

W107_Converging_Lines_Of_Prophecy.mp3

[00:00:02] This is a recording made at the Chapel of the Open Book. Under the covering title of the Pleroma. The special series. We are now dealing with the book of the Revelation, the closing chapters 19 to 22. It is our custom at this meeting to read a portion of scripture together first. So those of you who are listening, if you care to join us, will you switch off for a little while and read with us? Psalms 90 and 91. Psalms 90 and 91. These two songs. Both by Moses. The first one is stated to be so. The second one follows. Deal, particularly with Israel in the wilderness. You remember that when they came out of Egypt, they murmured and said that their young children had been brought out to die in the wilderness. And God said because of their attitude to him that the children that I said would be a prey would be preserved right through. But not one of that evil generation should go into the land. When our men became responsible when he was 20 years of age. And as they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, no man 20 years of age could expect to live longer than 80. And as a good many of them were more than 20, some of them knew they couldn't live longer than 70, and so on. And then the next sound addresses those who were preserved right through that awful experience. And together with Caleb and Joshua, were the overcomers.

[00:01:55] You notice not only are they preserved, thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flies by day. They will fall on thy right hand and on my left. But it shall not come nigh thee. And then thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder and the young lion And the dragon shalt thou trample underfoot. So now we've got the two classes that we get so many times in Scripture. Old Testament and new. Those who were the Lord's people who did not triumph and did not overcome, and those who were also not only the Lord's people, but they were miraculously preserved, sustained and strengthened with long life. They were satisfied and shown that salvation, that particular salvation, which was in view at the end. Well, now, of course, our time is very limited. Otherwise it would be very useful to go through both these Psalms to work this out more particularly. But. This evening, we are considering further aspects of the millennial kingdom. That is particularly before us not to try to find all sorts of scriptures that may possibly refer to it. But first of all, to come to the book, to come to Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 to 10, and say whatever that teaches shall give me the yardstick whereby I may measure all the rest of the statements which are said to be by either

myself or others. Millennial. I don't think anybody who values the Word of God can find any fault with that attitude.

[00:03:34] And if they do, I hope it's not going to make much difference to you or to me. It. I suggested last time that three words would more or less span the outstanding points of Revelation 21 to 10. First of all, restraint. We saw that being exemplified in the fact that Satan was bound for a thousand years. The second one was reigning for the very next moment. After we read of that restraining of Satan, we read about the overcomers who lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. And then immediately after that, the little season is up and we get rebellion showing you that although there was an element of peace and there were some who were the Lord's people and there were those who were rejoicing in his great salvation. There was a great number in the millennial kingdom who only were yielding, feigned obedience, and it was manifest that something else more drastic would have to be done before a kingdom could be so perfect that the son could deliver it up to the Father that God may be all in all. Well, now this evening, we're going to consider particularly these overcomers. And I think we'll take a leaf out of that old book and turn to Revelation 20 and actually read what it says before we construct any theories. Revelation 20, starting at verse four. You see immediately after Satan has been dealt with, the overcomer comes into view.

[00:05:21] Verse four, And I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection On such the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Now they're the words that form the central feature and the dominant feature of the millennium. According to the writing of John in this book. Now, let's come back to the early chapter, shall we? Because it's so important that we shall see this particular feature, for it's practically the key to the whole book. Revelation one. To whom was the book of the Revelation written? Who were the ones that their name was on the envelope. Surely. Have we forgotten that the whole of the book of the revelation not a part of it, not the first three chapters, but the whole of the book of the revelation was

sent to seven churches. 20% of those seven churches when it was still humanly possible that Nero would be the beast and Herod would make a first class Antichrist, there would already.

