

Podcast: Eschatology without Prophecy

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[0 : 00] Greetings and salutations, friends.

Welcome to the Providence Podcast. My name is Chris Oswald, Senior Pastor at Providence Community Church. Today you're going to hear something that I think is kind of different. You're going to hear eschatology without prophecy.

Anyway, eschatology stripped of any reference to the prophetic genre. You're going to hear an eschatological position presented by yours truly, built on some of the most simple ideas, fundamental ideas in scripture, and on some of the most simple of all texts pertaining to eschatology.

Now what I mean when I say that you're going to hear a position of eschatology without prophecy, what I mean is that I won't be leaning on any passage that features prophetic symbolism.

I'm just going to use texts that kind of go straight at the point. No veiled thing, opened interpretation, just basic, minimal, straightforward kinds of scriptures.

[1 : 20] I'm doing this because I sort of touched on eschatology last Sunday when I talked about, when I preached on 1 Timothy 4, verses 1 through 5.

And I made mention, or more than mention, that the last days referenced here is not a reference to the end times, but to the times in which they themselves, the apostles, were living through.

And I made an attempt to kind of explain how many passages were like that and what they were talking about and so forth. But today I'm going to, and it's taken me a couple of extra days to gather all of this together in my head.

But today I want to take you through a sense of what's going on in eschatology in the New Testament as far as I can see.

And I hope this interests you. I hope most of all that you'll look at the way that the Bible is handled here and see something worthy of invitation. So let's get into it.

[2 : 25] Lurking behind the text in 1 Corinthians 4, verses 1 through 4 is the idea of Gnosticism in general, mixed in with a few other movements, including Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism.

Now, all you need to know for right now is that those perspectives exclude equal affection for the material.

They almost always, well, that's putting it too softly. It isn't simply that they see the material as secondary.

There's actually really a genuine dislike for the materiality. This is pretty common with false doctrine in general.

And it essentially always assumes that the ultimate authority, the ultimate God, because a lot of these perspectives have, you know, hierarchies of gods and so on and so forth.

[3 : 40] But there's always an assumption that the one at the very top has essentially no real regard for materiality.

It may even be seen as a problem as it is in Gnosticism. And a kind of prison of being is how the Gnostics would talk about it.

And so what you're seeing in this particular section of 1 Timothy is that some have adopted something like Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Pythagoreanism, and began to teach that some of the more earthy things we do, like the marriage bed or the dinner table, that these things really need to either be prohibited or reined in significantly.

This sort of perspective is what is behind the theological strand of vegetarianism. It's the idea that we're really not people in any kind of unique way.

We are spirits and animals. And the animal world and the animal instincts and so on and so forth must be abstained from. If you want an interesting rabbit trail, Google, I think his name is W.C. or W.C. Kellogg, I believe his name is, the founder of the Corn Flakes, the inventor of Corn Flakes.

[5 : 20] And you can see he was a vegetarian, Seventh-day Adventist, and believed that consuming too much protein would stir up the animal spirits in you.

He was also a eugenicist. So what is essential about today's conversation, because we're going to talk about eschatology, isn't, whether you're a-mill, post-mill, or pre-mill, or historic pre-mill, that's not the most important thing.

The most important thing is that you don't have any hidden biases that have crept in from bad theology somewhere along the way that makes you see materiality, the earth, the planet, God's creation, as something somehow less than in terms of importance.

Or that you're viewing things like, for instance, the marriage bed as a non-spiritual act. So what I want to do is I do want to talk about eschatology, but I want to talk about eschatology in a general sense and help you to see God's plan for materiality, God's plan for the earth.

The first thing I would like you to ask yourself is I'd like you to decide whether or not God's command in Genesis to Adam and Eve, that they would rule and subdue the earth, I'd like you to ask whether he was asking them to do that because it pleased him.

[7 : 08] And I think the answer is yes. We can go to the crib notes of theology and understand that when God commands us to do something, it's ultimately for his own glory.

So what we have at the very beginning is a God who is interested in Adam and Eve filling the earth with their offspring so that the whole earth, which God created, would be ruled and subdued into something like Eden and that that would be occupied and cared for, intended by his own image, by the image of God.

That's what the original plan was. Now, the second question I'd like you to ask yourself is, do you believe that man's sin permanently derailed that project?

Did God say, well, now that you've sinned, never mind, I'm not interested in this world being filled with my image bearers who are tending to the creation, stewarding the creation.

So it may be that you have a subconscious sense, maybe just because you haven't really thought about it, that, well, first of all, you could have a sense that God commanded Adam and Eve to rule and subdue, to be fruitful and multiply in some arbitrary way.

[8 : 45] You may have not understood or just made the connection that he did that because it would bring him glory. He did that because it would please him. And secondly, you may have assumed in some respect that when Adam and Eve sinned, their sin essentially ended this project that God had started.

And of course, that would just be, again, we're getting into how we think about God. As Tozer says, what comes into the mind of man when he thinks about God is the most important thing about him.

One of the things that I've seen that really keeps people from seeing God well is a tendency to think of him as arbitrary, as getting derailed, as having plan A, B, C, and D.

It's just not, that's just not what the scriptures present to us. What the scriptures present to us is a God whose plans always succeed, whose word always comes to pass, and whose desires are ultimately fulfilled.

So, we've got a God who told Adam and Eve to do something. What? To fill the earth with people like them, who are images of God.

[10:02] And Adam and Eve sinned and became ineligible, in some respect, from doing that in a way that would be substantially glorifying to God.

Another way to think about this is that they marred their own image. And so now, when they would rule and subdue and fill the earth, the image that is filling the earth is not the image God wants to fill the earth.

