



THE TEACHING ABOUT
THE LAST THINGS

commonground
church

GROUNDED 2

(Talks 39-47 of Eaton's Whole Counsel of God series)

CONTENTS

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 1 (TALK 39):
THE KINGDOM

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 2 (TALK 40):
THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE RULE OF EARTHLY KINGDOMS

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 3 (TALK 41):
THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (DANIEL 7)

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 4 (TALK 42):
THE ERROR OF DISPENSATIONALISM (DANIEL 8 & 9)

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 5 (TALK 43):
DANIEL 9-11/INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS (TALK 44):
Q&A - Not covered in Grounded 2

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 6 (TALK 45):
REVELATION PART 2

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 7 (TALK 46):
REVELATION 4

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE LAST THINGS, PART 8 (TALK 47):
REVELATION 21 - THE NEW JERUSALEM

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 1

THE KINGDOM

TALK 39

Contents:

- The Kingdom
- The prophecy of Daniel
- The prophecy of Revelation

THE KINGDOM

The Bible can be read a number of ways (i.e. the story of salvation) – you can also look at it from the perspective of Kingdom. It is the same thing, but you are putting it a different way. It is the same tune but played in a different note.

What is the theme of the Bible? “Salvation” and also “Kingdom”.

Matthew 4v17

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

It begins in the Old Testament

The OT is constantly making the point that God is the King. He is King of the earth, the planets, the people etc. He rules over His people and of the nations.

Psalm 22 v 28

²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

Psalm 29 is a picture of a thunderstorm and the point being made is that the Lord is a mighty King enthroned forever.

But the human race has rebelled against His Kingship and God is putting down the rebellion of the nations by placing His Anointed in charge.

Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

David is a pale foreshadowing of what God is going to do – it is Jesus that David is pointing towards. God gave King Saul in His wrath and He took him away in His wrath as well. Until His Son would come – one day the King is going to come, in a humble manner, not with a big show of horses (aka power):

Zechariah 9v9

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The Old Testament always promised the coming King – but one that was humble. At the same time He would be victorious though. The Jewish people struggled to reconcile these two aspects.

1. He would be the humble King, executed and hung on a tree (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53)
2. He would be mighty, glorious and a conquering King (Psalm 2, Psalm 72)

They therefore tended to ignore the humble aspects and grabbed the glorious ones. So they expected the military conqueror, not the humble King. Jesus was incredibly humble though and he ignored all the powerful titles – he never called himself "Son of David" or "Messiah" – he called himself "Son of Man" (Daniel 7). What Jesus did say was that the "Son of Man must suffer". This was an impossible combination for the Jewish mind that expected the glorious and mighty King. Jesus brings together Daniel 7 and Isaiah 53 – the Son of Man is the suffering servant.

He will be a conquering King – taking command of the entire world. And He will restore the fortunes of the people. This is a vision of territorial prosperity. The Old Testament speaks of the King bringing His Kingdom to bear over all things (over the rebellion, the arrogance of the rulers of the nations etc.). The Messiah stands against all the kingdoms of the earth and will establish His Messianic Kingdom.

Prophecy in the Bible

Prophecy in the Bible is panoramic (this means that you get all of what God is going to do in one vision). It is all wrapped up in one image. When the Son of Man returns, He comes to save His people, He comes to judge His enemies, He comes to atone for sin, He comes to bring in paradise and He comes to resurrect the body. This is a picture of the total work of the Messiah. There are no divisions in it – it is a panoramic vision – a tovertop vision!

But as it unfolds you realise that it is going to come slowly. The Messiah ends up having two comings and salvation comes before judgement. That is why when Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 in the New Testament, he reads about the year of salvation BUT stops reading just before it speaks of the day of vengeance, because that day is still coming! The vision is being inaugurated but not being consummated. The vision is being started off, but not brought to completion. This is how prophecy in the Bible works.

Remember that this Kingdom is an earthly one, we must not fall into Platonistic thinking and imagine it to be non-physical! Jesus says “Get ready, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”

The salvation is coming before the judgement. This is what got John the Baptist into trouble. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets (he is in the New Testament but he is functioning as the last of the OT prophets as he summarises their message). His message was that there will be a baptism of spirit and fire. But as time goes on, no fire comes. Finally John is arrested but there is no baptism of fire yet! Why are the wicked not being judged and defeated? This is what troubled John and why he sent some people to ask Jesus whether or not He is the Messiah. Jesus replied that he fulfils all the signs of the Messiah but makes no mention of judgement.