[00:07:10] And this was a word to guide them, to encourage them to warn them, because if that had started, then the time of tribulation should have never had been or will be again would have commenced, and they would have needed all that this book gives them to encourage them to stand fast in God's mercy. That was postponed in his purposes. He had others that he was going to call and overrule the failure of Israel. And you and I are sitting here this evening because instead of shutting the whole thing down, he manifested further grace beyond dreams and called us poor Gentiles into salvation. But the day is fast approaching when our calling will cease and God will pick up the threads that have been laid down these 1900 years. And the book of the Revelation will then run its course and the words will be true. These things are shortly to come to pass. Now here it says in Revelation, chapter one, John, to the seven churches which are in Asia. The seven churches which are in Asia. And then if you're not quite sure whether it means the seven churches in Asia, you're told the first one was the church at Ephesus, and you're told the second one and the third one. The second one is Smyrna, and the third one is Pergamos. And if you look on the map, especially if you've got a map of the way in which you would have to travel in the days of the apostle Paul, you would discover that these churches are not put in any spiritual order.

[00:08:51] They are put in just the order which a postman would deliver them. If he were starting his walk from Ephesus, he'd go right round the roads and end up in May of this year. I'm not saying that there may not be some under neath testimony, prophetically or spiritually, that we can gather by their arrangement. But the first thing is these churches were addressed. They were given this vision. They were told all about the book of the revelation to them, particularly first. The point is this, that if the overcomer, as we shall see by looking at these seven churches, if the overcomer is so important, all the things that are said in this book was for their guidance. They were told about the antichristian power. They were told about the possibility, not only the possibility that the sure fact that when that power was at its its height, the beast should overcome them. But they were also told that the lion, who was also the lamb of God, he had prevailed, or as the same word is, he had overcome. So we got the warnings. Now we got the encouragements.

And then when the millennium's all over, you haven't done with the overcomer. Some people make the millennium a watertight department.

[00:10:11] Cut it off. And that's the reign of Christ. Instead of that, the Scripture says He shall reign unto the end of the ages, and the overcomer is there after the millennium is all over, after the Great white throne is all over. There he is with the new heavens and the new earth. He that overcometh shall inherit these things. So the overcomer is a frame upon which the whole of the book, as it were, is strung. And that may be the reason why so many peculiar views have been put forward by men for years and years, because we've adopted the idea that the millennium means universal peace. It's the synonym to a utopia. It's something which everybody is hoping and praying for. And then we have a blind spot at our eye when we read that when he comes to found the millennium, he comes to make war. To rule the nations with a rod of iron. To trample the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God. That's very different from a rule of universal peace. Psalm 110 says that he shall reign in Mount Zion in the midst of his enemies. You can't shut your eyes to these things. And so we say, let's start afresh. That's what we're doing here. We have this word, the overcomer, which I suggest to you you hold on to like they held on to the threads in the labyrinth. You know, when people start exploring caves in, the wise thing is to follow the idea of the men of old, to have a thread that you leave there, just run it through your fingers so that when you get to the other end, you don't know where you're going or coming back backwards or forwards.

[00:11:55] You follow the thread back. Well, this overcoming thread starts in the first chapter and it goes right the way through to the last chapter. And upon that thread, all the rest of the book is struck. Now then, as we want everybody, not only those of you who are sitting listening, who may know that these things are so. We want everybody who is also listening to this broadcast and may not all be quite so instructed. We want to see for ourselves Chapter two and three. First of all, we have these seven churches. Now he gives some commendation. He gives some words of warning. But whatever else he says or does not say to each one of these churches, this always comes verse seven. He that hath an ear. Let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcome it. Now that's the one that's addressed particularly to him that overcome it. Will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God? Do you notice that the reward for this man is definitely associated with the last chapter of this book? The Paradise of God is not some place that's unnamed or unknown.

[00:13:09] It was the garden that was equivalent to the Garden of Eden. So before we go any further, we'll turn to the end and we'll see where this overcomer was expected. Would expect to have his reward. Revelation 22 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb in the midst of the street of it. And on either side of the river was there. The tree of life, which bare 12 manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month. That's the way to our fruit, friends. That's paradise restored not picking you your half right pears and hoping they last out for 5 or 6 months. You see, God never intended that this is what it is and yielded her fruit every month of the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. That's the paradise of God. And this overcomer was directed to that. And you find it is directed to the end of the book of the revelation all the way through. Let's pick up another one, shall we? Smyrna is addressed. And the overcomer. There is mentioned here. Wait a minute. Yes. In verse 11, he that hath an ear. Let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. He that overcometh. Shall not be hurt of the second death. There is no other place in Scripture where the second death is mentioned except in the book of the Revelation.

