

OpenTheo

Good Shepherd, Sending the 70 (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg discusses the idea of whether Jesus excluded anyone from his teachings. While some may view his teachings as exclusionary, Gregg argues that Jesus is inclusive and invites everyone to access his teachings. He goes on to discuss how Jesus is like a shepherd, laying down his life to protect his sheep and ensure their safety. Despite the potential risks, the good shepherd takes heroic action to safeguard his flock. Ultimately, Gregg emphasizes the importance of understanding God's chosen people and how the church relates to the new covenant.

Transcript

Whether Jesus intended that meaning or not is highly questionable. I think the idea is that as the sheep in the illustration go in and out of his sheepfold, they have to go through him, and they go out to find pasture, they go in to find a place to sleep securely, and that doesn't correspond to an in going and out going on our part necessarily. That's just what sheep do, they go in and out.

Actually, in the Old Testament, the expression going in and out was often used of leaders like Moses and Joshua. When they were old, they said, I'm not going to be able to go in and out before you anymore, which meant lead them out to battle and bring them back safely and so forth, but it was just a matter of providing leadership really for them. But I'm not even sure whether he's applying that Old Testament figure here so much as he's just saying the sheep, you know, they go about their business, with reference to the sheepfold, sometimes they come in, sometimes they go out, but they have to go in or out through the door.

And he says, I'm the door. The idea is you're not going to make it into the kingdom of the Messiah unless you go through the king. He's the door.

He's the way of access. And when people complain that Christianity is a narrow-minded religion, and that we're excluding too many people, that we're excluding all those Hindus and all those Buddhists and all those Jews and all those Muslims, and that we're excluding all those pagans who've never heard the gospel and so forth, and how narrow-

mindful and exclusivist the gospel is, how offensive that is to people. Really, the way to get that in perspective is that anyone can come in.

It's not exclusive, but you do have to come through the door, that's all. Is it really that unreasonable to say, listen, anybody's welcome to my party, but come through the door. Don't crash through the windows, you know, don't burrow through the walls.

The door is unlocked, you know, come on in. Now, you know, if I say you're welcome to come in, but you have to come through the door, is that really being exclusive because somebody would prefer to burrow through the wall? I guess that's for individuals to judge whether they consider it reasonable or not, but it strikes me as a very invalid criticism to say that Christ excludes anyone. He's the door.

Anyone's welcome to come through him. The fact that people don't want to doesn't make him the exclusive one, it's they who are excluding him. It's they who are choosing not to come through the legitimate means into the kingdom of God.

And so that's what he says here. We already talked about verse 10, so we'll go on to verse 11 where he shifts the metaphor, where he's no longer speaking himself as the door, but now as the shepherd himself. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. And gives his life is the same thing as lays down his life, mentioned in verse 15. He says, as the father knows me, even so I know the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

So the good shepherd will lay down his life or give his life for the sheep. Once again, I want to make that clear in the realm of real animals and people. It's not commendable for a human being to lay down a human life for an animal's life.

The animal rights people seem to have lost touch with this fact. I mean, humans are more valuable than animals. And yet, there are many persons who, in the care of animals, because that is their charge and that is their job, they are perhaps out among dangers.

And those dangers can cost them their lives. And they don't hope to die, in most cases, I think. But they simply live a dangerous life and put their life on the line.

And this for the sheep, or more properly, for whoever is benefiting from the sheep. The owner of the sheep, or if it's their own sheep, it's their family, or whoever they're supporting. It's not so much that the sheep's life is more valuable than a human life.

But the sheep, in most cases, would be the livelihood of other people. And the loss of them can be hurtful to other people. And so, for a man to be heroic and to take risks in making sure that the sheep are not lost or stolen was appropriate.

Now, in Jesus' case, of course, the sheep, in question, are human beings. And his laying down his life for the sheep is what he later described in chapter 15 as the best example of love there is. Greater love than to have no man in this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

So that's, he's saying the same thing here. Later on, in this passage, in verse 18, it says, No one takes my life from me. Verse 17 and 18, it says, Therefore my Father loves me because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, I have the power to take it again. This is this command I've received from my Father.

Now, in saying this, he's pointing out that no one is forcing his hand here. Even those who took him eventually at the end and crucified him, they couldn't do it against his will. He made it clear to Peter that if he wanted to, he could call twelve legions of angels and they'd rescue him.

