

Special 24-08-25a

Good morning, this is the 25th of August, 2024. Welcome to Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're doing a little special this morning.

There's so much going on. There are events taking place and words being spoken and messages being delivered that impinge on how we view the world, our expectations of this life and the life to come. How close are we to the return of the Lord Jesus? And in particular this morning, we're going to take a look at one example.

I chose this example and sent it to you earlier in the week because it's representative. If you are listening to this historically, I would suggest that you pause here and go find Jonathan Cahn on YouTube. He has a video about earth-shaking mysteries for 2024.

He has another one on the assassination attempt on Mr. Trump. And these are the two that we've looked at in advance so that I don't have to spend time summarizing them. But we're going to discuss this morning, this kind of message with its implications for us as believers.

What should we think when we hear these very stimulating and very well-presented messages? What does the word of God have to say about people who are saying things about the word of God? That's the long title for this morning. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, we are so thankful that we are led by your spirit, enabled and empowered and enlightened by your word, motivated by the example of the Lord Jesus who lived this life in our observation so that we can look to him and see how the spirit-filled life, the life that is guided by every word that comes from you, the fulfilled plan and purpose that you had for him is reflected in the plans and purposes you have for us.

We see him now glorified and seated at your right hand and we are privileged to have him as our intercessor pleading our case in your presence. We thank you for the preservation of the narratives and the teaching and the promises and the prophecies that are in your word. And we ask this morning as we look at some of these together that your Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding, help us to see clearly what it is that we are to take from your word, how it applies, how it shines a light on our path so that we can walk by means of the spirit, we can travel the narrow road and head for the straight gate that leads to life.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Well, first of all, let me say that this is not a negative message per se. I believe with Paul and you can turn with me to begin with to Philippians.

Philippians chapter one, Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, wedged in there just ahead of Colossians. Philippians chapter

one, the folks at Philippi were a more stable and mature group. Paul enjoyed them because he could go a little bit further down the doctrinal road with them.

But he says something in the first chapter here that I think is pertinent for us. He said in verse 12 of Philippians chapter one, I want you to know brothers that the things which have happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. The furtherance of the gospel.

It's become evident to the whole palace guard, to the rest that my chains are in Christ. My current circumstances, which seem to be adverse are actually a part of my witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, isn't this true of all of us? If anyone knows us, they should know that we're believers.

And that whatever we face by way of opportunity or challenge, it is related to our identity in him and witness for him, right? So Paul says the things that are happening to me are an opportunity for God to reflect the Lord Jesus Christ in and through my life. This is our first foremost important observation as we approach our material this morning is we are defined by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved through him.

We exist in him. In him, we live and move and have our being. He has been made to us righteousness, peace and sanctification.

We have so many wonderful privileges, promises and potentials in Christ. We saw this in detail when we studied Ephesians chapter one. So whatever we do, however we approach, whatever is going on, whether it is exterior to us or internal to our personal circumstance in life, this is the principle.

I want you to know brethren that what has happened to me has turned out for the furtherance of the good news of Jesus Christ. If what we go through, if our conversations, our interactions, people observing our circumstances, our conduct, our hope, our faith, our love, it ought to be a testimony to the good news of Jesus Christ. This is kind of a given, but it's worth rehearsing and reminding ourselves.

Everything centers around our privilege of being body of Christ. His physical body left the earth. We are here in its place.

And we have the same opportunities. We have the same goals as God purposed for him in making the issue of relationship with God and salvation in Christ clear. So that is what Paul leads with here.

He says, most of the brethren in the Lord have become confident by my chains. Paul has a beneficial effect on his fellow believers, even though he's in dire straits. This is encouraging the brethren.

And they are made more bold to do what? What are believers doing as a result of Paul's

hardships? They are speaking the word without fear. How many times in our pastoral studies have we seen the importance of the truth of God? That it is the word. Preach the word in season, out of season.

Speak the truth to one another in love. Do not tolerate false teaching. Expel false teachers who lead people astray.

Some indeed preach Christ from not the greatest motives. Some of them are in competition. This strife can be actual animosity and grievance and argumentation and taking sides and being bitter toward one another.

