

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 16 No. 10

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July, 2014

A learned and thoughtful British clergyman experienced a very important “aha” moment, a flash of enlightenment in his career, which led him to a drastic change of course. The lesson he learned is vitally important for us all. It can also be a test of our integrity in handling the sacred words of Scripture. David Watson wrote:

“A sympathetic study of traditional Jewish religion can reveal the extent to which the modern English Christian gives a meaning to the words of the New Testament **different from** that which was in the minds of the Jewish writers. Greek was the language they used to convey the universal Christian message, **but their mode of thinking was to a large extent Hebraic**. For a full understanding it is necessary for the modern Christian not only to study the Greek text, but **to sense the Hebraic idea which the Jewish writers sought to convey in Greek words**.

“I cannot claim to have become very skilled in this, but made enough progress to discover **how greatly I had misinterpreted the Bible in the past**. Like all ordained Christian ministers I had spoken dogmatically, authoritatively from a pulpit which no one may occupy without license from a Bishop. **And much of what I had said had been misleading [the characteristic of a false prophet!]** because my own mind was incapable of giving a correct interpretation of the book I was authorized to expound. For me, the realization of this fact made nonsense of the distinction between clergy and laity, and was the main cause of my relinquishment of my orders.

“In describing my own intellectual deficiencies, and the process by which **I discovered my inability to grasp the meaning of the Bible across the vast linguistic gulf separating me from its Jewish writers, I can surely claim to write with first-hand knowledge**. From what I know of the clergy in general I see no reason for supposing that I was peculiar in suffering from this particular deficiency. **In fact, the authority of the Protestant ministry as a whole, the claim to be able to understand the Bible and expound it as the word of God, is in my view a vast confidence trick. I am not accusing the clergy of being individually fraudulent, or even insincere. The confidence trick is collective;** individually those who engage in it are themselves deceived by it, just as when I began to expound the Bible from pulpits I was fully confident that I was able to give a correct interpretation” (David Watson, *Christian Myth and Spiritual Reality*, 1967, p. 29).

These are critically important issues for all who claim to expound Scripture and teach others. We need to check and double check to ensure that we are not just victims of tradition handed down to us, but causing us unwillingly to misinform, and thus to deceive the public in the name of Jesus — a shocking and alarming and dangerous situation to be in!✧

World History Lesson

2 Peter 3 gives us a perfect account of world history since the beginning of God’s provision of a home for man in Genesis 1. In three major blocks of time, God has been seeking, finding and training his executives of the future Kingdom of God on a renewed earth (Acts 3:21; Matt. 19:28ff). In both the ancient Scriptures of Israel (OT) and the Christian era Greek Scriptures (NT), we find the whole realm of creation divided into just three great eras of time: the former heavens (or sky) and earth (the land or ground), which perished at the flood; then the present “heavens and earth” which will be refined by fire at the Second Coming of Jesus. This will be replaced by the reborn world, the renewed heaven and earth of the millennium (2 Pet. 3:4-13; Isa. 65:17ff; 66:22; Isa. 51:16).

In contemporary English, we understand that there is a difference between the heavens and the sky, the earth and the land (or ground), and the seas and waters. However, in both Hebrew and Greek, these fine distinctions which we accept because of our modern views of the cosmos are not found. So Genesis 1:1 is literally (as in three contemporary versions) translated as, “In the beginning God created **the sky and the land/earth**.” This description was provided for man before the era of modern science and telescopes which could probe the far distant galaxies. There was just the land that man stood on, the sky above him with its dome (firmament, called by God “heaven,” Gen. 1:8), in which the birds flew and the sun and moon were placed, and the waters were above and below the sky. Moses probably had no technical understanding of the earth as a planet, because men had never seen the earth as a globe in space, as most of us have done today. We should not force our modern understanding of the total *universe* into the account in Genesis. The Bible is interested in man and his position on the earth created for him, as a home, by God.✧

The Abomination of Desolation: Jesus' and Our Key to Events in the Future

In a recent email discussion a writer offered 4 different references *in history* for the fulfillment of Jesus' famous words about the **Abomination of Desolation**. Jesus announced the Abomination as the sign of the end of the age and his coming (Matt. 24:15; Luke 21:20). The **end of the age** is future to us, as described in Matt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20.

