

Focus on the Kingdom

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Biblical Realism in Relation to Israel

by Bill Wachtel (reprinted from Feb. 2006 *Focus*)

In so-called “replacement theology,” which is very widespread, *literal*, ethnic, national Israel is no longer in view as God’s covenant people, but rather the Church has fully and permanently replaced Israel. The Old Testament promises of restoration for Israel are “reinterpreted” by this theology so as to make the Church the recipient of all the blessings, while national Israel is left to receive only God’s curses.

Historically, the Catholic Church adopted this theology and made it widely popular. The Protestant reformer John Calvin perpetuated it among his own followers, and it is accepted today by many so-called “evangelicals” as well as (surprisingly!) Jehovah’s Witnesses (contrary to the views of their own founder, C.T. Russell).

This replacement theology stands clearly invalidated by Romans 11 (and a mass of OT prophecy), where “Israel” means literal Israel and where Paul tells us that God still has plans for them as a nation (vv. 22-32) because they are “beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (v. 28). The medieval Church adopted a method of “interpreting” Bible prophecies “allegorically.” This allegorism continues in much of the professing church today. Allegory means “saying something other.” It is a spiritual poison, because it nullifies the text of Scripture in the name of “interpretation.” (A very occasional *genuine* allegory in the Bible is so labeled, Gal. 4:24). False “allegorizing” is a sophisticated way of getting rid of truth one does not care to believe!

Long ago, people of Abrahamic faith realized that this method was untrue to Scripture and was destructive to belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom. The Gospel of the Kingdom includes vital information about the *now* hardened, blinded Israel (not the Church) who are “enemies of the Gospel” (Rom. 11:28). But collectively, in the future, they are going to turn to the Messiah. Meanwhile individual Jews can of course join the followers of Jesus the Messiah and become members of the spiritual “circumcision” (Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:16, the Israel of the spirit, not “the Israel of the flesh,” 1 Cor. 10:18).

Insisting on a biblical future for **national Israel** does not mean that we as Christians are supposed to be active *politically* to bring about whatever agenda we think the Bible supports. We believe the Church is not called to such activity but rather to be separate from the

governments of this age. For this reason we do not vote nor bear arms.

Some speak of the “God of the Jews and the God of the Muslims” in such a way as to suggest that this is the same God. We object to such an identification. The God of the Jews, Yahweh, is the true God of the universe. He is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus. He is not Allah, the “god” of Islam. The Koran and the Bible are vastly different documents. The biblical God calls Himself the God of Israel. False interpretations of the Bible are also capable of leading people away from the God who inspired this precious Book.

Though we believe in the restoration of national Israel, this does not mean that we see the *current* government of Israel as the Kingdom of God. We do not believe that Zionism is the fulfillment of the biblical picture of Israel *regathered in true faith*. We do not believe that the Israelis do not make serious mistakes, as we all do. Israel has not yet been converted to the Christian Gospel of salvation, nor to the ethic of the New Testament. Paul calls them “enemies of the Gospel” (Rom. 11:28). They are a worldly government just like all other current governments. They have been brought back to their historic homeland in unbelief, just as our forefathers in the Abrahamic faith envisioned.

But they needed to be there, in the land, in their unbelief in order for God to deal with them in that land, just as His prophets foretold. Many prophecies concern events yet to occur in Israel. In the future, after the Great Tribulation, a collective national repentance and turning to the Messiah is to be expected. “Thus all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). Micah’s comment fits well: “I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will gather the **remnant** of Israel” (Mic. 2:12). Israel as a whole will be finally converted. This does not mean every Jew, just because he is a Jew. Everyone must choose to repent and accept Jesus and his Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 8:12).

