



THE ABCS OF THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

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1. Introduction

This book will not likely interest the doctors of theology. It is not meant to. Bible students who have spent years searching the Scriptures and whose convictions are well grounded must not be unmindful of young believers who have only tasted the milk of the Word. Too frequently, when they do try the meat, they find that much has been put through the grinder of human theorizing and comes out a hash of confusing notions. I am not forgetful of the years I spent in the fog (to change the metaphor) of the postponed kingdom, the church parenthesis, the gospel of the kingdom versus the gospel of the grace of God, pre-tribulationism, and post-tribulationism.

A young Christian is spiritually confounded by this smog of confusing theories. I was for fourteen years. I wore out a Scofield Bible¹ trying to arrive at the truth.

A Plymouth Brethren friend started me on the right track by simply asking this question: “Do you think the gospel of the kingdom that John the Baptist preached differed from the gospel Jesus preached to Nicodemus?”

“Of course I do,” I replied. “Jesus was presenting the gospel of the grace of God.”

My friend responded, “Well, then, will you compare Mark 1:14-15 with John 3:24? You will notice that Mark says that Jesus was preaching the kingdom of God after John was put in prison; but John was not yet in prison while Jesus preached to Nicodemus the new birth according to that verse in John 3:24. So you can see there must be something wrong with your ideas about the two different gospels. In fact, Nicodemus was told that the entrance into the kingdom of God was by the new birth. There is no hint of any postponed kingdom.”

A few minutes of consideration was all that was necessary to show me my mistaken idea. I also saw that since I was wrong there, I could be wrong all along the line. I decided it was high time I shelved the Scofield notes and my dispensational² “Bible helps,” followed the example of the Bereans (Act 17:11), and searched the Scriptures alone to see what they said for themselves. I soon discovered that I had mistaken the third person of the Trinity as Dr. Scofield instead of the Holy Spirit. My dependence had been upon the speculations of humans rather than upon “Thus saith the Lord.”

¹ **Scofield Bible** – a widely circulated study Bible prepared by Cyrus Scofield that popularized dispensationalism; its first edition came out in 1909 and an author’s revision in 1917. See *Scofield or the Scriptures*, by Paul E. Sisco, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² **dispensational** – Dispensationalism is a theological system that understands biblical history in light of a number of successive administrations of God’s dealings with mankind, which it calls “dispensations.” It maintains fundamental distinctions between God’s plans for national Israel and for the New Testament Church, and emphasizes prophecy of the end-times and a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church prior to Christ’s Second Coming. Its beginnings are usually associated with the Plymouth Brethren movement in the UK and the teachings of John Nelson Darby (from www.theopedia.com).

I soon discovered that the only safe and sane method of interpreting the Scriptures was to let the Scriptures interpret themselves. I found the central column reference a great help in this regard. I also discovered that one must take the clear light from simple, unequivocal³ Scripture verses to cast light upon the dark, controversial passages. When I did that I found that, although I could not always be dogmatic as to what a verse meant in this latter category, I could be certain what it did not mean.

Soon such books as Revelation and Ezekiel and Daniel became sources of practical, everyday inspiration. Instead of relegating much of the prophetic Word into the futuristic wastepaper basket of the “Kingdom Age,” it became a “very present help” for very present challenges, day after day. My faith was deepened, and Christ drew me into a closer fellowship with him. I found that Jesus himself had clearly stated that this was the purpose of prophecy. He said: “Now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (Joh 14:29; *note also* Joh 13:19; 16:4). So, like the two on the Emmaus road, who had to be shaken from their false notions of the kingdom, from their speculative theorizing, and to whom the Lord had to say: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luk 24:25-26; *note also* vv. 44-47), I had been shaken from my foolish notions by my Plymouth Brethren friend; and, as a result, began to use the prophetic Word to nourish and inspire my soul. Grotesque charts on Daniel and Revelation found their way into the wastepaper basket.

2. The King and His Kingdom: A Consideration of the Nature, Place, and Time of the Kingdom

A. The kingdom of God is that spiritual realm in which His subjects are all believers: Jew and Gentile.

The kingdom is entered through repentance and the new birth (Mar 1:14-15; Joh 3:3, 5). The principles governing this kingdom are to be found in the Sermon on the Mount.

But the unbeliever, whether Jew or Gentile, cannot see this kingdom (Joh 1:5; 12:40). Paul tells us that the natural man receiveth not of the things of the Spirit of God (1Co 1:18; 2:14). But certainly there is no reason for the Christian not to see and enjoy fully this kingdom. It is a kingdom that is so different from any worldly affair. It requires a qualification of righteousness that only Christ can give (Mat 5:20). And one can only become a member of the heavenly kingdom as he comes to Christ with childlike trust (Mat 18:3).

It is, as the above Scriptures indicate, *a spiritual kingdom*. Paul says of this kingdom, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink [something one experiences in the physical realm]; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). Jesus declared that His kingdom was not of this world (Joh 18:36). If it had been, He certainly

³ **unequivocal** – distinct; clear.

would have welcomed, and not rejected, the Jews' efforts to make Him King over their political sphere (Joh 6:15). (Luk 17:20-21—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [something to be seen with physical eyes and felt with physical hands]...behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Col 1:13—Who...hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.")

Since the kingdom is not carnal, material, or physical, but spiritual, its durability is assured for eternity. "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18). In Hebrews we read of the removal of "those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken [the spiritual realities of the kingdom] may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved [or postponed], let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb 12:27-28).

B. The kingdom of God is a present reality.

Christ has all power in heaven and in earth now (Mat 28:18)! "All things are delivered unto me of my Father" (Mat 11:27). "He shall be great...and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David...and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luk 1:32-33). In connection with this statement in Luke, note what Peter says in Acts 2:29-36 about the fact of Jesus through His death and resurrection ascending that throne: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted...God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (vv. 32-36). "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom 14:9). "He hath put all things under his feet" (1Co 15:27). "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion...And hath put all things under his feet" (Eph 1:21-22). "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb 1:2-2:8).

C. It is our present privilege to share this kingdom with Christ.

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col 1:13). We are seated now in that heavenly Zion (Eph 2:6). "But ye are come unto mount Sion" (Heb 12:22-24).

3. A Few Prevailing Errors regarding the Kingdom of God

A. The postponed kingdom theory

According to this theory Jesus came to establish His kingdom in Israel. So when He and John the Baptist said, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat 3:2; 4:17), they both meant that the kingdom was to be an earthly, political affair. But the Jews refused to receive their King, and their rejection meant the postponement of the kingdom. It will not be established now until Jesus comes the second time, when the

millennial⁴ reign will fulfill what was at first intended. Now, it is quite true that the Jews of Christ's day did expect their Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom at that time. In fact, just a few hours from the cross, James and John quarreled about their positions in that kingdom, which they thought Jesus was about to establish at Jerusalem. "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Mat 20:20-28). "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luk 22:24).

The two on the Emmaus road, even after Calvary, still clung to the grave clothes of this Judaistic error. Note Jesus' rebuke to their carnal notions: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luk 24:25). Read Luke 24:13-48, and take special note of this statement of Jesus: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (v. 46). But, surely, these passages should be a warning to modern disciples not to fall into the same carnal reasoning. The Lord made it clear that His purpose in coming the first time was to die a redeeming death. At the very *commencement* of Christ's ministry it was evident that He had come to fulfill the many Old Testament types⁵ and prophecies that pointed to His redemptive work. Before Christ commenced His ministry, and before He had even chosen the Twelve, and, therefore, before He had an opportunity to be rejected, John the Baptist pointed to Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Joh 1:29, 36).

The Jews of Christ's day did look for a material, physical, political kingdom, as we said. But we have Christ's statements to clarify things for us. We live this side of Pentecost. We have the illuminating epistles that continually tell us of His heavenly kingdom. We may excuse the blindness of the Jews, but there is *absolutely no excuse for any Christian today to cling to such Judaistic misconceptions.*

Christ's disciples looked for the wrong kind of kingdom, and grieved at His death. They thought that ended all their vainglorious prospects of sharing His kingly glory at Jerusalem.

But the unbelieving Jews could not tolerate His kind of kingdom that required such spiritual principles as found in the Sermon on the Mount. The Jewish leaders were outraged at Jesus' standard of spirituality that cut deep into their carnal and supercilious⁶ religious observations. He just was not their kind of a Messiah. Thus, they got the crowd to join them in the cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They would not have that man reign over them. Note the parable in Luke 19:11-27. His enemies would not have Christ reign over them. It is a terrible indictment to make, but many of His so-called friends today still refuse to let Christ reign over His present kingdom!

⁴ **millennial** – of the millennium, when Christ reigns in Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

⁵ **types** – people, things, or events that foreshadowed or represented New Testament truths, especially as revealed in Christ and His work.

⁶ **supercilious** – haughty; arrogant.

The Jews would not tolerate a kingdom that required repentance to enter. They were told they must experience the new birth to even see this kingdom. What Jesus told to Nicodemus He most surely told to others, and certainly this leader of the Jews would have passed on to others what Jesus told him that evening. When they were thus confronted with the spiritual requirements of this kingdom, they refused to accept the terms and fought the Offerer.

Jesus constantly appealed to the Old Testament types and prophecies concerning the Messiah to prove that what He did fulfilled them. A few types He mentioned are Moses and the serpent lifted up (Joh 3:14), the manna as a type of the Living Bread (Joh 6:58), and Jonah and his three days in the belly of the great fish (Mat 12:40). Even John the Baptist had his faith bolstered when his imprisonment was shaking his confidence. Jesus sent his two friends back to him with Isaiah 35:5-6 together with the evidence they just had presented to them, that Jesus' ministry fulfilled this prophecy (Luk 7:19-23).

The cross was not a frustrating of the kingdom of God, but rather a means of bringing the mediatorial⁷ aspect of that kingdom into effect as far as repentant sinners were concerned. As we already noted, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luk 24:26).

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost clearly states the same fact. He points out that Jesus' death and resurrection was the door that led Christ to assume the heavenly throne of David. For we must remember that David's earthly Zion is now also a heavenly reality, and we as believers have come unto that mount. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22). That being so, why should some teachers insist that Peter was mistaken, and that David's throne is to be a future material piece of furniture? If a choice must be made between these mistaken teachers and Peter, let us be Bereans enough to accept Peter. Listen to his words: "God had sworn with an oath to him [David], that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ...This Jesus hath God raised up...Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted...For David is not ascended into the heavens...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord [King] and Christ" (Act 2:21-36).

In Luke 10:9-11 note that Jesus clearly stated that the unbelieving Jews and their rejection would not prevent the establishment of the kingdom of God. Even though the unbelieving Jews reject you, said Jesus, you tell them, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (v. 9).

God's kingdom was founded upon *His will*, and not *the choice of the Jews!* Their rejection of the King and His kingdom did not postpone the establishing of that kingdom in the hearts and lives of all believers, Jew and Gentile, but it did hasten their own judg-

⁷ **mediatorial** – having to do with Christ as the Mediator, representing man to God and God to man, especially as reconciling sinful man to God. See FGB 183, *Christ the Mediator*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

ment! Prayerfully read the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33-46. Note verse 38: “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” This points to Christ’s rejection and crucifixion by the unbelieving Jews. What was the result? Read on. “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons” (vv. 40-41).