It's broken, sinful people. So, I believe, and this is more about eschatology than you might realize, I believe that God never gave up on that plan.

In fact, the plan was always that as Adam fell, a new second Adam would come into the picture, and this Adam would be even more the image of God than the first.

This second Adam would be none other than Jesus Christ. It is so in this connection that God promises to Eve that she will bear an offspring who will contend against the serpent.

[11:17] Now, I want to walk you through some of the theology for that. And a big piece of this would be settled in Romans 8. So, Romans 8, 18 through 24.

Let me read that to you. Romans 8, 18 through 24. For I consider that this present time, I'm sorry. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

So, Paul is talking about a glory that is still coming, right? He's talking about a glory that is still coming. He says in verse 18, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

[12:42] And we can see at the end of the text that the glory he's talking about is the moment when we receive new bodies. What he's talking about is when our bodies are redeemed.

And what does he mean? Well, this is a reference to what theologians refer to as the doctrine of glorification. And that could be misleading to a layman to hear glorification. It typically seems like that's what we're supposed to do for God.

But the very last step in the order of salvation is that God comes, Christ comes to us, raises us from the dead, and gives us new bodies that are not only without sin, but without any limitations that the curse had previously levied.

And so the future, and this is the most important thing that every single eschatology has to understand. And if you're not, if you don't have this, if you don't believe this, you don't have orthodox eschatology.

Just quickly, what do I mean by orthodox? Well, what I mean is is that there are certain things that are really non-negotiable. And one of them is to believe in the physical return of Christ and to believe in the physical resurrection of the dead.

[13 : 58] Different schemes have different ways of talking about that in terms of timing. But in terms of the basic idea that we will receive new bodies and that our bodies will be like Christ's new body after he was risen from the dead, this is essential.

So hopefully you know that. But if you don't, I'm telling you now, and not only, and I wanted to mention it the way I did because I want you to know that's a non-negotiable. That's not Chris's weird post-millennial eschatology.

That's just the way everybody has conceived of what the scripture teaches. Everybody, you know, within orthodoxy for the longest time.

So what this is referring to then, what Paul's saying in Romans is that there's going to be a moment when we receive our new bodies.

And these new bodies are going to be like Christ's body. And these bodies are glorified. What that means is, it's, you know, they're as good as it's going to get, I guess you could say, in some respect.

[15 : 06] Now this process is described in detail, or in more detail, in 1 Corinthians 15. In verse 42, Paul is teaching about the resurrection.

And he says, So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, and it is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness, and it is raised in power. So he's talking about the body we have now compared to the body we will receive in Christ. And he says, the first one is perishable, the second one is imperishable.

The first one is dishonorable, the second one is glorious. The first one is weak, the second one is power. And earlier, actually, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us that this happens, this moment of physical resurrection happens when Christ returns.

Now, that's pretty great, and you can imply, just from that alone, God's regard for materiality. He's literally planning on filling his presence with materiality.

[16 : 16] And there's a way in which that's true even now, but it'll be even more true in the future. Jesus, just incidentally, did not shed his materiality when he ascended to the right hand of the Father.

He is in God's presence at the right hand. He's in the Father's presence right now in materiality. Okay, so Romans 8, going back to Romans 8, tells us that creation is actively groaning for this to happen.

I'm going to read that text to you again, but creation is actively waiting for this moment when God's image bearers receive their fully glorified bodies.

Why is that? Well, let me read that text to you again. Romans 8, 18. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subject to futility, this is the curse, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

[17 : 48] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Now, I do want to make a note. It's a bit comedic, but it'll help me make my point. There are some who read Romans 8, 22. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

There are some who are of such a stark, austere view of materiality and really genuinely hate this planet and hate this world that, motivated by all of their own broken theological understandings, they read that text I just read to you and say that creation is groaning to be killed.

Creation is groaning to be destroyed. They see annihilation of this world as a necessity. This is extremely Gnostic, but it definitely exists within even evangelical churches.

This view that creation itself is so bad and so broken and when it says here that creation is groaning and waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, they will literally say, yeah, it's groaning to be put down.

[19 : 11] But of course, verse 22 is really simple. It just says, for we know the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. The pains of childbirth, these are pains of expectation.

These are pains of a blessing. These are the pains you feel before you hold the baby in your arms. This is not creation wanting to be put down.

This is creation wanting to, as Paul says, gain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. out of the futility and bondage that it was put in under the curse and into freedom.

Now, you must remember that the curse was simply God matching the earth, the state of the earth, to the state of the earth's kings.

Sorry, let me say this a little bit more clearly. Adam and Eve were the rulers of the earth. That's what they were put on earth to do. And when their heart became futile and broken and when they died spiritually, God put a curse over the place they ruled to match their spiritual state.

[20 : 28] And so, what we see in Romans 8 is an undoing of that curse. that, and it will work in the same order that it worked before. Man is broken, so creation must be broken.

Man is restored, now creation can be restored. And remember why I'm talking about all this. I'm talking about all this because I want you to know that God is not anti-materiality.

He is not anti-feasts. He's not anti-sex. He's not anti-joy in the created things that He made. The idea really is that Jesus is a second Adam, the second Adam.

I usually like to refer to Him as the final Adam just because if we've had two, you know, you might think, well, maybe we'll have three. No, Jesus is the second and final Adam and He is coming to create, how does the New Testament talk about this?

A new people. A new race. And what He's doing is He's actually creating a new people redeemed in His image to fulfill the original creation mandate.