[00:14:51] Now, supposing we adopt the orthodox idea that the second death is the doom of all the ungodly that have ever lived, who have never believed Christ. They are raised from the dead at the end of time, and being judged are cast into the Lake of fire, which is the second death. You say, Yes, that's what you believe. Well, can you give me any reason why? A believer? Not an overcomer and only believer should be told that he would not be hurt of the second death. You see, if I take Romans the eighth chapter as something which is true. Romans The eighth chapter tells me. That means such a position by the grace of God, that nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Who is he? That Condemneth? The challenge is there that it is utterly impossible to conceive that any person who is a redeemed child of God should ever contemplate the second death. Would you say either John was wrong or we are wrong? Let's be modest and say perhaps we are wrong, shall we? Now then, look at what he says in verse ten. Will you fear none of these those things which thou shalt suffer? Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison. That ye may be tried. And ye shall have tribulation. Ten days be thou faithful unto death. And I will give thee the crown of life.

[00:16:30] Puts the crown of life. Is that the gift of eternal life? No. A crown has to be won. This is a martyr being addressed. He's going to suffer tribulation. But he's urged to be faithful. Faithful even unto death. And I will give you the crown of life. We read, the Apostle Paul said, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth is a crown. That wasn't that wasn't salvation. That was something over and above. Now this this company who are going to win a crown. Mark you go to win a crown were also assured that they wouldn't be hurt by the second death. Well, now I think you've got to agree with me. We've got to adjust our thoughts a bit. This second death must be something that was an alternative to winning a crown. Now. Just now we looked at Revelation 22 to see about the paradise of God. I think we better look at Revelation 20 to see what it says about the second death, don't you? There's every possibility. Our minds are so constructed. But you didn't know that you read the second death or that I read the second death in Revelation 20. Verse six. It. Read it again. Verse six. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection on such the second death hath no power. Can you believe your eyes? That those who are found worthy to sit upon thrones, to reign with Christ? For those who have withstood the mark of the beast, suffered to be beheaded.

[00:18:30] Were martyrs. Were told that the second death had no power on them. It becomes almost farcical if this second death means the doom of all the ungodly. There's no need to tell anybody that if that's what it means, unless we're entirely wrong with regard to our understanding of the finished work of Christ. Then he goes on to say this. On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ. And to reign with him a thousand years. So somewhere in the story, the alternative to winning a crown and reigning with Christ must be the second death. Her. I know that that's upsetting a good deal of our other teaching. But what does that matter? So long as we get a bit nearer to the teaching of God, will you turn the page to chapter at the end of chapter 20? We have the great white throne. We have the judgment. We have the books opened. And then we are told. Verse 15 and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire. And that in verse 14 is said to be the second death. We shall find the second death mentioned in chapter 21. Verse eight. But the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

[00:20:06] And then we have in the same chapter, verse 27, and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defile it, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie. And instead of saying now the second death it says but they which are written in the book of life and in chapter 22, we have in verse 15, for without our dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever liveth to make it right. They're outside. So now we've got another complication. The alternative to the second death is permission to enter the city. Those who enter the city avoid the second death. Those who are going to the second death are those equivalent to those who are outside the city. Well, again, you see, that doesn't conform to the usual interpretation, even though we may say, well, we are in a muddle. Well, we've got hopes of getting out of it. If once we recognize it, that's our point. We'll go on and let this speak for itself presently, either in this study or when we come to the beat again next Thursday. But we'll go on because we want to look at these overcomers in chapter two and three once more. Now we have the church at Pergamos and they are definitely associated with Satan's throne, as you see in verse 13. Verse 17, says he, that hath an ear. Let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches.