To the little group who did believe in Him, Christ said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32). Certainly there is not even a hint of a postponed kingdom in those scriptural statements!

In contrast to the believing nucleus that formed the mustard seed beginnings of Christ’s kingdom were the scornful rejecters of the Messiah and His claims, to whom Christ said, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Mat 23:29-39). He told them that the culminative crimes of those who formerly rejected and murdered Jehovah’s messengers had reached its zenith in them. The result was that *culminative judgment was about to fall upon that generation*: “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel [who was slain by the pharisaical Cain] unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation...Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (vv. 35-38).

And in a few years the armies of Rome came upon Jerusalem and executed this predicted judgment upon them. The desolation of that city, Jerusalem, exceeded anything that ever happened before or since. Read the account of this utter destruction in the history of the Jews written by the eyewitness Josephus. Matthew 24:15-25 along with Luke 21:20-24 give a preview of this disastrous siege.

What was the basic reason for the Jewish rejection of Christ? “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19) is Jesus’ explanation. And that is the reason today for the unbelief of both Jew and Gentile. “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (Joh 5:40), declared Jesus to the unbelieving Jews of His day. He says the same to unbelievers generally today. But when we think of the ultimate crime of the cross, we must not forget that all the world is guilty. Note Acts 4:26-28. Against Christ, say the disciples, Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together. All the world stands guilty before that cross!

B. The claim that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are different

A brief and simple examination of parallel passages of Scripture proves this commonly held theory as wrong as that of the postponed kingdom. First, let us note that the Jews customarily used the word “heaven” for God. Thus, in Matthew 23:22, Jesus himself states that to swear by heaven is the same as to swear by “the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.” Note also Daniel 4:25-26: “the most High ruleth” and “the heavens do rule.” So we could say that it is the “kingdom of the God of heaven” and combine the

terms. One would have to be very ingenious, in the light of plain scriptural facts, to devise a difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven! And yet Scofield does it! Note these parallel passages with the terms used interchangeably: Matthew 4:17 with Mark 1:14; Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20; Matthew 10:7 with Luke 9:2; Matthew 13:31 with Luke 18:24. Jesus uses the terms interchangeably in one statement: “A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven...It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mat 19:23-24). One might note that this entering the kingdom is “being saved.” “When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?” (v. 25).

In the light of the above Scriptures it is very hard to fathom the motive of any Bible teacher proposing that there is a difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God! Truth is always simpler to understand than the complex, deviating notions of teachers who endeavor to prove unfounded theories.

C. The claim that there are several gospels

Dispensationalists say that the gospel of the kingdom differs from the gospel of the grace of God. The everlasting gospel is still another of many other gospels. Note in Acts 8 the various names given to the same life-giving message: verse 4, “preaching the word”; verse 5, “preached Christ”; verse 12, “preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”; verse 14, “received the word of God”; verse 25, “preached the gospel”; verse 35, “preached unto him Jesus.” Surely no one would suggest that we have here several different gospels! It is the *one gospel* under different terms. It is the same gospel that Paul and Peter and all the other apostles proclaimed. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8-9). Note Paul’s mention of the “angel from heaven.” Evidently some teachers would wish this curse upon the angel mentioned in Revelation 14:6, because they claim the “everlasting gospel” he preached was a different gospel from that which Paul preached!

When John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Mat 3; Luk 3; Joh 1), he did not suggest that Israel was about to enjoy a period of national prosperity and power. He did not hint that his mission was to prepare Israel for the establishment of a glorified material kingdom. Rather than that, he sounded out the trumpet call to repentance and a solemn warning of judgment upon them if they refused to repent. His message also pointed them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He also bluntly pointed out to them that merely being Abraham’s seed did not qualify them for blessing. Note his statements: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Mat 3:7-9). And these stones—

probably the Gentiles—were to become living stones in the temple of God. Peter writes, “Ye also, as lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5). Jesus said of John the Baptist, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it” (Luk 16:16).

Before Jesus ascended into heaven after His resurrection He used the last precious hours in “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Act 1:3). You can be sure that Jesus would not have chosen this as His final subject if it had not practical bearing upon their immediate present. It is unthinkable that Jesus would use these last few moments to speak about something that had been “postponed” to the distant future. Neither would He speak on a subject that would have no bearing on the message they themselves were to go out and proclaim! Notice how the disciples tried to divert Christ into preaching to them a sermon on their theory of a restored national, political Israel. “Give us a sermon on futurism,” they virtually asked. But instead, Jesus gave them a practical missionary message. He told them they would receive power to be His witnesses throughout the world. He turned a prophetic meeting into a missionary challenge. And any kind of prophetic study that is purely speculative and which relegates great portions of God’s Word into the future and thus destroys its practical effect upon our everyday lives, proves by that very fact that it is 100 percent erroneous. One hears the defense, “Oh, only extreme dispensationalism does that!” Well, by experience and observation the only *safe* kind of dispensationalism, and the only kind of dispensationalism that can bear the pure, true light of Scripture is the simple dispensationalism that recognizes only *two* dispensations: that under the Old Covenant, and our present dispensation under the New Covenant.

Paul saw the end approaching. He wanted to buy up his last few days and use the time in the most helpful way. So what subject did he choose? He preached “the kingdom of God, and [taught] those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 28:31).

Fundamentalists are continually blaming the liberals for taking the Word of God and destroying its effectiveness by saying some is inspired and some is not. But how does this effect differ from that of the dispensationalists who cast into the wastepaper basket of futurism⁸ whole books of the Bible?

4. The Kingdom of God: Its Past, Present, and Future

There never has been a time when the kingdom of God did not exist. To understand this fact let us look at the four aspects of God’s kingdom, or the kingdom of heaven.

A. It is an eternal kingdom.

God has always been sovereign over His universe. Read Job 38-41. After Job had listened to God describe His power over the earth, he cried, “I know that thou canst do

⁸ **futurism** – the view that much of prophecy relates strictly to literal, physical events in the future.

everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee” (Job 42:2). Nebuchadnezzar declared of God, “How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation” (Dan 4:3). Listen to Darius, the Median monarch, “He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end...He...worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth” (Dan 6:26-27). Is it right that these heathen kings should have a nobler conception of the eternal values of God’s kingdom than many present-day Christians?

Consider also the following: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34), which He calls, “my father’s kingdom” (Mat 26:29). Read Psalm 2:1-12, Psalm 110:1-4, and 1Corinthians 15:24-28.

B. It is a mediatorial kingdom.

It is a mediatorial kingdom in which Jesus Christ, the second Adam, our representative, was able through His redeeming blood to take the title deeds of the earth and deliver us from the power of the prince of this world, Satan. Back in the remote ages, Satan, before his fall, had the earth as his territory in a peculiar way. Thus he was able to say to Christ in his temptation in the wilderness, after showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Mat 4:9). Jesus never disputed Satan’s right in making this statement; and certainly Satan wouldn’t have been so great a fool to say such a thing unless he did have power over these territories.⁹ Thus the mediatorial work of Christ on our behalf was necessary. And in Revelation 5 we find that in order for Christ to ransom us from Satan’s power He had to shed His precious blood. Before He could legitimately take from the Father’s hand the seven-sealed title deeds of the universe, He had to become the slain Lamb. Note this so majestically presented for us in these verses in Revelation 5:2-9: “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?...no man...was able to open the book, neither to look thereon...I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon...One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof...I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne...stood a Lamb as it had been slain...he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne...Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

⁹ Remember that, while Satan does have a delegated authority over the system of this world, God is in full control, and owes nothing to Satan in order to regain control of the world. The ransom price Christ paid for us was to the Father to satisfy the righteous requirements of His Law (Gal 3:13). Christ’s redemption did free us from Satan’s bondage and the curse of death that he holds over the sinful world (Heb 2:14), but that deliverance was not through His satisfying any demands Satan could rightfully lay on God, but through His destroying Satan—*Editor*.

Incidentally, it is such a majestic passage as the above that explains why a special blessing is attached to the consideration of this marvelous book of Revelation (Rev 1:3). This book is the greatest devotional book in all the Bible! It is a practical book for our present day. Note also in verse 3 that in this book are things to keep: its promises, its admonitions, and its instructions. No book has suffered more at the hands of friends and enemies than this last, wonderful book of Revelation!

After that “parenthesis,” let us continue to look at the mediatorial aspect of Christ’s kingdom. As mediator, Christ saves, guides, blesses, and finally takes to His prepared home in heaven (Joh 14:1-3) His elect, namely saved Jews and Gentiles—the Israel of God. Note Jehoshaphat’s comprehensive question: “Rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?” (2Ch 20:6). In its mediatorial aspect the kingdom of God extends beyond God’s own family in its influence and effect. But all is done on behalf of His own people (Psa 24:10; 45; 89; Jam 2:5).

C. It is a family kingdom.

In its mediatorial aspect the kingship of Christ extends into a much wider range than in the narrower family kingdom. The mediatorial kingship of Christ is related to the eternal rule of the Father in its wide application. The spiritual or family kingdom pertains only to those who are born again, God’s spiritual children through personal faith in Jesus Christ (Joh 1:12-13). In contrast, the mediatorial kingdom reaches out into all the universe—physically, politically, and socially. It is in this respect not as personal as the family kingdom. In its mediatorial aspect nations are “as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing” (Isa 40:15). But in its family kingdom concept we read: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). Only to the child of God is He Father and Prince of Peace. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee” (Zec 9:9). Also John 18:37, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world...Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

D. It is a heart kingdom.

The heart kingdom narrows down the sphere of the kingship of Christ to each individual believer—the reign of Christ within our souls. You will notice that the first two kingly realms extend to every tribe and nation. But the last two spheres extend only to God’s children. In fact, the heart kingdom pertains to God’s child [as an individual]! This is the realm of rule that affects our own personal outlook, service, usefulness, stewardship, and final reward. “Does Jesus reign within?” is the challenge of this heart kingdom. In its family concept one could ask, “Does Jesus have the pre-eminence in my church, in

my home?” But the latter kingship of Christ narrows the question down to our own personal life. Note the following scriptures:

“My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26).

“Whose heart the Lord opened” (Act 16:14).

“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts” (Rom 2:15).

“God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6).

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1Pe 3:15).

Each believer is a temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19).

“Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them” (2Co 6:16).

E. Summary

The sovereign will of God extends to the whole universe—to every atom of the physical realm, every moment of time, and every event that happens. The perfect will of God is active every moment of every day. Cooperating with God in His work on the earth are angelic beings (Mat 18:10; Heb 1:14) such as Gabriel (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Luk 1:26) and Michael (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1). Satan, or Lucifer, before his fall was a leading light in heaven (Eze 28:14-17 with Isa 14:11-13). God gave him special power over the kingdoms of earth. But his fall brought calamity and bondage to all mankind.¹⁰ Thus the redeeming, ransoming work of Christ was necessary, as we have seen in a previous consideration.

