

The End Times

by David Pawson

The sermon discusses the concept of the end times, the last days, and the apocalyptic view of history, emphasizing the importance of understanding the Bible's philosophy of history.

Duration: 59:47

Scripture: Matthew 24:7-44, Acts 2:17, 2 Peter 3:3

Topics: "Prophetic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses different philosophies of history that people often adopt when interpreting world events. The first view mentioned is the cyclic view, which suggests that history repeats itself in a never-ending cycle. The second view is the epic view, where history moves forward in ups and downs, but the ultimate outcome is uncertain. The speaker emphasizes that these views can influence our understanding of biblical prophecies and urges listeners to approach the Bible with the correct frame of history. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners that although there may be challenging times ahead, the Bible provides clarity on the duration and ultimate outcome of these troubles.

Transcript

My mind says good morning to you, my body says good afternoon. I haven't been teaching the Bible over fifty years. That's not true actually, Mike.

I've been teaching it over sixty years. But there we are, it's a wonderful book. Over sixty years ago I went to Cambridge as a student to study theology with a view to going into the ministry.

And I did not realize that my faith would almost be destroyed by the study. I tend nowadays to call theological colleges theological cemeteries. I'm afraid many young Christians have lost their faith through studying theology.

They taught me to read the Bible with a pair of scissors. We were cutting the Bible up into pieces and not much was left. After two years at Cambridge I couldn't prepare a single sermon.

I think that might have been quite a loss to the church. But thank God a book came into my hands by a Swiss theologian called Oskar Kuhlman. I've never met him but I'm looking forward to meeting him in glory and thanking him for that book because it saved my faith and restored my confidence in the Bible.

It was called Christ and Time. I had somehow imbibed the Greek idea that God is timeless, that he's outside of time, and that heaven is outside of time. I was terribly wrong.

I think some of you may still think that God is timeless. It's not that God is in time, but time is in God. He is not outside time, he is from everlasting to everlasting.

For him, as for us, time goes in one direction only, from the past to the present to the future. And our God is the God who was and who is and who is to come. Or to put it more simply, history is his story.

That's what the Bible was really all about. So with that book, Christ and Time, I went back to my Bible and it opened up as a new book to me. We are concerned with the end at times during this weekend, but just think of that word times.

That's not timeless, that's part of history, it's part of time. And this is the clue that time is real to God. He cannot, even though he's almighty, he cannot cancel the past.

He cannot change the past. Like us, he can change the future, but not the past. Did you ever realize that? It means, of course, that nobody can undo the cross.

It means that nobody can put Jesus back in the tomb. It's fixed in time and nothing can change that. That revolutionizes your thinking.

But it means the future is still open and the future can be changed, but I believe that the future is in God's hands as the past has been. Therefore, we're looking at the future during these two days. Now the title that I was given for the conference is Israel and God in the End Times.

Have I got it right? Israel and the Church in the End Times. Right. And so this morning in the first talk I want to talk about the End Times.

In the second talk, Israel in the End Times. In the third talk tomorrow morning, the Church in the End Times. And in the second talk tomorrow morning, the Church and Israel in the End Times.

So I think I'm sticking to my brief quite well. We're splitting it up into those four subjects. I just want to talk to you this morning about the End Times.

But the first thing I've got to say to you is that that phrase is not in your Bible. It's not a biblical phrase. It's a phrase that has crept into evangelical jargon in just the last few decades.

The phrase the Bible uses is the last days. It doesn't quite mean the same thing because we've been in the last days for the last two thousand years. It's a phrase that describes the period of time between the first and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The last days began at Pentecost, and Peter announced that in his sermon. This is the fulfilment of prophecy in the last days. I will pour out my flesh, my Spirit on all flesh, on all classes, on both sexes.

A universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the mark of the last days. So they've continued for two thousand years, and they will continue for a little time yet. We've been in the last days and still are.

