

Bible Basics Conference 2007: Things God has prepared for us

Part 13

Speaker	Bible Basics Conference; Michael Hardt; Hugh Clark; Andrew Poots; Geoff Hawes; Simon Attwood; Edwin Cross; Ernest Brown; Nick Fleet; Paul Dronsfield
Place	Catford
Date	10.11.2007
Duration	00:33:44
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/cbb001/bible-basics-conference-2007-things-god-has-prepared-for-us

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[00:00:01] I have handed the questions that we have to the speakers, and I don't know who would like to take up the first question.

I think that's Brother Ernie. And there are other questions still coming, but if you'd like to take...

I'm very grateful I've been given the easy one. What is pre-millennial?

The short answer is before the millennium, but I think it warrants a little bit longer answer than that.

Old Testament and New Testament affirm again and again that there is a period of peace and prosperity coming into the world.

For instance, in Isaiah 32, a king shall reign in righteousness.

[00:01:05] Act 1731, God has appointed a day in which he will rule the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance unto all, in that he has raised him from the dead. Now, there's only one place in the Bible that I'm aware of that details how long that period of blessing will be, and that is Revelation 20 verses 4 to 6.

Six times over, you get the phrase, a thousand years, the thousand years, a thousand years, the thousand years.

In other words, it's a period that will last a thousand years, a full cycle of time, and it's not just any old thousand years, [00:02:05] it's a particular thousand years, and it's the thousand years where Christ will reign and rule the world in righteousness.

And the term pre-millennial just means that things that will happen before the millennium, the

thousand years reign of Christ begins.

If there's time, more could be added later. Keeping to this afternoon's speakers, Paul Raymond, I wonder if Paul will begin with your text.

I have a question here. What sort of scriptural descriptions are there for interpreting the Old Testament scriptures as types? What is to stop an interpreter reading everything as a type in the way he wants? I suppose, in one sense, there's nothing to stop them if that is what happens.

[00:03:06] But, as we said, we can only understand the types as the Lord himself reveals them to us.

It's through the Lord that we understand the types. And a type doesn't stand alone, as it were. We read, don't we, that no scripture is of any private interpretation. In other words, you cannot take a scripture on its own, out of the context of scripture, and say, this means that, because it fits in with the whole of scripture. And so, if we claim that one scripture means something, we must have evidence from the body of scripture that that is so. And so, the interpretation of a type, it must illustrate, as we've said, a principle of scripture or a doctrine.

Well, if somebody is trying to propagate a peculiar doctrine through a type, and is not able to back it up from scripture, then I think that would be rejected.

[00:04:14] But my own feeling is that if somebody presents the interpretation of a type, and it commends itself to your soul, I think you hear the Lord's voice speaking to your own heart.

And the truth commends itself to the believer. We have an unction from the Holy One, we read.

If we're walking closely with the Lord, we can instinctively know that that's his voice. Yes, that is true. I mean, for instance, Jeff, yesterday, he applied a type in a certain way, which I'd never thought of before. That the spirit, Eliezer the servant, gives gifts to Rebecca. And he compared that to the Lord Jesus, the ascended Christ, giving gifts to men, to the church.

[00:05:13] And I'd never thought of that, but it commended itself. And the whole type also, in the context of the type, it commends itself. Because those gifts, Rebecca didn't, as it were, put the earrings on and put the bracelets on and stand in front of the mirror admiring herself. Those gifts led her to desire Isaac. She got the gifts, and what did they do?

They made her want to have Isaac for herself. And that is the whole object of the gift. It's not to glorify self, but it's to make us desire the one who gave them. So immediately, that interpretation commended itself. And I think, without being able to, as it were, give ourselves any rules as to how we can determine whether this is right or that is right, [00:06:02] I think we live in an age, not of law, but of grace. And through the grace of the Lord Jesus, I think we can understand the words.

And if a prophet speaks, then, as the scripture says, let the rest judge what he says from the word of God itself. The first question states as follows. If you doubt your salvation, can you be truly saved?

If you have always believed, how do you know you have done it properly if sometimes you have doubts?

[00:07:02] Why can the gospel message move you sometimes and other times it cannot soften you? Basically, if you have doubts as to your eternal salvation.

This is something that I guess each one of us, even the old boys on the front row here, would all have said at one time in our lives, we would have had doubts. Because Satan would put doubts into our mind as to whether we are really following the Lord Jesus, whether we are really Christians. But I just want to base the argument upon what the word of God says. And quite clearly, in John 3, it says, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. If that's what you believe, if you believe in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have everlasting life.

