

Catford Lectures 2009-2010

Part 6

Speaker	Catford Lectures Conference; Simon Attwood; Paul Dronsfield; Hugh Clark; Nick Fleet; C. Bell; Andrew Poots; Michael Hardt; M. Best; Geoff Hawes
Place	Catford
Date	01.11.2009
Duration	01:05:51
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ccl003/catford-lectures-2009-2010

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[00:00:00] May we sing together the hymn 160. 160. O bright and blessed hope, when shall it be that we his face, long loved, revealed shall see, O when without a cloud his features trace, whose faithful love so long we've known in grace. The whole hymn 160.

O bright and blessed hope, when shall it be that we his face, long loved, revealed shall see, O when without a cloud his features trace, whose faithful love so long we've known in [00:01:23] grace. That love itself enjoy, which ever true, did in the fable of Bethlehem assume. O Jesus, not unknown, thy self shall build, [00:02:05] the heart in which thou dwells, and shall dwell still. Still, Lord, to see thy face, thy voice to hear, to know thy present love forever live, to gaze upon thy self, so faithful love, love proved in secret held with thee alone. To see that love content on us flow [00:03:22] forth, forever thy delight glow with thy reward. Know what is next thy heart can we forget, thy saints, O Lord, with thee in glory met. Perfect in comeliness before thy face, [00:04:18] the eternal witness all of thine own grace. Together their songs of endless praise, with one harmonious voice in joy they'll raise.

[00:05:02] In the name of our Lord Jesus, amen. I'd like us to read together just three very small portions.

There'll be others to look at as we go through, but by way of introduction, may we first turn to first epistle of Corinthians and chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 51.

Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Behold, I show you a mystery. And then over in [00:06:29] verse 25, as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her. Verse 30, for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. And then in Genesis chapter 2, Genesis chapter 2 and verse 21.

[00:07:21] And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept. And he took one of

his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

[00:08:05] I've had on my heart over these last few months a very real impression that I should take up a subject which is not unknown to us. Indeed, it's a subject with which we're very familiar. It's a subject that's often taken up, often referred to. But I feel, especially for the younger ones, especially in view of the fact that nowadays one can so readily find opinions and views expressed, particularly on the internet, but also in printed literature. Many opinions and views are available, and I feel it's a very good thing to be [00:09:07] thoroughly grounded in what is true. And so I make no apologies for taking up something with which we're familiar, because all the while there are different views promulgated, all the while the error is still spoken of, it's vital that we rehearse together the truth. And I propose in some introductory remarks to show why I feel the truth of our subject, and I'll state now that of course it relates to the coming of the Lord Jesus for his own, and in particular the importance of looking for him. That's the truth that I want to speak about. About 180 years ago or so, some Christians were able to come together and were exercised to look into the Scriptures [00:10:14] to discuss between themselves, to help one another as to their understanding of prophecy. And as they did so, as they devoted themselves to the study of the Scriptures, there began to emerge a very clear understanding of what the Bible taught. And it was something which perhaps had been lost sight of for many hundreds of years previously. Of course, many today use this historical fact as an argument against the truth. They say, well of course these things are relatively new. [00:11:03] They say these teachings didn't exist before this one or that one wrote about them. They refer to certain brothers as having been the source of new teaching, which they say is not true because historically the church never believed these things. Well, the reason I read together the verse in Corinthians and in Ephesians is to draw our attention to this idea of a mystery. And I should like to say at the outset that what I believe our subject this afternoon is not something that's a novelty. It's not something that's new, but that it was something that the Scriptures have taught from the very beginning. I'm persuaded that the first believers, the early church, they spoke about, they understood and they lived in the good of the truth that the Lord Jesus is coming at any moment for his own. [00:12:18] I believe also that this is a truth that was very early on lost sight of, very early on. I think if we turn to the writings of John, if we turn to the later epistles, we can see already that the Spirit of God of necessity has had to speak of error that's come in, of things being given up, being lost sight of. And so we can see how quickly in the hands of man, when anything is given to man in responsibility, how quickly failure sets in. And I believe that the truth that the Scriptures taught was very, very early lost sight of in the church's history. [00:13:10] And that alone is the reason why you find nothing of it in the church fathers and in the very early writings. Now, many church historians, they approach it from another angle. They say, well, if we want to know what the early church taught, let's look back in the church fathers and see what their writings contain. And they look there in vain for these things. And then they say, well, these truths, they weren't taught by the fathers and therefore the truth that was brought out in the early 1800s is a novelty and not to be trusted. And I believe this is a very dangerous way of looking at it. The reason these things are not found in the earliest writings is that they had already been lost sight of. [00:14:04] And I believe there's a good reason why that's the case. But firstly, to go back to our scene in the early 1800s. Here, believers on the Lord Jesus, they, because of the circumstances around them, the darkness of the day, the activities of Napoleon and others, they began to ask themselves, was Napoleon the fulfillment of biblical prophecy? And so the circumstances caused men to inquire into these things. And as they did so, I believe the work of the spirit was that their eyes were opened and they began to see things. Not that they were a novelty.