What is the characteristic feel of living in the last days? Well, as Paul put it, you're living in the overlap of the ages. That's a phrase he uses in his letter to Corinth, the overlap of the ages. To the Jew, time was

divided into two great ages, the present evil age and the good age coming.

They believed, wrongly, that the present evil age would end and the good new age begin. But that hasn't been God's plan. God's plan has been to make those two ages overlap so that the good time coming has begun, but not been completed yet, and the present evil age has continued.

So, side by side, we live in the overlap of the ages. We've started living in the new age to come. It's in us, but it's not outside us yet.

It's invisible inside us. It's not visible outside us. The ages are overlapping, and the tension we all feel is because we live between the ages.

Part of us is already experiencing heaven, and part of us is still very much tied to earth. First thing in the morning, I always feel more tied to earth than heaven, don't you? So we have a tea-making practice in our house first thing in the morning. If I feel I'm Christian when I wake up, I go down and make the tea for her.

But if I don't feel like a Christian first thing, she goes down and makes it for me. It's a little arrangement we have, and I dare not tell you what the ratio is between one and the other. But there are times when I feel very bound to the earth, frustrated by it, part of this present evil age with all its temptations and pressures.

There are times, especially when you're in worship or prayer, when you feel you're out of this world altogether and you're into heaven. So we live in this tension between the two ages. But that is not the subject for this weekend.

But I explain it because if you're a real Christian, you must feel that tension again and again. Or to put it differently, has the kingdom of God come, or hasn't it come? That's a big debate among some Christians. But the answer is very simple, it has and it hasn't.

That's part of the tension. When Jesus wanted to teach us about the kingdom, he used parables of the kingdom. Those parables divide very neatly into two categories.

On the one hand are the parables of the kingdom which see the kingdom as a gradual growth, like the seed of a mustard tree, a gradual process in which the kingdom gets bigger and stronger but quite slowly. Then in the other half of his parables it comes not slowly but suddenly, in a crisis, not a process. And people, therefore, have argued about what does Jesus mean by the kingdom coming, which he told us to pray for every day.

Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. That's our daily prayer. It has come and it hasn't.

Or to put it in another way, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated and you can enter it, but it hasn't been consummated or established. So it's both a gradual process of growth and a sudden crisis or invasion of the supernatural into the natural world. Again, we live in the tension between these two truths.

The kingdom has come and it hasn't come. There was a Russian young man who refused to serve in the Russian army. He was hauled before a court to examine him and find him guilty of treachery.

The judge said to the young man in the dock, why do you not serve in the army? And the young man quoted Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount and said, that's why I can't join the Russian army. And the judge knew enough to know what he was quoting. He said to the boy, that's the kingdom of God and it hasn't come yet.

And the boy replied to the judge, Sir, it may not have come for you, but it has come for me. Now that's the tension. We know the kingdom hasn't come on earth yet, and yet we're in it already.

It's at hand. The announcement of the gospel from the very beginning was the kingdom of God is at hand. Something that's at hand is like that book.

It's within my reach. It's at hand and I can reach out and take it and it's mine. That's the kingdom that has come, the kingdom that is within me, the kingdom of God that I have now entered and enjoy its fruits and can demonstrate to others.

But they can't see it and they're not in it yet. One day it will come worldwide and, as the prophet Habakkuk says, the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth as waters cover the sea. Well now, this is our approach to time and the end times.

But we've got to ask, what do people mean by that? It's become a very common phrase among evangelicals only, I think, in the last twenty or thirty years. What does it mean? What do people mean by the end times? The Bible doesn't use the phrase, so we can't look to the Bible for the meaning. But I gather, talking with people, that they mean the very last days.

We've been in the last days for two thousand years, but God's purpose is moving forward and this talk of the end times is the talk of the very last days, the last generation on earth before the end of this present evil age. That's what the phrase means. Let me now talk to you about philosophy.

There's a change, but the philosophy of history means how you think of that line we call history. There are five different philosophies of history. All people writing history books try and find a pattern in the events that crowd in on us.

