, Look for an immediate fulfillment.

I think they did, and I think they saw one. Same thing as the Olivet Discourse. I think it was fulfilled the same way the Olivet Discourse was.

Now, in Revelation, it doesn't say this generation. It just says, it's about to happen. It's at hand.

It's imminent. In Matthew 24, it says, this generation will pass beforehand. So, all the so-

called signs of the times in the popular novels and the popular books on this subject are drawn from Revelation and from Matthew 24, and I think mistakenly, because they apply them to a time that the passages themselves do not allow them to be applied to.

That is sometime way off in the future from Jesus' day, like in our time. But Jesus and John, in Revelation and the Olivet Discourse, said, Look for it soon. It's going to happen soon.

Now, so the idea of signs of the times, Jesus said it's going to happen without any warning. People are going to be, it's in an hour. You won't think it's going to happen, and it'll happen.

When you're not looking for it. So, that's a mythology that's popular. There's signs of the times, and there's people making mega bucks writing sensational books on that assumption, capitalizing on and exploiting the ignorance of the Christian public, which, by the way, wouldn't have worked 200 years ago, because the Christian public didn't understand those passages that way until 1830.

It's a new idea, but we live after 1830, a good deal after. So, our whole culture, the whole evangelical culture, has been permeated with these views that have taken over through the influence of C.I. Scofield and Dallas Theological Seminary that propagated John Nelson Darby's views that originated in 1830. So, we've heard nothing else.

But we need to make sure we're not too provincial. The church hasn't been around for just 175 years. The church has been around for 2,000 years, and Christians read the Bible in the original languages most of that time.

And they didn't see these things. And there's a reason for that. Because they weren't there to see.

And they're still not there to see. Unless someone tells you to see them, then you say, oh, I guess it's in that verse. Sure, why not? But that's not necessarily saying that the verse really was teaching that.

It's a paradigm that's imposed. Now, here's another question. Is the second coming of Christ imminent? Now, imminent doesn't mean immediately going to happen.

What imminent means is there's nothing standing between now and then that has to happen. That is to say, if something is imminent, it could happen now. It could happen any time.

My answer to that is probably it is, but the scriptures do not say that it is. Now, when I was raised, I was raised, you know, evangelical. I've been born again since I was four years old.

I've been in the ministry since I was 16. I was Baptist. I was, you know, very conventional in all my beliefs about this.

And I was taught that, you know, the imminence of the second coming of Christ, that's an essential. That's one of the doctrinal essentials of being a Christian. You have to believe in the imminent second coming of Christ.

And people who didn't believe in a pre-trib rapture were often demonized because they couldn't possibly believe in an imminent second coming because there were things that had to happen first. The tribulation would have to happen first before he could come. And that removes imminence if he can't come right now.

So, you needed a pre-trib rapture to preserve the doctrine of imminence. Yeah, other things would happen after the rapture, but the rapture could happen now, anytime, and start the tribulation, according to that view. Well, again, if you go looking in the Bible for the doctrine of the imminence of the second coming of Christ, you don't find it.

In fact, you find teaching against it from Paul. If you notice over in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, Paul opens that chapter with these words. Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, I take him to mean the second coming here, and our gathering together to him, I take that to be the rapture.

We're gathered together to him at his second coming. We ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us. That is, there were letters circulating that were purportedly from Paul, but they weren't.

Don't be shaken by those things, as if the day of Christ was at hand or had come, is another translation of that same Greek word. Now, he says this, Let no one deceive you, for that day will not come until there is a falling away that comes first, and the man of sin is revealed. Now, we don't need to even know what Paul's referring to as the man of sin or the falling away, although there's many theories about that, and interesting ones.

We don't have time or need to look at them. All we need to see is that Paul says, concerning the second coming of Christ, don't let anyone tell you it has come or is imminent, because some things have to happen first. There has to be a falling away, there has to be a man of sin revealed, and until that happens, it can't happen.

So, Paul didn't teach that the second coming was imminent in his day. There were things that had to happen first. Now, it's possible those things have already happened.

Depends on how you interpret them. And if they have, then maybe we could say, well, Jesus could come, in fact, at any moment. But if they have not yet happened, then his coming certainly isn't any more imminent today than it was in Paul's day, because these things, he said, must intervene between his time and the second coming.



Now, some people say, but didn't Jesus say watch? Because you know when it's going to be, and we're looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in Titus 2.13. Yeah, the Bible does say we're to watch and to look, but that doesn't necessarily mean we're watching and looking, thinking it's going to happen any moment necessarily. It says of Abraham, in Hebrews 11, that he looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. That is, he was looking for the heavenly city.

But he didn't expect to see it that day. There were still things God intended to do first, like give him children, make a multitude of offspring. Those things were promised.