The kingdom of God is more comprehensive than the Church, but the greater includes the less, as the field in the parable included the treasure hid in it (Mat 13:44). We speak of the Church as being a flock, a body, a building, and a bride; but it is also composed of subjects of His kingdom. And the subjects of that kingdom are His chosen people, a royal priesthood (1Pe 2:9), or a kingdom of priests (Rev 1:6); and we obey the royal law of love (Jam 2:8). We fulfill the Beatitudes (the rules of His kingdom¹¹) as we walk in the Spirit (*compare* Mat 5:3-10; Gal 5:13-26; Rom 13:8-14).

Incidentally, it is incomprehensible that the Beatitudes should be taken from the Church and placed in the future materialistic millennium of the dispensationalists. To do so is to suggest that there will be mourning in this 1,000 years that is supposed to be perfect (Mat 5:4). There will be need of peacemakers in this period when wars shall be nonexistent (v. 9). Apparently Christians will still be persecuted (v. 10) and reviled (v. 11).

¹⁰ **his fall brought calamity** – through his tempting Adam and Eve and their Fall into sin.

¹¹ **beatitudes...rules of His kingdom** – The beatitudes are clearly not the conditions for entrance to the kingdom but definitive descriptions of God’s people in the kingdom—*Editor*.

5. Spiritual Israel

In this chapter we see what God's Word has to say about the "Israel of God." National Israel rejected Christ. The unbelieving Jews said, "We will not have this man reign over us" (Luk 19:14). The book of Acts gives us a picture of the animosity of the Jewish people, generally, toward the gospel. They imprisoned the apostles, stoned Stephen to death, and consistently hardened themselves against the gospel. Paul and Barnabas said to them, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Act 13:46). Paul's words would surely indicate that the "Jew first" maxim that is played to the hilt by some Jewish missions had its application in apostolic days, and was fulfilled completely then. "We turn to the Gentiles," said Paul and Barnabas. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul stated that the contrary Jews had filled up their sin, and that wrath had come upon them to the uttermost (1Th 2:14-16).

Since national Israel would not have Christ, the Abrahamic promise of blessing upon all nations through His *seed* (Christ) is now enjoyed by believers in all countries of the world. But before we enter into that exceedingly interesting and profitable study, let us examine first the wrong notions held by dispensationalists in respect to the Jews. They are habitually casting into the future prophecies pertaining to Israel that had their full and complete fulfillment in Old Testament days. It would seem that a few elementary lessons in Jewish history would eliminate the tendency to make eschatological grist¹² out of it.

A. God promised Abraham a seed.

In Genesis 22:18 we read, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Paul, writing to the Galatian believers, says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal 3:16). Paul added that every believer in Christ, regardless of race, is a descendent of Abraham. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free...male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (vv. 26-29). Jesus gave a forecast of this truth when he said to the leaders of the Jews in reply to their statement, "Abraham is our father," "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham...Ye are of your father, the devil" (Joh 8:39-44).

¹² **make...grist** – from the expression "make [it] grist for your own mill"; turning something to your own profit or advantage; in this context, using Old Testament prophecies to support one's particular eschatological views instead of noting the previous biblical fulfillment of those prophecies in the history of Israel.

B. The descendants of Abraham were to become a great nation.

“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee” (Gen 12:2). Bible history confirms that the Jewish people did become a great nation. Read about Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon to see that this promise was completely fulfilled. There is certainly nothing future about that prediction.

C. Abraham’s descendants were to inherit Canaan.

“Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen 12:7). “Look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Gen 13:14-15). “Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen 15:18; *see also* Gen 17:2-8).

Now, the first and second promises were so obviously fulfilled that we need not deal with them further. But we shall consider this third promise in the light of God’s Word in a moment.

D. Abraham was to have myriads of descendants.

“I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (Gen 13:16). “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Gen 15:5-6; *see also* Gen 17:2-8).

The promise that Israel would inherit all the land of Canaan is supposed to have a future fulfillment. Well, it was certainly future from Abraham’s day. This promise was given about 2000 B.C., but scriptural evidence proves without a shadow of a doubt it is not future from our day.

Around 1450 B.C. Moses led the Israelites out from Egyptian servitude, and they were then made into a great nation (Deu 1:10; 10:22). Before this great leader died he had led them to the border of Canaan. Then Joshua took command and led them into Canaan, the promised land. This was about six hundred years after the promise was made to Abraham.

Let us look at some biblical confirmation. “Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them” (Deu 1:8).

“And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers” (Deu 6:23).

“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes” (Jos 11:23).

“And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein” (Jos 21:43).

We have noted the promise concerning the boundaries of the Promised Land in Genesis 15:18—“from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” Note in 1 Kings 4:20-25 this fulfillment in Solomon’s day: “Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt” (v. 21). “And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt” (2Ch 9:26). So the land that was promised to Abraham and the promise that was renewed to Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, was literally fulfilled—partially to Joshua and completely to Solomon.

Why, then, in the light of biblical history do some theologians cast the fulfillment of this promise into the distant future? Certainly they have built a castle in the sands of human theories, with not one hint of scriptural foundation.

Compare Genesis 15:5, that his seed would be as the stars in multitude, with Deuteronomy 1:10. “The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.” Then Genesis 13:16—“I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth.” Also Genesis 22:17—“I will multiply thy seed...as the sand which is upon the sea shore.” See the fulfillment of these prophecies in 1 Kings 4:20—“Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.” “Therefore sprang there even of one...so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable” (Heb 11:12; *see also* 2Ch 1:9; Neh 9:23).

Before leaving this consideration of the promises made to Israel we find other prophecies concerning the Jews, their temple, and their sacrifices, which some would futurize, actually fulfilled and recorded in such books as Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. As William E. Cox says, “All prophecies concerning the return to the land, rebuilding of the temple, etc., were made prior to 516 B.C.,”¹³ when the temple was rebuilt.

6. The Finality of the Second Coming of Christ

Before we consider the subject of the present spiritual impact of the kingdom of God upon the daily life of the Christian we will take a recess and look at Scriptures that indicate that the coming of Christ terminates the universe as we know it. We sing, “When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more,” but many do not believe this is so. The dangerous aspect of this unbelief is that such skepticism leads one to hold out a promise of salvation after the return of Christ. Surely the correcting of that wrong and perilous notion should make worthwhile our study of the subject of the finality of Christ’s return, for mere speculative prophetic studies are an utter waste of time. Christ repeatedly declared that His purpose in foretelling an event was that its fulfillment might strengthen one’s faith and inspire his hope: “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he” (Joh 13:19; *see also* Joh 14:29; 16:4). Let us note several “finallys” of the Lord’s return.

¹³ William E. Cox, *In These Last Days*, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing.

A. The harvest of all souls is the end of the world.

Jesus makes it very clear that saved and sinner will be in the world until His Second Coming, when He will separate the one from the other for all eternity. Read Matthew 13:24-30 with verses 36-43, and you will see that there is no separation of seven years before His appearing. The wheat is not taken up to the heavenly storehouse, and then seven years later the tares are dealt with. Nor is this further delayed for 1,000 years. Note verse 30: "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Read also verses 39-40: "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world."

While we are in this chapter let us look at verses 49 and 50. The same consummation at the Second Coming is found in this parable of the net and the fish. Note that when the net was full, it was drawn to the shore, and the good was separated from the bad. "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

B. The resurrection will occur on the last day.

The Word clearly teaches that there is to be one general resurrection and it will be on the last day. Funeral ceremonies used by most ministers include the statement, "the general resurrection on the last day." When Paul declared that there will be "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Act 24:15), he meant exactly that. There is to be a single resurrection that will call forth from their graves the saved and the unsaved.

The apostle speaks of "the resurrection" in 2 Timothy 2:18 in the singular. Of the Sadducees it was said that they say there is no resurrection (Mat 22:23). The plural would have been used if there were more than one resurrection.

We cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, get two resurrections from Christ's words, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Joh 5:28-29).

Now, the fact of the resurrection of all at the coming of Christ means that this day must be the final day of this world's history. So, we should not be surprised that Jesus repeatedly says that *the* resurrection is the *last day*. "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (Joh 6:39). "I will raise him up at the last day" (v. 40); "I will raise him up at the last day" (v. 44); "I will raise him up at the last day" (v. 54). If in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is to be established (Mat 18:16), how much

more should this statement repeated four times convince any reasonable person that the resurrection is the *last, final day!*

Martha adds her testimony to the New Testament belief that the resurrection is the last day. “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (Joh 11:24).

Now, if any of these verses even hinted that this resurrection was that of the ungodly, then the dispensationalist could say, “I believe that the resurrection of the unsaved is the last day. It is 1,000 years after the resurrection of believers.” But, since this merely says, “the resurrection,” the only reasonable conclusion to arrive at is that this is one *general resurrection*.

In Paul’s resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, he tells us that this takes place when the “last trump” sounds. This is certainly a final feature. The implication follows that there must be other trumpets sounding before this last trump. In Revelation we learn of the seven trumpets sounding, and we find that the seventh trumpet is also one of finality. “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Rev 10:7). “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

These verses clearly indicate one great consummation at the coming of the Lord when the seventh or last trumpet sounds. So there is no possibility of some second resurrection occurring in the future. Revelation 10:6 tells us that in the days of the seventh trumpet time shall be no more. So the seven year “tribulation” of the futurists, and also their 1,000 year “kingdom age” have no place once Paul’s last resurrection trump sounds. Incidentally, the fact that 1Corinthians 15 has to do with the resurrection of believers does not make the slightest difference in respect to the finality of the “last trump resurrection.”

Peter makes it abundantly evident that everything that pertains to this earthly system will have run its course when Jesus returns. Read 2 Peter 3:3-14. Now Peter was not familiar with modern, fanciful schemes of prophecy. Peter only knew *one Second Coming*. To him “the day of the Lord” (v. 10) was identical with the Lord’s return. And when that day arrives he tells us that “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (v. 10). He adds in verse 11 that seeing that all these things will be dissolved, we are to look for new heavens and a new earth. There is certainly no room here for a space of seven or, much less, one thousand years, interspersed with one resurrection after another!

But doesn’t the Bible speak of a *first* resurrection? And if there is a *first* does that not mean there will be a *second* resurrection? Doesn’t Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians speak of the “dead in Christ” rising *first* (1Th 4:16)? Of course, the answer to these questions is yes. But again let us take our answers from the Bible itself, and not from what someone has said about these passages.

“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” (Rev 20:6). Here is a resurrection that produces blessings and holiness, and which makes us priests of God, and delivers us from the second death. Now, it is very obvious that this is no physical resurrection. Here is a resurrection that results in spiritual enduements¹⁴ and in deliverance from eternal hell. This is that “passing from death unto life” that alone produces the above fruit, and which gives us eternal salvation.