The Bible contains no doctrine of inevitable, irresistible salvation, much less of double predestination. Every man must make a choice, and happily God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4-5). The fact that not everyone will be saved is proof positive of our capacity to choose, that is, to exercise our divinely given “free will” to believe and obey the truth of the Gospel, in order to be saved (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36; 12:44-50).✠

The Energy of the Word of Truth in your Life

Believing Truth and Avoiding the Poison of Falsehood

A French theologian spoke for all of us I think when he said, “I need, as the universe needs, a God who saves me from the chaos and anarchy of my own ideas. Only God’s *idea* [cp. *logos*, **word**] delivers our minds and spirits from its long torment and our heart from its vast loneliness.”

I am convinced that God provides that empowering “idea,” that *logos* in Scripture, and the idea is that we can, if we play the game of life right, gain immortality and fix the world, with Jesus, on a grand scale in the coming Kingdom (Luke 19:17: “Well done! Govern ten cities”). That “idea” reaches from one end of the Bible to the other. It is an epic drama about the Kingdom and the land/earth restored. It is not, with respect to one of our local preachers, “all about money”; it is all about **the land and its future**. It is certainly not about “going to heaven.” People who speak the language of “going to heaven” demonstrate their misunderstanding of God’s *logos*, His Plan. God desires this perplexed and warring world and church to be at peace, enjoying truth and fulfilling our destiny which is to live forever, on the terms of the Gospel of the Kingdom announced by Jesus and Paul.

In the Bible the wise have their eye on **the restored Kingdom of David**. This understanding commends Abigail, the intelligent and beautiful lady who later, after being married to the disastrous Nabal, became a wife of David, and who was spiritually discerning enough to **recognize David as the Lord’s Messiah**, a “type” of Jesus. Her spiritual strength was that she recognized in David the one whom the Lord God was using to fight His battles (1 Sam. 25:28: “my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD”). She understood the Messianic ideal in David, the ancestor of the Messiah. The thief on the cross gained his success also by believing in the coming Kingdom (Luke 23:42-43). This is the hallmark of all the celebrated men and women of faith in the Bible. We should follow their example. They knew what works, and so many current “programs” and “improvement plans” evidently don’t work!

“What is the most powerful thing in the world?” the Bishop of Winchester asked in his book in 1928. “That question at once conjures up in the mind pictures of bombs, guns and explosives. It is none of these things. They are merely instruments. Behind them is **the mind** that uses them. And their use, or disuse, will depend on the ideas in that mind. **Therefore the most powerful thing in the world is the idea**. Behind the ships at

Boulogne, waiting for the invasion of England, more than 100 years ago, was the mind of Napoleon. The prevailing idea in that mind was the domination of Europe.”

I have been trying to urge students to stop clouding the issue by rather vaguely using “word of God” just as a synonym for the Bible as a whole, and confining it in a more strictly New Testament way (based on the first occurrence of “word of God” which came to Abraham in Gen. 15:1, when the covenant with him was announced). “Word of God” in the NT is almost invariably the shorthand for the **salvation Gospel about the Kingdom of God and the things of Jesus** (Matt. 13:19; Acts 8:12), God’s great idea. Jesus was the first preacher of that **great idea!** (Luke 4:43; Heb. 2:3).

The prevailing idea in the mind of Jesus was the preaching of his **Father’s Gospel** (God’s Gospel, Mark 1:14-15) centered on **the Kingdom of God**. Luke 4:43 remains the most neglected “refrigerator verse”: **“I must preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God: that is the reason why I was commissioned.”** Luke then tells us that as he preached the Kingdom they were listening to **the word of God** (Luke 5:1; cp. Acts 8:4, 5, 12). We should follow Jesus’ and Luke’s example here. Jesus also bids his Church to take that great commission Gospel of the Kingdom to the world, “and then [and only then] will the end come” (Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20). He continued: “When you therefore see the Abomination of Desolation standing where **he** ought not to...” (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14).