The fact that he didn't do so meant that he was the one in command and he was the one laying down his life. Jesus was never at the mercy of those that hated him. And we can see that many times in the Gospels where it says, They sought to take him, they sought to kill him, they took up stones to stone him.

They took him to the edge of the cliff to throw him off, but his hour had not yet come. He walked through their midst unhurt. No one laid a hand on him or whatever.

I mean, all these cases like this are frequent. Why? Because it just wasn't his will or his Father's will for him to die at that time. No one could take his life from him.

And the reason no one could is because he hadn't sinned. The wages of sin is death. And he'd never sinned, therefore he didn't deserve to die.

And there's no way death could be imposed on him without him voluntarily dying. And so he was able to lay his life down. He was also able to take it up again.

Now, Jesus' own role in his own resurrection is an interesting point. I think John alone really makes the point that Jesus raised himself from the dead. In other places we read of the Father raising Jesus from the dead, Galatians 1.1. Galatians 1.1 says, God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead.

So he was raised by his Father. But in both 1 Peter and in Romans, it says the Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead. He was raised by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8 says that, I think, in verse 11. But 1 Peter says it even more clearly in 1 Peter 3. And verse 18 says, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive, meaning

resurrected, by the Spirit. So his Father raised him from the dead, yet he was made alive by the Spirit, yet he took up his own life again from the dead.

He laid it down and he took it up again. Previously he made the same point in the Gospel, John, but back in chapter 2. He said, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. And he spoke of the temple of his body, we are told.

That's in John 2.19. But notice, if you destroy this temple, my body, I will raise it up again. We can see that the whole triune Godhead was involved in the resurrection of Christ. I think it's only John that ever mentions Christ's own role in raising himself from the dead.

Which is quite a feat, really. I mean, he raised other people from the dead prior to his own resurrection. And that's marvelous enough.

But at least he was a living man doing it. But if he was a dead man raising himself from the dead, to have that much power even after you're dead is tremendous. Sort of like Elisha's bones after he died.

You know, a dead man came in contact with him and sprang to life. But Elisha didn't raise himself from the dead. That his bones raised somebody from the dead after he died is amazing enough.

But Jesus was able to raise himself from the dead. He had power to do that. He had authority to do that.

And so he laid down his life. This was on his own. Now, he's kind of repetitious to a certain extent here.

I mean, some of the same points again. But in verse 12 he says, But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

I'm the good shepherd and I know my sheep and I'm known by my own. Now, who is the hireling here? Frankly, I don't think he has any particular case in mind. I don't think he's talking about the Jewish leaders really as hirelings, although I think I may have suggested that earlier.

But I think he's thinking they're the thieves and the robbers. But the hireling is the kind of leader Jesus isn't. Whether there were some particular cases in mind, I don't know.

Very possibly. For example, some of the Jewish leaders when Jerusalem was under siege or when they were attacked by enemies, no doubt just looked out for themselves. Ezekiel criticized the shepherds for feeding themselves instead of feeding the flock.

And somebody who doesn't care about the sheep and has nothing at stake but his own skin, he'll leave the sheep vulnerable and run off for his own protection. Now, whether Jesus had any particular cases of people like that or not, or was simply drawing a contrast between that kind of person and the kind of person he is, I don't know. But he was basically saying, I'm not that way because I'm not a hireling.

I'm not employed by someone else. These are my own sheep. I care about these sheep because they're my own.

And I'm not going to run away when danger comes. And danger was facing him all the time. In fact, back in chapter 7 they were saying, is this not he whom they're seeking to kill? How is it he's speaking openly? And they don't touch him.

The fact that he would speak openly when there were threats on his life was proof that he wasn't running away from danger. There were wolves. Probably more likely the Jewish leaders would be like the wolves than like the hireling.

The hireling is the kind of person that Jesus could have been like but didn't choose to because he loved the sheep, he cared for the sheep, he didn't run away. A hireling would. Now, of course, there's always the possibility of applying some of these things Jesus said about shepherds and sheep to modern leaders in churches.

And Christian leadership is compared with shepherds in the Bible frequently. The elders in Ephesus were called shepherds of the flock in Acts chapter 20. In 1 Peter 5, Peter refers to the elders of the church as shepherds of the flock.