When you read your daily newspaper, when you listen to the television news, do you see a pattern emerging? Do you see any purpose in it, or is it just repeated, here is the news for today and it's much the same as it will be tomorrow, and it's much the same as it was yesterday, but there's nothing new. Well, the Bible has its own philosophy of history, its own pattern of events day to day. We need to get that philosophy of history into our minds to understand the whole Bible.

I'm not just reading the Bible to help me through today, or like I read the horoscope and hope that something's going to fit. I want to know about the whole purpose of God, the purpose for the whole universe, and where I fit into that, rather than just trying to get some bit of personal comfort or help from daily Bible reading. This is the philosophy of history.

Now let me mention the five different patterns that people in our world see in world events. Because four of these five are being thrown at us on television, in the media, in the news, we tend, if we're not careful, to take it in. Then we read the Bible with a wrong frame of history and we don't get the overall story.

We only see bits of it. One of the first philosophies of history I want to mention is called the cyclic view of history. Quite simply, it means history goes round and round.

Or in a popular proverb, history repeats itself. Somebody said, history repeats itself because no one learns the lessons from it and it comes back. But that's a Greek view of history.

And if you're not careful, you will inherit that Greek view from the world around you, that things are just going round in circles. Good times, bad times, war, peace, it just goes on going round and round like a roundabout until you die and you probably get off the roundabout just where you got on. That's a very pessimistic view of history really.

It means history is going nowhere. There's no pattern, there's no purpose, it just goes on and on. The next view is like that but slightly different.

It's called the epic view of history. History doesn't go round and round repeating itself, it does go forward, but it goes forward in ups and downs, ups and downs, ups and downs. Good times and bad times, inflation and deflation, boom and bust, whatever.

But it will just go on going up and down and you hope that you will spend most of your life on an upper and not in a downer. It leaves open the question, how will history end? Will it end on an upper or a downer? Nobody knows. We'll just have to wait and see.

That's another philosophy of history which ordinary people take into their minds and just accept and hope they're on an up and not a down. The next one is called the optimistic view of history. That says history is getting better and better and better all the time, and life is getting better all the time.

This was the most common view of history about 1900 when the twentieth century began. It was summed up in the word progress. One English Prime Minister won an election on the slogan, up and up and up and on and on and on.

I think that was the philosophy in America at the beginning of the twentieth century. They thought that the twentieth century was going to be the best ever with all the scientific discoveries to help us overcome our problems. Life was going to be good in the twentieth century.

Man was on the up and up and up, and that was helped by Charles Darwin's idea of evolution. Society was evolving, man was evolving, everything was getting better and better, and they entered the twentieth century with such high hopes, and then the Titanic went to the bottom. The largest man-made moving object ever, filled with technology.

The ship, they said, God himself couldn't sink, and God did. The Titanic has gone down into history and is still the most famous shipwreck that has ever been remembered because it pricked the bubble of that idea of progress. It was the first major disaster of the twentieth century, and it challenged man's technical ability and all his dreams.

The ship went down, and with it the hopes of many. That was followed almost immediately by the terrors of World War I. The last Englishman to fight in World War I died last week. He was a hundred and ten, and he was the last surviving soldier of World War I. I wasn't in World War I, but I was in World War II, and I remember the horror of that.

But World War I, I've seen pictures of it. An uncle of mine was killed on the front at Passchendaele in World War I, in the mud and blood of the trenches. It was a horrific war, a stalemate for years in which people just killed each other one after the other.

Then in the second World War there weren't quite so many casualties, but altogether some thirty million died, of whom six million were Jews. The idea of progress, the optimistic view of history that it's going up

and up and up and on and on and on, has been killed dead in the twentieth century. It's been a terrible century, worst of all.

Now what's the mood now? What philosophy of history have ordinary people in their minds now? What pattern of events do they pick up? The answer is a pessimistic view of history. I'm drawing diagrams in the air for you. The cyclic view was this, the epic view was this, the optimistic view was this, and the pessimistic view is this.