But this strife can also just be competition. I wanna get my word out there. I want to be heard above the cacophony of voices in the Christian world.

And there's never been a greater access to people who want to tell us about the word of God, what it means, the significance, the portent, the prophetic import, and so on. Some preach Christ even from envy and strife, I would say, or competition or desire to continue to be well-known, possibly have your resources and books and videos and so on be popularized, distributed, sold. Some also from goodwill.

The former preach Christ from selfish motivations. Ambition is just motives. In some way, it's beneficial to myself.

Not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my chains. And there were those who were actually trying to sort of kick Paul when he was down and supersede him as being influential in the early church. God can't be blessing Paul.

Look where he is. He's a convicted felon, you might say. But the latter, those who are operating out of goodwill are doing it out of love.

Knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. This is your appointment and my appointment. Defense of the gospel, representation of the good news of life in Christ, relationship with the father, opportunities now and in the future to claim his promises, to receive his blessings, to receive his inheritance, to have service and function in the kingdoms that are to come.

It's a bright hope. Even though we endure our afflictions, those momentary light afflictions are working for us an eternal weight of glory. This is the core.

This is the heartwood of the tree. This is the strength of the vine in which we abide. These truths right here.

This defines us. And this is our starting point when we want to analyze what might be presented to us as a message from the word of God. If it is truly a message from the word of God, these are the things that it will promote.

So with reference to our example, and this is just an example. Our family has read together, Jonathan Kahn, C-A-H-N. He's published a number of books and there's a lot of fascinating observation in these books and in the videos that accompany and summarize some of them.

The Return of the Gods is a book our family worked through while we were on a trip that a lot of times we'll read to pass the miles. And a lot of interesting things, it's thought provoking. And let me say at the outset that anything that causes us to reach for our Bible and riffle through its pages and read its content and prayerfully reflect, meditate, regurgitate what we have learned from it is not a bad thing.

Even opposition can help us clarify our beliefs, our understandings. And in any presentation, there will be some truth. Even the serpent in the garden stated some truth when he was talking to Eve.

It was her job to sort what is true and what's not quite so true. And so that's gonna be our approach. I have enjoyed researching some of the observations, the claims, the presentation that Jonathan Cahn has made with regard to what the Bible says and what is going on in recent history.

It's stimulating. It is fun to go test our own observations and reflections, our memory of what we've learned in the past. And so that which sends us into the substance and the foundation of our faith is a good thing.

Jonathan Cahn is a messianic Christian. He is a believer. He loves the Lord.

He has multiple ministries that do wonderful things. And by their fruit, ye shall know them. And none of us get everything right 100% of the time, but if what we get right produces fruit, then those parts are good.

So I will start by saying, I think Jonathan Cahn is a lot of fun to watch. I enjoy his enthusiasm. I enjoy his absolute solid belief that the word of God is true, that it has truth that pertains to us.

His enthusiasm is infectious. His observations are noteworthy in that they're not always laying right on the surface of the word. And you've got to go back and check about this Levitical ritual or that period of time that is mentioned in the word of God.

I think that's all great. It's good. And I am happy for the opportunity to go through and offer a few thoughts about these two specific videos that I have suggested to you earlier.

One is the earth-shaking prophecies of 2024, and the other is the assassination attempt some weeks back on Mr. Trump. So without further ado, let me begin by addressing his introduction. He said, it is good to speak to people who are excited about the Lord.

I could not agree more. We are here because we are excited about the Lord. And anytime you get a group of people who have an enthusiasm and an interest and appreciation, a love for God, a love for the Lord Jesus, a love for the word of God, that's a great opportunity.

I get to do that frequently, regularly, and it's the highest, heavenliest privilege of human life, as Dr. Criswell said. So after he said that, he said, it's awesome. God is real.

And then he says, the Bible says, the sons of Issachar knew the times. And so they knew what they should do. And we are to be like the sons of Issachar.

We need to know the signs of the times. This is true. We've done a sort of ongoing special.

We did a core special and then we've added onto it. This will probably be added onto it. That's called the signs of the times.

And it is good. But here is where I already got distracted. And I ended up with two and a half pages of notes before I got past this sentence.