To place the key sign of the Abomination of Desolation in the past would evacuate Jesus' urgent warning prophecy of all useful meaning for us.

Jesus spoke of the Abomination as the major sign of the coming time of Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15), to be followed immediately by cosmic signs and his arrival in power (Matt. 24:29-31).

The Abomination is defined not only by its chronological place in Matthew 24 but also in the 4 corroborating references to the Abomination in Daniel, chapters 8, 9, 11, 12. Jesus emphatically referred us to **Daniel** for the correct understanding of the abomination (Matt. 24:15).

1) The Abomination whose **end** will come in the flood of judgment. Dan. 9:26b ("his end"), at the end of the final seven years of the prophecy.

2) He (the Abomination) comes desolating (on the wing of Abominations), Dan. 9:26, 27.

3) The Abomination occurs 1290 days (a month over 3 1/2 years) before the vision which **ends with the future resurrection**, Dan 12:11.

4) The Abomination is associated with a final ruler in Dan. 8:13, 25 who will be broken without hand, supernaturally, and as the final King of the North he comes to **his** end (cp. 9:26b) in Dan. 11:45.

5) The Abomination is defined as the King of the North (Dan. 11:21ff).

This is the essential data for defining the Abomination of Desolation, Jesus' key to the future. It is misleading to apply these prophetic words to events now past. This has the effect of negating the prophetic insight of Jesus based on Daniel, with which Jesus was deeply concerned. ✧

A Future Messianic March to Jerusalem from the East

From the *Word Biblical Commentary* on Isaiah:

According to Isaiah 40:3, "A solo voice calls for monstrous preparation, including a **highway**. One might expect that this would be for pilgrims returning to Jerusalem or for those who would resettle the land. The

highway does not come to Jerusalem from the northeast or from the north (from Babylon) or even from the south (from Egypt), where diaspora [scattered Jews] is located. The wilderness spoken of here is in the southeast, the Arabah. And the one to travel on it is Yahweh our God. Ezekiel had pictured Yahweh abandoning the city (Ezekiel 9-11). Now he is returning, using the way that was familiar from Temple traditions of Yahweh **coming from Sinai or from Edom**, see Isa. chapters 34 and 63:1-6, through the Arabah south of the Dead Sea to approach Jerusalem from the east. The heart of the announcement, the reason for the message of good news is that Yahweh is returning to take up residence in Jerusalem again. This calls for royal preparations" (p. 80).

Jesus, representing Yahweh, at his return will organize the new Kingdom of God resurrected personnel, the saints of all the ages, and then march with them from the area of Sinai and take over Jerusalem from the Antichrist. ✧

Our Status as Christians Is to Be Appreciated and Celebrated

We are the chosen, "choice" people of God, firstborn royalty, as is Jesus, co-heirs with him of the future Kingdom on earth, co-sons of God and co-rulers, co-kings. Brothers of Jesus and children of God. Also children of Jesus (Heb. 2:13). Royal priests and rulers (Rev. 5:9-10; Exod. 19:5-6). God's special treasure (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Deut. 4:20). Royal seed, seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29) and heirs of the world. Princes like David (Ps. 122:5; Isa. 32:1), heirs to thrones and royal office in the coming Kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27). Kings like Jesus, as in Rev. 2:26, 3:21, charged with the future duty of bringing the blinded world into subjection to God and Jesus. We are to "take charge of ten cities" (Luke 19:17). We are to be agents of a completely renovated society. This will come to power when Jesus returns to this earth (Acts 1:6; 3:21; 2 Pet. 3:13; Isa. 65:17ff; 66:22; Isa. 51:16; Ps. 102:13, 15, 18, 22, 25, 26; Heb. 1:10).