The time is getting worse. History is going downhill. I have been checking out even church congregations recently and I have asked them to vote and put their hands up for this question.

Do you believe the twenty-first century will be better than the twentieth, the same as the twentieth, or worse than the twentieth? The voting is almost uniform. About eighty percent believe that this century will be worse than the last. That is the pessimistic view of history going down and down.

I've mentioned four views. None of them is the Bible view of history. If I draw for you the Bible view, which we call the apocalyptic view of history, it goes like this.

Events will go down and down and down and get worse and worse and worse until suddenly there is a complete change and the line goes straight up to a high and then continues on the high. This is the apocalyptic view of history. Things will get worse before they get better and will get better after they get worse.

So it has got bad news and good news in it, but the good news has the last word. Now this apocalyptic view of history, this sudden uprising, is held by three groups of people in the world - Jews, Christians, and Communists. They all got this pattern of history from the same place, from the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament.

Their view of history was apocalyptic. Things will get worse and then suddenly better and the good time coming will be established. In other words, they looked for the golden age in the future, whereas Greeks looked for the golden age some time back in the past.

Christians look for the golden age in the future. Jews do. The only difference between Jews, Communists, and Christians is what they believe will cause that sudden change and produce a world such as we have dreamed of in our best moments.

The answer is the Communist thinks man will do that, that it will be the revolution that will do that, that the tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat will eventually explode in a revolution. The revolution will introduce a crimeless and classless society in which everybody gives according to their ability and receives according to their need. We now know that that is a bad dream, that it doesn't happen.

We have seen it not happen in Russia, we have seen it not happen in China. It doesn't work. Man is incapable of changing history.

He thinks he can. Every politician wants to say, change, change, I can change, vote me in, we'll change. Things are much the same by the next election.

No man can bring about that reversal. Both the Jews and the Christians believe that God can. Will.

But the difference comes when Jews believe that that sudden lift will come when God steps in and the kingdom of God breaks through, whereas Christians take it one step further and say that, yes, that's what God will do, but he will do it through a Jew called Jesus. Therefore, that apocalyptic view of history, which says it will get worse and worse and then suddenly better, is dependent on the second coming of Christ. From then, things will change.

That is why the centre of the Christian hope is the return of our Lord Jesus to earth. There is no other hope at all. Therefore, things will get worse and worse.

I'm almost tempted to say something American then and say, I nearly said, you ain't seen nothing yet. Well now, let's go back to the phrase, end time, or in plural, end times. That is now jargon for the very last days of this present evil age.

What do we expect to happen in those very last days? Now, it's been coined by Christians who believe that we are in the very last days, that we are now the last generation on earth before Jesus gets back. I'll be frank and say I don't believe that, and I will tell you why in a moment. I don't believe we're in the end times if that means the very last days.

I think they could come quickly, but now that I'm in my eighties, my hopes that they'll come in my lifetime are beginning to get a little dim. That doesn't worry me at all. If I die before Jesus gets back, hallelujah, I get a front seat at the big meeting because the dead in Christ rise first.

So, I'll grab a front seat so whether I die before he comes or not doesn't worry me. I'm with the Lord either way. Nevertheless, many Christians today have been trying to persuade me that we are in the very last days and that Jesus will return in our generation.

Somebody sent me a huge book, a missionary in Mexico who'd written this book to prove that Jesus would be back in 1996. He sent me a long letter hoping that I would read his book and believe it and preach it. I haven't heard from him lately for some reason, not since he sent the book.

But he was wrong, and he wasn't the first Christian to make that mistake. There have been five distinct periods during our age when Christians have expected Jesus back and interpreted the current situations as the end times and the very last days. Just because there are a lot of troubles, even a lot of natural disasters happening, that doesn't mean we're in the end times.