They hadn't happened yet. He was looking for it, just like a kid looks forward to his birthday or to Christmas, but that doesn't mean he thinks Christmas or his birthday is going to happen at any moment. He might, but he's mistaken unless it's really true.

But even if his birthday is six months off, he might be looking for his birthday with anticipation. It doesn't mean there's nothing that has to happen first. When Jesus said in Matthew 24, watch, for at such a time as you think not, your Lord will come.

He didn't mean, by the way, here we sit on the Mount of Olives talking about this. I might come back tomorrow. I might even come back tonight.

Nothing has to happen before I come back. Well, when he said watch, he didn't mean nothing has to happen first. He just told him a whole bunch of things that had to happen first.

Wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines. Those things hadn't happened between the time he spoke it and the time he finished the discourse and said watch. In other words, the command to watch for the coming of the Lord, in no sense conveys necessarily the notion that because you're watching, you assume it must happen right now.

After all, Jesus said in that discourse, this gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then shall the end come. Well, that hadn't happened by the end of the discourse, when he said watch. Clearly, Jesus told them to watch, although he didn't give them any reason to believe that Jesus might come back any moment.

He obviously couldn't come back before he left. When he gave the discourse, he hadn't died, risen again, or ascended. How could they expect a second coming any moment? So, Jesus never taught an imminent second coming.

It would be ridiculous. All his teaching was given before he left. How could he have an imminent second coming before he left? Paul didn't teach an imminent second coming.

He taught against it. He said some things have to happen first. Now, if Paul didn't teach it and Jesus didn't teach it, who did? Well, I'll let you do the research.

Get a concordance and see if you can find someone who did. The Bible does not teach an imminent second coming, but it does teach that Jesus will come when he's not expected. And maybe the less we expect it, the better.

If we're expecting it, maybe he won't come, because he says he's going to come when we're not thinking he's going to. But the point here is, the suggestion that we have to believe in an imminent second coming is an evangelical tradition of modern times. It is not taught in Scripture anywhere.

By the way, anyone who finds my position in conflict with their own, I truly have nothing emotionally attached to it. If you disagree with me, I really don't. It doesn't bother me.

You could be right, I could be wrong. But I would suggest that you look at the Scripture as much as I have before you decide which is right and which is wrong. Now, one other question.

No, we don't have time for one another. About the mythology. That's enough mythology to deal with in one time.

We need to talk about the reality. There are many passages in the Scripture which I believe are not about the second coming, but they sound like they could be. For example, in Matthew 10 and verse 23, Jesus said as he sent out the twelve on a short-term mission to evangelize villages in Israel and to meet him again later to regroup.

As he's giving them instructions about that mission, he says in Matthew 10, verse 23, If they persecute you in one city, flee to the next. For you will not have covered all the villages of Israel before the Son of Man comes. Now, he's basically saying, don't dilly-dally here.

If they persecute you, don't hang around and try to win them. Go on to the next village, because there are so many villages of Israel, you won't get to all of them before the Son of Man comes. Now, if he was talking about an event 2,000 years removed, there's plenty of time in 2,000 years for the church to reach all the villages in Israel.

I mean, there's maybe a lot of villages, but there's not so many that we couldn't get to. We've gotten to more than... The church in that time has reached more villages around the world than there were in Israel. Jesus is clearly saying the Son of Man's coming is going to interrupt and put an end to your opportunity to reach Israel.

You won't get to all the villages before he comes. Now, what is his coming there? Well, there's various opinions, but it can't be a reference to his second coming. And I don't think anyone seriously believes it is.

A lot of people think his coming is a reference to AD 70, because that certainly did bring an end to Israel and opportunities to reach Israel. After that, they weren't in villages,

they were scattered throughout the world. And so, Jesus could possibly be referring to that, when the Son of Man comes in judgment.

Now, when we talk about Jesus' coming in AD 70, people misunderstand. They think, you think Jesus visibly came in the clouds in 70 AD? No. I don't think anyone believes that.

If they do, they're silly. That's not what we mean. What we mean is that in the Bible, the expression God coming sometimes does refer to the second coming, or even the first coming of Christ.

But many times it speaks of something else. Let me give you two examples from the Old Testament. I just gave you one in the New, where Jesus said you won't reach all the villages of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

There's Old Testament examples of the same phenomenon that I'd like you to be aware of. One of them, a very well-known one to our students, because I give it as an example frequently, is Isaiah 19. There, it's a prophecy about the Assyrians conquering Egypt.

And that happened a long time ago. Assyria doesn't even exist anymore. Egypt hardly does.

But Egypt still exists, but it's not going to be conquered by Assyria any time in the future. This prophecy about the fall of Egypt to Assyria was fulfilled after Isaiah's time, but long before Jesus ever came into the world. But that destruction of Egypt by the Assyrians was seen by the prophet as a judgment from God.

And therefore, language was used that was typical in the scripture of a judgment of God. It says in Isaiah 19.1, the burden against Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt.