[00:21:34] To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone. And in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. Now, I suppose we'd all have to admit that we don't quite know what that means. Well, it's something that's hidden, something that's reserved. But I've got a hint in chapter 19. Verse 11, and I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called faithful and true. And in righteousness, he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns. And he had a name written that no man knew, but he himself. So it's to do with one who wears a crown. Some secret name between him and his God. We could pry into it. They shall get no answer. But he blinking. You see, the overcomer is the thought all the way through with some special element of reward. Now the next church is thyatira, and they have a with a woman Jezebel. Not a very nice name, is it? Because of the past history? You can realize and we have the depths of Satan in verse 24. Now, what is the word to this company? Verse 36. He either overcome it and keep his my works unto the end to him. Will I give power over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of a potter.

[00:23:11] Shall they be broken to shivers, even as I have received of my father. And I will give him the morning Star. Will you look at Chapter 12? And there appeared a great wonder in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of 12 stars. And she, being with child, cried travailing in birth and pain to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven. You notice I will give him the morning star here. The stars of heaven. And did cast into the earth and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to his throne. So here we have these overcomers are associated with Christ. They sit upon the same throne with him. And he shall rule. I will give him power over the nations. He shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall be broken in shivers. I was anticipating the end of chapter three, verse 21 to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne? But you see, the link with chapter 12 is caught up to God and his throne.

[00:24:43] But once more we've got the overcomer definitely associated with something which is given in the bulk of the book ruling with a rod of iron. Now the church at Sardis in chapter three. They are giving words of warning. They're also giving words of encouragement. And then it says in verse five, he that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father and before his angels. I want to come back to that. So as time is pressing. Keep that in reserve. We'll come back to the Book of Life again and go on to finish the chapter three. We have the Church of Philadelphia. And again, Satan is mentioned in verse nine, Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not. I don't know anybody today who pretends to be a Jew in connection with Christian things, but in those days there would be a synagogue and these churches will be mostly Hebrew Christians. Now we have the overcomer in verse 12 him that overcometh Will I make a pillar in the temple of my God? And he shall go no more out.

[00:26:07] And I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God. And I will write upon him my new name. I wonder whether we know. That the heavenly city,

the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem is only called the New Jerusalem twice. Once in the promise and once in the fulfillment. And that is not in the millennium that afterwards. Chapter 21. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first Earth were passed away and there was no more sea. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. So this overcomer is associated with the heavenly Jerusalem in the new heaven and a new earth when he comes down. Oh, haven't we limited all this and made it all fixed? One spot. This has got beyond the millennium now these this company. And then to finish, we have the Church of the Laodicean. The Nietzscheans. And we are told they are in verse 21 to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in his throne? And they are the thrones which you get in Chapter 20. I saw thrones and they sat upon them and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years Have I established this that every promise made to every overcomer in this series is within the pages of Book of the Revelation and doesn't go outside? If so, we've made a start.

[00:27:49] Well, now we come back to this question of the Book of Life. Normally we think of the Book of Life as the book in which God has the record. If we can just use the figure of all those that He chose before and since the foundation of the world, all those who are believers. What out. Is that so? There's no need to tell any believer that God will not take His name out of the book of life. And that's inconceivable. If grace means grace, if redemption is an accomplished fact, if the believer is passed from death unto life, there is no teaching in the scripture that it can ever be undone. The Scripture teaches you might lose your crown, you might forfeit your reward. But never even those who perished in the wilderness. They never went back to Egypt and crossed the Red Sea again. They were God's people. They were pleading with him to teach them to number their days to show a little mercy at the end and recognizing that they had failed. Oh, yes. So have we missed? Have we slipped up again in assuming that the Book of Life must necessarily mean those who are the redeemed or the believer only? Would you look at the other references in Revelation Chapter 13? Verse eight.

[00:29:17] This is right in the midst of the great anti-Christian beast and is and the tribulation period. Verse eight. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of life of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And then in chapter 17, verse eight. It was a very difficult verse to interpret,

but I'll read it as it stands. The beast that thou sawest was and is not. And shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. When they behold the beast that was and is not, and yet is. So both passages. Both passages speak about a book and before or since, rather the foundation of the world now. Chapter 20, verse 15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire. And there is a possibility, but there's an alternative reading Chapter 22:19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away His part out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book. Some readings are not the book of life, but the tree of Life. And it's difficult to decide. I'll leave it as it stands for the time being.