We need to be very careful about identifying current events as the fulfilment of prophecy because there are what I would call forecasting events, shadows cast before them that are like the final prediction but are simply shadows of it beforehand. Very important to ask, is this event a fulfilment of prophecy or a foretaste of the fulfilment of prophecy? Do you understand what I'm saying? Do make a note of that. For example, when 9-11 happened and the Twin Towers went down, I got so many people asking me, is this a fulfilment of Revelation 18, where the ships at sea see the destroyed buildings and the smoke rising? I said, no, it's a foretaste, not the fulfilment yet.

It's a foretaste. These foretastes do point to the end times but they're not proof of the end times. I want us to think soberly.

Jesus told us very clearly what to watch for. He gave us signs. His disciples asked him, what will be the signs of your coming, the signals of your coming? He told them exactly what to look for.

He gave them four particular signs when they asked him that question. Of those four signals, one and a half are already showing clearly but two and a half have still to appear. Whether they appear quickly or slowly, they've still got to appear.

We're not there yet. Maybe not even quite there yet, but we're certainly not there. I want to underline those very strongly.

It's interesting that all the signs are bad. All the signs of our Lord's coming are bad things happening, threatening events, dangerous events. In a word, troubles.

You know, when I was a young Christian I listened to other people's testimonies and I was so disturbed because they didn't fit mine at all. People would say, I came to Jesus and all my troubles were over. I thought, that doesn't fit my life.

I came to Jesus and my troubles began. I got filled with the Spirit and my troubles got worse. Those who know me best will know the truth of this.

I've had more trouble in the last ten years than the previous forty. So why doesn't my testimony fit? Other people seem to find their troubles go. But I've found comfort in Jesus who said, in the world you'll have trouble.

Thank God for Jesus' honesty. He never wanted cheap disciples. He told them straight away, follow me and you'll take up a cross, not a cushion.

Follow me and you're in trouble. And that's proof that I'm a Christian, hallelujah! That's my assurance. But he did say quite clearly in the New Testament, makes it clear that the troubles we will have now are heading up to the big trouble, or in Bible language, the great tribulation, the big trouble.

Frankly, we're not in the big trouble yet and it will come before the end. We're in trouble already and that's a foretaste. Some Christians around the world are in real trouble already, but in the big trouble, their real trouble will be worldwide and we shall all know it.

Out of 250 nations at the moment, the Church is in real trouble in all but two dozen of those nations. So it's getting nearer to the day when Jesus said, you will be hated by all nations. And that will be the sign of the big trouble when we get to that.

So Christians are prone to mistake present troubles for the big trouble. When you're in trouble yourself, it feels like the big trouble. But as soon as you lift your eyes above the local situation, you realise it's not yet, but your experience of it may be.

This has led Christians to do all kinds of funny things, one of which is to date the return of Jesus, which is an incredible thing to do when Jesus himself said, I don't know the date, and yet I'm meeting so many people who say they do. Martin Luther said this, gave a date in the seventeenth century. John Wesley did the same and gave a date in the nineteenth century.

Notice they were wise, they both predicted a date after they would no longer be here. And that to me is a very wise thing for Christians to do, otherwise you have to live with your mistakes. Like Russell of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who said it would be 1914, or was it 1918? But both dates came and went and nothing happened.

The Seventh-day Adventists, the lady called Ellen, she predicted 1848 and that came and went. Very foolish to predict the date of our Lord's return. You're claiming to know better than he did.

I just say gently but firmly, don't listen to teachers who tell you they know the date. But watch for the signs. When you see the signs Jesus gave us, you know he said that I am at the door, ready to step back onto the stage of history.

I'm looking for those mistakes. So don't mistake local troubles for the universal big trouble, and don't mistake a foretaste for the fulfilment. Praise God for the foretaste because they keep reminding us of what's going to come.

Praise God for an earthquake or a tornado because, as Jesus said, they are reminders of what's to come. They should be pulling people up to think again about God. But alas, in the book of Revelation it says, even when the worst things happen, people will still be cursing God rather than repenting.