They had always been there, but simply they had been lost sight of. And the reason they had been lost sight of is that they relate to the person of the Lord Jesus. [00:15:08] And Satan first attacks that which is most precious to God.

He attacks that which is most vital first. And if he's successful in getting believers to lose sight of the most important truth, then other truths can wait. And sure enough, they did wait. There was decline and there was departure throughout the years. To the extent that the very nature of salvation was lost sight of. And it required the reformation for the truth of, the simple truth of the gospel to be recovered. Now, no well-taught Christian questions the truth of what was brought out in the reformation, [00:16:02] simply because it had been unheard of prior to that. They accept readily that biblical truth had been forgotten, lost sight of, had been replaced with works, with the Catholic church system, and with many things of man's origin. But the grace of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, in the time of the reformation, these truths were recovered. But they fell short of going back to all that the scriptures had. And it was left to men later on for the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts. Now, the thing about these early conferences, the first in Albury and Surrey and later in Powerscourt in Ireland, was that as men looked at the scriptures, there were various things that they were enlightened as to. [00:17:11] It wasn't one subject only, it wasn't the emphasis of only one thing, but many things became apparent. And it's as if when they saw the importance of these things that everything else fell into place. And I've put it to you that when we see the distinct place that the Lord Jesus has, and we put him in his rightful place, then everything else falls in line. And so it was that as they began to have a clearer understanding of the truth of the Lord's coming for his saints, they began to realise that there was a distinction between the church and Israel. [00:18:05] They began to see exactly what it was that the church was, what its hopes were, what its purpose was, how it should function. Everything began to fall in line. And, dear brethren, we are the beneficiaries, the recipients of a very rich heritage of truth. And we should be very grateful that we are able, like I think it was Sir Isaac Newton said, he stood on the shoulders of giants. Now none of these things which we take up today, they're not new to us, we've not discovered them for ourselves. We have the benefit of godly brothers who've gone before, who've brought these things out, and they're readily available. And it's a very good thing if we rehearse them, if we remind ourselves of them, if we go over them again and again, [00:19:04] so that we're grounded and rooted in these vital truths. So the movement of the Spirit, as I believe it was, brought things into a proper perspective. Believers, they realized that the Lord Jesus had given himself for the church, in those verses we read in Ephesians. They realized that what the church was, was a company of those for whom the Lord died to be united to himself. It wasn't an organization, it wasn't anything that should be linked with the state, it wasn't something one should go into for a career. These things had been practiced for hundreds of years, but they realized that it had a unique place in God's mind. And more than that, they realized that actually it was distinct from Israel, and that Israel had its own purpose and future. [00:20:12] And as they realized these things, over time they found that everything else settled into place. And the Holy Spirit was given liberty. They realized that the practice of having a distinction between clergy and laity, the practice of giving all responsibility in the hands of one man, wasn't according to Scripture. And so they began to open their Bibles and to find their instruction for their path and for their practice. And I trust we've learned something of these things. But what I want to be occupied with, with the remainder of our time together, is to say something about what the Bible teaches us about the Lord coming for his own. [00:21:09] About the truth that the Church does not go through the tribulation.