Yes, the great idea which emerged in the mind of Jesus in that marvelous Olivet Discourse is contained in that very next verse (Matt. 24:15): “When you **therefore** [connecting the thought to the ‘end of the age’ he had just mentioned, v. 14] see the Abomination of Desolation standing where **he** ought not to...” (Mark 13:14). The RV of 1881 corrected the pronoun to “he” and we find it now in ASV, NAB, NEB, REB, Goodspeed, Moffat, Fenton (“brutal desolator”), Good News Bible: “standing where he should not be (note to the reader: understand what this means).” The *Oxford Bible Commentary*: “Grammatically the participle, ‘standing,’ is masculine in Greek, qualifying a neuter noun: hence the ‘thing’ concerned is clearly personified in some way.”

The same idea occurs in Revelation 13:14 where the neuter “beast” is followed by a masculine pronoun, making him a person. His number 666 is interesting. It is what the ancients called a triangular number, the sum of all the numbers up to 36, but it is doubly triangular: 36 is the sum of all the numbers up to 8. 888 is the number of Jesus and the final beast is an 8th head. The final antichrist appears to be a horrible parody of the true Messiah.

We are commanded to pay attention to every word of the Bible — “Man is to live out of every word which

comes from God's mouth" (Matt. 4:4) — not just the bits we feel "comfortable" with. One sometimes hears that the book of Revelation is not something to be studied, because it is all too difficult! But that is to follow Luther blindly. Luther said early on that **Christ was not preached in Revelation at all**. It is not an apostolic book, he declared. But that view deprives Jesus of 22 chapters of instruction to us, since the book is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him. Jesus had said in Matthew 24:25: "Look, I have told you in advance." These are warnings which we can scarcely afford to neglect. If you don't care for the book of Revelation, get over it! Learn it and thus listen to Jesus.

The book of Revelation is largely Jesus' own **expansion of his Olivet discourse**. And both Revelation and Matthew 24 are based on **Daniel** and the other prophets. Obviously, Paul's hope was that these prophetic warnings and teachings would be handed down from generation to generation ("Teach my words to faithful people who will be able to teach them to others also," 2 Tim. 2:2). When the time came for their fulfillment, they would serve as guiding lights for those whose lot is to live through the troubled times which *just precede* the **arrival**, the single Parousia, of Jesus.

Did not Paul writing in about 55 AD say to the Thessalonians, "Don't you remember how when I was with you [for a short time] I used to tell you these things?" (2 Thess. 2:5). He was referring to the detail about the antichrist, the man of sin, the Abomination or "brutal desolator." Paul knew of the vital, energizing power of the words of Scripture, and he desired his congregations to have that power in their lives.

Date-setting by earnest students has caused the atheists and agnostics to mock! It may have been exciting to live in the years just before 1844, the year of Miller's great failed prophecy of the end. But the cost was great in terms of disillusion. Worse than that, the date gave the Seventh-Day Adventists, not wanting to admit that the whole calculation was flawed, grounds for erecting a whole scheme which became dogma in that denomination: Jesus, they said, entered into some special new position in 1844. How much better it would have been to inspect and question the whole theory that days are meant to mean years in prophecy and to go back to the drawing board (see for example the excellent words of Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 294-298). How much better to acknowledge that all the effort put into setting a date for the Parousia has so far failed! SDA's summarily dismissed any who questioned their cherished dogma about 1844. Such is the cruel intransigence of denominations.

The 1914 failed date led Jehovah's Witnesses, rather than admitting the error, to posit an invisible coming of Jesus in that year — the very year, ironically, when

World War I broke out — odd, since the date was meant to signal the beginning of the Kingdom of God! 1914 was only one of a series of mistaken calculations, and some loyal members of the original Witnesses are still sure that Jesus came back in the 1880s.

1948 has also not proven itself to be a chronological guide to the future Advent. Yes, it was remarkable that the state of Israel was founded in that year, but the Bible has much, much less to say about Israel in the land *in unbelief* than it does about the still future return of a remnant of *converted* Israel (Rom. 9-11). This is part at least of the concern so eagerly asked about in the disciples' famous last question: "**Is this the time when you are going to restore national sovereignty and Kingdom to Israel?**" (Acts 1:6). This is the question condemned outright as misguided by John Calvin, who did not understand the Kingdom of God. Calvin said that there are as many errors in that question as there are words!