So, God on a cloud comes into Egypt. That sounds like what Jesus said he'll do. You'll see the Lord coming on a cloud, on the clouds of heaven.

Well, did Egypt see God riding on a cloud? No, they saw clouds of dust behind the chariots of the Assyrians, and that was God coming against them through the agency of an invading army. God was judging Egypt. It was as if God was himself leading the armies of the Assyrians to destroy Egypt, because they deserved it.

And that kind of language is commonplace in the Old Testament. That's a really clear one, because it uses the same language Jesus used about coming on clouds. It's unfamiliar to us, because we're not Jewish, and we didn't live in biblical times.

We live in North America, in a culture largely affected by English culture, many, many centuries removed. We're not Middle Easterners. We don't talk the way they did.

We don't think the way they did. And it's to our advantage to find out how they did,

especially if we're going to try to understand what they said. And so there are times when the Bible talks about coming, God coming, the Lord coming, when it isn't really about the end of the world and the second coming.

It's in the context, talking about a judgment. In many cases, it's the judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but it can be something else in some cases, too. Another example of this, which clearly was not a reference to the second coming, but sounds like it, if we just apply the language the way we normally apply this language to passages of this type.

Look at Matthew chapter 16. I mean, no one's going to say this is about the second coming unless they don't believe the Bible. Or Jesus, because Jesus said this in Matthew 16, 28.

Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. This is an embarrassing verse for many Christians because they think that when the Bible always talks about Jesus, the Son of Man coming, he must be talking about the second coming. They misunderstand the biblical idioms.

And they say, oops, Jesus made a mistake. He thought some of those people would still be alive at his second coming, and they're all dead now, a long time dead, and he still hasn't come back. Jesus goofed.

No, he didn't. Jesus doesn't goof. Jesus is God.

He doesn't make mistakes. So, what did he mean? Well, that's a matter of debate. Some people think he's referring to the transfiguration.

Some think he's talking about Pentecost. Some think he's talking about 70 AD. It doesn't matter, for my point.

The point I'm making is, whatever he was talking about, he wasn't talking about the second coming, though the language sounds very much as if he was. Some of you standing here won't taste death before you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. If he hadn't said that thing about not tasting death, if he hadn't put that time limitation on it, we would, of course, assume he's talking about his second coming, but he can't be because he'd have to be wrong if he was.

And so, even evangelicals who are less less preteristic than I am, generally don't apply that verse to the second coming. They typically apply it to probably the transfiguration more often than anything else. But whatever.

Maybe it is the transfiguration. Maybe it's something else. The only point I'm making, it isn't the second coming that we're thinking about.

That's not what he's talking about there. Because that didn't happen while some of those people were still alive. It's the same prediction as in Matthew 24, where this generation will not pass before all these things are fulfilled.

Because in Matthew 24, he had just said they will see the Son of Man coming out of the clouds. They said this generation won't pass. Now, if he was talking about the second coming, he apparently was wrong again.

It's the same information, just different words. Some of you standing here won't taste death before you see the Son of Man coming. This generation won't pass before the second coming.

It's obvious that this generation means the same thing as some of you standing here won't die. But if it was the second coming, then Jesus was wrong. We should just fold up our Bibles and find another religion to join because this one isn't working.

On the other hand, if we believe Jesus is infallible, as I do, then I'd say he was right. And he was talking about something other than his second coming. Again, demonstrating that language that looks like it's about the second coming might sometimes not be.

It might be about something else. Now, having said that, it's that fact that made Chris want me to tell you, well, how in the world, then, if language that sounds so much like the second coming cannot be about it, then how in the world would we recognize the passage that it is? And the answer to that is sometimes difficult, but not usually. I mean, there are some passages, I have to admit, I don't know if he's talking about the judgment of Jerusalem in the 18th century or if he's talking about the future coming, but there's not many like that.

The majority of passages on the second coming are reasonably unexpected, unmissable, unmistakable, is what I meant to say, because there are some features of those passages that cannot be applied to A.D. 70 or any other previous time, and it has to be future. Those features are the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of all people at the great white throne judgment, everyone called before the throne of God and judged and sent off to their eternal fates. That hasn't happened yet.

And the creation of new heavens and new earth. That is the end of this present world. It says in Revelation 20, verse 11, I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away and there was no more place for them.

Then I saw new heavens and a new earth, for the first heavens and the first earth were no more. So, when Jesus comes back, we've got passages that tell us he's going to raise the dead, he's going to judge all humanity, and it's going to be the end of this present cosmos. The heavens and the earth will pass away and there will be a new heavens and a new earth.

That clearly hasn't happened yet. Now, I know that there are preterists who try to take all of those things figuratively so they can say, well, there's something spiritual that's talking about and not the real deal. I've looked at their arguments, I've tried to be open-minded because I've tried always to be open-minded whenever there's intelligent Bible students who disagree with me and have arguments for their position.