[21 : 44] Remember how I said, do you know that God commanded the earth to be filled with His image because He was glorified by that? And then I asked, do you think that that was somehow abandoned when man sinned?

And the answer is no. It wasn't abandoned. It was simply a way to get us to Christ who would be the seed of Eve, who would crush the serpent and would take creation back for Himself.

C.S. Lewis' article, an essay, might be the first chapter in his book on miracles, deals with the incarnation. And I don't think that Lewis ever really developed an advanced eschatology, but he had a lot of really good instincts.

And here you can hear his regard for creation as he describes one way of thinking about the incarnation of Jesus, the coming of Jesus as the second Adam.

He writes, the central miracle asserted by Christians is the incarnation. They say that God became man. Every other miracle prepares for this or exhibits this or results from this.

[22 : 54] In the creation story, God descends to reascend. He comes down, down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down to the very roots and seabed of the nature He has created.

But He goes down, listen to this, He goes down to come up again and bring the ruined world up with Him. So this is, again, this is not especially remarkably, you know, controversial, but it's just biblical and this will show you, if any of this feels a bit off to you, this will show you one of the reasons why we aren't building cathedrals anymore and so on and so forth.

why Christendom 1.0, you know, through the development of Western civilization was so earthy. They really saw the coming of Christ as the redeeming of the world and the redeeming of God's creation mandate project to fill the earth with His image.

And, you know, there are verses that reflect this throughout Scripture. I don't have my Bible in front of me and I'm sitting on the couch and it'll just be a whole thing to go get it, but in Psalm 2, we have the nations raging and the heart behind their rage is they feel like God is an unfair, holding out slave master.

It says, let us burst His bonds apart. And so they conspire together to figure out a way to throw off the limitations that God has imposed upon them.

[24 : 43] And it says then, you know, I think the next verse, he who sits in heaven laughs. He holds them in derision. He's like, guys, that's not how this works.

You can't come up with a plan and throw a coup and overthrow ultimate foundational power. So he laughs. And then it says that he creates or he begots, he points to his son and he says, you know, my son's going to break you into pieces.

And I think at the very end of the Psalm, again, this is all from memory, you know, he says something like, you know, kiss the son lest he be angry. Serve the Lord with fear and trembling or something like that.

the idea in the two-thirds into the Psalm is that Jesus, it says, ask of me the nations.

And the idea there is, did God tell the son ask of me for the nations? Yeah, Psalm 2 says that. And then you have to ask, did Jesus ask for the nations?

[25 : 53] It's like, well, of course he did. That's what he's, that's why he says all authority and power has been given to me in Matthew 28. Of course he asked. The father's telling him to ask, he asked.

He asked for the nations. And he says to the disciples in Matthew 28, the Great Commission, all authority has been given to me under heaven and earth. He received the nations.

And so what's really happening with the incarnation, and this is what most ancients saw, is that is that Jesus is working the program initially entrusted to Adam, but now purchased by Christ.

I mentioned a few weeks ago that you really need to figure out why it is that the apostles quote Psalm 110 so often.

And not just the whole Psalm, there's really only there's really mostly two sections that are repeatedly quoted. And one of those is about the ongoing priesthood of Jesus, which is a kingly priesthood.

[27 : 03] It's the order of Melchizedek who was both king and priest. King of Salem, king of peace, and a priest. So that's one section where the apostles quote Psalm 110 all the time about Jesus, but there's a second section, and that is sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

And it's quoted over and over and over and over again. See, one of the themes that will emerge in this podcast is I really want you to make sense of the big things before you try to make sense of the little things, and make sense of the more plain things and the repeated things more than the obscure things.

So before you go out figuring out what the wheel within the wheel is or what the weeks in Daniel are, this or that, let's make sure we can crawl before we walk and walk before we run.

And far more insistent in the New Testament is, hey, before you figure out what the third scroll is or whatever, why do the apostles keep quoting Psalm 110?

Well, I think the answer is that they saw that Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father to rule over the earth, and not only the earth, but to rule over the heavens and the earth through his word, through his spirit, and through his church in order to bring all of the enemies to ruin.

[28 : 43] I think the argument could be made something like whatever the spiritual powers and authorities and so on and so forth are that are still attempting to keep Adam's race in charge, all of that must be destroyed.

In biblical theology, this makes perfect sense. The new Adam is ruling and subduing by being fruitful and multiplying with his new bride. And the multiplying with his bride is spiritual, whereas the multiplying of the first bride was biological.

We, of course, love having lots of babies at Providence, but what we really are getting at, what we're really aiming at is spiritual children, and those two things are not the same.

And so Adam and Eve's dominion mandate, the way that they were to fulfill that in an unfallen state was to make babies, and these babies would be unfallen, perfect representations of the image of God, and they would fill the earth and this would please God.

And now we have sin in the world. And so what we're looking at now is Jesus, the second Adam, with his bride, the church, engaged in spiritual multiplication and filling the earth with his image bearers who are redeemed and justified and have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and have the spirit of God indwelling them and so on and so forth.

[30 : 14] And there's a way kind of just to kind of overlap these ideas pretty neatly. The new Adam is ruling and subduing with his bride by being fruitful and multiplying just as the old Adam was commanded to do.

And in both cases the bride is given to the king when he falls asleep. Now there's plenty of people who will tell you that the deep sleep Adam fell into in Genesis was death itself.

But certainly with Christ we have a similar situation. He even has his side wounded after he is dead and he awakes not only risen but given a bride, the church, all those who would believe in him.

Christ died and awoke with a new bride just like Adam. And the new Adam is cleaning up the mess made by the first Adam and he is fulfilling God's original mandate to rule and subdue by being fruitful and multiplying.