In John 5 we have both the first spiritual resurrection and the general physical resurrection depicted in no uncertain terms. Jesus is the spokesman, so we can appeal to no higher authority. Listen to His words: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (Joh 5:24-25).

The Apostle John uses these words of Christ when he writes, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1Jo 3:14). Paul adds his testimony in this statement: “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...Even when we were dead in sins, [he] hath quickened us together with Christ” (Eph 2:1, 5).

The first spiritual resurrection takes place now when we accept Christ as Savior. But the general physical resurrection is still future. Jesus speaks of that in the same fifth chapter of John, verses 28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming [not the plural, “hours”], in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” At the one general resurrection all shall come forth that are in their graves. Some shall experience the blessed resurrection of the redeemed; but the unsaved shall come forth to judgment and to eternal woe.

7. Will Anyone Be Saved after the Return of Jesus Christ?

Some ideas that people hold in respect to the kingdom of God and the return of the King, although unscriptural, are not necessarily harmful. But there are other notions that people hold that are spiritually disastrous. For instance, the “postponed kingdom” theory and all of its implications is certainly harmful to anyone who seriously accepts it as fact, as a previous chapter points out. Futurism’s treatment of Revelation from chapter 4 on destroys the very purpose of the book. The special blessing of Revelation 1:3 is vitiated¹⁵ completely. The dispensationalists’ insistence that the Church is a parenthe-

¹⁴ **enduements** – qualities or abilities given.

¹⁵ **vitiated** – spoiled; impaired.

sis¹⁶ unknown to the Old Testament writers not only belittles the Church which Christ purchased with His precious blood, but it also takes from us many Old Testament passages that clearly point to our gospel day. But the theory most harmful, widely held by all dispensationalists and futurists, is that salvation will be available after Jesus comes for His Church. Condemning the “second chance cultists,” they propagate a doctrine that is every whit as harmful. And they ignore all that the Bible teaches about the finality of Jesus’ return.

Now, what we have already considered regarding the finality of Christ’s return surely precludes the possibility of the day of grace extending past the Second Advent. But let us look at some specific Scriptures that deal with that aspect of last things so that we need have no doubt.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Co 6:2). That “now” makes no sense if you should say that the day of salvation extends into the days after Christ returns. It is *now or never!* Encouraging a sinner to entertain a false confidence in a post-rapture day of grace destroys such an injunction as, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow” (Pro 27:1).

The “today” of salvation is emphatically repeated in Hebrews. “Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts” (Heb 3:7). “But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (v. 13). “While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (v. 15). Read also chapter 4, verse 7: “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

This gospel day is limited, and to make its grace extend to the tomorrows after Jesus returns is to ignore all these clear statements about this limited day, and to encourage sinners to hope in a tomorrow that offers no hope!

Peter, in his second epistle, also clearly shows us that the only reason why Christ has delayed His return is that sinners might enter the door of salvation before it is closed forever. Jesus had stated that fact in such unmistakable language that one wonders why it is necessary to quote other authorities to prove that the opportunity ends forever at His Second Coming (note Luke 17:26-30). Peter answers the slanderous statements of critics who claim that Jesus’ delayed return is proof that He will not come back the second time. He writes, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9). He repeats that truth in verse 15 when he says that “the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.”

Surely these statements are so simple that one wonders how anyone can concoct the notion that a great day of evangelism will follow the return of Christ! Such an erroneous theory is surely rebuked in these words of Peter. The Second Coming *ends* all evangelical

¹⁶ **parenthesis** – interlude or intervening occurrence.

effort, and that is why the longsuffering Lord waits until His salvation is embraced by as many perishing souls as will avail themselves of it.

When the last living stone has been placed in the Temple of God; when the last member of His Body has been united with Him by faith; when His Church is complete, then He will come. There will be no other temple, body, or church, once Christ returns. That is the clear and simple teaching of the Word of God.

8. The Three Kinds of Scriptural Tribulation

One Sunday evening, after preaching in a certain pastorless church all day, I was invited by the pulpit committee to meet with them. The first question I was asked was, “Do you believe that the Church goes through the tribulation?” Whenever one asks that question, you can be sure you have met with a futurist whose mind is steeped in teachings derived from Scofieldism. Now, since the question of tribulation looms so large in the minds of many Christians, it is important that we consider this subject in the light of God’s Word.

About three years after I had escaped the snare of the Scofield Bible, I decided to make a thorough study of tribulation. I soon discovered that the Bible referred to three distinct types of tribulation. After quite a lengthy time of delving into the Word I submitted my findings to Dr. McNichol, the principal of Toronto Bible College, where I was then a student, and he agreed that I was not dealing in mere theory.

Let us start with the first type of tribulation where the Bible starts, namely, in Leviticus.

A. The Jewish tribulation

In chapter 26 of Moses’ book of Leviticus we find the Lord outlining the blessings that would come to Israel if she obeyed God; but there are also enumerated the curses that would come upon the nation if Israel disobeyed the Lord. Read the book of Judges to find how Israel repeatedly backslid, and the judgments that fell upon the nation as a result. But its worst crime against Jehovah was the rejection of the Son and Heir, Jesus Christ. Obviously, it follows that its greatest punishment would come upon the unbelieving, Christ-rejecting nation as a result. And it follows that this judgment would find some prophetic foregleam¹⁷ in the Old Testament. Well, both in Leviticus 26 and in Deuteronomy 28, we find definite predictions of judgment that found fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Carefully read Leviticus 26:14-46. Notice the repeated phrase “seven times more” punishment for your sins in verses 18, 21, 24, and 28. The number seven in Scripture stands for completion or fullness. All one needs to do is read the account Josephus gives of the terrible judgment that befell the Jews when the Romans besieged the city in his

¹⁷ foregleam – preview.

day, to realize that it would not be possible for any worse calamity to befall any people. The desolation predicted by Daniel, repeated by Christ, and foretold repeatedly by Moses in this chapter in Leviticus found complete fulfillment in A.D. 70. “I will...bring your sanctuaries unto desolation” (Lev 26:31); “I will bring the land into desolation” (v. 32); “Your land shall be desolate” (v. 33).

Daniel speaks the same language when he refers to the same event. “The people of the prince that shall come [the Romans, without doubt] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined...and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate” (Dan 9:26-27). Christ speaks of this “abomination of desolation” and tells those present that this would be seen by the generation then present. Read Matthew 24:15 with verse 34. Luke pinpoints this desolation as happening when the armies overcome Jerusalem, which did occur in A.D. 70 (Luk 21:20-24). “These be the days,” says Christ, “of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (v. 22). Matthew records Christ’s statement that “upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth...verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation” (Mat 23:35-36). And then he adds this significant statement: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (v. 38).

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians about the Jewish crucifixion of Christ, adds this: “For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1Th 2:16). They filled up the measure of their fathers (Mat 23:32) by rejecting and crucifying Christ. Paul says the same thing when, after noting how they killed “the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men” (1Th 2:15), he adds this: “to fill up their sins alway” (v. 16).

Let us look again at Moses’ predictions of judgment upon the God-defying Jews. Turn to Deuteronomy 28 and read from verse 15 to the end of the chapter. Certainly we have a picture of the fierce Roman siege of Jerusalem from verse 49 to the end. The Roman army was composed of soldiers from remote places as far away as Britain—“from far, from the end of the earth” (v. 49). They were certainly fierce and regarded not young or old (v. 50). The famished people lost all natural affection and ate their own children (vv. 51-57). This was “Jacob’s trouble” of a certainty (Jer 30:7). This was the Jewish tribulation of Matthew 24:21.

The disciples of Christ remembered the warnings Christ gave them pertaining to these days of vengeance, and they obeyed His instructions as recorded in such words as, “Let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment” (Mar 13:15-16). History says that not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. They did what Christ fore-warned them to do. (Note also Mark’s and Luke’s accounts of this warning given by Christ of those days in Mark 13:14-23 and Luke 21:20-24.)

Even the transportation of the scattered Jews to Egypt to work in the mines is recorded by Moses and was fulfilled accordingly (Deu 28:68). The markets were so glutted with Jewish captives that no one would buy any more, and they were left to perish.

Have you ever wondered why children refer to Jews as “sheeney”? Well, as much as we abhor their doing so, Moses foretold that the Jews would be called this. “Thou shalt become...a byword” (Deu 28:37). This word in Hebrew is *sheninah*. Gentile depreciators abbreviate it to the word “sheeney.” Nothing in either Leviticus or Deuteronomy has failed to find a fulfillment in the past and present history of Jewish tribulation.

If one should ask where the futurists get their future seven year tribulation, which is primarily Jewish in nature, and which is to either immediately precede or follow the Second Coming of Christ (depending upon whether one is a *pre* or *post*-tribulationist), the answer is, “the Scofield Bible and its followers.” Certainly they cannot find one verse of Scripture to attest their conjectures.

When Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they were not the true seed of Abraham, but that Satan was their father, and that his deeds would they do, Christ was simply pointing out to them their culminating dastardly deed of murdering him on Golgotha (Joh 8:33-59). Nationally, these Christ-deniers were of Abraham’s seed, but spiritually they were no kin of his. Jesus added, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me...this did not Abraham” (vv. 39-40).

Thus they cried at His trial, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Mat 27:25), and this request saw its greatest fulfillment at the time of the great tribulation visited upon them in A.D. 70.

Many parables of Jesus pointed out to His listeners the fact that their rejection of His claims would result in their utter destruction. He warned the Jews who had accused Him of casting out devils by the prince of devils, Beelzebub, that every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation (Mat 12:25-27). In His parable of the unclean spirit and the empty house (vv. 43-45), He said, “The last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation” (v. 45). Speaking of the hypocritical Pharisees, Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Mat 15:13). And this rooting up took place at the time of the A.D. 70 tribulation. Read the parable of the householder and his vineyard (Mat 21:33-46). “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance” (v. 38). So, continued Jesus, they caught the son and heir and slew him. And in answer to the Lord’s question as to what the lord of the vineyard would do to the wicked husbandmen, the Jews said, “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons” (v. 41). Jesus then pointed out to them the prophecy about the rejected stone becoming the head of the corner and added, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (v. 43). The chapter closes with the chief

priests and Pharisees admitting that Jesus was speaking of them. So, once again, they sought to apprehend Jesus.

In this parable we not only have an unmistakable prediction of judgment upon that generation of unbelieving Christ-rejecters, but we also have another affirmation that their rejection would not lead to a “postponed kingdom.” Instead, the kingdom would be given to the Gentiles who would produce fruit to God’s glory.

In the next chapter of Matthew (22:1-14), we find that the parable of the marriage supper of the king’s son pronounced the same judgment upon the rebellious ones. The rejecters of the king’s invitation “took his servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them” (v. 6). The result: “When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies [remember Dan 9:26-27] and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (v. 7).