That we have a hope that is based on the coming of the Lord Jesus. That it's he that we look for, not for anything else. And I believe that if we're occupied with the Lord Jesus, everything else will fall into place. There are other opportunities to speak about various other truths and we're often occupied

with them. But first and foremost, let's get the truth of those things which relate to the Lord Jesus. We get that right and everything will fall into place. The Bible opens with pictures and types which with, we might say, with the benefit of spiritual hindsight, [00:22:12] we can see that they very clearly teach us things which we only learn of in the New Testament. And we read two verses that speak of a mystery. Behold, I show you a mystery.

I hope we're all clear what a mystery is when we read it in the Bible. In the world, we speak about a mystery. It's something that's unknown. Nobody knows about it. It's hidden. But when the Bible speaks about a mystery, it's trying to convey a completely different picture. When the Bible uses the word mystery, it's not to us any longer a mystery. [00:23:02] It was once, and that's the point, it was once unknown. It was once hidden, but is now revealed. And when the Apostle Paul says, behold, I show you a mystery, we can say to ourselves, it's no longer hidden. He's shown it to us, and the mystery is to us a mystery no longer. And so, the Apostle, he spoke of two mysteries in the verses that we've looked at. The first mystery is this wonderful matter of Christ and the Assembly, Christ and the Church. If we read our Old Testaments, we find nothing explicitly about the Church. It wasn't taught. It wasn't known. It wasn't understood. It was hidden. And it's not until the Apostle Paul comes on the scene as speaking the word of the Lord, [00:24:09] the Holy Spirit inspired him to reveal these wonderful truths, and he is able to show us the mystery of Christ and the Assembly. And so, if we want to learn objective truth about these things, we can only turn to the New Testament. If we look in the Old Testament, we won't find direct objective truth relating to the Church. But, on the other hand, the truth of the Church, of Christ and the Church, is not an afterthought. It's not something that God thought up when everything else was going wrong. No. In fact, we're told that we were chosen before the foundation of the world. [00:25:01] And we learn that actually the Church was ever in the mind of God. And so, we're not surprised when we open our Bibles and the very first book, in the very earliest chapters, we find not teaching about the Church, but we find a picture of it. We find it in time. And we find that in regard to Adam and Eve. Adam was put into a sleep, and this is a picture of the Lord Jesus having to go into death. One of Adam's ribs, Eve, was formed.

And the scriptures we read in Genesis 2.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. And the Apostle quotes those very verses in Ephesians. [00:26:01] He quotes them as being relevant to this mystery, this wonderful truth of Christ and his Church. Christ, who loved the Church and gave himself for her. And so, I use this to establish the principle that what God had ever in his heart, though for many centuries it was hidden, until in his own time it was revealed, he has put in his word types, pictures, that with the benefit of spiritual hindsight, we might say, we can read it and profit by it.

Another mystery of which Paul spoke, we shall not all sleep. And in Corinthians and elsewhere, Paul was bringing out truths which, by virtue of the fact that he describes them as a mystery, [00:27:01] we do not, we will not find them in the Old Testament.

And I suggest to each one of you that unless we grasp this, unless we fully realise the way in which God has inspired the writers of his Holy Word, we're never going to fully understand the truth that he desires to unfold to us. If you read writers on various subjects, you find that they go into the Old Testament and the New, and without realising this distinction that the Spirit has placed in his word, they go off on a tangent and they seek to establish their own ideas on the basis of what they find, [00:28:02] not dividing, not rightly dividing the Word of God.

If we stay in Genesis, chapter 5 of Genesis, we have a genealogy starting from Adam.