As always, Jesus is our guide ("This is My beloved Son; **listen** to him," Luke 9:35). In Matthew 24:3 Jesus was asked about **the end of the age in clear connection with trouble in the Temple**. Commentators have fought over that connection. But if one takes Daniel and other prophets, especially Isaiah, as one's base then trouble in a temple and the appearance of a final awful figure, the antichrist, is to be expected.

The disciples asking their question started with the advantage of a good knowledge of what the prophets had foretold about the end of the age. They asked the *right* question: "When will these things happen [the demolition of the temple] and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3). Mark and Luke report the very same question as the cue for the Olivet discourse. They do not even mention the second coming *as such*, but they imply it in the phrase "all these things will be fulfilled" — a group of words which echoes the Greek of the last chapter of Daniel (see Dan. 12:7 for the exact same phrase: *suntelesthesetai panta tauta*).

The fact is that the disciples were not, as it turns out, speaking of two events separated by nearly 2000 years, i.e. an AD 70 destruction in Jerusalem and then a Parousia much, much later. **The AD 70 fall of the Temple was definitely not a sign of the immediate, impending arrival of Jesus**. Jesus has still not returned. Go to Israel and you will not find him sitting on the throne of David!

This has not prevented the rise of preterism — "past-ism" — which boldly declares that Jesus *must* have returned in AD 70. After all did he not predict his arrival in very close connection with the destruction of the Temple? Yes, he did. But had the Kingdom of God been understood as a new, visible revolutionary government headquartered in Jerusalem, the catastrophic mistake

promoted by increasing numbers could not have ever been imagined. Surely it is clear that far from the Kingdom and restoration of Israel being a fact of AD 70, the very opposite happened: Israel was dispersed and decimated! And what about the resurrection of the dead? Did *that* happen in AD 70? Clearly not. Those who promote the second coming in AD 70 have fallen for a colossal systematic mistake.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 remains one of those classic golden texts which gets us oriented to the New Testament scheme: “Those who belong to Christ [all the faithful of all the ages] will be **made alive/resurrected** at his coming [Parousia].” That is the Christian goal, plainly and simply. To “make alive” is one of those wonderful resurrection verbs. The *TDNT* has it just right: “Life is given to man at the resurrection when God raises him. The idea of the immortality of the soul is quite alien...The immortality of the soul is first found along with dualistic Hellenistic psychology in Diogenes...’To make alive’ is used generally of the future raising of the dead. Rom. 8:11: ‘the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise your mortal bodies.’ I Cor. 15:22: ‘As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.’ To be made alive thus means the same as raise up, and in John 5:21, as in Rom. 8:11, the two words occur together: ‘Just as the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, thus also the Son raises those whom he desires to.’ ‘Make alive’ is used in the same sense of Christ’s resurrection in 1 Pet. 3:18, ‘made alive in the spirit’” (Vol. 2, pp. 864, 874, 875).

The Abomination of Desolation in the Future

The assumption that Jesus was referring to events in AD 70 has given rise to a “problem,” causing many commentators to despair and some to accuse Jesus of being hopelessly mistaken. The destruction of the temple and city are inextricably bound up together with the Second Coming in the minds of the disciples when they asked their question (Matt. 24:3), and equally in the mind of Jesus when he gave his detailed reply. Both Jesus and the disciples **knew what Daniel had already said**, and Jesus expands on that preexisting pattern of prophecy. **All problems arise when the base in Daniel is neglected.**

Some commentary has done its best to *avoid* the fact that Jesus spoke of an end-time temple or holy place in which the Abomination of Desolation would stand “where **he** ought not to.” The deliberate masculine participle here (as in Rev. 13:14, of the Beast) is Mark’s way of alerting us to the all-important fact that the Abomination of Desolation is a personality. He stands where *he* ought not. This of course helps us to make the obvious link to Paul’s “man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3-4) sitting in the temple, and to Jesus’ link in Revelation 17 to the final, eighth

king who as an individual is “the Beast” to be destroyed by Jesus. And Paul’s man of sin is built on the final King of the North figure in Daniel 11, and this helps us to locate him. The “north” is not Europe but the area of Iraq, Syria, ancient Assyria or Babylon.