Nothing that has happened since the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 exceeded the horror of those days. The Jews were sure that the Romans could not take their Holy City. They were certain that their temple could never be invaded. Like Samson, they did not seem to know that their strength had departed from them because of their dreadful treatment of the Son of God. God gave them up to such an extent that natural affection left them, and they devoured their own flesh and blood, as we mentioned before. The Nazis’ slaughter of the Jews in Europe was more extensive in the number of deaths than the A.D. 70 desolation, but nothing before or after that Roman siege compared with it in the treachery and the cannibalism of the Jews themselves. Historians say of that A.D. 70 destruction, “The miseries of the siege and the destruction of life and property were at least as much the work of the Jews themselves as of their conquerors.”¹⁸ This could not be said of any succeeding attack upon them.

Stephen meekly said of his own martyrdom, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Act 7:60). But of their murder of Jesus Christ he had a moment before declared with vehemence, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (vv. 51-54). And, said Christ, these murderers would be destroyed (Mat 21:33-46). Incidentally, there is not one verse of Scripture that even hints that the kingdom taken from the Jews and given to those who bring forth the fruit thereof would be taken from the latter some future day and given back to the Jews. They had their day. Today their only hope of enjoying the kingdom of God is by entering it now by the *new birth*. If they remain not in unbelief, writes Paul, they may be saved—they may become part of that body of Christ, that kingdom of God (Rom 11:23). In Acts 13:45-52 we find the Jews rejecting the message of life and Paul declaring to them, “...seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (v. 46). The unbelieving Jews chose

¹⁸ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Howard-Severance Co., s.v. “Jerusalem.”

death instead of life, and the tribulation of A.D. 70 was the culmination of the judgments they had brought upon themselves by reason of their constant denial of God's way of life. Although we have far from exhausted the subject of Jewish tribulation we will pass on to the next type of scriptural tribulation, namely, the tribulation upon the ungodly.

B. The tribulation upon the ungodly (the wrath to come)

Before futurism and dispensationalism had produced their theory of the "rapture" before the "great tribulation," the book of Revelation and its judgments upon the ungodly were understood to have both a present and future application. The trumpets, for example, announced judgments upon the ungodly down through history until the last or seventh trumpet heralded the return of Christ and the final judgment. (Note 1 Corinthians 15:52 and Paul's last trump return of Christ, with Revelation 10:7; 11:15.) But the confusing notions of these new schools of interpretation closed the book of Revelation after chapter 3. From chapter 4 on, its exhortations, warnings, promises, and pronouncements of judgment are not for the Church at all. They apply, chiefly, to this "seven year tribulation period"!

So the fourfold repeated statement about the book's message being for the time at hand was obliterated by this false teaching. "To shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev 1:1); "for the time is at hand" (1:3); "the things which must shortly be done" (22:6); "for the time is at hand" (22:10). Its judgments that have befallen nations since the First Advent and which will continue until the Second Advent have been lost sight of by all who accept this futurism. The message of the seals, trumpets, and vials is lost upon that part of the Church which has gullibly accepted this Scofieldism. And this is most tragic!

The tribulation of the ungodly is portrayed throughout Revelation. God's sealed ones are protected from this outpouring of wrath upon the evildoers. "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev 7:3).

Revelation reveals that the unbeliever is constantly under the judgments of God. Nothing works together for the good of those who despise God, neither now, nor eternally. It's true that storms do come down upon the Christian, but since He is upon the Rock they do not injure him. In fact, says Christ, not even death can trouble the believer. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Mat 10:28). "It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Mat 7:25).

We who are Christ's need not fear either present calamities or the future Judgment. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 5:9); but, "sudden destruction cometh upon them" (v. 3). About the tribulation upon the ungodly generally Paul says this to the Romans: "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile" (Rom 2:9). One may read Peter's account of the final tribulation judgment upon the ungodly world in 2 Peter 3:3-15. Both in the Old and New Testaments many passages tell of the tribulation upon the ungodly.

C. The tribulation of the Christian

It is most sickening to hear a preacher lull his people into a comfortable sleep by telling them that they will not “suffer the great tribulation.” Communists, who are sent out with the understanding that they will accept suffering for their cause must feel disgusted when they hear of such sermons. Even the Peace Corps are sent out with the knowledge that they must take hardships in their stride.

“Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,” Christians sing, but it is the strangest kind of war of all time. It is a war where you will not be injured or scarred in any way, and where you most assuredly will not suffer death for the cause of Christ! It is also a war foreign to the pages of Scripture. It is the kind of battle found only in the marching orders of the dispensationalists.

The Word of God from Genesis to Revelation tells us that the follower of God belongs to the ranks of the martyrs. From righteous Abel right down to the last death of a despised Christian in some Congo prison or South American jungle the Church of Jesus Christ is portrayed as a suffering Church.

Paul declares that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12). Of course, one may escape this kind of tribulation by living such a compromising life that no one will ever know he is a Christian. The veteran soldier of Christ, who had suffered before, daily enduring hardship for the Captain of his salvation, instructed young Timothy. He wrote to this young recruit, “We both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God” (1Ti 4:10). “Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). “Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel” (2Ti 1:8). “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3). “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds” (2Ti 2:9). “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2Ti 2:12). Read also 2 Timothy 3:10-12; 4:5-8.

Jesus constantly warned His disciples that in the world they must expect tribulation (Joh 16:33). If men hated and persecuted Him, He told them, the world would also hate and persecute them.

To quote Paul again: “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). But he assures the Christian that such tribulation will never separate him from the love of God, even though for the sake of Christ he is “killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Rom 8:35-36). Even if the “killing all the day long” is nothing but bearing hatred continually for Christ, John makes it clear in his first epistle (1Jo 3) that such hatred constitutes martyrdom of the person hated. Paul told the Thessalonians, “No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know” (1Th 3:3-4). He also said in his second letter to them, “We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure...that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2Th 1:4-5). But he also added a word about the tribulation upon the ungodly persecu-

tors: “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you” (v. 6).

Paul tells us that we are to “glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom 5:3). James says the same thing: “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam 1:3). Peter also: “...Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:6-7).

On that day of rewards it will be said of every true and faithful believer, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). For “they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:11).

How utterly disgraceful is the unscriptural teaching of some who consider themselves fundamentalists but claim that during their “seven year tribulation” whoever refuses to take the mark of the beast, and is therefore martyred, will thereby win his own reprieve from God’s final judgment and will live in eternal bliss! Not the Blood of the Lamb, but their own shed blood, will atone for their sins! What blasphemy parades in the name of Bible exposition in our day!

9. The Kingdom of God and Daniel’s Seventy Weeks Prophecy

Near the close of the 70-year Babylonian oppression of Israel, Daniel set his “face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting” (Dan 9:3) to determine when Israel should find favor once more with God. He prayed, “I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem...because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake” (vv. 16-17). Read the whole of Daniel 9 to gain a better understanding of verses 24-27, which contain the controversial seventy weeks prophecy.

One often hears the statement that a text without the context is a pretext. No passage in Scripture better illustrates that fact than does this chapter 9 of Daniel. To enter fully into these last four verses one must grasp the setting and occasion of this remarkable prophecy. Let us look again at the context.

Daniel had no doubt read the book of Jeremiah, and in chapter 25, verse 11, he found the prediction: “This whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” He also read this in chapter 29, verse 10: “For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.” Daniel knew that this period of seventy years was about to expire.

Daniel also was familiar with Isaiah's remarkable prophecy written about two hundred years before his time respecting the decree of the Persian king Cyrus, found in Isaiah 44:26-28, that this king would become the Lord's shepherd to perform Jehovah's pleasure in restoring the captive Jews to Jerusalem. There is no doubt that when Cyrus decreed in respect to Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be built," and in regard to the Temple, "Thy foundation shall be laid," he was fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy. Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make that decree, so that "the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled" (Ezr 1:1).

The context, then, of Daniel 9:24-27 must be read and understood because of the light it throws upon this most remarkable prophecy. And those preceding verses are Daniel's prayer concerning Jerusalem, its sanctuary, and its people. And note the repetition of the word "desolations" or "desolate" as applied to Jerusalem (vv. 26-27). The most casual reader will see that these verses have to do with the very same subjects contained in Daniel's prayer.

Gabriel was sent by God to His servant Daniel in response to his earnest pleadings and told him that the seventy years of captivity were to be followed by a period of seventy times seven years—490 years. All Bible students agree on this. He was also told that the same decree of Cyrus that was to end the Babylonian captivity was to be the starting point of the seventy times seven years.

Now what was the purpose of these seventy prophetic weeks? It is here where agreement ends, and confusion commences. Yet, this should not be so. Three times Gabriel used an expression that indicated that this prophecy was to be clearly understood. "I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding" (v. 22); "I am come to shew thee...therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (v. 23); "Know therefore and understand" (v. 25). Verses 24-27 are spoken so clearly and so simply (free from all figurative language), it is amazing that in recent years Christians should be confused by the diverse and contradictory theories foisted upon them in the name of Bible exegesis!

There were some prophetic truths of which Christ said to His disciples, "It is not for you to know" (Act 1:7). But here we have a prophecy where it is clearly stated, "Know therefore and understand" (v. 25). Daniel 9:24 summarizes the whole prophecy. In this single verse we have foretold the greatest event in human history—the coming of the Messiah and His redemptive work. Those seventy weeks of years were "determined" upon Israel and its great city, Jerusalem, to accomplish six things.

A. The six-fold prophecy and its fulfillment

Let us note this vitally important six-fold prophecy and its fulfillment.

First, "to finish the transgression." Most expositors are agreed that this points to the Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ, when Israel filled up the measure of its sins. Read the words of Jesus addressed to the Christ-rejecting scribes and Pharisees of His day (Mat 23:29-39). In Daniel 9:11 we read that "all Israel have transgressed thy law," but the very

height of their transgressions was reached on the Golgotha hill when they crucified their Messiah.

Second, “to make an end of sins.” On Calvary’s cross Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, but he was there stricken for the transgressions of His people. He was wounded on Calvary for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isa 53). By way of the cross, Christ “offered [the] one sacrifice for sins for ever” (Heb 10:12). He made an end of sins by making a perfect atonement and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. By Himself he “purged our sins” (Heb 1:3). “It is finished” (Joh 19:30) are words that may apply to both the first and second statement: to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins.

Third, “to make reconciliation for iniquity.” According to the futurist school, Christ died in vain. By placing the fulfillment of this prophecy into the future that school nullifies the sacrifice of Christ for our sins.

But Jesus Christ came not only to atone for man’s sin but also to reconcile him to God. This was needful, for man is not only a sinner but also an enemy of God. Read Romans 5:8-10; there you will see that Christ’s death was not only for us because we were sinners, but while we were enemies we were reconciled to God “by the death of his Son.”

Colossians 1:12-22 shows us how important the reconciling work of Christ was in making us members of the kingdom of God. The “blood of his Cross” made peace for us, so that we might be “translated into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Satan would like to think that none of this was accomplished by the Anointed One, Jesus Christ! But he knows better! The next best thing he can do is to get some friends of Christ to “futurize” this passage in Daniel 9.