And obviously someone who is in some role of leadership, in Christian leadership, needs to consider these things too. He is not permitted to be a hireling. He doesn't just leave his post because it gets unpleasant or because he's got opponents or because his life is in danger even.

If he is, in fact, a shepherd over certain sheep. And, well, I think that a parent, for instance, many of you will never be pastors but may be parents. You'll be like shepherds over sheep.

And, by the way, even a person who is a pastor, his own children are his first priority, in my opinion. They're his first stewardship. And for him to leave his sheep, to leave his children unprotected is because maybe he'd catch some flack for not doing so.

Because it's dangerous for him to protect them. Would be a case of showing himself to be a hireling. I think of, of course, I have my own pet peeves and most people by now know what they are.

But I think of a person who won't homeschool their kids even though they know that when their kids go to school their spirits are being assailed by evil philosophies. And

even their bodies are in danger. Kids bringing guns to school and shooting each other and stuff.

And even children being molested. At the grammar school a block away from where we used to live there were kids being molested in the bathroom by one kid who was in there. As well as weirdos driving up and down the street picking up kids.

It's dangerous out there for kids. And I'm not saying that every kid who goes to school gets into that kind of trouble. Some kids go through their whole school life and never get shot or molested or beat up or anything.

But the fact is there are known dangers out there that you don't have to subject kids to. And parents, I think, to send their kids there are not thinking as clearly as they need to in terms of their role as shepherds of sheep. There's wolves out there.

A lot of wolves. And by putting your kid under the teaching of someone who may not even be a Christian who definitely has an agenda and a philosophy they want to communicate with the Christian you may as well be putting them at the mercy of wolves. And by the way, parents sometimes think, well, we have a strong Christian home and whatever things they learn wrong at school we can undo it when they get home.

Fat chance. I mean, kids spend five, six hours a day under the direct influence of their peers and their teachers at school even if they, I mean, when they get home from school they don't spend five solid hours under the direct influence of their parents even if their parents are there. I mean, mother's fixing food or something.

There's not that input into their lives for a solid five or six hours. And a lot of Christians lose their families because of that. And yet a lot of them will not make the sacrifices or take the flack that they'll get from the system and whatever for taking their kids out.

I would see that as being like a hireling in a situation. But I'm not trying to say every parent who puts their kids in school is consciously neglecting responsibility. But I think parents need to think about their charge over their children as like a shepherd's charge over sheep.

And you're protecting them with your life. That's what you need to do. Shepherds of churches, pastors of churches need to have the same attitude if that's where God has put them, over a group of sheep.

They don't run away when it gets rough, when it gets dangerous, or when it gets costly to take care of the sheep. Now he says in verse 15, As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Now there have been a lot of interpretations of this I've heard over the years, although of course all responsible Bible scholars understand it the same way. There's really only one sensible way to take it, but there's many nonsensical ways that people have taken it. One way, and I'm talking serious people, have said this is proof that there's life on another planet.

Jesus said he has other sheep that we don't know about. He's got to go to them, and where did he go? He went up into space, right? When he left here, he ascended into the heavens. And no doubt he's gone to other planets to do the same things that he's done here, and to gather his sheep in these other places.

Sheep that we don't know about, because they're not around. This is literally taught by some people, and this scripture is used to try to prove extraterrestrial life, and there are Christians who think that that might be what it means. None of them are scholars, none of them are responsible in their biblical, in their approach to the Bible, but there are Christians, of course, who don't know the Bible very well, who think that way.

There are then, of course, the Mormons who believe that the other sheep are the American Indians, that Jesus, after leaving his disciples in Israel, went up to North America. And the Book of Mormon tells the story about his ministry here, on this continent, and how he went and gathered his sheep from the American Indians. And they quote this verse as a proof of the Book of Mormon being correct, that Jesus came to the North American Indians, because he told his disciples.

He had other sheep they didn't know about. Now, of course, one doesn't have to resort to these weirdo interpretations in order to make sense of this passage. Almost everybody who's familiar with the whole of scripture realizes that he's talking about Gentiles in general.

His disciples, at this point, were all Jewish. All of his sheep were Jewish. And they didn't know, they didn't have a clue that there were going to be Gentiles in this flock.