Let me read it again. This is a transcript. You know what? God is real.

The Bible says, the sons of Issachar knew the times. So they knew what they should do. And we are to be like the sons of Issachar.

We need to know the signs of the times. God is real. And that is something that the Bible does say about the sons of Issachar.

In general, Jesus also encouraged the disciples. You know how to judge what weather is coming by red sky in the morning, sailor take warning, red sky at night, sailors to light, or words to that effect. That's the Navy's paraphrase of what Jesus said.

You can judge the weather by what you see in the sky. Why can you not judge the signs of the times? That is something we certainly should do. I'm going to return to this point because I'm going to give you my two and a half pages after we get a little further.

But I will tell you, I was diverted right at this point. And I think you'll enjoy the fruits of it. But let me go forward and continue to his next point.

God is love, God is just, and God is true. And he deals with all things so that he is not mocked. No argument there.

Good, solid agreement to start with. His next statement is a question. What if he is sending us a message, giving us a prophetic revelation of where we are, where we're going, and what we need to know? What if there was from the Bible a blueprint for this hour about what we need to know to prevail in the days ahead and even the end times?

This set of lessons this morning for us is designed to give us a framework for analyzing and evaluating messages of this kind from any source, from anywhere, whether it's something we read, something old, something new, borrowed or blue.

There is a lot of interest in end times prophecy right now as you watch Israel, as you see nations beginning to align in hostility all around, attacks from every direction as recently as the last 24 hours. We are very much aware that there is a need to understand what we should be doing in light of what seems to be a convergence of circumstances indicating that the end may be near. But let me ask you this, let's go back to these questions.

God is just, God is true, God is love, God deals with all things. What if he is sending us a message? What's your answer to that question? Is God sending us a message? Do we have information, a message, a word from the Lord? Is there any word from the Lord? The answer of course is yes. Where do we find that message? It is before you, it is open to some passage, hopefully Philippians chapter one.

This is our message from the Lord. So as a starting point and what I would suggest we do slightly differently than the prophetic excitement folks tend to do. If you notice there is a profound and yet not always noticed difference in starting point, in approach.

We are living in circumstances, we have both personal, social, national, political, international circumstances. If I want to know how I should think, how I should prioritize, what my goals and purposes, how I should pray, do I start with circumstances and try to parse these factors to determine what I should do? No, our starting point is the word of God. This has been emphasized to the point that I only need to mention it here in our recent pastoral studies, as with almost every study we've ever done.

God's truth is the foundation. The church is the pillar and ground of truth, not the pillar and ground of let me grab the headlines and see if I can somehow connect the Bible to the headlines. I look at the headlines in the light of what I know from scripture.

And it's not always easy to tell which is the heart and which is the head, which is first and which is second. What is cause and what is effect when people begin with a headline? I see something in the headlines. What does the word of God tell me? Here is the key.

What is the word of God profitable for? I doubt that there's a person listening to the sound of my voice who doesn't remember the scripture. The word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, clearly parsing the events of the day and the circumstances of the world, rightly dividing politics, society, culture, social issues. What does the word of God aim its sharp sword at? I have the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God in my hand, but that sword has already penetrated to my heart and my soul, my joints and my marrow.

And it is a judge, a critic of my thoughts and my intents. So what is it I am looking for when I have a situation, external or internal, and I go to the word of God? How should I think? How should I speak? How should I live? To his credit, Jonathan Cahn is going to conclude his presentation with a very strong personal exhortation to living a Christian life that bears witness that reflects faith and hope and love. He does a wonderful job of that.

And I will say that he could have gone straight to the conclusion without a lot of the intervening material. He starts well, people who share an enthusiasm. He ends well.

We should live a life that reflects God's glory and anticipates the Lord Jesus' return. No argument there. But the word of God gives us the means how to do that.

And so often we have good intentions at the beginning and we have a wonderful exhortation at the end, but what gets left out is how do I do this? Where does the power come from? Where is the discernment? Where is the leading and the guiding? And my divergence from Cahn's approach is I do not find it in correspondences between current events and ancient records of the Bible. That because a certain number of years matches or a pattern seems to emerge where this follows that and then this happens. And I would rather skip the trying to find needles in haystacks of history and just go straight to the word of God, spend our time there.