So that's kind of interesting, isn't it? Well, I think it is. Now I want to go back to 1 Corinthians 15 for a moment. And this is one of those places where Psalm 110 is quoted.

[31 : 26] Psalm 110 is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15 is about the resurrection. And I want you to hear the Christ Adam comparisons. 1 Corinthians 15 20.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order. Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ.

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God, the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power, for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Now, this is not an unclear passage. This isn't prophetic literature.

[32 : 25] This isn't highly symbolic. There's not a lot of typology going on. Well, there's some, but this would be one of our easier to understand passages.

Again, this is what I want to really encourage you to do. I want you to make sure when you're trying to understand God's plan for the future that you're getting hold of the texts that are obvious, of the texts that have a discernible meaning, and that you're using those first and you're not trying to jam these, I'm going to give you some examples here in a moment, but you're not trying to jam these relatively simple ideas into your pre-existing complex system.

So this passage tells us pretty simply that Jesus is going to reign at the right hand of the Father until all of his enemies are put under his feet. Every enemy will be conquered and humiliated, I think, is the idea.

I don't really know what that looks like. I can point you to dozens and dozens, maybe hundreds of substantial religions that no longer exist, historically substantial religions that no longer exist.

I didn't realize this. I got super into the TV show The Vikings, and I didn't realize, so I started doing some research, I didn't realize that we really have no idea how Nordic religion was exercised, not in very much precise detail.

[33 : 56] Most of what we understand is just made up to tell a story. We're just taking our best guess, and so all of these people supposedly returning, I say all, the people supposedly returning to Norse mythology as their religions, like, well, really, you're just LARPing a movie that you saw.

There's no way to actually, there's no book, there's no way to go back and do it the way that it was, quote unquote, supposed to be done. So somehow, in some way, Jesus is reigning at the right hand of the Father until all of his enemies are put under his feet, and the very last enemy, it says here in verse 26, to be destroyed is death.

And so this is how we can be kind of clear that the return of Jesus is coupled with the resurrection. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

death. So what we're waiting on now, where we are in history, if you're interested in a map at the mall, you were here, we are in this stage of time where Jesus with his bride is reigning and ruling and conquering his enemies.

enemies. This is not super far away from the basic idea of how God commanded Israel to occupy the promised land.

[35 : 20] It was essentially a clear them out and then move in kind of thing. And so I think when you're thinking of the judgment of the world and the future of this planet and the future of materiality, I think that the picture that really emerges is that Jesus has come to fulfill the original Adamic mandate to rule and subdue, to be fruitful and multiply, to fill this earth with people who are created in his image, recreated in his image through salvation, and that we're now in this stage, his ascension was to the right hand of the Father, and we're now at the stage where through his church, he works progressively through history to a certain point in which the enemies are his footstool.

Now, Hebrews will tell you that that's already happened in some respects, but it hasn't happened in the practical sense. Hebrews will tell you, you know, we don't see everything in subjection to him yet.

Everything is, of course, in subjection to God, but we don't see everything in subjection to him yet. So, that's kind of what I would consider to be kind of just a simple Bible-first sketch of God's perspective on materiality.

He seems very interested in it. He created himself, he gave himself a body. He is redeeming people from their sin, and one day will give them a new body, and when they get a new body, creation itself will be restored from its curse.

And so, behold, I am making all things new. It really is all things new. It's a complete refurbishment, a complete renewal of the world and all those who will live in it.

[37 : 20] Now, how does Jesus do this? I want to make sure we understand that there is nothing in this that is triumphalistic or prosperity gospel-ish.

In other words, the only way that Jesus is going to overcome his enemies is through the blood, sweat, and tears of his people. There's nothing about this project, as I'm presenting it, that should make us suggest we'll just be skipping and dancing through a progression of triumphalistic history.

Lewis, and back to his miracle essay, he says, the central miracle asserted by Christians in the incarnation. The central miracle asserted by Christians is the incarnation.

They say that God became man. Every other miracle prepares for this or exhibits this or results from this. In the Christian story, God descends to reascend.

He comes down, down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down to the very roots and seabed of the nature he has created. But he goes down to come up again and bring the ruined world with him.

[38 : 32] Listen to this next section. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden.

He must stoop in order to lift. He must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders.

Or one may think of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in midair, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay, then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover.

He and it are both colored now, colored now that they have come up into the light. Down below, where it lay colorless in the dark, he lost his color too.

In this descent and re-ascent, everyone will recognize a familiar pattern, a thing written all over the world. It is the pattern of all vegetable life.

[40 : 02] It must belittle itself into something hard, small, and death-like. It must fall into the ground. Thence the new life re-ascends.

So it is also with all of our moral and emotional life, the first innocent and spontaneous desires have to submit to the death-like process of control or total denial.

But from that, there is a re-ascent to fully formed character in which the strength of the original material operates, but in a new way. Death and rebirth go down to go up.

It is the key principle. Through this bottleneck, this belittlement, the high road nearly always lies.

The doctrine of the incarnation, if accepted, puts this principle even more emphatically at the center. The pattern is there in nature because it was first there in God. All of the instances of it which I have mentioned turned out to be but transpositions of the divine theme into a minor key.

[41 : 15] I am not now simply referring to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The total pattern of which they are only the turning point.

it is the real death and rebirth for certainly no seed ever fell so far for certainly no seed ever fell from so fair a tree into so dark and cold a soil as would furnish more than a faint analogy to this huge descent and reascension in which God dredged the salt and oozy bottom of creation.