I believe that this is a true history. It's not intended to be a myth.

It's a true record of the creatorial order that God established, and we have a full account of the first characters.

And chapter 5 of Genesis, in verse 21, we're introduced to a character called Enoch.

[00:29:08] And we're told there, Enoch lived 65 years and begat Methuselah.

And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah 300 years and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were 300, 60, and 5 years. And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. Now, it's a very interesting little chapter. And if you, for a bit of homework, you go home and you write out the ages that are given, and if you add them up in your head, or if you have to use a calculator, you'll find that we start with Adam, and after so many years, we're told 130 years, he begat a son called Seth. [00:30:06] And then after that, we're told how much further, how much more Adam lived. And in all, we're told that Adam lived for 930 years. But if you follow the sequence through and compare the years given, you'll discover that when Enoch lived, Adam was still alive, still very much alive.

And you'll discover that when Methuselah was born, I think if my math is correct, Adam was about 622 years old. In other words, he had over 300 years more to live.

And I find that very instructive.

And I find it so for this reason. [00:31:01] We're all familiar, I trust, with the account of the fall, when sin came in.

And as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience, a curse was pronounced. One of the consequences of the fall of Adam and Eve was that God said to Adam, you shall die.

Now, of course, the first murder, Cain and Abel, the account of that is brought in.

But putting that for a moment aside, I want us to think of the effect of Adam's death on Enoch and Methuselah.

Now, it's a very interesting thing, the meaning of the name Methuselah. It means something along the lines of, it shall come when he dies.

[00:32:06] It shall come when he dies.

And I suggest that that was an intelligent name given by Enoch. I believe that Enoch named his son Methuselah intelligently. In other words, he named it in view of what he had learned. Can you imagine Enoch growing up in the lifetime of Adam, in the presence of Adam, and not learning something of God's ways?

Can you imagine that there was no communication between Adam and these other characters? I'm

persuaded that Enoch learned many truths from Adam and from others.

[00:33:03] Adam, he had a relationship with God.

God provided Adam and Eve with skins. And again, we have another picture of truth that wasn't revealed until later on, but there already, in picture form, God is teaching us something.

The covering of Adam and Eve was brought about by the provision of skins. An animal had to die in order to provide skins, and the truth of substitution. A covering for what is offensive before God can only be provided by the death of another. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. And we get this, we might say, New Testament teaching given to us very early on in type, right at the beginning. [00:34:02] And so, I'm sure Enoch, he grew up in the good of certain wonderful godly truth. And he called his son Methuselah, it shall come when he dies. And he called him that because he understood something of the truth of God. Now, you don't need to take my word for it, because we can turn to Jude, and we can read there, in Jude 14, And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all. Enoch prophesied about the coming of the Lord, of the coming of the Lord with myriads of his own to execute judgment. [00:35:03] Where do we read in the early chapters of Genesis about the Lord's coming? We don't. But the very fact that by inspiration, in Jude, we read that Enoch prophesied, it shows that Enoch was intelligent as to these wonderful truths of God.

So, Enoch, he obviously knew many, many godly truths. And he named his son intelligently. And there was Adam. And we read, Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah 300 years. And that 300 years is more or less, though not exactly, coincides with the last 300 years of Adam's life.

Then Adam died.

Can you imagine what an effect that had on those that lived at that time? [00:36:07] Here, indisputably, was the judgment of God in regard to sin.

God had said, you shall die.

And there came a moment, there came a day when Adam did die. And so, it must have had a tremendous effect on Enoch and those around him, particularly Enoch. Here was proof positive that when God said something, he meant it.

Judgment was brought in.

But then, you know, God came in in wonderful grace. As if to say, yes, the judgment in regard to sin has taken place. As if to say, yes, in this scene of judgment, in this scene of sin, [00:37:02] and all the sorrows and consequences of it. In amidst such a scene, God comes in in grace. And we read, and Enoch was not, for God took him.