Fourth, “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Spurgeon declared that “one of the main designs of Christ’s coming to earth was to bring in everlasting righteousness.” The futurist school casts all this into the “blessings of the future millennium age.” But Jesus Christ has become to the Christian his righteousness (1Co 1:30). Paul, showing the spiritual qualities of the kingdom of God, wrote, “The kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). The prophet Isaiah foretold of this righteousness that would be forever (Isa 51:8). Jeremiah pointed to the coming King and said that He shall be called, “*The LORD our Righteousness*” (Jer 23:5-6). Daniel’s prophecy has assuredly been fulfilled in that One Who brought in “everlasting righteousness.”

Fifth, “to seal up the vision and prophecy.” Jewish history confirms the fulfillment of this prophecy. Isaiah, two centuries before Daniel wrote this statement, declared “The LORD hath...closed your eyes...the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed” (Isa 29:10-11). The word “sealed” used here by Isaiah is the same word used by Daniel in Daniel 9:24. “To seal up” means to close up tightly as the lions’ den was sealed with the king’s seal (Dan 6:17), or as the sepulcher was sealed after Christ’s burial (Mat 27:66). Because of the refusal of Israel to listen to the prophets, and finally their rejection of Christ Himself, their judgment would be a

blindness that would seal up the Word of God to their understandings. Since they cried at Jesus' trial, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mat 27:25), part of their chastisement has been a mysterious blindness that has sealed up to them all that the prophets have written about their Messiah. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:14-15 that a veil is upon their hearts, so that they may read Moses and the prophets every Sabbath day and yet not see how they wrote about their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of this prophecy of Daniel is certainly not future!

Sixth, "to anoint the most Holy." Some teachers (who agree on all thus far written on Dan 9:24) have divergent views on this one statement. Some say that it refers to the heavenly sanctuary of Hebrews 9:23-24. Others claim that its fulfillment took place on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down in anointing, sanctifying power upon the assembled disciples and thereby anointed the spiritual sanctuary, "the temple of the living God" (2Co 6:16; 1:21).

My personal opinion is that this refers to the anointing of Jesus Christ at His baptism. He surely is the "Holy One of Israel" (Luk 1:35; Isa 60:9, 14); and when the Holy Spirit descended in the bodily shape of a dove Christ was then anointed for the work that lay before Him (Luk 3:22). He likely referred to that occasion when He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel" (Luk 4:18). Acts 10:38 reads, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power."

Daniel's 70 weeks or 490 years saw the accomplishment of all the six predictions we have just considered. There is no future 70th week. The "gap theory," or the "dispensational break," of the Scofield Bible and the futurist school is simply one of the many "winds of strange and divers doctrines" of these last days (Eph 4:14). Instead of all the evangelicals of the world being united in their gratitude to God for sending the Redeemer to accomplish these purposes prophesied so remarkably by Daniel, this dispensationalist school scoffs at the only true and scriptural interpretation of Daniel 9:24 and places all who thus understand this verse in the class of heretics!

B. The Prince of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy

Before we arrive at this vision of the coming Prince in Daniel 9 we should keep in mind the fact that Daniel in two previous visions gave us an outline of world governments and showed us that the last of world empires would be replaced by the kingdom of God (Dan 2). "The stone that smote the image became a great mountain [Mount Zion, no doubt], and filled the whole earth" (Dan 2:35). Here is "the stone which the builders rejected" spoken of by Christ Himself (Mat 21:42-44). Daniel 2:44-45 offers further confirmation of the stone referring to the establishment of the kingdom of God. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed...it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Verse 45 speaks of this stone "cut out of the mountain without hands," showing the spiritual nature of the kingdom established by the God of heaven—the kingdom of heaven.

The vision of chapter 7 gives more details relating to this heavenly kingdom. It tells us that the kingdom would be conferred upon “one like the Son of man” (Dan 7:13-14).

It naturally follows then that in Daniel 9 we should expect further confirmation of the establishment of the kingdom of God by the Messiah, and not the introduction of some foreign element, as suggested by the dispensationalists. And that is exactly what the burden of Daniel 9:24-27 is—the announcement of the coming of the Messiah. Philip Mauro points out that His coming is not heralded as “Messiah the King,” but rather “Messiah the Prince” (v. 25). Since the kingdom of God could only be established by the redemptive work of Christ, Mr. Mauro points out the perfect suitability of this term “Prince.” Four times the title “Prince” is given to the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and these together give a comprehensive view of the work of the Messiah. Note these occurrences:

Acts 3:15—“And killed the Prince of life.”

Acts 5:31—“Him hath God exalted...to be a Prince and a Saviour...to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Hebrews 2:10—“For it became him...to make the captain [Prince] of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Hebrews 12:2—“Looking unto Jesus the author [Prince] and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”

In view of these passages, read Daniel 9:25-26 again and see the fulfillment in the work of Messiah the Prince.

C. The prediction of another “prince”

The people of this prince—with a small “p”—would destroy the city and its sanctuary. This is in sharp contrast to the royal decree of Cyrus to rebuild both the city and Temple. The one would build, the other would destroy and leave the city’s house desolate (Dan 9:25-27 with Mat 23:38; 24:15; Luk 21:20). There is no doubt that the “prince” here is none other than the Roman commander Titus. All one needs to do is to read Matthew 24:2-21 and Luke 19:41-43, along with Josephus, to be assured that this is so.

D. The covenant confirmed by the Messiah

We have seen that Daniel’s seventy weeks prophecy brings us down to the Messiah and His redeeming work at His First Coming. We have seen that the result of the Jewish rejection of His claims led to the destruction of both their city and their sanctuary. The people and the prince of Daniel 9:27 were the Romans who were God’s instruments to punish this Christ-rejecting people. There is not one hint of any Second Coming teaching in verses 24 to 26 in chapter 9. However, the dispensationalists force into the whole passage this foreign element. Thus, the prince of verse 26 is the antichrist. This statement, “he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week” (v. 27), obviously points to Christ and the covenant He made with His disciples; but, instead of seeing that, they claim that the word “he” refers to the antichrist here as well!

This is indeed a strange doctrine, and one that historic Christianity never heard or dreamed of. The public ministry of Jesus Christ extended into three and a half years of the seventieth week. In the midst of that week He was crucified between two thieves. The veil in the Temple was rent from top to bottom, thus signifying the end of that temporary way of approaching God. Jesus caused thereby sacrifices and oblations to cease, by the perfect sacrifice of Himself. Thus the Old Covenant gave way to the New Covenant (Jer 31:31 with Heb 8:7-13). Anyone who reads Hebrews chapters nine to twelve and still has any doubt that Daniel 9:27 and the covenant made in the midst of the seventieth week mentioned there is not past history, has to read the passages with the smoke-colored glasses provided by the futurist school. But such conniving does not alter the fact that “he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15).

There is no point in placing before the reader further proof that Daniel 9:24-27 was accomplished at Jesus’ first coming, and that there is no future seventieth week. If what has been said already is not accepted because of maintaining the preconceived notions fostered by the dispensationalists, any further proof would be a waste of space.

10. The Spiritual Aspects of the Kingdom of God

“Don’t spiritualize the Christmas pudding!” Don said to me in college one day as we were leaving for the Christmas holidays. I had been delighting in Dr. McNichol’s treatment of the Word of God, who had pointed out that once there had been a natural nation (Israel) and a natural city (Jerusalem), a natural Temple and its sacrifices and priesthood, and that each of these has a spiritual counterpart today. And since he supplied us with an abundance of Scripture to prove this assertion I was enjoying this presentation of the Word very much. But Don rejected it all as being a destructive method of interpretation.

“If you spiritualize the Scriptures you make them unreal,” he contended. With this remark we parted for the Christmas vacation.

Had I wanted to give Don an answer I could have said, “Don, if I could spiritualize the Christmas pudding I would have pudding forever. Paul says temporal things that one can see and handle pass away, but the things that one can neither see nor handle are spiritual, and they are eternal!” (2Co 4:18).

Now, first let it be stated that our problem is not a distinction between that which is *literal* and that which is *spiritual*. Not at all! But the antithesis is between that which is spiritual and that which is natural. Read 1Corinthians 15:44-46 and you will find Paul distinguishing very clearly the two categories—natural and spiritual. He points out that the natural order comes first, and afterward that which is spiritual. In Hebrews, chapters 8 to 10 and 12:18-24, we also find this contrast clearly presented.

No one was a greater spiritualizer of the Word than the Apostle Paul. The manna in the wilderness was “spiritual meat.” The water that the Israelites drank was “spiritual drink.” The rock was “that spiritual Rock” from which flowed the water (1Co 10:3-4). He says we should teach and admonish one another in “spiritual songs” (Col 3:16). We fight spiritual foes and must put on spiritual armor, he tells us (Eph 6:10-17). He points out that a true Jew is one that has experienced the circumcision of the heart, and is a Jew *inwardly* and not *outwardly* (Rom 2:28-29; Phi 3:3).

The Israel of God is that spiritual commonwealth into which born-again Jews and Gentiles have entered. This is that holy nation of which Peter writes (1Pe 2:9). Like Paul, the Apostle Peter was also a great spiritualizer. He writes of Christians as living stones built into “a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5).

Now all these “spiritual” possessions were very real and “literal” to both Paul and Peter. But they were not physical, natural, temporary objects. Because they were spiritual, they were eternal.

Jesus was continually pointing out to His disciples that many things He said they misunderstood. They were forever carnalizing that which was to be understood in a spiritual sense. When He spoke of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees they thought He meant real bread, instead of the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. When He told them that to have life they must eat His flesh and drink His blood they failed to see that He was pointing out the fact that in order to have His life they must first partake of His atoning work—His body broken for them and His blood shed on their behalf.

The Scriptures are filled with figurative language to elucidate some spiritual truths. Jesus, for example, called Himself the door through which we must enter to be saved (Joh 10:9). The Apostle John uses scores of figurative terms in Revelation which, if misunderstood, lead to grotesque interpretations. In fact, it is the misapplication of the symbols of this book that has resulted in its being a closed book to so many Christians. Instead of Bible students seeing in this “book of the blessing” (Rev 1:3) the triumph of the kingdom of God over the powers of the evil one and his army, their minds are so distracted by the carnal expositions that one continually hears, that they turn away from this book in utter bewilderment or disgust.

Some Christians claim that when you say certain expressions are to be understood figuratively you are destroying the reality of the Bible. But that assertion is untrue. The symbols and figures of the Bible stand for realities.

In Revelation Christ is repeatedly presented as the Lamb. Certainly that is figurative language; but Christ is nevertheless the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (Rev 5:6; Joh 1:29). Satan is a spirit, but he is pictured as a serpent and dragon (Rev 12:9). The scarlet woman of Revelation 17 is portrayed as sitting on seven moun-

tains (v. 9). Dr. T. T. Shields¹⁹ once remarked, “To literalize this figurative language would give us a woman with a fantastic posterior!”