Paul’s Man of Sin, as a single and final horrible individual, is also destroyed by the outshining of Jesus’ Parousia (2 Thess. 2:8). It is important to consult Paul’s source here to get at his meaning. Paul here quotes from an Assyrian end-time context in Isaiah 11:4, thus completing the circle of interlocking texts, denoting the final antichrist as apparently a Middle Eastern character. The “decisive and final end” predicted is found in Isaiah 10:23; 28:22 and Daniel 9:27, referred to as future also by Paul in Romans 9:28. Putting these verses together gives us the picture of the ultimate end of this present evil system. That end was neither in AD 33 nor in AD 70.

The NT scheme is based heavily and solidly on Daniel, and the famous seventy “sevens” prophecy is the heart of the prophetic scheme along with the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:26-27; 11:31; 12:11; 8:13).

Matthew Henry *Commentary*: “The message itself, Dan. 9. It was delivered with great solemnity, received no doubt with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark and hard to be understood. Daniel, who understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now honorably employed to make known to the **church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of, at the end of another seventy, not years, but weeks of years.** He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for *his people* and the *holy city* — that *they* might be released, that *it* might be rebuilt; but God answers him *above what he was able to ask or think.* God not only grants, but outdoes, the desires of those who fear him, Ps. 21:4.

“The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general, it is *seventy weeks*, that is, *seventy times seven years*, which makes just 490 years. **The great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, will lie within the compass of these years.**”

By far the most detailed in terms of chronology and events is the famous last “week,” or better with the NIV “seven,” of Daniel 9:24-27. This prophecy contains all the gems of Jesus’ view of the future and has suffered miserably at the hands of rival systems. What is often neglected is the context of the Daniel 9:24-27 prophecy of the end-time. Daniel had discovered the Jeremiah prophecy that the end of the desolation of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar was to be expected at the termination of a 70-year period (Dan. 9:2).

It is to that great prospect of final restoration that Daniel addresses his attention, with all the zeal of the prophet for God's intervention, the end of trouble in Israel and permanent peace and stability in Jerusalem. Our hope must be the same as Daniel's. Daniel's prayer is the famous "How long, O Lord?" cry of the righteous in all ages. Daniel sets the scene for the great seventy sevens prophecy: "In the first year of [Darius'] reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, for **the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem**, namely, seventy years" (9:2).

The whole point of the chapter, and in particular the 70 "sevens" prophecy of verses 24-27, is lost if this context is not kept in mind. Daniel wants to know how much more suffering and trouble is in store. When will the restoration come? "Do not delay," Daniel implores God, "because Your city and Your people are called by Your name" (9:19).

I believe this exegetical consideration should have prevented the amazing claim that the prophecy of the 70 "sevens," obviously an extension of the 70 years prophecy, could have ended in 33 AD! Most improbable is the so-called "historicist" understanding that the final "seven" of the 490 years predicted in verses 24-27 could actually lie beyond the end of the prophecy if it ended in 33 AD.

Thus Historicism ends it *also* in AD 70 (two ends?). This makes no sense at all. Daniel wants to know when the trouble will be finally over. It will be over when the decreed or "cut off" 490 years expire. It is incoherent to imagine that the prophecy would include a reference to the exact opposite of what is prayed for — i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by General Titus!