So here we see let's connect a few thoughts that Jesus is diving down to the very bottom of existence.

He is becoming nothing in the form of a servant right? And taking the form of a servant and humbling himself to death even death on a cross.

But he goes all the way down to the very very bottom of creation to pull the whole thing up with him. And when he pulls it up not only does he regain his color from the descent but the creation regains its color as well.

[42 : 39] This is what Psalm 110 is talking about that after coming into this world living and dying and being raised he ascended to the right hand of the father until all of his enemies would become his footstool.

How does this happen? It happens by people part of the church part of his bride it happens when people engage in the exact same process that he engaged in in their own individual lives.

Another way to say this is that the way that Jesus is going to make all of his enemies his footstool is through faith. What is the enemy? Who is the enemy?

The enemy is fundamentally one who does not believe God. One who does not trust God. One who leans on his own understanding. This is how the world got into the position it's in.

This is why Adam and Eve failed. They did not trust. And the way out is the mega faith. The proto faith of Jesus.

[43 : 52] The proto belief of proto trust in the father that led him through his whole cycle which is the cycle and the seed. And then as a part of that he saves us and we engage in our minor versions of that very same trust all the way into nothing and back up into resurrection again.

And every time we do that we're taking one step closer to a world that is renewed after the image of its creator. This is really why eschatology does matter.

It matters to the extent that you believe that your life has something to do with the way God is going to end this story in triumph and glory.

The way out of this mess began with Christ trusting the father with the God man trusting his father and it continues with those who are born in Christ doing the very same thing.

Now I want to be careful I've been trying to do this more often just so we are safe from some potential theological errors but I want to be careful to talk about the difference between imitation of Christ and imputation.

[45 : 26] If we're thinking about imitation we're looking to what Christ did and we're attempting to engage in the same pattern. But the thing is to do that pattern requires spiritual power we don't possess.

And so we've got to understand that Jesus isn't only calling us to act like him but he is actually also acting through us. You can think of this life death and resurrection reveals a pattern of warfare.

Trust God like seeds fall to the ground and then the life death and resurrection of Jesus gives us the power we need to do to fight.

That's not super clear. That's not super helpful. Let me say this another way. When Paul says I worked harder than any of them never lost it was not I but Christ who worked in me.

Well here's how Paul here's what's going on with that story with that statement. Why is Paul working harder than any of them? In part because he's looking at Jesus who emptied himself and he's saying I'm going to imitate my Savior.

[46 : 38] I'm going to imitate my Lord. I'm going to give everything I have. I'm going to give so much that I can't even carry my own cross. I'm going to just literally empty myself out like Jesus emptied himself out.

So why is he working harder than anyone? In part because he's looking and imitating Jesus. But he's also clear to say that in that effort to imitate it wasn't him that was working but Christ that was working through him.

So Christ both shows us the pattern and gives us the power. He shows us the pattern and gives us the power to fulfill the pattern.

Now one of the verses that I've joked about this a few weeks ago that we quote all the time is Philippians 2. and the thing is that we usually only quote the pattern part the imitation part and we don't notice that there's the power promise right after it.

So let me read that text to you. If nothing else when you listen to this podcast you'll just get a lot of Bible. So I feel like I'm just going to keep reading a lot of Bible to you. At least you'll get that.

[47 : 49] Okay Philippians 2 verse 1. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, here's the imitation, right? Here's the pattern. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ, Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being founded human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

This is why you should imitate him, not only because he's your God but because God blesses this kind of activity. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[49 : 15] That's the section we read a lot. And by the way, you can see there's a bit of an illusion there to Psalm 110 where he is reigning and everyone has to give him his due.

They all have to acknowledge that he is indeed king. So that's the imitation part. And what we never do is read the imputation part. We read the pattern but we don't get the power.

And the power is in verse 12. Therefore, which is the very next verse, therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but also much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Did you hear that in verse 13? So what I've done, just so you're, because I know you're not looking at the verse, I've read verses 1 through 13, all continuation, like no gaps, anything like that.

And we're told in verses 2 through 11 to imitate this pattern, this pattern of, as Lewis describes it, falling like a seed to the ground and dying, the humiliation and exaltation pattern.

[50 : 29] But in verses 12 through 13 we're told that the power to do that comes from God. It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

So I want to say a couple things here. I do believe the dominion mandate stands and I do believe that God is working through the second Adam to fulfill it and that the church is his bride and the church is comprised of those who have been born again in his spirit and essentially recreated in the image of God.

And I believe that that is going to take place, that this ruling and subduing is going to take place through people like you and me dying to self, surrendering to God, taking risks, being humble, being meek, being faithful and essentially when we get the chance to surrender to him to do so knowing that that surrender is like a seed falling to the ground and dying.

And the next thing I want to make clear that I just mentioned is that it is God who is doing this in you. You see the pattern, you choose I want to do this too, God will work in you.

Now, I just think that all of this is tying into that creation mandate thing. And remember why we started this. We started this to just make sure we understand that God has high regard for his creation.

[52 : 02] The fulfillment of the creation mandate is a new race of people gathered from many tribes and tongues who will do what? And how will they do it? Well, Revelation 5, 9 through 10, worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Verse 10, Revelation 5, So that's the project.

He must reign until all of his enemies have been made a footstool, then he will come again and make all things new, renewing both us and our world in physical form. And he will do all of this step by step through faithful Christians, just trusting God, undoing the original, not the original sin, that would be wrong, undoing the fallout created by a world that has been filled with people who are not trusting God.

God will undo that by raising up people who do trust him. And they will walk in the power of what Christ purchased for them. That power is from Christ.