Understanding the “spiritual” of the “symbolical” language of the Bible opens up much to our present enjoyment and benefit which we otherwise find incomprehensible. John deliberately tells us to expect to find symbols in Revelation. The angel mentioned in chapter 1, verse 1, was going to “signify” his message to John. In other words, he was going to use “sign” language. So John tells us that stars are angels and candlesticks are churches (Rev 1:20). He tells us that horns are kings, and the woman is a city (Rev 17:12, 18). He doesn’t point out that the twelve pearls that form the twelve gates of the Holy City are to be understood figuratively, but how else could they possibly be understood (Rev 21:21)? Dr. Shields’s remark about the grotesque woman would aptly describe the oysters necessary to produce such mammoth pearls!

Understanding the figurative language of Revelation is the key to helping us appreciate such terms used elsewhere in the Scriptures. That is the reason we spent this little while in this marvelous “book of blessing.”

The believer has been translated into the heavenly, spiritual kingdom of God’s “dear Son,” and has thus come unto Zion, that heavenly city (Col 1:13; Heb 12:22). Christians compose the “royal priesthood” (1Pe 2:9) and are therefore a kingdom of priests (Rev 1:6).

The Christian who does not enter into the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of God and who refuses to accept the symbols that portray the many present realities of that kingdom is robbing himself of his present inheritance.

11. The Hope of Israel and the Kingdom of God

In the minds of adherents of the Scofield Bible and the dispensationalists the “hope of Israel” (like many other present spiritual realities) is still in the future. Not only is this hope futurized, but it is materialized as well, along with many other spiritual blessings.

Just what is the “hope of Israel” according to Scripture? Paul told the chief Jews at Rome that He was bound with a chain because of “the hope of Israel” (Act 28:20). Paul’s preaching had been about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and how the resurrection proved that He was the divine Son of God. Before the Jewish council the apostle declared, “Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (Act 23:6). At Caesarea, as he defended himself before Felix the governor against the falsely accusing Jews, he said, “So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead” (Act 24:14-15). Later, before king Agrippa, Paul said, “Now I stand

¹⁹ **T. T. Shields** (1873-1955) – Calvinistic fundamentalist pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church; founded the Union of Regular Baptist Churches in Canada and Toronto Baptist Seminary.

and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers...For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews" (Act 26:6-7).

Now, if the futurists were right, this "hope of Israel" would mean future restoration to Palestine, rebuilding of the temple, and the physical prosperity of the Jewish nation in millennial splendor for 1,000 years. Any reasonable person would know that such a hope preached by Paul would have won the applause of every Jew. But the hope Paul preached brought him into chains, and finally to martyrdom. What, then, did Paul preach that so infuriated the Jews?

Paul preached that Christ was crucified for our sins, and rose again for our justification (Rom 4:25). He preached the gospel of the grace of God, which is the same as the gospel of the kingdom of God. In Acts 20:24-25 Paul uses both phrases, proving the identity of the one with the other. The apostle never once declared that his prayer and heart's desire for Israel was that they might be given temporal power so that they could glory over the Gentile nations for 1,000 years. Indeed not! He did say, however, that his heart's desire and prayer for his people was that they might be saved (Rom 10:1). He told them that if they believed in their heart in the Lord Jesus, and confessed with their mouth that God had raised Christ from the dead, they might be saved (Rom 10:9). He made it clear that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile (Rom 10:12). Both alike are lost, and both alike must come to Christ the same way. He said distinctly that if the Jews "abide not in unbelief" they might be saved (Rom 11:22-23). But that is the only hope ever presented to Israel. (Read also Rom 3:20-23; Eph 2:14-22; Gal 3:26-29.)

Believing Jews and Gentiles compose the one Body and Bride of Christ (Eph 2:16). They are living stones in the one spiritual Temple of the living God (1Pe 2:5). There is no division that would result in a separate identity for Israel. Scripture nowhere even hints of such a division.

The dispensationalists are in bad company. They have joined hands with Paul's tormentors. If Paul had held the carnal notions of the priests and rabbis of his day, and had preached the dispensationalist's glorification of Israel with their earthly trappings of splendor and power, he would have been the most welcomed person of his day. But the apostle had to declare in the synagogue at Antioch that "they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers...knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day" (Act 13:27).

Even Christ's friends found it hard (before Pentecost) to believe in the "hope of Israel." That is why he had to declare to the two on the Emmaus road, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Doctor Luke adds, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luk 24:25-27). Later, to the other disciples, Jesus said, "These are the words which I spake unto you...that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me...Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance

and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:44-48). This is the hope of Israel. Jesus never once suggested that their hope was some distant future millennium.

The above statements of Christ prove that the Old Testament is in the New concealed, and the New Testament is in the Old revealed. The Old Testament prophets foretold the purposes of the Messiah, and, although they did not have as clear a revelation of Christ’s purposes in His Church as the apostles did, yet they certainly did have glimmers of our present age. Paul said that, although the age preceding the coming of Christ did not know as clearly as he and the other apostles the mystery of Jew and Gentile being united in the commonwealth of Israel, yet they did know something of this fact (Eph 2:11-19; 3:1-6).

The hope of Israel is the hope of the Gentiles, and if this hope is not grasped before the Second Coming of Christ, only eternal hopelessness awaits both. Thus one may see the terrible aspects of a doctrine that offers *hope* following the return of our Lord. For that reason one cannot be too vehement in his effort to expose this false doctrine.

12. Revelation 20 and the Millennium Explained

Revelation 20 has been the springboard that has sent many erroneous doctrines into orbit. The most prominent is dispensationalism. Its entire “millennial thesis” is built on the figurative language of this most controversial chapter in the Bible. Many dispensationalists go so far as to say that this chapter contains the key to opening up one’s understanding of the entire Bible! In other words, one enters the Scriptures through the door of Genesis and travels right through the Mosaic, historical, poetical, and prophetic books of the Old Testament. Then he continues into the New Testament through the portal of Matthew’s Gospel, journeys through the remaining Gospels, and enters the book of Acts, and on into the epistles until he comes to Jude. And then finally, after he reads through Revelation with all of its symbolism, he comes to chapter 20 to be told that now that he has gone right through the Temple of the Word he can now have the key to open the Scriptures!

Unfortunately, this “key” to opening one’s understanding of the Word of God has instead opened a cage that has released upon Christendom some of the strangest birds, with a diversity of names such as Scofieldism, futurism, dispensationalism, premillennialism, etc. These “birds” have preyed upon evangelical Christians so that even some who renounce all these isms, and who disavow the “postponed kingdom” theory, still believe in some future millennium with all the trappings of Judaism.

If one believes that the kingdom of God is a present reality, then he must see in Revelation 20 a present-day application. Now to some Bible students this may sound very revolutionary. In fact, twenty years ago such an affirmation sounded startling to me. I had many years before renounced Scofieldism, but I’m afraid a few of the grave-clothes of futurism still clung to me as far as Revelation 20 was concerned. A millennium had to

fit in somewhere, and it seemed to me that the most convenient place to put it was in the future.

But then a few verses began to bother me. The binding of Satan in verse 2 reminded me of the Lord's statement that he would have to bind that "strong man" before he could spoil his house (Mat 12:29). And it dawned on me that the place where that spoiling of his goods and his house took place was the same place where Satan's head was bruised (Gen 3:15), namely, Calvary's cross. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col 2:15). I also found that in Hebrews 2:14 we have the clear statement that Christ by virtue of His death destroyed the power of the devil. So I knew that as far as the Christian is concerned the roaring lion is chained—just as Christian discovered on Hill Difficulty in *Pilgrim's Progress*. I knew that it was wrong to cast into the future, then, this binding of Satan that Christ accomplished by way of the cross.

But other verses also aggravated me. Every time I read verses 5 and 6 I knew that there was something wrong with my exegesis²⁰ of these verses.

"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."

I asked myself what mysterious virtue a physical resurrection could have to make a person blessed and holy. I concluded that those attributes came only from the spiritual life of Jesus Christ in my soul. Then it gradually dawned on me that my passing from death unto life at my acceptance of Christ as Savior was a definite resurrection from spiritual death (Joh 5:24-25). This was the first resurrection that produced blessedness and holiness. And I knew that by virtue of this resurrection the second death would have no power. Incidentally, verse 14 defines the second death as being cast into hellfire.

We shall be looking at verses 5 and 6 more fully a few paragraphs from now, but let us start at verse 1 and briefly look at its various terms, and see what meaning it contains. Actually, it would require an entire book to exhaustively consider every detail of Revelation 20. We are only going to suggest a few principles of interpretation in the light of Scripture itself in order to make the chapter understandable to any who will be Bereans enough to let God's Word speak louder than the dispensationalist teachers.

Verse 1: Since Christ has the keys of hell and death (Rev 1:18) it is quite safe to assume that this angel is the Son of God. Now, teachers who are afraid of the "figurative" language of Scripture must agree that both the "key" and "chain" mentioned here are symbols. The key symbolizes authority (Mat 16:19). The chain signifies restraint (Jude 6).

Verse 2: Notice the fourfold character of Satan as revealed in his designations: dragon, serpent, devil, and Satan. A Bible concordance will reveal the usages of these various terms and will help us to complete the picture of our adversary. He was bound a thou-

²⁰ **exegesis** – interpretation.

sand years. Now just as the terms “key,” “chain,” “dragon,” and “serpent,” are to be understood figuratively, so is the “thousand years.” J. Marcellus Kik in his splendid book *Revelation Twenty* says that the term “thousand” denotes vastness (Deu 1:10-11). Not only are the cattle upon a literal “thousand hills” the Lord’s (Psa 50:10), but all cattle upon every hill belong to him. David used the term symbolically, as did John.

We have already mentioned that Jesus Christ and His victory on Calvary resulted in the binding of Satan. But we will add a few more confirming references. Note Jude 6 where the fallen angels are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness.” The demons are still very active, and were especially so in the days of Christ’s earthly ministry. But, in comparison with the freedom they had before joining in Lucifer’s rebellion, they are bound. In Hebrews 2:14 we read that Christ through His death destroyed “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” John writes, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8). And all this adds up to the binding of Satan for the “1,000 years” of our present gospel age.

Verse 3: You will notice in this verse that the binding of Satan is related to his being deprived of power to deceive the nations anymore. Before Christ came to preach liberty to Satan’s captives all the world’s nations were kept in utter darkness in respect to Jehovah and His redeeming purposes. Only in Palestine among the Jews was there any light, and this light had grown dim through their traditions. As for the Gentile nations, they could all remain in heathen darkness. No Jew cared for their souls. Jonah’s attitude toward Nineveh illustrates the view that Jews took of Gentile nations generally (Jon 4:1-3). Satan was gleeful. He had everything his own way! Then Jesus came, and everything changed. The Old Testament prophecies relating to the light of the gospel extending out to them began right away to be realized.

Here a few of the prophecies concerning the Gentiles: “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious” (Isa 11:10). “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa 49:6). “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa 60:3).

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, writing to the Roman church, exults in God’s grace toward the Gentiles in several verses (Rom 15:9-21). Nine times he uses the word “Gentile” as he quotes from Old Testament prophecies. In the ministry of Christ also we have evidence of Satan’s power being broken as far as “nations” were concerned; Matthew writes, for instance, “In his name shall the Gentiles trust” (Mat 12:21).