I want to hear them. I want to know if they know something I don't know. Sometimes they do.

This time they don't. There really is no value in that position, I believe. Now, let me show you some scriptures which I think are unmistakable.

And the passages about the second coming will generally be in context that talk about the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the world, and the end of the world, as we know it. Let me just give you a few samples of each and this will be your key to recognizing those kinds of things. In John 5, well, let me give you, I'm going to give you John 5, but let me give you another verse first.

1 Thessalonians 4, 16 through 18. I quoted it earlier, but it's one of the clearest passages that describes the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the church happening at the second coming of Christ. And it can't be that this, you can't say this happened at any time previously.

It hasn't happened yet. 1 Thessalonians 4, actually I want to start earlier, verse 13. But I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep.

He means died. Lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. So he's going to tell us what our hope is.

So we don't have to sorrow about those who've died because we have a hope they don't have, and this is what it is. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. The dead in Christ are now with him.

He's going to bring them back with him. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep, who are dead. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout.

Now, if not for some of the other features of this passage, one might be still wondering, this sounds an awful lot like the second coming, but so do some other passages that aren't about that sound like it, so maybe this isn't. But when you see what follows, you say this has got to be the real deal. This has got to be the end of the world.

The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and

remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

Now, from that point in time, we will always be with the Lord. Are we with the Lord? Well, yeah, we're with the Lord. He's always with us, but not in the sense that Paul means it.

How does he mean it? Look over at 2 Corinthians 5, and you'll see what Paul means about being with the Lord. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says in verse one, For we know that if our earthly house, he means our physical bodies we're in now, this tent is destroyed, that would be at death. We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

So if we die, we go to heaven. For to this, in this body, we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven. If indeed having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

I'll talk more about these verses under another category, but he says in verse four, For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed. We want to be resurrected with resurrection bodies. That this mortality, our mortal body, should be swallowed up by life.

Now, in another passage similar to this, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul said when Jesus comes back and we're raised from the dead, this mortality will put on immortality. That's a function of the resurrection of the second coming. And now he says we're looking forward to that time when this mortality will be swallowed up in life.

Now, a few verses down, not very far down from this, he says in verse six, So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. Now, remember in 1 Thessalonians, he said, thus shall we always be with the Lord. At this point, he says, while we're in this body, we're absent from the Lord.

I mean, God's not far from us. He's with us. But in the sense that Paul says our hope is hanging on, we're going to be with him in a different sense than now.

While we're alive in this present body, we're not with the Lord in the sense that he's talking about. We are absent from the Lord. He says, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

We don't see him yet. We are confident, yes, and well pleased, rather, to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. So, to be with the Lord doesn't happen while we're in this body.

So, in 1 Thessalonians, it says, well, the dead will rise and we who are alive will be caught up and we'll be with the Lord from that time on. He's clearly talking about something that has not happened yet, has not happened as long as we are in this body.

There is an absence from the Lord.

It's not absolute because God is everywhere and he's with us. But there is a sense in which we don't see him. It's kind of like he's not here some of the time.

It's not like you're here. I mean, I can see you and I know he's here because of faith. We walk by faith.

He says, not by sight. He's around, but we need faith to know that. When we see him, we won't need faith to know that.

We'll see him, just like we see each other right now. So, that hasn't happened. Paul says, the dead are going to be rising.

The living saints will be caught up to meet him in the air. And there are other verses of this type, which I would take you to, but we've already used up too much of our time. We need to go to the next point.

The judgment. In 2 Timothy 4, and verse 1, Paul said, I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. Now, his appearing and his kingdom obviously is future.

Because at his appearing and his kingdom, he will judge the living and the dead. Now, we might assume that those who have died maybe have been judged already, but we know the living haven't been. And this is connected with the resurrection and the rapture.

Those who are dead will be caught up to the Lord to be judged. And those who are living will be caught up to the Lord afterwards to be judged. The dead and the living are both going to be raised up to meet the Lord to stand judgment.

And at his coming, at his appearing, he's going to judge both categories. Matthew 25 is one of the most extensive passages on this judgment in the Bible, but it is in the form of a parable. So, it has some non-literal features, but it still is clear enough that Jesus teaches this idea there is a second coming when all the dead will be raised and they'll be brought to judgment.

In Matthew 25, 31, Jesus said, When the Son of Man comes in his glory, OK, that sounds like the second coming, and in this case it is. And all the holy angels with him. And that's a dead giveaway.

You know, his holy angels haven't shown up yet. Neither has he, yet. Then he will sit on the throne of his glory, and the nations will be gathered before him, and he'll separate them one from another as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

And you know the story. The goats go into everlasting punishment, prepared for the



devil and his angels, it says. And the sheep go into everlasting life.