So I've done something accidentally, I'm just realizing, quite Baptist-y, because I've essentially alliterated my way through this. What's the project? What's the project? He is ruling and subduing and must reign until all of his enemies are made his footstool.

[53 : 39] I gave you the pathway. How does this happen? What path do we take? The pathway is to die to self, trust in God, and be vindicated in his spirit, in the world, so on and so forth.

It's the death-resurrection cycle. So I've given you the project, the pathway, and now I've started to talk about the power. This is all God working through us. And it's this power that Paul is so concerned that the Ephesians understand.

I would say that in Corinth, the problem was the pathway. they thought they were going to reign by being high on themselves. They thought they were going to reign by being big deals.

They thought they were going to reign by spiritual gifts of power. So Paul is correcting them by saying, no, no, no, no, no, that's not how we win the world. We win the world by being full of love, and that love does not boast, and it does not envy, and so on and so forth.

But the Ephesians seem to be needing to know about the power, the power that comes from God. So in chapter 1 of Ephesians 1, he says, for this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and here comes another Psalm 110, seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come, and he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

[56 : 01] So one more thing, and then I'm going to talk about just a few kind of guidance on thinking about eschatology, but these three things, the project, the pathway, and the power, they're interdependent.

You can't get, you can't remove one of them and see any progress at all. And I have seen over the years people just sort of almost accidentally, but kind of naturally, like, you know, you know the way that a toddler somehow finds the most dangerous thing in the house within five minutes of being in that house?

It seems like Christians are always looking for a way to screw this up. It's not, it's so not as complicated as we're making it sound, but man, I just feel like you just, you just watch, you just watch people like, and you know, you watch yourself take this very simple thing and really get it all twisted and messed up.

The girls were what were into this show called Bob's Burgers, and I think it's a pretty cute show. I've only seen a few episodes. Maybe one of you can pull this up and put it on Base Camp for us.

There's a video of him teaching his daughter to drive and they're in this massive open parking lot. There's basically no way to screw this up, except there's one light pole, you know, in the center of this utterly abandoned empty parking lot and she's creeping along and he keeps saying to the daughter as she's driving, like, the pole, the pole, the pole, like, don't hit the pole, don't hit the pole.

[57 : 36] And she could literally turn anywhere and not hit the pole. It just somehow figures out how to hit the pole. You know, I just don't see this whole thing as all that complicated.

It just seems like we keep finding a way to mess it up. Anyway, with that said, I will say that, you know, the world's a completely different place than it was 2,000 years ago. There's quite a bit of evidence that Jesus has been fairly successful in his reign at the right hand of the father and that there have been indeed many enemies made his footstool and that it has indeed come about through just average people just taking, you know, crucifixion-like risks in key moments.

Some of them are big and some of them are small and so on. But anyway, that's kind of the story that is so far as I see it. Okay. I think one of the things to ask, because people kind of tend to think this way, people will sometimes say, is this postmill?

Is what you're saying postmill? Here's what I want to tell you. The average Christian is generally pretty poorly served by rushing to label things because then when you label them, you start interacting with the labels more than you do the ideas themselves.

And there's always like some like tarnish on each position. You know, premills have a bad reputation in this way or some premills do, right?

[59 : 12] Or some amills have a bad reputation in that way or some postmills have a bad reputation in this way. It's really best to do your best, especially, you know, for just the average Christian.

You just really think about the ideas themselves. Let's make sure, secondly, that we're prioritizing the most plain texts first. And this is a big thing for me.

I just will always kind of ask myself, do I have the ones that I should understand understood? It isn't clear to me that God has intended the same level of certainty for all parts of his word.

I think that's fair. I think that it is not as, not everything in scripture is equally as knowable. And sometimes when I really study hard, I can wind up thinking, well, there's probably only two possibilities here, or three possibilities.

But there are so many texts that are simply undeniably straightforward. forward. And so one of the ways to talk about this is I always wonder, I always wonder from the other eschatological positions, it's like, are you sure you're not like jumping to the most random, weird spots, the spots that are the hardest to understand?

[60 : 32] And in doing so, kind of forcing yourself to have weird definitions for some of the most obvious stuff? For instance, you know what the first verse of Revelation says?

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. That's the first verse of Revelation.

Now, I've got people that will chart out chapter 20 or chapter 12, and there's a full PowerPoint slide deck on this means that, that means this, and here's where Russia is, and so on and so forth.

And then when you ask them, what does soon mean in Revelation 1-1? Then they start getting all weird, and they start coming up with all these sort of abstract interpretations for the word soon.

It's like the mysterious stuff, the prophetic genre stuff, it's like, yeah, that stuff's easy for me, but I can't define soon in a way that makes sense.

[61 : 42] I think soon probably should just mean soon, it's a first verse, and then work on all this other stuff. Another example of that is, but see, what will happen is they'll work on all the other stuff first because this is how people teach eschatology.

They work on all the weird stuff first and then they have to cram soon in, the meaning of soon, into system, into harmonize with their system. Another example of that is Matthew 24, 34.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. It's like a lot of people have really fancy and elaborate kind of literally, you know, what I would call Baroque or Byzantine kind of examples of, you know, their eschatology, and this chapter is about this time period and so on and so forth and this and that.

But it's like, okay, what does the word generations mean? What does the word generation mean? And they will have to, because they've committed to this highly ornate system, they will have to make that word mean something other than what it just would typically mean, which is a group of people alive at a certain time.

So, and is it possible to get a different meaning out of generations? It is. It's just like, why? Why am I doing that? Why am I going to that extreme when it could just mean right then?