Keil has it right: The events prophesied "present the object for which the seventy weeks are determined, i.e. they intimate what will happen until, or with the expiry of, the time determined." In AD 33 no ultimate deliverance occurred to the people and the city. What is worse — the city was again demolished 40 years later than the wrongly-supposed terminus in AD 33. "From the contents of the six statements, it thus appears that the termination of the seventy weeks coincides with the end of the present course of the world" (*Daniel*, p. 349), that is, **the second coming of Jesus**. If so, then all the prophecy chapters of Daniel unite to give us a grand picture of the coming of the Kingdom, which will entail the destruction of the final wicked "horn," "beast" or antichrist.

If we see the AD 70 event as prophesied here, we are finding an event which lies wholly outside, i.e. about 40 years later than the supposed final week, if it ended in 33 AD. I think Keil is right again: "The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans followed the death of Christ, not after an interval of only 3½ years, but of 30 years,

whereby the whole [historicist] calculation is shown to be inaccurate" (p. 382). That is, if one ends the seventieth week in AD 33, then the predicted destruction of Jerusalem *in the seventieth week* does not fit within the limits of the prophecy at all. On that historicist reading, the trouble in Jerusalem is removed from the seventieth and last "seven years." But Daniel's vision sees the final and ultimate trouble in Jerusalem as filling up the content of the **seventieth "seven."** Finally, after that 70th "seven" expires comes blessed relief forever — the Kingdom of God on a renewed earth!

What then is to be expected in the seventieth "seven" ending with the return of Jesus? Before that seventieth week begins, i.e. "after the 69th week," we learn that the prince Messiah (*maschiah nagid*) is to be "cut off and have nothing" (9:26). That event has been taken traditionally, rightly, as predicting the now past sacrificial death of Jesus. Then follows a prediction of an evil person: "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and sanctuary, and **his end** will come in the flood...**He** will make a firm covenant with the many for the one week. And for half the week he will cause sacrifice and offering to be suspended, and on the wing of abominations **he** will cause desolation until the **irrevocably determined end** is poured out on the desolator" (9:26-27).

Much depends on the connection of "end" with the evil prince announced in verse 26. There is much evidence for the right translation as "his end."¹ As early as 1881 the RV scholars corrected the KJV and many have followed suit. The point here is that the prophecy is not about Titus in AD 70, because Titus did not come to "his end" in that event. But in Daniel 11:45 the evil King of the North does come to "his end" in the Middle East, just before the resurrection of Daniel 12:2. Keil makes our point loud and clear:

"The prince who is to come who destroys the city consequently cannot be the Messiah but is the enemy of the people and the Kingdom of God, who shall arise in the last time (affirming 7:24-25, the final wicked horn)...There thus remains [after his careful examination of alternatives] nothing else but to refer the suffix 'his' of '**his end**' (v. 26b) to the prince. 'End' (*ketz*) can accordingly only denote the destruction of the prince...The phrase 'and **his end** with the flood' refers to the hostile prince whose end is here emphatically placed over against his coming...Preconceived views as to the historical fulfillment of the prophecy [Titus in AD 70] lie at the foundation of all other references" (pp. 360, 363).

Daniel's prediction of "his end," the end of the life of the wicked prince, simply will not fit the facts of the

¹Please see "A Close Look at Daniel 9:26-27" (appendix) at restorationfellowship.org

Roman invasion in 70 AD. Such was the cry of the futurists of all times.

All this is of the greatest relevance to the prophetic discourse of Jesus and thus *our* responsibility to be informed and to warn future generations, however long they last, about the real signs of the impending end of the age and coming of Jesus. (I am not impressed with pop internet culture which seeks to turn Obama into “Obamination”; that is hardly serious Bible study.)