Wonderful grace. God came in.

And Enoch was translated.

He lived, at that time, he'd only lived 365 years. Relatively short time compared to those of the others.

And God took him.

And then, Methuselah lived on.

And if you go on to read the rest of Genesis 5 and Genesis 6, and you look at the timing of it, you will notice that the very year in which Methuselah died, the flood came. The very year.

[00:38:01] It will come when he dies.

Enoch, he understood the truth about the flood. The judgment that God would execute upon this earth.

Before then, Enoch was taken up to be with God.

And I believe we have in this scene a type, a picture of the truth, which remained hidden for hundreds and hundreds of years, all through the Old Testament, and it wasn't until Paul could say, behold, I show you a mystery. Then, and only then, was the truth brought out. But it was ever in God's mind. It was ever in God's heart. And I believe that Enoch is a picture of the truth, that the church, before the tribulation comes, will be caught up, taken up to be with Christ. [00:39:03] Further, we can read on Noah and the ark, eight souls. And I think it's in Peter, it says, a few, that is eight. And I believe that Noah is a picture of the godly remnants of Israel that will be saved through the tribulation period. Just a few, just eight, a remnant representative of those of Israel that God will preserve through all that time of sorrow. Well, we must move on because I desire just to take up a few scriptures, and we need to turn to 1 Thessalonians. [00:40:03] 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 13.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

[00:41:02] But of the times and of the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

For when they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travel upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.

Turn over to 2 Thessalonians 2.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter as from us, [00:42:05] as that the day of Christ is present, which is what it should read, not at hand as in the authorized, but that the day of Christ is present. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that

day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself in the temple of God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. [00:43:03] And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Here, the apostle is taking up truth which had not previously been revealed. He says, as from the Lord.

He's speaking as an apostle. Now, notice a few key points in these verses.

We must get a firm grasp of these things if we are to remain unshaken by the contrary views and opinions that are often too readily available. Firstly, Paul says, he doesn't want us to be ignorant.

And then he says, we, and twice he says, [00:44:03] we, the living who remain.

Now, when Paul says we, he includes himself.

He says, effectively, when the Lord comes, I shall be here, I and you, the living who remain when the Lord comes. In other words, he had in view the possibility or the reality that he would be alive when the Lord came for his own. Now, many have used this against him and said, you see, Paul was wrong to teach that the Lord could come at any moment because Paul's died and the Lord hasn't yet come. But I say to you, no.

It doesn't show that Paul was wrong, but it shows that Paul [00:45:01] was putting forward the truth that we should live in the expectation that the Lord will come at any moment. And we should say, we, the living who remain. If Paul had said, those who are alive at the coming of the Lord, it would have, of necessity, put it back. But no, he keeps it in the present. He keeps it in his own lifetime. And he says twice, we, the living who remain. And that teaches us that we, like Paul, should have this in our hearts, the prospect, the bright and bested hope that the Lord will come at any moment.

Having spoken to the Thessalonians of the Lord coming for his own, being caught up with him, he says, let's comfort one another, therefore comfort one another with these words. [00:46:05] And I suggest that if it were true that before the Lord comes, we must pass through the great tribulation, how could we possibly have the coming of the Lord as a means of comfort? How could it be a comfort to know that before we go to be with the Lord, we have to pass through the great tribulation? Impossible.

No, the coming of the Lord is before the tribulation. Therefore, comfort one another with these words. And then he goes on, chapter five, there's no chapter distinctions in the original. He goes on and says, but at the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you, for you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief. The day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord [00:47:01] for his own are different occasions.

Get a grasp of that, dear young believer.

Get a grasp of the fact that the day of the Lord and the rapture are two distinct occasions. And if you have that clear, you won't be led astray. Because the day of the Lord, when he comes as he not prophesied, he comes in judgment. He comes with his saints. And for those who are not his own, it will come as a surprise.