That is the sad case of human nature. We are rebels against God, and a rebel doesn't like to admit it. People will go on cursing God as the troubles get worse.

Now how near the end are we then? Well, the one thing I can say to you very confidently is we're at least two thousand years nearer. Now I'm going to go a bit further than that, but I will say that with absolute confidence. We are two thousand years nearer the end times.

Hallelujah for that! But there's more to say. What time is it on God's clock? I've heard people for years saying it's one minute to midnight or three minutes to midnight. They seem to have a better clock than I have.

Let me underline why I believe we're not in the end times yet, though we may be very near, and it would be wise to get ready for them. First, we are not in the big trouble. It's not here yet.

We certainly have troubles, big troubles. We certainly have reminders of the big trouble, but I do not believe we're in it yet. When I read Revelation chapter six to nineteen, I see there a detailed description of the big trouble, and I don't see that around me yet.

I again thank Jesus for his honesty in telling us in those chapters what will happen. He's not telling us so that we can gloat over it and say, well that doesn't affect me. He's telling us to get ready.

Jesus only unveiled the future so that we might prepare and be ready for it when it happens, and be the only people on the earth who are ready for it, because we've had his inside information on what to expect. But in Revelation six to nineteen there are twenty-one disasters affecting the whole earth, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls of wrath. But they're pretty grim.

At one of them, a quarter of the world's population dies. That hasn't happened yet. In another, a third of those who are left die.

That hasn't happened yet. These are disasters on a gigantic scale, and they haven't happened yet. They are very reminiscent, strangely, of the plagues in Egypt.

When you read Revelation, you think you're reading the book of Exodus again. The plagues that afflicted the Egyptians are all happening again, even down to locusts. But they haven't happened yet.

You know, when I read those middle chapters of Revelation, which are not good bedtime reading, and they're not very comforting, and that's why they're often neglected. People want to rush on to the new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem and get past all these big troubles. But when I read them I say, Oh, thank you, Lord.

I now know the worst that can happen. That's good, don't you think? Far better to know the worst that can happen and be ready for it than be always wondering. In 1975 they discovered that my wife was suffering from a very serious cancer and it looked as if she would go to be with the Lord.

We didn't rush around trying to find a Christian healer. We didn't ask a lot of people to pray. We simply got on our knees and said to the Lord, Lord, she's ready to come to you if you want her.

But if you have more on earth for her to do, then you know what to do, Lord. That's what we said. I shall go home to her next Friday.

I think we can say she's cured after 1975. But I thank God for a doctor who told us the worst. I told my wife the worst, and she was at peace from that moment.

I couldn't understand her, but from the moment I told her the worst she was at peace and was prepared. Well, when you read the middle section of Revelation, it's pretty horrible, but you now know the worst that can happen. Nothing worse than that is going to happen.

I didn't even hear her sing Hallelujah. Never mind, you don't need to. Whisper it if you like.

But you see, Jesus has told us the worst, and as I said, you ain't seen nothing yet. But when the worst comes, we're ready. We know.

We're not going to be surprised. We're not going to be caught out. We're not going to be upset.

When everybody else is saying, what is the world coming to? You just say, I know what it's coming to, and I know who it's coming to. It gives you a great opening when people say, I don't know what the world's coming to, because we've got the answer and they haven't. We know the worst, and we're ready for it.

The one bit of good news about the big trouble is that it's very short. Jesus has told us that. He said, unless those days were short, nobody would survive.

The elect would not come through it. God will keep it short, and we know exactly how short. How often does God have to tell us something before we get the message? He said, it'll be a time, times, and half a time.

That's three and a half times. Then to make it clearer, he said, it'll be three and a half years. To make it clearer still, he said, it'll be forty-two months.

To make it clearer still, if it hasn't got home, he said, one thousand two hundred and sixty days. So we know how short the big trouble is, so that even when it comes, we can say to each other, only three and a half years more. That's good.