Remember, even years later, when Peter was told to go to the house of Cornelius, it shocked him, and it shocked all those who heard about it, all the Jewish Christians, that some Gentiles were allowed to be sheep too. And yet we know very well that at a time later than this that we're reading about, Jesus told his disciples to go and gather his elect from all over the place. Gather them from all over.

By the way, let me show you something. John, of course, wrote in his gospel, after this realization dawned on him and the other apostles, but he gives a comment in John 11. If you look at John 11, verse 49 through 52.

John 11, 49 through 52 says, And one of them, Caiaphas, being a high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that

one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish. Of course, talking about Jesus should die. Now this is, now John makes his comment.

Of course, he made this with hindsight. Now this he did not say on his own authority, but being a high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for that nation, that is Israel, and not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Now the children of God who were scattered abroad is the imagery of, of course, sheep that have been scattered.

And he went to gather them up. Now who are they? They are in addition to that nation. The high priest said, one man needs to die for our people.

And John says, yeah, he did not know how true that was. Jesus did die for that nation, Israel, but not only for that nation, but for God's children, God's sheep that were scattered all over the place. In other words, all the Gentile nations too.

Now, now John understood that by the time he wrote this gospel and made this comment, but the apostles did not understand that for a very long time after Pentecost, that, that Gentiles could be included. Paul said in Ephesians that this fact was a mystery which had not been revealed in former generations to the sons of men, but has been made known through the holy apostles and prophets through the Spirit. So at the time that Jesus was speaking to the disciples, there was not the faintest hint in their minds that any Gentiles would ever be God's sheep.

Remember, God's flock, God's sheep. There was a long precedent in the Old Testament for using that kind of language. It always referred to Israel.

Everyone else were the bears and the lions and the leopards. You know, I mean, all the Gentiles, the Gentiles weren't God's sheep. Israel was God's flock, the sheep of his hand, the sheep of his pasture.

We are his people and the sheep of his pasture, David said in Psalm 100 and so forth. Now, when Jesus said, I have sheep you don't know about, he means you Jewish disciples do not know yet, and I can't tell you yet because you couldn't handle it yet. But there's going to be Gentiles who are sheep too.

And I got to go to them too. He didn't mean he was going to physically go there from, you know, like ascending to heaven and then come back to America. But that through the church, the church was going to carry the message of Christ and Christ himself to the Gentiles.

And he says, I will bring them and they will hear my voice. And there'll be one flock and one shepherd. Now, I want to make something very clear here, because this, this verse is very important in dealing with dispensationalism.

It is dispensationalism alone that considers that Israel is still God's chosen people, even though they believe the church is also God's chosen people. They just say God has two chosen people. God has the chosen people of Israel and he relates to them on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, they say.

And then he has the church and he relates to us on the basis of the new covenant that he made in the upper room with the disciples. So he has two covenant peoples, but they're never the twain shall meet. That Israel will forever be God's chosen people ethnically and the church will forever be God's chosen people spiritually.

This is actually almost straight from the dispensational text. And so when you read in the Old Testament that Israel is God's flock and that God's going to send a good shepherd and he's going to send a shepherd to his flock and he's going to gather the sheep that are scattered and so forth, they understand this has to be with reference to Israel. That Jesus has to have a leadership over Israel in the millennium or in the last days or something.

Whereas Jesus indicates that he's going to go bring the Gentiles in, the Gentile sheep, and when they come in, along with the Jewish sheep, there'll be not two flocks, but one flock. There's not going to be a Jewish flock and a church flock. He doesn't have two flocks and two chosen people.

He has one chosen people made up of the Jewish sheep and the Gentile sheep. It's just that not all Jews are his sheep. And how could he make it clear, but in this passage where he's... Well, let me point out to you a little later here, in the same chapter, verse 26, Jesus said to the Jews... The Jews speak in verse 24, okay? The Jews surrounded him and said, how long do you keep us in doubt, okay? He says to them in verse 26, you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

Now, here are some Jews who are not his sheep. In the Old Testament, it was considered that the whole nation of Israel, all Jewish people, were God's sheep. But now he's defining sheep differently.

There were some Jews who were his sheep, they were his disciples. But there were also Jews who were not his sheep. They were not in his flock.

They were not God's sheep. And now he's saying, I'm going to go get some Gentiles and some of them will be my sheep too. And when they do, we'll have one flock made up of my Jewish sheep and my Gentile sheep.