And not something to be looked forward to either. And so, he then had to write to the Thessalonians. They had evidently had some letter purporting to be from the apostles to say that the day of the Lord was already here, and they had missed out, therefore, on the rapture. And he had to write this corrective letter [00:48:03] in 2 Thessalonians. He says, don't take any notice of it, even if it purports to have come from us. Because until the day of the Lord, before the day of the Lord comes, the man of sin must be revealed. Before the man of sin can be revealed, something and someone must be removed.

And he says, there's something that's withholding this tide of evil. And there's someone that's withholding the tide of evil.

And when that which withholds is removed, then the enemy will come in like a flood. The man of sin will be revealed, and then the period of judgment, of tribulation will be brought in. And very briefly, because we haven't got any time to go into detail, the thing that restrains, I believe, [00:49:02] is the church.

Its presence here, indwelt as it is by the Holy Spirit, has a restraining effect on the wickedness, a tide of wickedness that's waiting. And secondly, the he who restrains is the Holy Spirit himself. Now, when the Lord comes for his own, for the whole church, and the whole church is taken up to be with Christ, no more it, the church is gone, the it that restrains is removed, and the Holy Spirit dwelling every true believer is also gone.

If there's a true believer in the church left here, then it's not true to say that the Holy Spirit has been removed. So, 2 Thessalonians 2 teaches us very clearly that the church and the Holy Spirit must be removed before the man of sin can be revealed [00:50:02] and before the time of tribulation is brought in.

Very briefly then, Matthew 24, and verse 21, verse 20, Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day, for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Notice it says, pray that your flight be not on the Sabbath day. Quite clearly, the context of that is Jewish.

The context of Matthew 24 with its reference to the Sabbath day is to Israel.

The Sabbath day is of no relevance [00:51:03] to the believer in the church.

Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7 Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

Very briefly, those two verses are all we have time for to establish that the great tribulation applies to Israel.

It's Jewish in character. It's not for the church to go through. [00:52:02] It has nothing to do with the church. It's the time of Jacob's trouble. It relates to those for whom the Sabbath is a matter of importance in Matthew 24. Indeed, the whole of Matthew's gospel, when we read it, we can see it's Jewish in character. Not that it's irrelevant for the believer to read. I'm not saying that. I'm not saying there's nothing in Matthew for the Christian. Of course, it would be a very wrong thing to say. But in character, it's entirely Jewish.

Jacob, you know, that deceiver, what was he characterized by for most of his life? He tried to do everything his own way. He was the beneficiary, the recipient of God's promise. Like Abraham, God promised Abraham. And Abraham is spoken of, really, as representing the life of faith. And I suggest that when it comes to Jacob, [00:53:03] rather than his name that he was given later of Israel, Jacob is characteristic of one who's been promised certain things by God, but seeks to bring them out, bring them about in his own strength by way of the flesh.

And I think it's significant when Jeremiah 30 says the time of Jacob's trouble, it relates to Israel, but in its character as Jacob. Israel in the flesh.

And Israel, insofar as they've rejected their Messiah, they're seeking to obtain their blessing in the flesh.

And the stipulation, I believe, these verses show us that it relates to Israel in its disobedience to God.

One last comment before we close. [00:54:03] There may be, there are many, and I trust there aren't any here tonight, but there may be some today that have this view that, well, doesn't the church just simply replace Israel in prophecy?

So before we decide whether or not these prophecies relate to Israel or not, we need to dispense with this, we need to deal with this idea of whether the church has replaced Israel in the mind of God. And for that, we need only to turn to Romans 11, where in verse 1, the apostle says, has God cast away his people?

Has God cast away his people?

Verse 25.

I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, [00:55:01] lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved. So clearly Romans teaches us that no, God hasn't finished with Israel, but their disobedience is an opportunity for God to come out in grace to the Gentiles. And when the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, verse 25, God is able once again to take up Israel.