This is the judgment of the last day. You find that judgment in Revelation 11, verses 15 to the end of the chapter. You find it in Revelation 20.

The great white throne and all the dead. The sea gives up the dead. The graves give up the dead.

And they all stand before God and they're judged out of the books. We're going to talk more in our next lecture about the judgment and rewards and what this is all about. But the point I'm making now is simply there are passages in the Bible that speak of this judgment.

It's like a sequel to the resurrection. The resurrection ushers people into the judgment hall, so there's a resurrection and a judgment at the time Jesus comes back. That has not happened.

Not all nations have been consigned either to eternal punishment or eternal life yet. That will happen when Jesus comes back. So, we know passages like this, and there are others, are about a future second coming.

They're not about AD 70 or something like that. Also, we've got the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth. Now, I'll tell you this.

Those who are full-on preterists, I'm going to close this person here. Those who are fully realized preterists, they say, well, this new heavens, new earth thing, it's a symbol. The new heavens and the new earth is the new covenant.

And the old heavens and the old earth that passed away is the old covenant. And so, when the temple was destroyed, the sacrificial system was gone. That was the passing away of the old covenant.

Symbolically spoken of is the passing of the old heavens and the old earth. And the new covenant has replaced it. And the old is no more.

So, we've got a new covenant. And they would bring up something like Paul saying, and this is a good verse for this point, if you want to try to prove it. In 2 Corinthians 5, 17.

If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

Well, in the description of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation, it says, old things have passed away. Behold, I make all things new. And so, they would say, you see, when you read about the new heavens and new earth in Revelation, it's really just talking symbolically about the church.

And the fact that the old Israel was the creation of God that has passed away. The old covenant and that which defined the old Israel. Now, there's a new Israel, a new covenant.

And this all fits, I mean, frankly, theologically, I don't have any objection to these implications. The question is, is that what the passage is talking about or not? Now, frankly, Revelation chapter 21 and 22 about the new heavens and new earth, it's hard to know. Because Revelation is written in such symbolic language, the visions are often symbolic.

And in those passages, it would be easier than in most to suggest this is not literal. But, the apostles who wrote non-symbolically in their epistles taught there will be an end of this present world and there will be a literal new heavens and new earth. And that will be at the coming of Jesus.

Second Peter chapter 3 would be one of those places where that I think is unambiguous. Nothing is so unambiguous that someone can't misunderstand it. But, let's face it, misunderstanding can be very unreasonable at times when the passage is relatively clear.

And this is, I feel, relatively clear. In second Peter 3, it says in verse 3, knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days walking according to their lusts, saying, where is the promise of his coming? Now, this coming, I believe, is a reference to the second coming. Scoffers will come because he delayed his coming.

And they say, well, I guess he's not coming, right? Where is it? Where is that promise? Why hasn't he fulfilled his promise? Why hasn't he come? And, basically, he says, well, these people are willingly ignorant, verse 5, that God does keep his threats, but he says in verse 7, well, actually, verse 8, that beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord a day, a thousand years is a day, a day is like a thousand years. That is to say, Jesus maybe didn't come in a day. In fact, he maybe didn't even come in a thousand years.

It's all the same. A day, a thousand years, it's all the same to him. So, his promise, having been delayed from our perspective, doesn't change anything.

With him, it's just another day. You know, it's not like he has somehow allowed something to fall through the cracks. It didn't happen this day, or tomorrow, or it didn't happen in our lifetime, or our grandparents' lifetime, but that doesn't mean it's not going to happen.

For it to happen a thousand years after it's predicted, or two for that matter, is not any different for God than if it happened a day or two after. It's still a faithful promise regardless of how much time intervenes. And he says in verse 9, this is important, the

Lord is not slack concerning his promise.

That is, he hasn't come back as he promised yet, but that's not because of slackness or negligence on his part. Here's why he hasn't come back. He says, he's long-suffering, that means patient, toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

That's why he hasn't come back yet, because there's people who are going to repent who have not repented yet. He's patient with us. There are people today that if he came back today, they'd go to hell.

But if he doesn't come back today, some of them are going to repent. And so he waits. That's why he hasn't come back sooner.

Now he says this, in verse 10, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. To me this is a very clear reference to the second coming of Christ. He says, in which, that is, in that day that he comes, the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat.

Both the earth and the works that in it will be burned up. I don't think that's happened yet. I miss that day.

If it happened, I must have slept through it. And he says in verse 11, Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, 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 a fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

So he says, this is what's going to happen when Jesus comes back. The day of the Lord is going to come, and the earth and the universe are going to melt and burn up. And what we're looking for is a new heavens and a new earth.

So that's what's going to happen when Jesus comes back. The fact that that hasn't happened proves that Jesus hasn't come back yet in the sense that he's talking about in that passage. He has come in many senses that aren't referring to his second coming, but referring to judgment, acts, or some other thing, just because the language is used non-literally in the scripture sometimes.