The disciples asked Jesus for a “sign of your coming and the end of the age” (Matt. 24:3). The only visible and definite sign which Jesus offered, after general statements about wars and increased earthquakes and famines, is the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation, as defined not by our own whims, but by Daniel. “When you therefore see the Abomination of Desolation...” The Abomination is a feature of the seventieth “seven” where “he comes desolating on the wing of abominations” (9:27), and later in Daniel 11:31 the abomination is seen taking away the sacrifice. Finally Daniel 12:6-8, 11 provide just the specific chronological information we need to make sense of the prophecy. When Daniel had had time to recover from the shock of the extended troubling prediction of chapter 11, he asked for specifics on how long the **final phase** (the *acherit*) of the prophecy would last. The whole brief interview deserves the greatest publicity. Daniel is privy to a conversation between angels. One angel said to the other, “How long will it be to the end of these amazing events?” (12:6; the “how long” echoes Daniel’s impassioned “do not delay” of 9:19). When will all the troubled times be over? It is our cry today also.

Now this most solemn announcement and oath: “I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for **a time, times and half a time**; as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, **all these events will be completed**. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, ‘My lord [*adoni*], what will be the outcome, the final phase, of these events?’” (12:7-8).

The resurrection of those sleeping in “dust-land” (the biblical *Sheol*, *Hades*) had just been announced as the final event of the last phase (12:2). But what about the events just before the resurrection? “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the Abomination of Desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days” (12:11).² With that amazing prediction Daniel is discharged from his long life (he was probably 90 or so) as prophet: “As

for you, Daniel, go your way to the end of your life; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age” (12:13). He must have died with these words ringing in his ears: “From the time the sacrifice is removed and the abomination of desolation is set up there will be 1290 days.” This is slightly beyond the length of the half week (3½ years) which had been prophesied for the breaking of the covenant by the wicked prince, the last half of the final seven of the seventy “sevens” prophecy.

The statement in Daniel 12:7 is “all these things will be fulfilled.” So familiar were the disciples with this material that they echo those very words: “When will all these things be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:4). It is that critical period of time, **the last half of the last seven years**, which shows up of course in Revelation in much more detail, as 42 months, 1260 days, or “time, times and half a time,” showing again how the NT treats the seventieth week, and particularly its last half, as prophetic of events not in AD 33, not in AD 70, but in that final period just before Jesus appears in power and glory. This understanding was held by early pre-millenarian church fathers too, Irenaeus and others.

According to Jesus the Great Tribulation would be days in which it would be very hard for pregnant and nursing mothers (Mark 13:17). It would be a clear breach of common sense to suppose that Jesus was talking about a period of nearly 2000 years beginning in AD 70. Rather Jesus, as he himself expressly says, is quoting from Daniel and there the great tribulation (12:1) is a time of extreme trouble connected with the activities of the final wicked King of the North and followed by the great resurrection of all the saints of all the ages, who are currently asleep in the dust but will “awaken to the life of the coming age” (12:2).

A remarkable theory arose for the first time in the 1830s in a charismatic setting in the UK at which a lady ventured the idea that the Parousia would in fact not be a singular, spectacular event, but would occur in *two phases*, one secret and unannounced for the purpose of removing Christians to heaven so that they would not have to be on earth when the Great Tribulation began, and the other seven years later “in power and glory” — a public display by which the wicked would be brought to an end.

The seventieth “seven” was correctly read as future, but the surprise innovation declaring what no one had ever seen before, that Jesus would have a second and third coming (though that language was cleverly not used), caused and continues to cause a storm of conflict and controversy. But is this really so difficult? Had not Jesus plainly declared that he would gather his elect “immediately **after** [post] the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29-31)? Desperate attempts to derail this text

²Note the confusing mistranslation in the Spanish Reina Valera which completely alters the terms of the prophecy, by making a long gap between the abomination and removal of the sacrifice.

which obviously allowed for no pre-tribulation rapture have been a staple diet in much prophecy writing. The strained plea has been that the “elect” in Matthew 24:31 must not be Christians but a special group of Jews who needed to suffer in the Great Tribulation. But by “elect” Jesus meant the Christian believers: “Many are called but few are elect” (Matt. 22:14). There lurks in this Dispensationalist argument about the elect that dangerous tendency to divorce Jesus’ teaching from instruction for us Christians. The false argument was that Jesus was not addressing Christians, but unconverted Israel as “the elect.”