For many years, the majority of Christians believed that the church had replaced Israel. And in many ways, they would have had nothing to dispel them of that notion. But I believe there was one event, a very significant event, that must surely put paid to that view, [00:56:01] and that was in 1948. 1948, when Israel once again became a nation. Prior to that, one can well understand how people thought, well, the nation of the Jews is finished.

But for decades, believers were predicting, because they understood what the word of God taught,

that Israel would return to its land.

And it would return to its land in unbelief. And in 1897 or thereabouts, Mr. Savage, he wrote a very helpful book, Signs of the Watchman, I think it was called. And he asked this question, how will it be possible for Turkey, who then occupied Palestine, how will Turkey be persuaded to give up control of Palestine in order that Israel will be restored to its own land? [00:57:01] He didn't know.

Nobody knew in 1897 how it would be possible. But God knew.

And it was within 20 years, after the First World War, Turkey, it backed the wrong side.

It backed those who lost the war. And as a result, its stranglehold on that area was broken up. And so it was not a question of who will persuade Turkey to give up Palestine. It had no choice. God was in control.

And in 1948, the scriptures were fulfilled. So we have evidence in our own history that no, God has not given up his earthly people, Israel. But my desire this evening, this afternoon, was to, I know it's been a very feeble attempt, but I trust we may be exercised to dig further into the scriptures. [00:58:02] Because as Paul said to the Thessalonians, we, the living, who remain. I want us to finish on this note, that the exercise of Paul, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, was to impress upon his readers that there was an expectation that the Lord would come in their lifetime. And that's what we, as believers, should be looking for. We should be looking for the Lord Jesus, not looking at the signs around us, at politics, at the world news, to see whether or not we're about to enter a period of tribulation. That's not what the Spirit would have us be occupied with. Sure, there are signs these things are happening. Things are moving towards these things. But it goes to show, only the more clearly, [00:59:01] that the Lord Jesus is coming very soon. Maybe tonight.

Maybe our dear brother Hugh will never get up on this platform, because the Lord may have come in the interval. It's a truth, I believe, the Bible teaches very clearly. And it's a truth that's designed to give us in our hearts a longing and a looking for the person of the Lord Jesus. He is preeminent.

He gave himself. He loved us. He gave himself for his church. And I believe we should be, at the beginning of another year, encouraged and exercised to have before us the Lord Jesus.

And then everything else will fall into place. Church order, prophecy, all these things, they take second place. But they'll fall into their rightful place if, and only if, we put the Lord Jesus [01:00:01] and give him the preeminence. Perhaps we can close with a hymn which speaks of this wonderful expectation. 208. Dear Mr. Deck, one of the early brethren, he had a grasp of this truth, and it worked out in a practical way. He was able to write these lines. May we sing together 208 in hope. We lift our wishful longing eyes, to see the morning star arise. Verse 4.

If here on earth the thoughts of Jesus' love lift our poor hearts, this weary world above, if even here the taste of heavenly spring so cheers the spirit that the pilgrim sings, what will the sunshine of his glory prove? What the unmingled fullness of his love? What hallelujahs will his presence raise? [01:01:03] What but one loud, eternal burst of praise. The whole hymn 208.

In hope we lift our wishful longing eyes, waiting to see the morning star arise.

How bright, how gladsome will his advent be before the sunshine, forth in majesty.

How will our eyes to see his face delight?

[01:02:12] Whose love has cheered us through the darks of night?

How will our ears drink in his well-known voice?

Whose faintest whisper make our soul rejoice?

No stain within, no falseness around, [01:03:09] no jarring note shall let his golden sound.

Hope you without, hope you within the breast, no thorns to burn, no toil tomorrow rest.

If here on earth the thoughts of Jesus' love [01:04:08] Lift up, all hearts, their weary world above, If ever, never, taste all heav'nly springs, Suggest the spirit that the pilgrim sings, On will the sunshine of his glory prove.

[01:05:06] All the unnamed God, the mess of his love, All hallelujah, will his presence raise.

O come, O come, eternal birth of grace.