Many people want the triumph of the Kingdom but the bit that is coming now is that the poor have the Gospel preached to them – not coming in triumph just yet. It is a hidden Kingdom and not every knee is bowing and not every tongue is confessing.

The approach now will be to look at these Scriptures:

- Daniel
- Matthew 24
- 2 Thessalonians 2
- Revelation

B. THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

There is one book in the Old Testament that looks into the future more than any other book. It tells how the Kingdom of God will be setup.

Background to Daniel

The Kingdom of David had been abolished. The Babylonians, through Nebuchadnezzar, had destroyed the temple. The walls were broken down and the people had been scattered. The exile was severe and the people of Israel were no more. Daniel speaks into this awful situation.

DANIEL 1

Despite the rule of earthly kingdoms, the Kingdom of God survives. Syria controls the North, Babylon the South – the land is devoid of any worshipper of Yahweh – all the people get renamed according to the Babylonian gods, but God has still got his eye on his people.

The power of pagan kings will not overcome the people of God. Daniel resolved that he would not bow down; he would not eat the food that was against the law; he would stand for God.

Daniel then starts to highlight the coming empires that will appear before the Messiah as he interprets the dreams of the King. There will be four great kingdoms but then God will establish his Kingdom. It will come over all other Kingdoms.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 2

THE KINGDOM THROUGH THE RULE OF EARTHLY KINGDOMS

TALK 40

CHAPTER 2

Daniel was given a great vision of the history of the world (i.e. the whole Mediterranean world). The four great empires would appear before the Kingdom was established. These were named:

- First empire – Babylonian
- Second - Persian
- Third - Greek
- Fourth - It was never named in the book of Daniel but was referred to as a “divided” empire (partly iron and clay). This would turn out to be true of the Roman Empire.

The gospel of Luke mentions the actions of the Roman Empire in order to emphasise that there were important players (i.e. the Fourth Empire). Everything is being setup for the arrival of Jesus. The

Greek empire provided the common language for the Gospel to be preached everywhere, Babylonian numbering etc.

Daniel makes a stand for the faith and does well. The King gives him high honour.

The summary so far:

Chapter 1 - God's people can survive

Chapter 2 - God has a plan and it is on course

Chapter 3 - Emperors can honour God (the Kingdom can survive despite State religion, in fact it is strongest there (i.e. China today))

CHAPTER 3

Nebuchadnezzar sets up a state religion and all those that fail to bow will be persecuted. Daniel refuses and states that he will serve his God. Nebuchadnezzar is fuming at this refusal. He heats up the furnace to seven times its usual heat. As the King watches this, he sees 4 in the fire instead of the 3 that were thrown in. He calls them back and they were totally protected. At that point, the King says that he will tolerate the Jewish faith.

The summary so far:

Chapter 1 - Survive

Chapter 2 - Impressive people after the dream was interpreted

Chapter 3 - The faith of God's people is tolerated

CHAPTER 4

Could God actually save Nebuchadnezzar?

The King is now walking around full of pride, he is almost echoing the words of Romans 11 (from me, through me, for me etc.) and claiming to be the source of all these good things. He is humbled immediately; he doesn't even get to the end of the sentence. God is in control and Nebuchadnezzar gets saved!

CHAPTER 5

The story jumps now to Belshazzar – the last great King (he was actually the son of the King). He has learnt nothing from his ancestors and is arrogant. He mocks God by using the vessels from the temple deliberately to despise the God of Israel. Then hand writes on the wall "You have been weighed in the Kingdom and found wanting." Daniel is dragged out of retirement and is the one who interprets this. It happens that night – Cyrus releases the people of Israel and they can go back.

God can protect anyone, anywhere!

CHAPTER 6

Now Darius the Mede/Cyrus the Persian (ME reckons that they are the same person) is the one who persecutes the people. Daniel faces the same situation again and prospers again despite being thrown into a den of lions.