One flock and one shepherd. So it's quite obvious that Jesus didn't teach that all of Israel is his sheep and it makes up one flock, and then the church is some separate flock. By the way, there'd be problems with that because what do you do with Jewish Christians then? If God is forever going to have two separate flocks, one is made up of the Jews and

the other made up of Christians, then what about Paul? He was Jewish and he was a Christian.

Is he going to be in the Christian flock or the Jewish flock? If you strip him from his Gentile converts and put him in a different flock from them, you're certainly building again the middle wall of partition that he said God broke down. There's no wall. In Christ, the Jew and the Gentile are one.

There's no Jew or Gentile. So there's just one flock made up of Jewish believers and Gentile believers, and that's what he's talking about in verse 16. We talked about verses 17 and 18.

Let's go on through verse 19 and see the result. Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these things, and many of them said, he has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to him? Others said, these are not the words of one who has a demon.

Can any demon open the eyes of the blind? Well, can they? I don't know. There are demonic signs and wonders that take place. Sai Baba, where is he? In India, I guess.

He's a guru that, you know, there's miracles done for him. There are Westerners, there are intellectuals from this country, doctors and so forth, that go watch this guy heal the sick, and do amazing things, or allegedly even raise the dead. Now, he's also homosexual in his life.

He's obviously not a holy man, but he's a false prophet. He's got signs and wonders. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? Well, I think maybe they can.

But the point is that Jesus linked his works with his teachings. It's not just he went around doing signs and wonders. He did signs that illustrated the truth of what he was saying.

His life and his miracles were of one piece. Like Sai Baba, his life is full of sin and lust and greed, and yet he does miracles as if he were a holy man. Jesus did miracles like a holy man and lived like a holy man.

He was holy. And therefore, you know, it is quite legitimate to use the miracles of Christ as one of the means of confirming that he was who he claimed to be. Not that miracles by themselves would do so, because it says in 2 Thessalonians 2 that the man of sin himself can do great signs and lying wonders in the power of Satan.

So there are signs and wonders that can be done without being a holy man. The man of sin does that, it says, in 2 Thessalonians 2.9. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders. So I don't know, maybe demons can, maybe a demon can open the eyes of the blind, but that certainly is not a

true assessment of Jesus, that he did it because he had a demon, because there is nothing about his life that was unholy, nothing about his life that was anything other than honoring to God.

And therefore his miracles and his life were of one piece, a witness of who he was. Now I want you to turn to Luke chapter 10. And here we have the story of the sending out of the 70, which apparently happened next in the chronology.

And I'm not going to have so much to say about this. We can't just not cover it at all. But we already covered the sending out of the 12 on another occasion.

That sending out of the 12 was mentioned in Matthew chapter 10. It's also mentioned at the beginning of Luke 9, the sending out of the 12. But in Luke 10, at the beginning, Jesus sends out 70, or some manuscripts say 72.

It doesn't matter which it was. But the point I'm making is that what Jesus is recorded as having said to them on this occasion resembles almost exactly what he said in the sending out of the 12, which we study on another occasion. Which means I don't have to make those same points again and make the comments, but we should read it so we'll have this piece of the life of Christ also in our... we'll have it before us because it is an actual incident in his life.

Let me read it first and then I'll make some comments. After these things, the Lord appointed 70 others also, and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to go. Then he said to them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Now, by the way, that particular statement is found in connection with the sending out of the 12 in Matthew. One of the last lines in Matthew 9 says, The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few.

Pray for the Lord of the harvest to send them. And then he sent out the 12. So he apparently said it twice, connected with both sendings.

Go your way, behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag nor sack nor sandals and greet no one along the road. This doesn't mean they should be unfriendly, but they're supposed to be in a hurry.

The idea is that they are to make haste, don't stop, and talk to people along the road. There's too much to be done in too little time left before Jesus will be leaving. But whatever house you enter, first say peace to this house, and if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it, and if not, it will return to you.

So to pronounce a blessing on a house is something, apparently, something really

happens, if the house is worthy of it. An encouragement to us to bless houses and people. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages.

Do not go from house to house. This is also what we've covered before. Probably the reason for staying in one house was so that while they were laboring in a certain town, persons wishing to contact them would know where to find them.