It doesn't matter what you think or what you feel. The fact is, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and if you have believed on the Lord Jesus, [00:08:06] that he died upon Calvary's cross for your sins, you have everlasting life. And not only do you have everlasting life, but you are justified. God has completely wiped the slate, completely removed every sin that you've ever done. But not only are you justified, just as if you've never sinned, he's also given you righteousness. And so further on in Romans, it says, Who is there that shall lay any charge against one of God's elect? Is there anybody who can lay a charge against a Christian?

The answer is given, no, God has justified you. So if you put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus, as a child, and you doubt it, that's perhaps a good sign.

Because Satan is tempting you. Those that don't doubt their salvation, those that never query it, ought to be the ones that ought to be more concerned. [00:09:09] If you're concerned about your salvation, stop relying on what you have done and rely a little bit more upon what the Lord Jesus has done. And the next question. How do we continually get our first love for Christ back?

The Ephesians, we know, the church in Ephesus, when the Apostle Paul wrote to them, they were a very high and a very good church.

There was much order, there was much that he could commend in the epistle to the Ephesians. And yet we know that when John wrote several years later, he could say to that church many good things, [00:10:04] but the one thing that he said about them is they had left their first love.

And you know, this is not something, again, it's something that affects each one of us. At times we can be really on fire for the Lord Jesus, and then we find at other times there is that which comes in which hinders us. And we don't feel that joy for the Lord. We don't want to get up and read his word in the morning. When it comes round to the prayer meeting and the Bible reading, we're not so keen. Well, there is a verse that I think is well worth turning to, if I can find it, in Psalm 50 something.

Psalm 51.

You remember this is a psalm, and it's one of those grand occasions when the title is very helpful for explaining the psalm.

[00:11:05] And of course the title of the psalms, as we know, are part of the scriptures. And it says to the chief musician, a psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone into Bathsheba. It was mentioned yesterday, the sin of David to Bathsheba. And David in this psalm, he acknowledges his transgressions in verse 3.

In verse 7 he says, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. But in verse 12 he says, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.

And perhaps one of the reasons why our keenness, our first love for the Lord Jesus has waned, is because in our lives there's that which we need to repent from. And perhaps there's things that have come into our lives. I'm not suggesting for one moment there would be anything as bad as what David did in relation to Bathsheba. [00:12:04] But perhaps there's just something small that comes in. Perhaps we've got an interest which is not really connected with the things of the Lord. Perhaps our time is being occupied with other things. Perhaps decent things, but they're becoming more ingrained in our lives. You know, if we want to really know the joy of the salvation of the Lord, some of these things we've got to challenge ourselves and say, am I really doing this for the Lord or is this something for myself? And this verse has been a help to many in the past. David could say, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. And indeed the way in which he had it restored was he looked back over his life, he confessed the wrongs and he was ready to go on and serve the Lord. [00:13:11] The question is, if decisions are to be made by the whole assembly, what is the scriptural basis for brothers' meetings?

And I hope the other brothers will be preparing a helpful addition to my comments. I think firstly I would reiterate really the statement made in the question that matters are for the whole assembly. I don't think it would ever be right to say that an assembly decision is a decision made only by the brothers.

However, I think it's a matter of, in one respect, eldership.

Now, I trust that what was clear yesterday is that we cannot [00:14:01] have recognized elders in the sense that there are those who are specifically appointed by the apostles or the delegates. And for the other reason that any assembly of Christians in any one place can't claim to be the whole assembly in that locality. And therefore there's a practical limitation or difficulty in calling all the elders together.

Nevertheless, on the same basis that simply because it's no longer possible for us to gather together the entire church in any one place, that's no reason for us to say, well, we can't meet together at all. And we recognize there's a scriptural principle and whatever the limitations practically nowadays, we still come together on the basis and the ground of the one body. But confessing that we're only a representation of it. [00:15:04] So I think we have to bear that in mind that though the elders as such in the way that we see them in the New Testament can't be called together, nevertheless, the response to the limitations of today should not be, well, we cannot have such a meeting of such character at all.

And I think when brothers come together, it's with a view to coming together in the character of elders. And I hope it was clear that there are those for whom the Holy Spirit has made such. Those who are godly, experienced in the pathway, can give wise counsel and who can shepherd and look over the flock.