We are getting closer and closer to Jesus with every turn of events. The Jewish nation would not be surprised by the Empires that rise up and then fall. Through all the hardships was the promise of the Messiah in the book of Daniel. God's Kingdom is advancing on course – Jesus came and He will come again.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 3

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (DANIEL 7)

TALK 41

“The coming of the Son of Man” passages were read:

Matthew 10 v 23

²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 16 v 27-28

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Matthew 24 v 30

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Matthew 25 v 31

³¹ When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Mark 8 v 38

³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark 14v61-62

⁶¹ But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Luke 9 v26

²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

DANIEL - CHAPTER 7

¹ In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. ² Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. ⁴ The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. ⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' ⁶ After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. ⁹ "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. ¹¹ "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. ¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

These are prophecies about the future. They point out that things will get worse but that also they will be resolved well. There are many prophecies throughout the Old Testament and it is important to remember that not everyone got it right when they interpreted them:

- Pharisees - thought that the Romans would be defeated by Israel
- Apostles - thought they would be at the right hand of Jesus

ME points out that we must remain humble when we think about The Last Things – he tells some stories about people that have got it wrong throughout the years. Jesus said that no-one will know the time.

We are meant to get a rough idea of where things are going so that we can flow with them and not be discouraged. We will not know how it all fits together. Get the general principle but don't try and stitch everything together. Work with Scripture but don't try to write history before it has happened. Daniel and other Scriptures is a great place to start.

Did you notice how often the Scripture speaking about the Son of Man coming included the thought that this would happen before you pass away?

This all goes back to Daniel 7 – Jesus would refer to Himself as the Son of Man. This is interesting because no one else used it in Ancient Israel. It is also interesting because it means “any man, anywhere”. Jesus made His own title and then taught people what it meant – Son of Man must suffer, come in His glory – the title comes from Daniel 7.

ME then gives a brief summary about Daniel and how it is a great book of prophecy. God is purifying His people by giving them what they want until they are sick of their sin and then God cleanses them forever.

The scene moves from the 4 beasts and thrones are getting put into place. God is sitting on His throne and is ruling the world. The world is not out of control, it is under the control of God. Philosophies will come and go and rule for awhile, but God is on the throne. God is using all of history to accomplish His ends (i.e. the Greek language was used to spread the gospel, Roman sandals and roads).

All the prophecies given in Daniel were there to encourage the Israelites as they could read it and expect the times of pain.

The Kingdom of God is pictured as a man (not a beast) and it comes out of the heavens (not from the restless thoughts of man represented by the sea). He comes to the Father, to God – He is not coming from God but to God. That is why Jesus can say that all this will happen before the end of their lifetime, because in the ascension, the Son of Man came to the Father. It is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel 7.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 4

THE ERROR OF DISPENSATIONALISM (DANIEL 8 & 9)

TALK 42:

Daniel is not included with the Prophets in the Old Testament; he was a layman not a Prophet. His main job was to be a wiseman, philosopher in the Babylonian empire.

DANIEL 8

Alexander the Great is prophesied as the goat from v5 onwards. The horn represents power and his mighty Greek empire spread quickly. But it was broken quite quickly as Alexander dies in his 30's and the Greek empires became four empires (Macedonia, Thryce, Syria, Egypt) as predicted in Daniel. Eventually they became 2 – Assyrians (North) and Egyptians (South). It was then that the Old Testament was translated into Greek and thus prepared the way for Jesus.

Everything that happens is in the interest of the Kingdom of God! God is still doing this today – displaced people are flocking into cities and being saved.

The little horn rising up is seen as a type of antichrist – he tries to pull down the Jewish faith and tries to wipe it out and replace it with hedonistic culture. This will last for 2300 mornings and evenings – they often revolve around 3 and a half years – ME suspects that it goes back to the great struggle between King Ahab and Elijah which lasted 3 and a half years. It then becomes a symbol of short and fierce persecution. A very fierce revolution did take place during the Greek empire and it ended with the Revolt of the Maccabaeus – the entire nation rose up and the people of Israel got a certain measure of independence (can rebuild the temple, priests started to rule the country etc.)

DANIEL 9

Daniel is now concerned about the restoration of the temple and worship. He knows that Jeremiah prophesied that 70 years would pass before the restoration. So Daniel turns to God and prays here in Chapter 9 for the restoration of the people of Israel.

Then there comes a point where the prayer is answered. While Daniel is praying, Gabriel gives him an answer:

Daniel 9 v24-27

²⁴ "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one,

a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

In the late 1820's there were influential changes (after the French Revolution and the Battle of Waterloo) and people were very interested in prophecy. They thought that the world was going to end – King was beheaded, women would be allowed to vote, Napoleon was the antichrist etc. There were prophetic conferences during these times and an interpretation of Daniel 9 was formulated and it is characterised today by the Dispensationalist view (and the Schofield Bible). DL Moody got interested in all of this and went along with it. He had a colleague, Schofield, who added footnotes to the Bible and it led into American Dispensationalist views. Extreme views on prophecy go back to this point.