[63 : 15] And it seems like, well, I'll just take the things that are pretty obvious. I'll take the most simple meaning of those things and then see how far I can get out into the weeds of the mysteries.

And maybe some of it makes sense, maybe some of it doesn't. Here's another way of thinking about this. Every eschatology has some passages that don't seem to fit their explanation.

That's why this debate is kind of endless. So the premillennial has problem passages. The amillennial has problem passages. The postmillennial has problem passages.

But you know what I've noticed? is that the postmillennial problem passages are the passages that are extremely thick with prophetic metaphor and symbolism.

And the premillennial's problem passages are with the word soon. Or the word generations. It's like, well, you know, I think that should tell you something.

[64 : 23] It tells me something. I would rather have an eschatology that didn't have to invent a new meaning for the word soon, but then as a consequence of that, wasn't able to tell you what the fourth scroll was.

Because I think that that's just, that just makes more sense to me. To me, spending all of your effort trying to understand the more complicated sections, arriving at some schemata, some schema, some explanation, and then getting to the word soon and having to make that word mean, well, he didn't really mean soon.

Or getting to the word generations, like, well, he didn't really mean generations. So you're telling me that locust is an Apache helicopter, but soon means 2,000 years from now. Got it. Let me give you a couple examples.

One of the things that I'm really concerned about is, even more than that, is I want to make sure that my eschatology fits the basic claims of the gospel. And, again, I think that's one of the reasons.

I'm not a post-millennial in some kind of sense of, you know, I didn't go out studying this. I didn't, I didn't, I think like most people, I didn't decide like I want to be an eschatology guy.

[65 : 45] I think all of us at this point are kind of eschatology fatigue. So it wasn't that. It just, it just was stuff that emerged from, from just more basic Bible things.

Whether it be the creation mandate, whether it be the word soon in Revelation 1-1, the word generation, the idea of Adam, the second Adam, you know, lots of stuff like that.

But I want to make sure that your eschatology doesn't violate the actual gospel. And there is, that does exist in kind of radical dispensationalism.

And I know I'm throwing terms around and I would take the time to define it, but this is already too long and it doesn't really matter. Again, I'm not trying to get you into labels, I'm trying to get you away from labels.

But, you know, here's an example of what I'm talking about. I just want to make sure that my eschatology fits with the gospel. One of the things that the gospel says is that there's no other way to the father except through the son.

[66 : 47] And in Acts 4.12, when Peter is speaking to the Jewish authorities, he says, there's no other name under heaven or earth by which men may be saved. So one of the things I'd want to make sure about my view of the end times or the future is I want to make sure that I understand that the only way that Jews are saved is by bending the knee to Jesus and coming to the father through him.

And if you have some other explanation for how the Jews will be saved, then that's a big problem because your eschatology doesn't even fit with the basic centrality of the gospel.

Think of it this way. If the Jews rebuilt the temple and resumed sacrifices, they would be moving radically farther away from Christ, not toward him, because they would be denying the efficacious once and for all nature of Christ's final sacrifice.

It'd be like, it is finished, not for us, bring in the ox. And this is really what Hebrews is talking about. So I wouldn't want any kind of eschatology that believes that the Jews are saved one way and the Gentiles are saved another way.

There are some even who think that the Jews get earth and that the Christians get heaven. And of course, we saw earlier in Revelation 5, they will reign on the earth with him, speaking of all the tribes, that that's just not true.

[68 : 16] And then here is something I just can't shake. But you know, sometimes you get an idea in your head and you're just, you lock in the cycle too quickly and then you kind of can't get out of it until someone pushes back.

So I would love to hear some pushback on any of this, but here's one of the things that for me has been difficult to get past. And I just refer to it as kind of basic gospel math.

Here's the way I think about it. Does salvation make men better or not? Do they live better lives or not? So that's the first step.

Is being reborn in the spirit make you live a better life? Does being born in the spirit make you live a better life?

And I think, you know, yeah, that's for sure true. There's no way of getting around that. Secondly, will the majority of Christian people be instrumental in leading at least a few other people to Christ in their lifetime?

[69 : 24] And I would include kids and coworkers and neighbors and so on and so forth. And I think the answer to that is yes. That's the expectation that's put forth in scripture. Number one, when people get saved, they lead better lives.

Number two, does the average Christian lead other people to Christ? And the answer is maybe not as many as they should, but over the course of a lifetime, if that were not true, there would be fewer Christians today than there were, you know, 2,000 years ago.

So the majority of Christians will lead a few people to Christ. So we have increasing numbers. Salvation causes people to live better lives. What is the logical conclusion of having more Christians living better than they did before they came to Christ?

Christ? What is the logical conclusion of more Christians and their little slice of the world, their little sphere of influence being improved because of the fruit of the Spirit?

I just think this is basic gospel math of an optimistic future. To me, a pessimistic future implies somehow that one of those two presuppositions is not true.

[70 : 42] Now push back on this because I've thought through, am I getting it wrong? I sometimes feel like there's something I'm not seeing that everyone else is seeing.

But to me, a pessimistic future implies either Christians will stop being better as a result of being Christians or B, the average Christian is not expected to or will reproduce themselves beyond the rate of replacement.

if one of those two things is not true, then yeah, I can see how maybe we have a pessimistic future.

But if both of those things are true, the only counterpoint I can see is that somehow huge waves of persecution drop in, but the truth is that we've seen huge waves of persecution and they don't usually have any real stifling effect on the church at all.

What I'm concerned about is that our eschatology reveals that we don't actually think the coming of Christ was a big monumental change in power and we don't actually believe that salvation changes people to the extent the Bible says it does.