Thank you Jesus for telling us. So we know it'll be bad, but we know it won't be long. That's the first thing I wanted to say, that we're not in the big trouble yet.

We may be. Some of you listening to me now may well be. I don't think I will be now, but there we are.

At least I can help other people to get ready if they're in it. But we're not in it yet. The second thing I want to say is that characteristically, the end times will be governed by an unholy Trinity, and that will be in God's plan as well.

What do I mean by the unholy Trinity? Well, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the holy Trinity. The unholy Trinity is Satan, Antichrist and the false prophet. In place of God the Father, Satan, which has been his ambition all along.

In place of Christ, the Antichrist. Do you realise that anti there does not mean against? It means instead of. So don't think of the Antichrist as being against Christ, think of him as being instead of Christ, a false Christ, promising peace and security to a lost world.

And the world will believe him when he promises it, but it won't last for long. But that's what he will come. He will even be a Christ-like figure.

Satan is a master of deception, and he will offer peace and security to a sick, sad old world, and the world will say, great, this man will lead us. It's almost as if every election today is messianic. Have you noticed that? Everybody's looking for a man to get us out of our trouble, and that's the big thought.

Shall we elect this man or that man for President or Prime Minister? Well, we'll go for the man who will get us out of all our troubles. And very quickly they get disappointed. In fact, Newsweek this week says it will be within twelve months, and that's what happens.

Because we need one Messiah, and there's only one capable. That's our Lord Jesus, the only one capable of bringing justice and therefore peace to the world. Because as long as there's injustice, there will not be peace.

You've got to establish justice first, and then when people have no injustices to grumble about, you can have some peace, and only Jesus can do that. So we're not yet in that unholy Trinity when there will be no more cash, no more money, that unless you have the number of the Antichrist either on your forehead or your hand, and you come to the checkout at the supermarket, you don't get out a checkbook, you don't get out a plastic card, you simply hold your hand or your forehead and then you'll get your food. And if you don't bear that number, you don't get any food.

We're not in that yet. We're nearly at the cashless society. We're well on the way, and there's one town in England, forty miles from my home, where as an experiment, they did away with money altogether and only used the plastic card number for all the shopping in the town.

It's coming, and it's coming to your town sooner or later. And in the day when all money is gone, if you don't have that crucial number of the Antichrist on your body, you won't be able to buy anything. But we're not there yet.

What I've found is that when I read Revelation, the whole thing is becoming more credible, more believable. I mean to talk of cashless society fifty years ago, nobody would have believed you. But now it's commonplace.

You can imagine it happening. So Revelation becomes more and more relevant as we get nearer the end times, but we're not there yet. 1 John, the first epistle of John, has a little verse in it.

You know, or we know, that Antichrist, the Antichrist, is coming. But already there are many Antichrists in the world, and these many are again foretaste and not fulfillment. And again, through the ages of church history, so often Christians have thought they knew who the Antichrist was and thought therefore they were in the end times.

Martin Luther thought the Pope was Antichrist, and the Pope returned the compliment by saying Martin Luther was. Napoleon was a candidate, but actually Napoleon wasn't all that bad. I've discovered recently that Napoleon urged the Jews to go back to the Holy Land, and he conquered the Holy Land to give them a home.

But they wouldn't go. But at least he had that one good thing about him. Then Hitler.

Oh, wasn't Hitler the Antichrist? Well, when you lived in Germany under Hitler, you could be forgiven for thinking he was. He was an Antichrist, but not the Antichrist. Same goes for Hussein, for Gaddafi.

I had a video sent to me from America. A preacher, I've forgotten the name and therefore I can't name him for you, but that's probably better. And he was telling me that he was travelling America saying that the king of Jordan's nephew was the Antichrist.

He had it all off and it was very impressive. Listen, we can't do that. The Antichrist isn't here yet, and the false prophet isn't here yet, but they will be.