THE DISPENSATIONALIST INCORRECT VIEW OF DANIEL 9

The 77's are days and these stand for years and so a date has been given in Daniel for the arrival of Jesus. God wants to establish Israel but they rejected the Kingdom and thus Jesus will come twice – there will be Rapture 7 years before the Second Coming of Jesus. It gets terribly complicated and charts are required! There are 3 different theories about how this relates to the Tribulation. People have really strong opinions over these things.

It all hinges on the interpretation on the idea that days represent years and that there is a gap of 7 years. All the controversy hinges on a few verses from Daniel 9! The whole world goes crazy about the Rapture because of this – weird stuff about bombing Iran, Zionism etc.

Problems with all of this:

1. Wrong method of reading the Bible – read modern things into the Bible, as if the whole world was the Western world (ME regards that as racist). It is one dubious thing built upon another
2. It tends to make you insensitive to injustices perpetrated by Israel because you are so pro-Israeli politically. It is the same as Apartheid but it is not identified as such.

This whole view is a mistake – people in the 1820's should have looked at what God was doing. Their incorrect view however led to a lot of pessimism in the prophetic voices of the time.

Matthew 24 – needs to be read correctly. We must not be afraid by the troubles coming, they are signs that the end is NOT coming, the preaching of the gospel is just getting started!

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 5

DANIEL 9-11 & INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

TALK 43

DANIEL 9

The previous session focused on the negative interpretations of Daniel 9, now ME will expound the passage.

V24-27

The verses revolve around the temple. When is this coming? The passage speaks of “seventy sevens” (not weeks as some Bible’s translate it as). This phrase is common in the Ancient world and speaks about “totality/completeness”. This is taken from the week (i.e. 7 days is the total/complete week). This passage doesn’t refer to a date, it is a picture of completeness. The entire future is being divided into the perfect number and something big happens after 7 units and something even bigger happens further down the road, with one more final unit to go.

WHAT IS ALL OF THIS?

ME believes that Cyrus holds the key – the only person who is called Messiah in the Old Testament – he is an anointed one. He came and ended the Babylonian empire and sent the Jewish people back home. They are saved geographically but they are still sinners. There has to be another Saviour, the servant of the Lord (from Isaiah), Jesus. He is the greater Saviour. Salvation comes in two phases – first Cyrus and then Jesus. Hard times would still exist – the temple would be destroyed. The story ends without us knowing what happens with the final ending. Salvation has come but the end of the world has not come. Daniel leaves it open-ended.

DANIEL 10-12

This is one long vision that gives a detailed survey of the history of Israel. There are many symbolic references throughout – one needs a commentary in order to get the details – ME doesn’t have time. Scholars debate the end of Daniel 11 – the story seems to breakdown - **there are 3 possibilities:**

1. Liberal scholars – Daniel wrote the book at that point and that is why it is inaccurate, all the things had already happened, but now that he has to predict, he gets things wrong. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have however dented the theory because Daniel was already written. Daniel is also written in an earlier form of Aramaic – not 2nd century BC Aramaic. So it is getting harder to believe this theory.
2. Evangelical theory – Daniel jumps at the end of Chapter 11 to the antichrist.
3. ME’s view – ME feels that Daniel moves from the Greeks to the Romans at this point (v40)

REVELATION

It is written in the same style as Daniel. You need to first get a big picture of what it is all about before diving into the details.

- The book is highly symbolic of God getting victory in history despite persecution
- It is NOT just about what happens after Jesus comes – that would make it irrelevant
- It is NOT a walk through history – largely discredited now
- ME believes that it is going round and round the coming of Jesus – it is circling around this topic.

You need to discern it's structure:

- a. Rev 1-3 Seven letters written to 7 churches as a warning of Jesus coming
- b. Rev 4-7 Now in heaven where 7 scrolls are being opened
- c. Rev 8 Seven trumpets are now blown
- d. Rev 11 Seven visions of 7 persons
- e. Rev 15 Seven bowls of wrath being poured out
- f. Rev 17 Seven words of judgment
- g. Rev 19 Seven visions of the Lord triumphing
- h. Rev 21 Seven glimpses of the final glory

You are going round and round the course of history and every time 7 things are mentioned.