And therefore, it's appropriate that such should be able to come together. [00:16:05] And it's clear from the scripture that the elders were brothers only. It was to the brothers exclusively, not including the sisters, to whom such a role was given. And so in that capacity, I would say it's scriptural for brothers only to come together to discuss matters of discipline, perhaps.

And sadly, in many cases of discipline, there are facts and details which must be brought to light, which is not a good thing if such matters were discussed too openly.

If everyone in the assembly was made party to these details, it wouldn't be a very happy thing. For the person concerned, if there's repentance and sorrow, it's best that such details are able to be forgiven and forgotten.

[00:17:01] And the fewer people that know about them, the better. Because we're all human and we know what gossips we tend to be and little things are said and things get out of hand. So I suggest there's a very good practical reason why, in some cases, the discussion of matters should be necessarily limited.

And in practice, this means that we have brothers' meetings to take up such matters. Now, I don't say it's exactly... We can't say they're meetings of elders because it's appropriate that brothers who are not exactly recognized as elders may be present. It may be appropriate that they're not present. But, you know, the brothers that come together are not exactly equivalent to elders. But in any case, what they are not is the whole assembly. [00:18:02] And if a matter needs to be gone into and a decision needs to be made, they cannot make an assembly decision.

They may be able to examine the facts and be able to then come back to the assembly and say, well, we've looked into the matter and this seems to be the problem and together we feel this is the way forward. And the assembly must be involved in any act. It must be an act of the whole assembly. And obviously, at such a meeting, the sisters would be present, they would be party to the facts of the matter and would be able to give a moral consent, knowing the facts, they should be able to agree with and submit to the judgment come to.

But, obviously, it wouldn't be appropriate in an assembly meeting of that nature for sisters to have an audible part. So, you know, in brothers meeting together, [00:19:03] in a practical way, it's just a way of working these things out. I don't know, that's really the best way I can respond to such a question. But I'm sure the other brothers have some helpful additions to make. Maybe I should come up and ask them.

Well, brothers meetings and elders in the church may be a question for some, but it seems that those that have eldership qualities, which are moral qualities, they're the ones that we would expect to take the lead among God's people. In the assembly or even in deliberation, they're the ones that we would expect to take the lead among God's people. In the assembly or even in deliberations concerning practical matters and issues of discipline or happier issues.

But, although they may take the lead, Peter speaks of them [00:20:01] as in his epistle, in a special way.

It may be good just to see what an elder, how he functions. 1 Peter 5, it says, The elders which are among you, verse 3, neither as being lords over God's heritage.

So I deduce from such expressions that those that take the lead among God's people are not the lords or the masters, but the servants. And so those that occupy themselves with matters, local, administrative, are but servants and not the leading functionaries in the local church. And that's always important to bear in mind in our considerations. There are times when matters affect the

whole company and it's good then to declare it to everyone so that everyone shares. But the detail, as Nick has been saying, [00:21:02] of matters of discipline, it can be very unedifying, very defiling, and it's not appropriate to broaden the matter. So it's sometimes best that those in whom the local believers have confidence accept the conclusions that are arrived at on certain matters. But in the general way, I think the spending of money may be committed to the responsibility of some, but that information is good to be shared among all. And so that's quite a prickly issue.

For example, if money is spent and the rest of the Assembly doesn't know what's happening to it, well, people will get upset, understandably. And if there are changes of the meeting times as well, to make sure that everyone knows that the meeting has changed for the time it's going to be held. Otherwise, there'll be another prickly issue. But in every case, it demonstrates, these two examples, [00:22:02] that those that make these determinations must do it in fellowship with the brothers and sisters, and that they are always servants of their brethren.

We are never masters of our brothers. For the Lord said in Matthew 23, Call no man master, for one is your master, even Christ, and all of you are brethren, all of you are brothers. There's an egalitarian principle which should affect every detail of the Christian community and Assembly.

I hope that helps. We do have an example in Scripture of a problem that arises. In Antioch, there were those who went down from Jerusalem to Antioch and they were bringing false doctrine with them. They were saying that the Gentiles should be brought under the law. And this caused the brethren of Antioch great concern.