God is delighted with the prospect of His promised coming new society on a renewed earth. According to Jeremiah 27:5 God is very pleased to "give the earth to those who please Him."

"For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former ones will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore" (Isa. 65:17). This statement likens the coming transformation of Jerusalem (see the following verses) to a new creation of the cosmos:

Isa. 65:18-25: “But be happy and rejoice forevermore over what I am about to create! For look, I am ready to create Jerusalem to be a source of joy, and her people to be a source of happiness. The Lord will create Jerusalem to be a source of joy to Himself. Jerusalem will bring Me joy, and My people will bring Me happiness. The sound of weeping or cries of sorrow will never be heard in her again. Never again will one of her infants live just a few days or an old man die before his time. Indeed, no one will die before the age of a hundred; anyone who fails to reach the age of a hundred will be considered cursed. They will build houses and live in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build a house only to have another live in it, or plant a vineyard only to have another eat its fruit, for My people will live as long as trees, and My chosen ones will enjoy to the fullest what they have produced...A wolf and a lamb will graze together; a lion, like an ox, will eat straw, and a snake’s food will be dirt. They will no longer injure or destroy on my entire royal mountain, says the LORD.”

A similar statement appears in Isa 11:6-7.

Some see an allusion to Genesis 3:14 (“you will eat dirt”). The point would be that even in this new era the snake (often taken as a symbol of Satan) remains under God’s curse. However, it is unlikely that such an allusion exists. Even if there is an echo of Genesis 3:14, the primary allusion is to Isaiah 11:8, where snakes are pictured as no longer dangerous. They will no longer attack other living creatures, but will be content to crawl along the ground. (The statement “you will eat dirt” in Gen. 3:14 means “you will crawl on the ground.” In the same way the statement “dirt will be its food” in Isa. 65:25 means “it will crawl on the ground.”)

As in Isaiah 11:1-9 the prophet anticipates a time when the categories of predator and prey no longer exist.

“They will no longer injure or destroy on my entire royal mountain. For there will be universal submission to the LORD’s Kingdom, just as the waters completely cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

In the most basic sense the Lord’s “holy mountain” is the mountain from which he rules over his kingdom (see Ezek. 28:14, 16). More specifically it probably refers to Mount Zion/Jerusalem or to the entire land of Israel (see Ps. 2:6; 15:1; 43:3; Isa. 56:7; 57:13; Ezek. 20:40; Obad. 16; Zeph. 3:11). If the Lord’s universal Kingdom is in view in this context, then the phrase would probably be metonymic (a part standing for the whole) here, standing for God’s worldwide dominion (see the next paragraph).

“For the earth will be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” The translation assumes that a universal kingdom is depicted here, but *'erets* could be translated “land.” “Knowledge of the Lord” refers here to a recognition of the Lord which results in a willingness to submit to his authority.

Isa. 11:10-11: “At that time a root from Jesse will stand like a signal flag for the nations. Nations will look to him for guidance, and his residence will be majestic. At that time the sovereign master will again lift his hand to reclaim the remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the seacoasts.”✧

Is Your Jesus Really a Human Being? What Does Your Church Teach, or Do You Know?

Are you well enough informed about your own church’s or your pastor’s official view of who Jesus is? Would it not be a matter of simple honesty to know about the identity of the personality you claim as Savior and under whose “banner” you meet week by week? An orthodox evangelical Trinitarian wrote:

“It is true that in Chalcedonian orthodoxy [the teaching of the Council which defined the Person of Christ in 451 AD] God the Son united himself to a *personless human nature*.”

This statement is an accurate description of the orthodox, standard, officially accepted view of Jesus. This is the creedal affirmation of your church, in all probability. Let us unpack it a little further. Another Trinitarian scholar writes:

“The Council of Chalcedon tells us that Jesus is called ‘man’ in the generic sense, **but not ‘a man.’** He has human nature, **but is not a human person.** The Person in him is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. **Jesus does not have a human personal center.** This is how the Council gets around the possible problem of split personality.”