WHAT IS THE MILLENNIUM IN REV 20?

There are 3 views and another one if you are a Dispensationalist!

What happens when the devil is bound and thrown into the pit?

1. Premillennialism - There is literal view – there are a thousand years before the very final end
2. Amillennialism – The binding of Satan occurs at the cross and can't stop the nations going forward
3. Postmillennialism – There is a golden age before Jesus comes again

ME grew up with Amillennialism but when he came to preach on Revelation he switched his view.

Two things made him change his mind:

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REV 12 AND REV 20.

In Rev 12 you have a spiral involving the persons and the women gives birth to the lamb and Satan tries to wipe him out. As a result of the child caught up into heaven and Satan is thrown down to the earth – his power is reduced by Jesus at the cross.

In Rev 20 as a result of the coming of Jesus, Satan is thrown from the earth to the pit.

Therefore the binding of Rev 20 is more than the binding that occurred at the cross. This is something further.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE PASSAGE

What is the riding forth of the Son of God on the white horse? Is it the second coming or is it evangelism? ME believes that it is the preaching of the gospel – it does not refer to the second coming – and so the binding of Satan is following the preaching of the gospel.

If Satan fails at every point to stop Jesus, will Satan manage to stop the preaching of the word? Surely at every point, Jesus wins!

Rev 19 to the end is the church proceeding with Jesus and binding Satan as a result of the gospel. Which means ME is a Postmillennialist. The rest of Revelation deals with those who share in the resurrection glory of the Lamb.

These issues were only touched on briefly and people are encouraged not to deal too much on these things.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS

TALK 44: Q&A

Q&A is not included in Grounded 2

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 6

REVELATIONS CONT.

TALK 45

Q&A is not included in Grounded 2 but then the talk continues with The Last Things near the end.

REVELATION CONTINUED...

Jesus is the Lord of History – the scrolls represent History – the scrolls are all opened. But then, just before Judgment Day happens (Rev 8v1), the people of God are sealed and protected (Rev 7).

Revelation 7

¹ After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁵ 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, ⁶ 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, ⁷ 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, ⁸ 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence." ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The 144 000 is symbolic (12 tribes x 12 disciples x 1000 to symbolise largeness) and represents all the children of God. It can't be literal because in v9 we are told that they are a great multitude that no one can number.

Also there are no tribal records anymore so any thinking that depends on tribal records will not stand. The section then works through the rest of the passage. The section ends in 8v1 as Jesus opens the final scroll and the entire earth is silent before Him for half an hour (so there is time in heaven!). This is the pattern of the book, section after section as the book unfolds.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 7

REVELATIONS 4

TALK 46

Jesus is the King of the Kingdom who has conquered and is conquering! We have looked at Daniel and Revelation and will draw our conclusions of The Last Things from Scripture.

We are living in the gospel age – this was inaugurated when Jesus came and He preached straight away that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Where the King is, there the Kingdom is also. We are therefore in the gospel age where Jesus is reaching the nations by extending the message of salvation by the King.

There are 2 themes that are side-by-side in the New Testament:

1. Warning – the opposition to the gospel will be great (The Beast rising from the sea (picture of false religion) etc.) There is something that restrains false teaching though (ME believes that this is preaching).
2. Success – there will be victory in the end however. Be ready for great triumph as all nations will be reached. Go and win all nations.

So there will be great victory but in the face of persecution. “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” Tertullian.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

The Bible speaks of people going to a place of glory or of punishment at the end of their lives. The second you die you will have some kind of a body and will be recognisable. When Jesus came back, he had a body.

And then there will be the day that Jesus comes again. There is one way to stop being judged – be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Everything will be dealt with on Judgment Day unless it has been cleansed by the blood.

His coming will bring judgment, visible, noisy and He will usher in the eternal age. There will be one Second Coming and we will come with Him. We participate in His coming in glory.

ME briefly summarises the structure of Revelation. The main point of this talk is to convince us that Jesus is the King of Heaven. ME works through the passage below:

Revelation 4

¹ After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" ⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

All the great animals and the 12 elders and 12 apostles = 24 elders which represent the people of God are all worshipping.

A good question then gets asked: Who is worthy to open the scroll? The book of history that speaks of what God is planning on doing in the world. Who can administer the plan of God? No-one can be found, except for Jesus, the lamb that has been slain (He can be the lion because he has been the lamb). He has dealt with the problem of sin. He needed to be the lamb before he could be the lion.