If they're moving around, staying in a different house every night, inquirers, people who want to know more about the kingdom of God, might have difficulty locating them. But if a house would welcome them, they should set up a base of operations in that house, and stay there until they leave. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat such things as they set before you, and heal the sick who are there, and say to them, the kingdom of God has come near to you.

And that is because, of course, Jesus is coming and is near to them, and he is the king. But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, the very dust of your city, which clings to us, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near to you.

This wiping off the dust of the feet was also commanded when he sent out the twelve. I think I mentioned to you that the religious Jews, if they had to pass through Gentile territory or through Samaria, they would ceremoniously wipe off the dust off their feet when they left those places, so they wouldn't carry with them any of this unclean dirt. And so Jesus says, treat these Jewish cities the same way they treat Gentile cities.

If they reject the Messiah, they are no better than Gentiles or Samaritans. And so you show the same disdain for their dust as they would show for the dust of Gentiles or Samaritans. Then he says in verse 12, But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

And again, that is not new either. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented a great while ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be thrust down to Hades. He who hears you hears me, he says to his disciples. And he who rejects you rejects me.

And he who rejects me rejects him who sent me. So you can't just say, well, I like Jesus, but I don't like Paul. Or I don't listen to Peter and John's writings.

That's not Jesus talking. He said to his disciples, he who hears you hears me. And he who rejects you rejects me.

By the way, I'll point this out only because in our Isaiah classes, we're imminently going to run across this. In fact, in our very next Isaiah session, we'll run across this. Verse 15 here, Jesus is alluding to something from Isaiah 14.

In Isaiah 14, we have a prophecy addressed to somebody called Lucifer. In verse 12, Isaiah 14, 12 says, How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How are you cut down to the ground, you who weaken the nations? For you have said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

I also will sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High God.

Yet you shall be brought down to Hades, or Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit. Now, everyone here is of course aware that traditionally, Lucifer has been identified with Satan for a very long time in church history. Beginning with some very early guys, Tertullian and others, they identified Lucifer here with Satan.

Now, there doesn't seem to be any obvious exegetical reason for identifying this individual with Satan. For one thing, the word Lucifer doesn't appear anywhere else in the Bible. So this is the only time the name appears.

Therefore, we can't say, well, Lucifer elsewhere is Satan, so he must be Satan here. Well, there is no elsewhere. Lucifer is found only here.

And it's only found here in the King James and the New King James. Because, and I think the Living Bible uses it, but most other versions translate it into its meaning, which is star of the morning, or morning star, or dawn star, or something like that. Anyway, it would appear from verse 4 that the person being addressed is not the devil, but the king of Babylon.

Because in verse 4, the same chapter says that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon and say, and then follows this entire prophecy, including the verses we read. Now, one of the problems people find with identifying Lucifer with the king of Babylon, and one reason that they really want to say, well, this has to be not a mere human king, this has to be a supernatural being, is, look what he said about himself. He said, I will ascend into heaven, in verse 13, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

Verse 15 says, but you'll be brought down to Sheol, the Hebrew equivalent of Hades in the Greek. Now, okay, if we take the language literally, then any earthly king who thought he was going to ascend into heaven was pretty ambitious, no question about it. But one thing I would point out to you is that when Jesus was talking to Capernaum, which was, of course, not an angel or not a supernatural being, but just a mere earthly city, in Luke 10, 15, Jesus said, and you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be thrust down to Hades, or to Sheol.

If you have a cross-reference in the margin of your Bible, it will probably say, it will probably say in the cross-reference Isaiah 14, 13, and 15, because Jesus is, in fact, alluding to the language there. Now, he's using the language of Capernaum. Lucifer is not Capernaum.

I'm not trying to make that identification, but what I'm saying is, Capernaum was not an angel. Capernaum was a mere human city, and if Jesus could say of a merely human city and its people, you are trying to be exalted to heaven, but you'll be cast down to hell, then why would not the exact same words in Isaiah, why couldn't they be addressed to a merely human city, or human kingdom, or human king? What I'm saying is that language is among the factors in Isaiah 14 that leads people to think that Lucifer is the devil, and yet, that very language used by Jesus in talking to Capernaum, which, if anything, confirms that the language can be, and it may even prove that it was, in Isaiah, referring to an earthly entity, not a spiritual, heavenly entity or supernatural entity. Anyway, that's a side point.