[00:31:01] God shall take away his part out of the Book of life and out of the holy city. So you see, to be shut out of the holy city is equivalent to having your name taken out of the book of life. And to be shut out of the holy city is to mark you as one who is not an overcomer. Look, be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. And possibly it's the martyr whose name is put in the book of life. Perhaps we put too many people in it. It's not the record of every redeemer that's ever lived, but it's the record of those who love, not their lives unto the death. And they had their name in the Book of Life. But you see, an overcomer could fail. Possibly he could draw back. He could shrink back. He could. He could submit to temptation and forfeit. The Scripture warns you that you could be cheated of your reward, although you can never be cheated of your salvation. All of these things can be kept distinct. We may be learning something now, then. Suppose we go back to the same thought. The Book of life must mean the book where God has put all the names of the elect. Right. I go to the Epistle, to the Ephesians, because if it is going to mention it at all in the prison epistles will put it there, chosen in him before the foundation of the world and their names in the Book of Life.

[00:32:23] But what do I find? I don't find the book of life in Ephesians, but when I read the next epistle to the Philippians, it starts off with a bishops and deacons service. It emphasizes in view of the Day of Christ service. It speaks about striving together for the faith of the Gospel service. It says Running with a prize in view. Not sure of having got it yet. Service. It speaks of a man who had practically almost forfeited his life in service for Christ, and that epistle is the only epistle in which Paul mentions the Book of Life. Shall

we look at it? Philippians. Three Philippians in chapter three says, verse 14, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And in chapter two, he brings before us the case of Epaphroditus in verse 25. And it says he is sick. And it says in verse 30, because for the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward him. So he is the martyr element. Even risking his life. So now we have in chapter four. Verse two. I beseech you and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord and I entreat thee also true yolk fellow help those women which labored with me in the gospel.

[00:33:54] This is work service with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, work service fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life. And that's the only place that Paul mentions it. So you see if the context has any bearing upon it. It has to do with service, with winning a prize with the overcomer element like epaphroditus, and not with just simple faith and simple salvation. I don't mean to discredit salvation, of course at all, but only to make the difference between the two. Well, we come back to. Chapter. Oh, I said I would come back, didn't I? To this Book of life in chapter two. Chapter three. Well, I've done it. Well, I feel that we must now come back to this passage in Revelation 20. And then I'll give you the things that we should have to discuss next time, because our time is fast running out. The first thing we shall have to consider is what is meant by the rest of the dead. I just mentioned here that there are 1 or 2 differences with regard to the readings of this passage, but they boil down to this, that one set of manuscripts read the rest of the dead live. Not again until the thousand years were finished and the other set of manuscripts read and the rest of the dead live. Not until the thousand years are finished. Well, you can take with you like, What's it matter? I don't suppose those who were being spoken about would have quibbled over whether it was lived again or lived.

[00:35:39] The question was living. So don't you be sidetracked by some of these statements that there's another reading. So let's have the other reading before you begin to talk too much about it. You see, and friends, while we're on that matter, if you could have presented to you the worst possible lot of manuscripts that they collect together and they were once more translated into English, unless you were a very cute reader, you would hardly know what you were reading. The authorized version. When you're told there's so many thousand different readings, it's the way you spell Moses with a U or an O. It's whether you have a comma or a full stop. It's all there's many a

thing which do not make the slightest difference to the integrity of the Word of God. So let's forget it. So we have to look at the meaning, the purpose of the rest of the dead. What does that mean? Because you see, up till now, we've all known what it meant. But perhaps we are beginning to say perhaps we've slipped up there, too. And then we want to look at the meaning of the expression the first resurrection. Is this the first resurrection that ever takes place? Why is it called the first resurrection and what association has it with the rest of the dead? Well, I think we'll say that's good enough, I think, for this evening. And it will be something to pick up and carry forward when we meet together next time.