Furthermore Jesus urged the disciples, via the Apostles, to flee to the hills when the Abomination appeared in a holy place and that is hardly appropriate if one expects to be removed to heaven by a pre-tribulation rapture event.

But it was Paul who made any theory of a double second coming impossible. It was Paul who writing to the Thessalonians reflected on the present persecution and afflictions of believers. In true pastoral style he promised them relief (*anesis*) from all such suffering and he promised it at a very particular moment of the future. Here are Paul’s wonderful words: “relief to you who are suffering, **when the lord Jesus Christ will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel**” (2 Thess. 1:7-8). Paul could not have penned these words if he believed that another event, *not* the appearing of Jesus in flaming fire, would bring about the desired relief from suffering. He simply could not have told his audience to expect relief “at the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus Christ in flaming fire to take vengeance,” had he also taught them about the cessation of suffering by removal from the earth seven years earlier.

The sheer desperation of the pre-trib. rapture camp which is massive in the USA was brought home to me recently when the editor of a leading pre-trib. prophecy magazine felt the difficulty of this text in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. He attempted a complete repunctuation of Paul. He said that Paul wrote “to you who are suffering now, relief. [new sentence] When the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed...” He assured me that this is what his German translation said. Well, I simply quoted Luther and several modern German versions, none of which even hinted at such a violent interference with Paul’s words. Lesson to be learned: we will do almost anything to defend our strongholds, even when they do violence to the obvious statements of the NT! I suggest that Paul is utterly clear. The end of trouble comes to believers only at the one publicly manifested arrival of Jesus in power and glory to eliminate those who refuse him, and to establish the Kingdom. ✧

Comments

“I loved your whole August newsletter, but especially the ‘Losing Luke’ article. What jumped out at me was the realization that what Luke 1:35, where Jesus is called the ‘Son of God,’ was really saying was that he was *not* the son of Joseph — that his origin was from God’s seed, not a man’s. And sure enough, in the genealogy Luke says, ‘Jesus...being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph.’” — *Florida*

“I’ve been a believer for almost 30 years. And I want you to know that you and I are totally on the same page. After I did a study of the Scriptures to see if Jesus is really God back in 2001, I came to the conclusion that he is NOT, and have been teaching that for the last 13 years. So, of course I teach against the Trinity also. In addition, I teach that the dead are actually dead until their resurrection. In fact, I recently discovered you, and I do not find anything you teach that I disagree with. Halleluyah! And I praise God for you and all the others who teach these truths, because this is just basic true Christianity!” — *email*

“It’s been over 5 years since I rejected the Trinity doctrine. I find Jesus more personal, who shares in our sufferings and trials. I find it easier to relate to Jesus as an example, our elder brother. I find that the non-trinitarian view gives more understanding of the ransom! I see more clearly how we are reconciled to God our Father. I’m glad of the internet, and to find your books concerning the Trinity, the Kingdom Gospel, etc.” — *Northern Ireland*

A generous reader of Focus on the Kingdom has provided us with an excellent bumper sticker to call attention to the loss of Jesus’ creed in Mark 12:29. Please let us know if you would like one to display:

**“Christianity is the only
World Religion which begins by
discarding its own founder’s creed.”**
— Sir Anthony F. Buzzard
www.restorationfellowship.org

Please see my wife Barbara’s book reviews at 21st Century Reformation — **21stcr.org** — including reviews of Jenkins’ *The Jesus Wars*, Rubenstein’s *When Jesus Became God*, and Dunn’s *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*

SAVE THE DATE!
2015 Theological Conference
April 30-May 3, 2015
Calvin Center, Hampton, GA