I don't need to get off on that. The point about it going easier for Tyre and Sidon than for Capernaum or Chorazin, and for it going easier on Sodom than these cities and so forth, it's basically saying that these pagans, that he's never had the witness and the miracles and so forth that the disciples are bringing to them, and therefore, the fact that they didn't repent is almost more forgivable. But these cities of Israel have seen and heard of the miracles of Jesus, and yet they remain callous, unresponsive, and that makes their damnation the greater, because they've had more opportunity.

Verse 17 says, This is as far as we'll plan to go this day, but let me comment on a couple of these things. The Seventy come back. We don't know how long they were gone.

It just tells us of him sending them out, and then it tells us of them coming back. Sometime he left, how much time, we don't know. But when they came back, they were impressed at their authority over demons.

Now, he told them to heal the sick and preach and so forth, but the thing that apparently happened that made them most exuberant was to see actual deliverance from demons. Now, demon possession was a fairly common phenomenon. Most people recognized it.

And to see people delivered from demons, which no earthly means could deliver them from, was a stupendous miracle, and no doubt made them feel their oats a little bit, and feel like, wow, we're pretty hot stuff, we can cast out demons. They obey us in your name. Of course, Christ's name is the issue there.

Demons obey Jesus and those who act in his name. But Jesus said, perhaps as an answer by way of caution to them about getting too, who knows, or no, well, let me just comment on what he says. He said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Now, he just talked about two verses earlier, Capernaum, who is exalted to heaven falling down. What did he mean by Satan falling down from heaven? Well, of course, if we have already in place in our theology the idea that Satan is a fallen angel, then there'll be every reason to interpret it that way. If Satan is a fallen angel, then Jesus could be referring back to the fact that he knew Satan before he fell, and he was there when he fell, and he saw it with his own eyes.

And some feel that the meaning of this is, don't get too proud, guys. These demons are subject to you, but don't get too arrogant, don't get too cocky, because I saw a similar arrogance, I saw a similar cockiness in Satan, and it resulted in his fall. Now, that is how some people understand this.

Actually, it would be a sensible way of reading the thought processes here. If, indeed, the Bible teaches that Satan fell in the manner that we traditionally think, if, however, there is no place in the Bible that speaks of the devil being a fallen angel, or him having any existence prior to being a devil, then we'd have to ask, is there anything in this verse that produces this doctrine? Is there anything in this verse that would tell us that the devil is a fallen angel if we don't have it from some other place? And we don't, by the way. We don't have it from any other passage.

So, does this passage teach it? Well, not necessarily. There's no mention of an angel. There's only mention of Satan.

It doesn't say he was an angel. He fell from heaven, but what is the time frame? Is this the origin of the devil, or is this some other time frame he's talking about? After all, in Revelation chapter 12, we see the dragon, who is Satan, cast out of heaven. And that is after the birth of the male child, who is to rule the nations with the rod of iron.

If you're not familiar with Revelation, I may be losing you here, but it's in Revelation 12. There's a vision of a woman pregnant. She gives birth to a male child.

He's caught up into heaven. He's to rule the nations with the rod of iron. Most scholars, and I personally would agree with them, feel that that's the birth of Jesus.

And then there's a war in heaven, and the result of the war in heaven is that Satan is cast out. Now, that's not the origin of the devil, certainly. That's after the birth and resurrection and ascension of Christ we're looking at here.

So, what is the time frame of Jesus coming? I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Is he talking about the origin of the devil, an angel falling, or does he have something else in mind? Well, let me give you an interpretation that makes sense to me. I don't say that it's better than the other, the other being that maybe he is, talking about Satan falling as an angel falling.

But it doesn't say so in so many words, and we're not told that anywhere else either, so

we shouldn't assume that that's the right interpretation necessarily. But, this is a possible interpretation. Jesus saw something in the spiritual realm happening, even as the disciples were outcasting out demons.

They come back and say, wow, Lord, we saw demons going out of people. He says, well, I saw something else. I saw the downfall of the devil.

I saw the downfall of Satan. And this would be prophetically, I think. Now, one thing that would certainly be in favor of this suggestion is that in John chapter 12 and verse 31, John 12, 31, Jesus said, just prior to his death, Now is the judgment of this world.

Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. I think all evangelicals agree the ruler of this world is a reference to Satan. And Jesus, as he was, of course, talking about his death, which is impending, he said, now the ruler of this world is going to be cast out.

So the casting out of Satan is associated with the cross. Now, let me suggest to you what I think Jesus is possibly saying here. I could be wrong, and it's only one of, more than one possible alternative.

I think what he's saying is, you guys are surprised to see demons going out in my name, but don't be surprised. In the spirit I saw, prophetically, the ultimate downfall of Satan. And it was, of course, going to take place at the cross.

And so the casting out of demons going on right now is simply a precursor of that. Actually, Jesus had said earlier that he already bound the strong man, which is why it was possible to plunder his house. The reason Jesus and the disciples were able to cast demons out of people is because Satan was unable to resist.

But there was worse things in store for Satan. Satan had already been rendered incapable of resistance of Jesus, but Satan was going to collapse. His whole kingdom was going to come down.

He was falling rapidly, like lightning. A rapid descent, he thought. Now, you can take it either way.

You can take it that Jesus is talking about the original fall of the devil, if there was such a fall, then that's what he could be referring to. In which case, his comment is basically saying, don't get too proud about this. After all, he does say to them, a few verses later, don't rejoice in this, that the demons are subject to you, but just rejoice that your name is written in heaven.

In other words, focus on the grace of God, rather than your authority and your power. At the same time, though, he does affirm their authority and power. He says in verse 19, Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.

Nothing shall by any means hurt you. This giving of authority to them was no doubt associated with the fall of Satan. That is, with his current fall.

With the fall that was imminently going to happen at the cross. By bringing Satan down, through the death and resurrection of Christ, he was going to give his disciples authority over Satan. Satan was being cast to the ground to be trampled on by the disciples.

Let me show you just a couple of scriptures here, and we'll be done. Romans chapter 16 and verse 20. Paul says, And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Paul said the God of peace was going to crush Satan under their feet, under the church's feet.

Well, he has to be on the ground then, because that's where the church is walking. He was cast to the earth, and cast down. He was not under our feet before Jesus died and resurrected.

But that's where we're to see him now. Being trampled on and crushed by the evangelistic efforts of the church. In Revelation 12, which I referred to a moment ago.

Let me read to you the verses about the fall of Satan there, because it's relevant. Revelation 12, verse 9 and 10 says, So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

When was this? When is this? What's this talking about? Well, the answer is in verse 10. Then I heard a voice saying in heaven, Now, now what? Now that Satan's been cast out, now that his angels are cast out, now salvation has come, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ has come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night has been cast down. When Satan is cast out, that's when salvation came.

When the power of Christ came. When the kingdom of God came. That's what it says.

That was at the cross. That was through the mystery of Jesus and his death and resurrection. That's where salvation, and the kingdom, and the power of Christ were released.

And it is when Satan and his angels are cast out that the announcement of heaven is, Now, salvation has come. And so we can see very clearly that the casting out of Satan is associated with the cross. And when Jesus says to his disciples, I saw Satan falling, I think he's speaking in the prophetic perfect tense, I saw it in a vision, it's happening soon, and then you will find yourselves above him rather than below him.

You church are walking on the earth, Satan until this point has been in the heavenlies

above you, but he's coming down and he's going to be under your feet, and you're going to have authority over him. Just like God said that he'd give authority to Eve's seed to crush the head of the serpent, so he says, I'm giving you authority over serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing will by any means hurt you.

Does this mean they were invulnerable to physical harm? No, it couldn't mean that because they all died. In fact, they all died martyrs at the hands of cruel persecutors. So what is he saying? He's saying they will not be spiritually harmed.

The authority is a spiritual authority over spiritual enemies, and those spiritual enemies cannot harm them. Physical enemies can kill you, but your spiritual enemies cannot harm you if you're walking in the authority of Christ and you're under his authority. And therefore you should rejoice that your name is written in heaven.

It doesn't matter whether in a particular conflict you cast a demon out of someone or not, what matters is in the final analysis if your name is in heaven. If you are secure in your position in Christ and you're in heaven with him, seated with him in heavenly places, then that's something to rejoice in. Temporal miracles and things like that, those are nice, but there's things far more important to focus on.

And I would say people who have deliverance ministries sometimes seem to neglect this particular priority. Not always.