They're called in the book of Revelation to beasts, but they're human beasts who will be totalitarian dictators between them. The false prophet backing up the Antichrist with miracles and convincing many. I'm going to speculate for the moment, so don't take the next few minutes as dogmatic.

But it says in Revelation that one beast, the Antichrist, will come out of the sea and the other, the false prophet, from the land. And I thought for a long time, what does that mean? Because it's obvious that sea and land are metaphorical there because the Antichrist won't be some amphibious creature crawling out of the oceans. But when sea is used metaphorically in scripture, it refers to the sea of the nations, the sea of the Gentiles.

But the word land in scripture refers to the land of Israel. Now if that is the right interpretation, the Antichrist will be a Gentile but the false prophet will be a Jew, and they will work together. And I'm going one step further and say that I personally will not be surprised if the Antichrist is an Arab and the false prophet a Jew, and that they will bring peace to the Middle East by an agreement.

That's exactly what the Bible says. There will be a peace treaty for seven years, but it will completely break down after only half that time, and then the Antichrist and the false prophet will be revealed in their true colours as agents of Satan. That's the kind of prediction that the Bible does seem to make, but we're nowhere near that yet.

However, if at some point an Antichrist Arab arises who makes a proposal for peace with Israel, I know now that many people in Israel are desperate for peace. And since many of them are godless, they're ready to agree almost anything to get a peace treaty. And I can see all that happening.

But it's not happened yet. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul makes it quite clear that before Christ can appear, Antichrist must be seen first. And I haven't seen the Antichrist yet.

I'm still looking because I know that when he does come, we shall be left in very little doubt. The Bible, as you probably know, is a book packed with predictions. Twenty-four percent of the verses in your Bible have a prediction about the future.

I'm amazed why people who want to know the future don't read the Bible instead of the horoscope, because this has been so accurate. Let me give you some figures. I know that statistics can be used to blind people, but here are some statistics.

Actually, it was an ancestor of mine that invented the word statistics. He must have had his own teeth when he did so, because it's a very difficult word to say. But here are some biblical statistics for you.

In the Bible, there are 735 different predictions about the future. Some of them happen more than once, and some of them even 300 times. But 735 different predictions about the future.

How many of those do you think have come true already? The answer is 596 that have happened literally and come true exactly as predicted. That's 81 percent and it means that the other 19 percent I have no problem believing will happen. It doesn't take much faith to believe that if 81 percent have happened, the rest are going to happen as well.

Of the rest, there are still 20 that have to be fulfilled before Jesus gets back. That's quite a few, and they are very specific. So there are still 20 things to happen before we can be quite sure that Jesus is about to step in.

With the accelerating speed of world events, those 20 things could happen fairly quickly. But I underline what I have already been saying, they haven't happened yet, but they will. I have made two assumptions in this first talk, which I'll have to deal with in the second and third talks.

The first assumption I've made is that Israel is not a sign that we're in the end times. I believe that the Jews had to be back in Israel before the second coming, but nowhere in my New Testament is that listed as a sign of his return. I'll explain that in the next talk, which is about Israel in the end times.

The second assumption I've made, which probably the majority of evangelicals in America would not agree with me, is that the church will be in the big trouble. I've been driven to that view, which I'm thankful to say I share with Mike Bickle, which is why I'm here. Namely that the church must prepare to go through the big trouble.

I'd rather be wrong my way than the other way. I'd rather tell you to get ready for the big trouble than to tell you you don't need to and then find you're in it. So I'd rather be wrong my way than that.

But in the third talk, I'll expand on that and talk about the church in the end times. Let me summarise this first talk. We're not in the end times yet.

We're not in the big trouble yet. We haven't seen the Antichrist yet. But we should be getting ready ourselves and getting other people ready for the whole thing, because the end times is coming.

We're in the last days and one day we'll be in the very last days, if we're still alive. And disciples are people who get ready for the future, not just revelling in a curiosity, satisfied about the future, but getting

ready for it by the Lord. Thank you for listening.

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