So when he says, what if he is sending us a message, God does send us a message, but he doesn't send it to us in circumstances. You can take two believers. One is in the midst of prosperity, blessing, opportunity, advancement, everything is going great.

This is entering the land flowing with milk and honey and being allotted a field. And you've got, you're like Job. You've just got prosperity everywhere you turn and opportunity to be a blessing to others as Job had.

Other believers are in the other phase of Job's experience, which is hardship and deprivation and loss and grief, personal suffering of a severe nature, bereavement of a horrendous nature, losing all 10 of your children at once. And Job can not draw a message from God from his prosperity any more than he can draw a message from God from his adversity. Job navigates his prosperity and his adversity through what he knows about God.

And when his three friends come and the dialogues ensue, as we saw in that wonderful study, people have varying degrees of understanding of God's character, his plan, his purpose, his priorities. And from their perspective, they will endeavor to interpret circumstances in the light of God's word. And to their credit, Job's friends are Job's friends because they're knowledgeable believers.

They don't get it right, but that time they spend with Job is a Bible class where God comes in at the end and grades their test. And Job offers sacrifices and they are drawn

closer to God and they learn something because they are healthy, growing believers. Nothing wrong with getting it wrong when you haven't learned everything you need to know.

It's a learning process. And that's the reason we're here in a fallen sinful world with a fallen sinful nature is to learn. And sometimes we learn in our mistakes.

What if he is sending us a message? Definitely God is sending us a message, but I will claim on the foundation of the word of God, God is not sending us a message by raising up various individuals or spacing events at certain intervals in the modern day. That is not the way God sends messages. We have got the word of God to do that.

And the word of God has so much in it. I looked up these statistics. The old Testament has got 929 chapters, 23,145 verses.

Think of that, over 23,000 verses in the old Testament, 622,000 words, a lot of material. The new Testament has 260 chapters, almost 8,000 verses and around 185,000 words. The entire Bible has 1189 chapters.

31,000 verses and 807,000 words. Do you think in that vast landscape that if you look hard enough, you will find something similar, some part of a narrative, some circumstance, some incident, some detail that matches another circumstance, detail, pattern or incident in the modern day? Let me give you an example. This is called the birthday mystery.

If you gather a group of 23 people, there's a 40% chance, 40% chance in a group of 23 people that two of them have the same birthday. Any random collection, get 23 people, you've got an almost 50-50 chance of two of them having the same birthday. If you get a group of 40 people, there's a better than 90% chance that two of them will have the same birthday.

Even though there's 365 days in a year, if you work out the math, it is a virtual certainty that in a group of 40 people, two of them will have the same birthday. What are the odds? Well, the odds are not as astronomical as one might think. The same is true of Scripture.

There is so much in God's Word by way of description, detail, ritual, didactic material, poetic material, prophetic material, it's like the birthday people in the room. You're going to find a match sooner or later. This was the basis for the Bible codes.

Remember when they took the Hebrew text and put it into grids and then started, it's like those word puzzles where you're trying to find a word on the diagonal or a word on the, you know, it's a skip code. Every 14th letter, you take that and you get a whole new string of letters. And then they would look in there and find Hebrew messages.

And of course you're going to, the words in Hebrew are almost all three letters and there's only 22 letters in the alphabet. So if you do a random string of Hebrew characters, you're going to find Hebrew words all the way through it. And you can choose a couple that are significant to you, the month of Adar and murder, or the month of Nisan and lamb.

You're going to find these. If you look hard enough, is it a message from God? Is your circumstance of blessing or adversity a message from God? Not to say that this circumstance is not from God, known to God, carefully calibrated to enter our life at that point. Hear me closely.

All of our lives are in God's hands. There is not a sparrow that falls to the ground that he doesn't know about. And we are worth more than many sparrows, according to the Lord Jesus.

The question is in the word message. Our circumstances, our opportunities and challenges, our tests, our blessings, our hardships are known to God. They are organized, sequenced, timed by God.

But that's not a message. That is a place to apply the message, right? Where is the message? Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. David never says the sequence of circumstances and attacks from the Philistines and the Amorites and the fealty or lack of loyalty on the part of my followers and the decisions that my sons make.