But in passages like this, we know this isn't non-literal. This is the real second coming he's talking about. And Paul taught the same thing in Romans 8. And this may be the last scripture we have time to give, because we've run a little late here, and I don't want to take advantage of the fact that you came expecting to leave, and now you're stuck until I finish.

Paul says in verse 19 of Romans 8, For the earnest expectation of the creation, that's the heavens and the earth, the creation. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

And that revealing of the sons of God is when we are resurrected and glorified. Now, we are sons of God now, but that's not yet been revealed. John said that in 1 John 3, verses 2 and 3. He says, Beloved, now we are the sons of God, but it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.

But when He shall appear, we will be like Him, for we'll seem as He is. Clearly, that hasn't happened yet. I haven't seen Him and become like Him instantaneously, as He is, so He hasn't come that way yet.

But notice he says, We are now the sons of God, 1 John 3, 2, but it has not yet been revealed, or it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We're children of God, but the world looks at us and says, Wow, there's a child of God. We'd look just like them.

We don't look any different than them. Especially when we blow it. We really don't look any different than them.

But the time will come when we're like Jesus. When He comes, we'll be like Him. We'll be resurrected in glory.

Then there'll be no mistaking who the sons of God are. That will be the revealing of the sons of God. It has not yet been revealed that that's what we are to the world, but we are.

But time will come when it is revealed. Now Romans 8, 19 says, The whole creation is earnestly, eagerly expecting this day when the sons of God will be manifested. That's the second coming of Jesus.

It says, For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope. Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, that is from decay, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

So the point here is, the creation anticipates a day when it too will be delivered from the effects of the curse, from the bondage of corruption. Not only Adam fell, but the whole creation fell with him. But not only will the sons of Adam be restored, the creation will be restored.

When? When the sons of God are manifest. Which is when? When they're resurrected. Which is when? When Jesus comes back.

Paul's teaching is the same as Peter's. When Jesus comes back, it's the restoration of the universe. The new heavens, the new earth.

And so, we can see, these are just samples. There are more passages in the script that have these features. I'm just trying to give you sort of a, sort of a touchstone to say, okay, here's a passage that sounds like it might be the second, but it might not be.

That character, Steve Gregg, said some of these things aren't really about that. How do I know if this is or not? Well, if there's the resurrection, if there's the judgment, if there's the new heavens, new earth. And by the way, I dare say the majority, if not all, the past, not every last one I have to say, but the majority of passages in the Bible about the second coming mention one or more of these features.

Which is a dead giveaway. Now, are there passages that don't? Yeah. You've got Acts chapter 1, verses 10 and 11, where when Jesus ascended, two men in white apparel said to the disciples, you men of Galilee, why stand you gazing into heaven? And this same Jesus, who you have seen taken from you, will come again in like manner as you saw him go.

Now, there's no mention of resurrection or judgment there, but the fact that he's going to come back in the same way that he went away is a fairly clear prediction of his actual reappearance visibly. Since we know the Bible teaches there is such a visible appearance of Christ to come, it's almost certain that that is one of the passages that's talking about it. But we need to recognize that the prophets and the apostles in writing often use the typical idiomatic metaphors and so forth that the Jews were accustomed to.

And some of those we're not accustomed to. And when we read them, we say, whoa, that's got to be like the end of the world. And sometimes it isn't, because it's the idiom.

But sometimes it is. And the time to know the difference is when you see those things that accompany the last day, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of all nations, the end of this world, the end of this cosmos and the renewing of it to new heaven and earth. That's that.

Those are the ways we know for sure when we're talking about the second coming and not something else. I want to give you just a real quick, without looking at specific scriptures, a real quick probable order of events. Now, I'm different than the popular teachers, because they'll give you an order of events starting like seven years before this.

And they'll give a detailed account of what's going to happen three and a half years into it and what's going to happen like at the midsection between the three and a half years and the seven years. They've got these unique charts because it's so complex and

there's so much time involved. Everything I'm going to tell you is going to happen in one hour, the Bible says.

In one hour, or at least on the same day. There's a day, the day of the Lord, the last day. This is what's going to happen on the last day.

There's nothing predicted that's going to happen the day before or the year before or the seven years before. This is going to happen on the last day. And I say probably in this order because you never find all of these elements of it in one passage.

If you had all the elements in one passage, you'd say, oh, there's the order of events. But you've got a few of them over here in this passage, a few in this passage, different samplings of it and it never really anywhere tells us here's the exact order of all these events. So, I'm going to tell you what I think is a probable, reasonable order to expect.

First of all, Jesus descends into the clouds. There's a trumpet. There's a voice of the archangel.

And the dead rise. At least the Christian dead do. Now, the non-Christian dead rise the same day, but maybe not at that moment.