Those that worshipped the Creator now also worship the Son as the Redeemer, the author of salvation. The whole of heaven is now worshipping Jesus.

REV 6-8

Jesus is opening the seals and is now administering history. The way He conquers is by bringing a word – a word of salvation for all those that receive Him. He is not conquering nations via military power but through invitation of His Word (pluralism is a Christian invention!). There is still great persecution when this message is preached though and people cry out and wonder why God doesn't come in Judgment. The Lamb, that laid down his life, gets angry and comes again in wrath. If you will

not have Jesus as your Saviour, you will have Him as your Judge. The people of God are sealed and thus the wrath of God doesn't harm them. The great multitude that no-one can number will worship Him forever.

The 7th seal is then opened by the lamb and the final judgment of God comes. Evil will be put down forever. We need to ask God for mercy, not justice, justice will come but for now we need to prayer for all to receive mercy. We may face great days of persecution but we must seek mercy for our enemies. Make sure you are riding in the army of Jesus!

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS, PART 8

THE NEW JERUSALEM (REVELATIONS 21)

TALK 47

REVELATION 21

Revelation 21v9-27

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This book is deeply imbued with symbolism; some people struggle to get this. There are many invalid questions (i.e. What is the great beast 666?) because you imagine that it is something literal. Everything is symbolic. You can't take the book literally because then you will miss the entire style of Revelation.

There are 8 sections/scenes and we need to be aware of this. If the number 7 is a sign of completion in the Bible, then what is the symbolism of 8? It is the symbolism of starting all over again (i.e. starting a new week). That is why it is at this point in Revelation that Jesus says "behold I make all things new". He is bringing all of this together by making a people, a community. This is the new thing that God is doing. You get saved on your own (just like you are born on your own) but the very moment you get saved, you are in a family.

The city of God is also described in this passage. What is this city standing for? Is it a picture of the church, as she is now, or as she shall be in her latter day glory? Is it the final people of God beyond the second coming?

ME believes that it is all 3. This is a mark of the panoramic aspect of prophecy. It gives you a view of everything that God will do and then it gradually unfolds.

WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK AT THE CITY OF GOD?

1. It is bright

It is full of righteousness, glory and light. It is like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. The church is like this! It is radiating, having the glory of God.

This stands for purity (there is no such thing as dirty light!) – this enables you to see clearly. It is full of joy, holiness and joyful holiness (we can confuse holiness with severity – the Bible knows nothing of this – there is no holiness if you are not joyful or full of peace!). This city shines with light and joy! This is not a veneer, it is real and deep joy. Happiness depends on what is happening, whereas joy doesn't depend on what happens. This is what church is like. This is symbolising people – it is not literal – the people are bright

2. The city has a wall and gate

The city has walls and gates in the walls. Where does all this come from? You must read the whole Bible and reclaim the symbolism of Revelation for the weird fringe. Ancient towns would have a wall around it to defend it from attack.

The wall makes the town very distinctive – you know whether or not you are in the city or out of the city. There is a definite point when entered or exited. All the business would be conducted in the gates. The parliament, commerce etc would be housed in the gate. The gates are opened – anyone can come in and out.

There is a definite body of people – all those who have come through the gate (Jesus Christ) – are within the wall. This is what counts – moral performance, the church, reading your Bible – all of this doesn't define whether or not you are part of the people. It is the person of Jesus who puts you in the people of God – inside the wall!

Symbolism is also taken from the cities of refuge. If you were falsely accused and your life was in danger as someone wanted to take vengeance. There was a law that protected you – you needed to go to the city of refuge – you were safe when you were inside. This is the same with the city of God. You run to Jesus and you are safe. It is Jesus who declares you “Not Guilty” no matter what is in your past. You are forgiven and accepted – all the lights are shining for you. It is available for all nations.

3. It has 12 buttresses that hold it together

There are 12 supports that hold the city up and ensure that it never falls down. These are the 12 apostles that have laid the foundation for the people of God. It is the gospel message that keeps the people together. There are many new ideas but it is the gospel message that holds it all together. That which conforms to the gospel message should be embraced. This is the Whole Counsel of God – the buttress that holds all the people in position.

The number 12 dominates everything – it is a big cube – the dimensions are 12x12 etc. Inside the temple, the Holy of Holies was a cube. The church of God is like a great Holy of Holies. It is a vast Kingdom that filled to the fullness of God. It is open for all, the gates are open!