They are a message to me of what I should or shouldn't do. The message is not in the circumstance. The message is applied to the circumstance.

And this is my strongest point of departure from those who present the word of God and current events the way that Jonathan Cahn does. He is starting with the circumstances and finding a message in them rather than navigating and responding to circumstances from the message that is in the word of God. The message is not in the circumstance.

Paul says, I know both how to be abased and how to abound. But Paul didn't get his apostolic message and the good news of Jesus Christ from his periods of abounding or his periods of abasement. His message came from the Lord Jesus Christ and he has communicated it to us and it's recorded in the pages of scripture along with the rest of God's message.

So the language betrays the difference in approach here. So what if God is sending us a message and giving us a prophetic revelation of where we are, where we're going and what we need to know? Can you answer those three questions from Bible class? Do you know where you are? Do you know where you're going? Do you know what you need to know to pray, to decide what to say, what to speak, who to vote for, how to respond to good times and bad? Do you know those things? Or do you need a newspaper and your

Bible and you're gonna use the two together? The Catholics made this mistake when they said, well, we've got the Bible, but we also need the church and we're gonna get part of the message from the church and part of the message from the Bible. And when the Pope speaks ex cathedra, that's equal authority with the word of God.

So if I see a symmetry or a harmony or a similar pattern in current events and I see it in scripture, am I gonna combine those two together to get my message for where I am, where I'm going and what I need to know? No, those things only come from the word of God under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I do not read portents. I don't read tea leaves.

I don't watch for doves flying overhead. That's my favorite one, by the way. I actually knew someone who had two doves fly over their head and they made an important life decision that turned out horrifically because it wasn't a sign.

God does not communicate to us via signs to give a message. God authenticates a message at certain points in history via signs and he also authenticates a messenger. So let me close real quick.

If you're still in Philippians, turn over a couple of pages to Colossians. Colossians, if you look at the ministry output of Jonathan Cahn, and I don't mean to pick on him, I'm just, he's a convenient example. His book output, his video output and so on are all centered on mysteries.

Mysteries. And so if you look at a list of the videos or a list of the books, there's the Josiah mystery, there's the Trump mystery, there's the Biden mystery, there's everything is a mystery, right? And to align current events with things that are in the Bible is to reveal a mystery, to preach a mystery. If you look at Colossians, Paul says in verse 24 of chapter one, I rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God.

The mystery, which has been hidden from the ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to his saints, to them God will to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. What is the mystery? What is the mystery that has been revealed to us? Is it how long Hillary Clinton was in public office? Is it how much blood was on Trump's big toe? Oh my gosh, I'm sorry. Continue to read here in Colossians during the break.

I'm not gonna go through it, we've seen this before. Continue on in the hearts in chapter two, verse two, being encouraged, knit together in love, attaining the riches of full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and Christ. You want a mystery? Come to Grace and Truth and let's look at the mysteries that God reveals.

Go to any good teaching church, find somebody who's in the word and understands that Paul is the apostle of the mystery and nobody that's got a YouTube channel is an apostle. No one has been given the stewardship of the mystery but Paul, uniquely so. Peter didn't get the stewardship of the mystery.

John didn't get the stewardship of the mystery. John's got a revelation and a lot of it is harmonious and extends what is found in Ezekiel, in Isaiah, in Daniel. The mystery is all the apostle Paul.

If you wanna know mysteries, don't waste your time on videos, dig into the word of God. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, the Thessalonian letters, the pastorals that we're looking at now. You wanna know the mystery? Go there.

What does that mystery do for you? It doesn't raise the alarm on current events, it transforms us by the renewing of our minds so that we may know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12, one and two. You wanna know God's will? You wanna know if God has a message for today? How should you act in the face of world events, current events, social events, personal circumstances? You don't need a newspaper headline.

You don't need a history book. You've got the book in your hand. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to go ahead and address some of the interesting points that are raised in these videos. I find it fascinating, it's fun. This is not a negative, you know, fellow believer bashing session at all.

At the same time, we do wanna discern how we should respond. And we'll see that when we come back.