That's ambiguous. Paul said the dead in Christ shall rise first. Now, elsewhere he makes it clear that the dead who are not in Christ will also rise the same day, but maybe not at the same moment.

That's not entirely clear. It's not the most important thing. The point is when Jesus comes down, the first predicted event is the sound of the trumpet is going to cause the dead to rise.

Second, and apparently immediately thereafter, the living Christians rise. Those who have died in Christ will not, will, will, that is those who are alive when Christ comes will not precede those who fall asleep. The dead in Christ rise first, then we who are alive and remain shall become.

So, the dead will rise, then the living will rise. That is the Christians. What's the point of rising? Now, the two-stage view thinks we're going to go off to heaven for seven years, but actually, there's no indication of that in the Bible.

I think we're rising off the ground to keep from getting our feet singed. Because when Jesus comes, he's going to come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the lost and burning up the earth, it says. We just read about that in Peter.

And so, it's better not to be here at that moment. So, we're caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We'll never be away from him again.

After that, we will ever be with the Lord. But where is he going from there? Well, he's

coming here. But first, he's going to clean it off.

He's going to burn it off. So, at that point when we're caught up, in all likelihood, that's when the earth and its inhabitants, who would be the lost because all the Christians are in the sky now, will be burned up. No one survives that, except the Christians.

Now, if... After that happens, if the dead non-Christians did not rise at the same moment as the Christians did, they will probably rise about this time because what comes next is the judgment. Everyone, the living and the dead, now come to the judgment seat of Christ. And that would require that all the dead would rise to be brought there.

But the Christian dead have already risen. And all the living, who were not already dead, they're brought there too. He'll judge the living and the dead at his coming.

And then, of course, he does judge everyone from the things written in the book. And then everyone is consigned either to eternal punishment or eternal life. I know there's nothing sexy or sensational about that scenario.

It all happens kind of quick and there's no, you know, dictators cutting people's heads off in the meantime. There's a lot of really fun stuff that the popular novels talk about. It's just not taught there.

But this is what we're told. This is what the Scripture actually says. And so we have these events happening in rapid succession, apparently.

And Jesus said the hour is coming in which all the dead will hear his voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, some to the resurrection of damnation, all that within the space of, he said, an hour. So it's short. And if it's not even literally an hour, it certainly is a short time.

That's what he's indicating. So that's all I have to say. Frankly, it's not all I have to say.

It's all I have time to say. And so we'll stop with that. And I'll be glad, although some may be eager and may need to go home.

I will gladly take time to take any questions. OK, now, see, when there's no questions, I have to do one of two things. One is my teacher was so comprehensive.

I left no stone unturned. Or I have so rendered myself not credible by what I said that no one would care for me to answer their question. Yes.

So maybe the idea that this is a thousand years, you know, well, you know, frankly, it is. But I was raised with that, too. That's called premillennialism.

And there is a reference to a thousand year reign of Christ, but only one place in the Bible. And that's Revelation 20. Nowhere else in the Bible can you find a reference to a

thousand year reign.

But the assumption of that you and I were raised with is that that thousand year reign is to be positioned between the second coming of Christ and the actual end of the world. That when Jesus comes back, he establishes a thousand year reign on this world at the end of which he'll destroy and burn up the world and make a new heaven and a new earth. So that's a variation on what I'm now believing.

And the reason I don't believe that anymore is, well, partly because of some of the scriptures I shared. Peter said when Jesus comes back in that day, the earth and the heavens are going to burn up. So it doesn't seem like he's aware of any thousand year interval there.

Nor did Paul seem to be aware of any interval. Peter, Paul, Jesus, the Old Testament prophets, James. In other words, most of the biblical writers, they never mention and give no indication that they know anything about a thousand year reign of Christ.

Now the Old Testament prophets did talk about a reign of Christ, but they always said it's forever and ever and has no end, which is a little different than a thousand years. You know, we know that famous verse in Isaiah 9, 6, which is typical of many verses. It says, you know, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

The government should be upon his shoulder, meaning he'll be ruling. And it says, and of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end upon the throne of David over his kingdom to establish it and order it even forever. Now, see, that's very typical of Old Testament prophecies about the reign of the Messiah.

It'll be forever. No end, you know. Now, the only reason anyone would suggest it's a thousand years, and thus afterwards has an end, would be to interpret that one passage, Revelation 20, a certain way, which would put it in, you know, an earthly reign of Christ that's not eternal, but lasts for a thousand years.

It's a long time, but it's not eternal. And to place that between the second coming and the new heavens and the new earth being created, but as I, as some of the scriptures I mentioned seem to indicate, there doesn't look like there is an interval there. And therefore, the thousand years, which is indeed mentioned in scripture, must be understood in a way that harmonizes with the scriptures on this.