[72 : 00] I feel like if you believed both those things, it seems to me like the conclusion is an optimistic eschatology. I think the point I'm getting at is to ask, what am I doing with the easy stuff in the Bible?

Words like soon and generations, the basic gospel math that seems to point to a certain outcome. What am I making of the fact that there were 40 believers at the day of Pentecost and now there are considerably more?

Now, last thing for me is people will sometimes say, does eschatology even matter? Well, I think it does matter. I think it would be weird to suggest that a major theme in Scripture doesn't matter to personal daily life.

But I think that what people use as their main eschatological discussions, the timing of the millennium, the nature of the millennium, those things, I'm not sure those things matter, but as much as as much as having basic hope that God will rule from the right hand of the Father until he makes his enemies his footstool, I think that matters.

I think not reading those texts well affects the way you read the Bible. So I would say it's too lazy a thing to say that eschatology doesn't matter at all. I think having an airtight system doesn't matter at all.

[73 : 24] The label doesn't necessarily matter. It might be more hurtful than it is helpful, but the one thing that seems to matter is what does God want us to know about the future?

because if he wants us to know certain things, then yeah, apparently that he thinks it matters. I've got two tests for you, two ways to kind of, two heuristics to think of, and I'm really five minutes from being done.

And the first one is what I would call the mind-blown test. I don't know if it's ever happened to you, but I've been in conversations, maybe like at a dinner party or something, you know, where everybody's sitting around the table and it's one of those nice rare moments where everybody's having the same conversation.

You know, it's not like four different conversations, it's just one. And imagine someone says something and you think, oh, that's interesting. I mean, that's a pretty good idea or that's kind of an interesting idea.

But everybody else at the table, just their jaws hit the floor. And, you know, there's like a sense of awe that fills the room. And you're just this bystander, you don't get, like, what, why is everybody else freaking out about this?

[74 : 39] And people start saying what that person just said is the most profound thing I've ever heard. They're genuinely overcome by the statement.

And you're the schlub, you know, sitting at the table who's like the one person who's not super impressed. I mean, the thought mentioned was a good one and you thought it was true and cool insofar as it goes.

But it's not causing your jaw to hit the floor. And there's got to be some explanations for the disparity between your reaction and everybody else's. And, you know, it could be that they're all just dumb and easily impressed or it could be that you're dumb and you don't understand the implications.

Friends, when you look at how the apostles responded to the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, their jaws hit the floor.

They were utterly astounded at this development. And I'd say, like, really, your eschatology starts there. Your eschatology has to start with understanding the degree to which the coming of God to earth is revolutionary.

[75 : 57] And you don't want to be the person who's kind of like, well, I mean, it's kind of, it's, it's great, but, you know, and I'm glad it happened, but it's like, no, they all thought this was a revolution of the first degree.

So I'd say make sure your eschatology accommodates this sense of wonder and amazement at the first coming of Christ. Every eschatology has to start with the first coming of Christ in some respects.

And the second thing I would say or throw out to you, oh, and don't forget, you still have to figure out why Psalm 110 gets quoted all the time in the New Testament. I'm not doing your work for you.

And the second thing, just to close, is what I would call the Boniface test. So somewhere around 730 AD, a man named Boniface was attempting to evangelize the northern German horde, some of y'all's relatives, and some of my relatives, the problem was everybody there worshipped a tree, and the tree was called Thor's Oak.

Well, Boniface took Psalm 110 very literally. Like, this is an enemy of God, this tree. And he grabbed an axe, and he went to cut down the tree.

[77 : 11] Now, it's a huge tree. This is a problem. It was worshipped because it was huge amongst other reasons, I guess. And I'm sure the challenge with this is that he's thinking, how am I going to cut through this tree before the pagans cut through me?

But as the story goes, he slung the axe in faith at this tree, and with that single notch, the tree is said to have fallen down on its own.

And the story goes on to say that the tree was processed and used to build a Christian church. So here's the question. Does your eschatology give you any incentive to oppose the idols of our age?

Now, the safe option is to go into full piety mode and focus only on the idols of your own heart. No one is going to cut you down for cutting down your own idols.

Idols. In fact, there are some, but there are some idols that you have in you that can't be cut down until you turn out into the world and start cutting down other people's idols.

[78 : 27] Your idol of comfort and safety and low conflict and man's praise, you can't cut those down without first going out into the world and taking aim at the world's gods.

And so it seems obvious to me that any eschatology ought to, at the very least, motivate you to do that.

to step up with Boniface to the Thor's Oak of today or to the many Thor's Oaks of today and take a swing. I don't know.

Does your eschatology encourage you to do that? I mean, post millennialism does. So thank you for your patience. Again, I would not be an ideal instructor on this topic.

I really can just walk you through how I've gotten to where I've gotten. And a lot of it is with the most simple of the texts and the most fundamental of ideas in scripture.

[79 : 33] The dominion mandate, the second Adam, the church as his Eve, Psalm 110, soon means soon, generations mean generations, so on and so forth.

So I hope that's been of interest to you and I would absolutely love to hear your feedback, whether you do that on the Spotify app itself or you can reach out to me.

This is really a podcast for people who I already know and serve at Providence Community Church, so all those folks know how to get a hold of me. Well, may God richly bless you and keep you and may God's word, even the word that was read today, echo through your heart and be transformative for you from one degree of glory to the next.

God loves you so much, he gave himself for you. If you haven't given yourself to him, you're holding out, man. It's time to trust Jesus.

It's time to trust Jesus. All right, God bless you, friend. Talk to you next time. Goodbye. Bye.