Doctor Luke tells us that on the day of Pentecost “there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Act 2:5). On that day they heard the message of the gospel in their own tongue; and when they returned to their own nation they spread the glad tidings among all men.

Writing to the Colossians, Paul was able to say that the gospel had come into all the world. In fact he added, “The hope of the gospel, which ye have heard...was preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Act 1:6, 23).

John, however, tells us that near the close of the Gospel Age Satan would once more regain his power to deceive nations. Today China, for instance, has been deceived by him through communism. The Congo, Cuba, and other countries and sections of nations are already feeling the deceptions of the devil (Rev 20:7-9).

Verse 4: A summary of this verse is simply that all the saints of God “reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17). That reign is upon earth during the Kingdom Age of our present “1,000 years.” “We shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10). When Jesus returns, “he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority...then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1Co 15:24-28).

This eliminates the grossly carnal notion of some future 1,000 years of saints sitting on a billion thrones reigning in Jerusalem! Materializing terms that can only be understood in their spiritual and figurative sense leads to the most absurd conclusions!

John saw the “lives” of God’s martyred saints who had refused to bow to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Instead of being stamped with the mark of the beast they were His sealed ones (Rev 7:3) and reigned over the world and the flesh and the devil himself. Thus, “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). God’s people are like sheep “killed all the day long” (Rom 8:36). And, since “we suffer [with Christ], we shall also reign with him” (2Ti 2:12). We are seated now in heavenly places, writes Paul (Eph 2:6), and we are sitting upon thrones.

Verse 5: In sharp contrast to the reigning saints of God are those worldlings who bear the mark of the beast and who are dead in trespasses and sins. They think they are alive as they indulge in their pleasures, but the Scriptures tell us they are dead (1Ti 5:6; Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13). These are the dead who refused to hear the voice of the Son of God (Joh 5:25; 11:25). To “live again” is to experience the first resurrection. But unrepentant souls remain in their spiritual death.

Verse 6: When Christ, the Resurrection and the Life, comes into a sinner’s heart, he passes from death unto life, and thus experiences the first resurrection. This results in blessedness (the joy of the redeemed) and in holy living. The second death (eternal separation from God in the lake of fire) has no power over God’s children. “This is the second death” (Rev 20:14). As a kingdom of priests (Rev 1:6), they live and reign with Christ during this gospel dispensation.

Verses 7-10: Near the end of this age Satan will once more go out to deceive nations, as he did for the many centuries before Christ’s first coming. And, no doubt, he is already doing his soul-destroying work. China was a field white unto harvest and into that field went many missionary societies. But in recent years the red horse rider has gone forth sowing death and destruction (Rev 6:4). No Christian missionary is welcome in Red China today. Many other fields had opened up years ago to the Christian evangel, but to-

day the deceiver of nations has once more asserted his power, and the result is death—in the Congo, in Cuba, and in other lands. And, in passing, it might be said that when doors had opened to these and other countries, and gospel harvesters were welcome, the Church of Jesus Christ did the job half-heartedly. A few zealous souls went forth to reap, but how few comparatively, and how little was the total sum invested in foreign mission work. Today we are reaping the results of a harvest field gone mildewed.

In the midst of the deceiver's renewed effort to hinder the gospel he has "compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (Rev 20:9). And he will likely arouse more world leaders against God's people. But at such times we believers may look up, for our Deliverer is about to cast "fire...down from God out of heaven" and devour them.

Verses 11-15: After that general resurrection we shall all give an account of the deeds done in the body (2Co 5:10). The unrepentant sinner whose name is not in the Book of Life will be eternally doomed. The Christian whose life and work were built upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, may find that some of his work was wood, hay, and stubble which will be destroyed, but he himself will be saved. Paul writes, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it...If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1Co 3:13-15).

The "second death" of verse 14 is eternal, conscious separation from God's presence. Let us each be sure that by faith in Christ our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life!

Now, the above treatment of Revelation 20 is simply a digest. Many books have been written on this chapter, dealing with the subject along the same line of thought as I have followed, but more exhaustively. They are all worth reading!

13. Antichrist and the Temple of God

The term "antichrist" appears only in John's epistles. And from its usage there it is very evident that apostate personages and apostate systems of religions are depicted. If that fact had been recognized, we would not have had paraded before us this and that military, political, or regal personality as being either "the antichrist" or his "forerunner." Of course, the propagator of such "newsy sermons" containing such sensational delineations does for the time being gain some notoriety from "Bible students" who are susceptible to such "prophetical sermons"; but when his "antichrist" or "his prophet" is hanged head downwards while the world mocks, the "prophetical teacher" becomes a "pathetical teacher" and has to make a bonfire of both his sermons and his books.

John tells us that we are living in the last time, and that even in his day there were "many antichrists." He described them as apostates who "went out from us." He then gives us a definite description of these antichrists. He writes, "He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (read 1Jo 2:18-22). Now, just as he pluralized "antichrists," so he has informed us that there are "many false prophets" (1Jo 4:1). Then he

adds, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (v. 3). In his second epistle he also writes about “an antichrist.” Note his words: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2Jo 7). No great “atheistic prince” is ever pictured in Scriptures as being the antichrist, despite the claims of the dispensationalists. Both in John’s day and ours the worst enemy of the Church is within its own ranks.

The late Dr. John McNichol, formerly principal of Toronto Bible College, said, “An antichrist system is more to be feared than an antichrist person.” T. H. Salmon in his book *The Lord Cometh* writes, “There seems to be no more need for thinking of the ‘man of sin’ in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 as being one individual than there is for thinking the same thing about the ‘man of God’ in 2 Timothy 3:17, or the ‘one new man’ of Ephesians 2:15.” William E. Cox in his book *In These Last Days* states,

“Scripture nowhere states that he [Antichrist] will be recognized for what he is. Rather, he will appear much as did the serpent in Eden—cunning and deceiving. He will appear as a religious leader. In view of present circumstances, Antichrist might well be already on the scene. The ecumenical movement is made to order for one person (Antichrist) to assume the leadership of a super apostate ‘church.’ This person could well be the Pope of Rome. Leading ecumenists are bowing more and more in that direction.”

In case one concludes that the above statements are contradictory, let me add another statement by Salmon from his book above mentioned. Speaking of the papal system in connection with the “man of sin” he writes,

“The word ‘Antichrist’ signifies a vice-Christ, rather than an open opponent of Christ. That is, in the place of Christ, rather than against Him. This is important because of the Pope’s claim to be the ‘Vicar of Christ.’ This so-called ‘Vicar of Christ’ is the only man who wears a triple crown and blasphemously claims to have power over three worlds: heaven, earth, and hell. It is his false claim to be Christ’s ‘vicar’ that makes the Pope to be Antichrist. Not merely *any one particular Pope, but the whole Papal system.*”

This interpretation agrees with all of the Protestant Reformers, as well as, it seems, the translators of the King James Version of our Bible. In their “Epistle Dedicatory” we find this statement: “The zeal of Your Majesty toward the house of God...is more and more kindled, manifesting itself abroad...by writing in defense of the Truth, (which hath given such a blow unto that man of sin, as will not be healed).” Further along they write, “So that if, on the one side, we shall be traduced by Popish Persons at home or abroad...we may rest secure, supported within by the truth.”

The favorite verse of many dispensationalists respecting the antichrist is 2 Thessalonians 2:4 where the “man of sin” is depicted as sitting in the temple of God. This is said

to be the future temple that the Jews will build in Jerusalem. But like every other contention of this school, there is not one verse of Scripture to confirm this theory.

Let it be stated at the beginning that if a nation of Christ-rejecting Jews built a temple in Palestine it could not be called the “temple of God.” It would be a pagan temple instead. Christ said that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Joh 14:6). So this temple would have no connection whatsoever with God.

Christ said of the temple of His day, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Mat 23:38), and he never once even hinted that this temple would be restored. In fact, even in Old Testament days, when the physical temple was the “habitation of God,” it was not the divine ideal, for it is written, “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet” (Act 7:48).

From the cross forward the only temple the Scriptures refer to is the temple of Christ’s body, composed of living stones, namely, all believers in Jesus Christ (Mat 16:18; Eph 1:20-23; 2:12-16, 20-22; 3:4-6; 1Pe 2:5, 9; 1Co 3:9-10, 16, 17).

This temple of God in 2 Thessalonians 2 is without doubt the Church. Paul writes elsewhere, “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God” (2Co 6:16). We, “an holy temple in the Lord...an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:20-22), is what Paul meant in Thessalonians.

In the midst of God’s people the man of sin would attempt to do his destructive work. And today it is evident that the isms and the cults that are now preached from many pulpits point to the heretical teaching of antichrist gaining ground.

The above argument regarding the meaning of the “temple of God” is established when you remember that the word for “temple” used by Paul is a different word from that used when the entire Jewish temple is meant. Paul uses the word *naos*, whereas the word *hieron* is always used of the Jewish temple. Dr. A. J. Gordon wrote: “There is no undisputed instance in the New Testament where this word *naos* is applied to the Jewish temple.” And Dr. Gordon writes as a futurist!

As has been stated previously, this book is a summary only, and does not attempt to go exhaustively into any of these various considerations. But on each subject we have attempted to point out scriptural guideposts, which, if followed, will lead you into further confirmation that we have done as the Bereans did—used only the Scripture to cast light upon itself. As we follow their example the Word will glow with light, where before there were dark and hidden passages.

14. Conclusion

Prophecy was never intended to create controversial speculations but to confirm our faith in “Thus saith the Lord,” as we see the predicted events fulfilled before our eyes. Futurism destroys this purpose. Peter clearly states that prophecy was meant to be light

shining in a dark place, “until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2Pe 1:19).

The interpretation of prophecy should not cause Christians to break fellowship with those they differ with. But it is a tragic fact that certain denominations and missionary boards in the United States very definitely divide believers on these issues. You must either be “Pre-Mill,” or “Pre-Trib,” a Scofieldite, or a dispensationalist, or you are considered by these people a heretic!

How can these church and missionary groups be so unthinking? It is very evident that in recent days members of God’s born-again family (who hold all the cardinal doctrines of the Word) do also hold varying views on prophetic questions. Even within their own special circle of eschatology they differ on many things. Therefore it is time for God’s children to make this declaration: “It is better for us evangelicals to explore fellowship on the basis of our common belief of all the cardinal truths of God’s Word than to exaggerate differences in the field of controversial prophetic interpretation.”

That does not mean to forsake our forthright proclamation of what we believe in this area. It does not mean that we must remain silent on our differing views. We may continue to defend with all zeal what we believe is so, but along with that zeal let there also be loving tolerance of our differing brethren’s views. It is one thing to express hearty disagreement with a fellow believer’s affirmations; but it is another thing to despise in our hearts that brother in Christ.

Paul’s exhortation still applies: “Speak the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). Even Paul sounded very severe at times, but we have the assurance that he practiced what he preached and was always motivated by Christian love. Let us go and do likewise! ✨