[00:23:04] And so they sent a delegation down to Jerusalem to bring the matter before the brethren of Jerusalem. And it says in Acts 15, verse 4, When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, of the Assembly, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. And then there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And then, verse 6, And the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter. So it wasn't primarily considered by the whole Assembly. There were those, as has been said, who have a responsible position in the Assembly, who are men who are esteemed because of their godliness. They came together to consider the matter. And then, after they had reached an agreement, they put it to the Assembly. [00:24:02] Peter stands up.

He gives his conclusion.

He concludes in verse 21, For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Verse 22, Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole Assembly. So there was agreement. The decision was brought to the Assembly. The Assembly was of one mind. They agreed, and therefore the letters were sent and the matter was resolved. But to be a brother is not a qualification to be at any meeting in itself.

Are there any more questions? If so, please give them to David, and I'll bring them forward. Thank you.

[00:25:05] Thank you, Paul, for mentioning one of the three examples I had in mind. These are not exactly brothers' meetings, but perhaps indications.

Act 6, there was a question of distributing funds.

And what is done is they look for seven men, perhaps what you would call deacon service, and they look after this matter. In Acts 4, you have Barnabas.

He sells a field.

He takes the money and he lays it down at the feet of the apostles. And the third example, the brothers, apostles, elders, who came together in Acts 15.

So I think even though these are not exactly brothers' meetings, these are indications that such matters were dealt with [00:26:02] by brothers at the time.

Now, one question was handed to me, and I've lost it now. I think it was handed to me on the basis that it was in Spanish. And what it said was, what is the marriage supper of the Lamb? And of what does it consist? And when does it take place? I'll just give you a thought or two very briefly, and perhaps others have more on this. We just read in Revelation 19, where the expression occurs, verse 9.

Revelation 19, verse 9, and he says to me, write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[00:27:04] So first question, when does this happen? Supposedly, the safe answer is between the rapture and the appearing of Christ. The sequence of events in Revelation is that you have the Christian testimony on the earth, chapters 2 and 3. As of chapter 4, the church is found in heaven.

As of chapter 6, the judgments of the seven-year tribulation fall upon the earth. And then you come to chapter 19, chapter 19, and it says in verse 1.

Well, let's start in in verse yeah, right, verse 1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, [00:28:01] Alleluia, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments, for he has judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth and her fornication and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. That's the response, Alleluia. And then it says in verse 6 in the end, Alleluia for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Now those two things suggest to me and I'm happy to hear the views of others that the marriage supper of the Lamb is presented as occurring just before the appearing of Christ. Now why?

Well, A, because the false church system, Babylon, is judged. And then you have the marriage supper of the Lamb. B, because it says [00:29:01] the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. So it is really at the introduction of the kingdom. And actually the next thing you read then is in verse 11 So you find that the marriage supper of the Lamb is followed in this report here immediately by the appearing. So, in brief, rapture, tribulation period, judgment of Babylon, marriage supper of the Lamb, appearing, millennium, eternal state.

The only addition I would make is that after our responsible life and service are over at the rapture [00:30:03] and before appearing with the Lord at his appearing there is not only the marriage supper of the Lamb there is the personal interview with the Lord Jesus by the believers. Now, I cannot imagine

that our gracious Lord would do any other than interview us, give us his views on everything we've ever done before we sit down with him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. By the time we are at the marriage supper of the Lamb there'll be no doubt on our consciences at all we will be at rest in his presence enjoying the presentation as the bride to him [00:31:01] before the kingdom commences. So, I thoroughly agree with Michael. One more thought. Just before I was married I was told what it would cost me. In modern currency I was told it would be 75p for the ceremony and then my wages for life. And there is a relation between the Lord or the church as the bride and the church as a wife. Now, in this life it's common to say bride for a day a wife for life.

But the things that are said about the church as a wife are related to the responsibility [00:32:01] so that triggers off in our minds from this afternoon anyway that that's related to the appearing. The thought of the bride and the enjoyment of his love is an eternal thought. So, the eternal, the spiritual is always better than the natural. So, if in this life it's a bride for a day and a wife for life in spiritual terms for the church it's a wife for a thousand years and a bride for eternity.

Could we draw a conclusion by saying good evening.

[00:33:03] After we close we have some instructions please for tea. First of all, if we can move the chairs obviously from here back to their normal place. And then again the normal instructions please through this door. Tea is served in the back room and to come back out this way. And again cold drinks are available at the back and avail yourselves of those. As I said, brief announcements and then if we can proceed immediately after Hugh has closed the conference. Thank you very much.