And especially when there's a lot of scriptures that talk about the second coming and the features I just talked about. I mean, I just gave several samples of each point, but there's several more I didn't bring up just because I'm trying to give samples. The fact there's only one place in the Bible that mentions a thousand years makes it unlikely that a single passage in Revelation is intended to trump and contradict all the other material that says something different.



And rather, since Revelation is a book written in a somewhat symbolic genre, to suggest that the thousand years is a symbol for something seems reasonable to at least explore that possibility. And I came to believe differently than I was raised to believe as a result of noticing that the features of the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 are features that have explanations in other parts of the Bible. And in the other parts of the Bible that talk about these things, it applies it to the present age.

And the thousand years, I have come to feel, is a symbolic number to represent the age of the church. Because at the end of the thousand years in Revelation 20, that's when you have the new heavens and the new earth, that's when you have the resurrection, that's when you have the judgment, all at the end of Revelation 20, at the end of the thousand years. Well, that's what the rest of the Bible places at the end of the present age, when Jesus comes back.

So that kind of clued me that maybe the thousand years means the present age. The main difficulty with that is that the present age has been a lot longer than a thousand years. I mean, the time between the first and second, if Christ is in a thousand years, it's been so far two, and could be more, who knows.

And that is the main objection, to understand the thousand years as related to the present age. But the objection is answered without great difficulty when one actually studies all the times in the Bible that the number 1,000 is used. And it's not used literally.

It's used as a... It's not even used as a round number or an approximation. It's used as a symbolic way of speaking of a long indeterminate time or a large indeterminate number. Like, a day to the Lord is like a thousand years.

That's not exact. And that comes from the Old Testament. In Psalm 90, verse 4, it says, A day... yesterday... It says, a thousand years, in your sight, is like yesterday, when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

Well, obviously, a thousand years just means a long time. To you, it's like a short time. To you.

I mean, what's a thousand years? It seems long to us, but it's like short to you. And when the Bible says, A day in your courts is better than a thousand. For God owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

For God keeps covenant to a thousand generations. Or, if you just start looking at all the places the Bible talks about a thousand, you find that, you know, it doesn't look like any of these cases are necessarily using the word thousand as a statistical unit. It's more like an impressionistic way of talking about a really long time.

When Jesus was asked, Shall I forgive my brother seven times? He said, no, 70 times 7.

Well, he didn't mean literally 70 times 7. He just means a lot more than you're thinking. You're thinking 7. Hey, multiply that by 70, and you're getting closer to it. But he wasn't saying, You must forgive your brother 490 times.

After that, no further obligation on that. He's basically using a number in a non-literal way to convey the notion of a larger number than what he was thinking of. And that's how a thousand is typically used in its occurrences in the Bible.

I'd recommend anyone who wonders about that, go ahead and get a concordance out and check that out. They'll find that's true. So, my belief is that the thousand years is simply a number that means a long period of time of no particular determinate number.

But it could be a thousand, two thousand, ten thousand for that matter. A thousand years is still a good biblical way of speaking of a period like that, which is really long. So, anyway, there's other problems because we do, we are accustomed, because of popular belief, to take revelation quite literally in many respects.

But not in all respects. There's a lot of things we know are symbolic, like the beast with seven heads and ten horns, or Jesus is a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns. Well, no, he's not really a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns.

It's a symbol. It's telling us something about him, but it's not really describing him in literal terms. And revelation is full of symbols.

And therefore it wouldn't be too surprising if Revelation 20 had some symbols in it, too. You know, and I think it does. That'd be my summary.

And that was not an ignorant sounding question because, in fact, frankly, I think it was a perceptive question because I wasn't sure if anyone here who had been taught that view would recognize, since I made no reference to it, that what I was teaching was different than that. And obviously, it's frankly very perceptive to ask a question like that. And I had that view myself for many of the years of my ministry.

I grow. Still. I still grow.

I hope. Any other questions? Okay. No one popping up with something that you can't live without finding out tonight.

So, let's close. Tomorrow morning, we have two lectures, and tomorrow night one. And you're welcome to come to any or all of them.

But, like I said, the one tomorrow morning, the first one will be about the judgment. What will people be judged on the basis of? What kind of rewards do people receive? Since the Bible says God will reward everyone according to their works. The lecture of that is going to be about where we're going to spend eternity.

If you've been told you're going to live forever in heaven, you've been told something that's not quite what the Bible actually says. What the Bible does say is just as good. But it's not exactly that.

It has more to do with the new heavens and new earth and the new Jerusalem. But we'll talk about, you know, what are we going to be doing forever? I mean, how are we not going to get bored? And then tomorrow night, frankly, is going to be my favorite of the series, I think. And that is talking about the fate of the lost.

Not that that's a really wonderful, pleasant subject, but the reason it's one of my favorites is because the answer might be not as bad as we think. But it's not going to be real good, either. You know, we'll look into that.