Now the honest comment of a Trinitarian scholar and author who admitted:

“During my theological formation I was well instructed in the traditional account of the **Incarnation** of God in Jesus Christ. I distinctly remember being told that the Word of God, when he assumed human nature, assumed *impersonal humanity*; that Jesus did not possess a human personality; that God became man in Jesus, **but that he did not become a man...**Two considerations have persuaded me that this traditional Christology is incredible.”

Most churchgoers have not even bothered to think about this!

Another orthodox theologian describes the view of Jesus which evangelicals accept, week by week, in the doctrine of the Trinity:

“Now the doctrine of the *Incarnation* is that in Christ the place of a human personality is **replaced** by the Divine Personality of God the Son, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. Christ possesses a complete

human nature **without a human personality**. Uncreated and eternal Divine Personality replaces a created personality in Him.”

A celebrated expert on Gnosticism, a false philosophy which threatened the early church by making Jesus essentially non-human, points to the underlying problem, apparently hidden from the public:

“Already Harnack was forced to say: ‘Who can maintain that the Church ever overcame the Gnostic doctrine of the two natures or the Valentinian Docetism? [the theory that Jesus only *appeared* to be a human being but really wasn’t]. Even the later councils of the Church, which discussed the Christological problems in complicated, nowadays hardly intelligible definitions, *did not manage to do this*; the unity of the Church foundered precisely on this.’”

Note that this scholar admits that the Church did not overcome pagan Gnosticism in its definition of Jesus.

The official Jesus of Trinitarian theology is “man,” but not “a man.” Are you happy with that as a description of the biblical Jesus? Once Jesus is confessed as truly and fully God, in every way coequal and coeternal with the Father, it is impossible to say that he is also fully and truly man. The Trinitarian church fathers realized this, and so they maintained that Jesus had **“impersonal human nature”** and was not **“a man.”** Is that a tradition you want to be part of? This is official Trinitarianism. The scholar above pointed out that this division of Jesus into two was the cause of the disruption of the unity of the church. The greatest commandment cited by Jesus (Mark 12:28ff) was tampered with. There were now two who were God, while Jesus then was declared to be “man but not a man.”

You obviously cannot be a genuine human person unless you are “a man.” Orthodox Trinitarianism **officially denies that Jesus is “a man.”** The documentation above, which represents the Trinitarian point of view, proves this. Trinitarianism suffers from the “docetic” heresy: Jesus only *appears* to be a man, but his center of personality is really God.

But there is more which should shake the longsuffering complacency of pew-sitters, who seem to care very little about where their church’s beliefs about Jesus came from. Psalm 2:7 records a divine oracle about the Messiah Jesus, promised by GOD, who in a key prophetic oracle declared of His Son: “You are My Son; today I have become your Father.”

Your immediate impression of course is of a begetting, a coming into existence at a defined moment in time — “today.” But according to the “orthodox” view of the Son of God, “today” cannot mean “today.” So you are told officially in church. Because with God all time is eternity, it is impossible that He can have become the

Father of His SON at an actual moment in time, in history!

A contemporary scholar is frank enough to admit the verbal convolutions to which church members so willingly submit themselves: “It is far from clear what content, if any, we can impart to the concept of eternal generation” (Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, p. 131).

Where are the churchgoers who will rise and demand an explanation of that amazing dissolving of language into meaninglessness? The true Son of God came into existence in time, in the womb of a young Jewish woman some 2000 years ago. He was truly part of the human race, not a visitor dressing up as human. ✧

The Fall of Jerusalem as Foreseen by Jesus

“Jesus linked his own return with the fall of Jerusalem. All attempts to deny such a connection between the fall of Jerusalem and Jesus’ return in apologetic interests are mere sophistry and deserve no refutation” (Schenkel, *Das Charakterbild Jesu, Ein Biblischer Versuch*, 1864, p. iv).

This is a very strong statement, but it should be taken very seriously. The professor’s point was that in the Olivet Discourse (repeated 3 times: Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) Jesus **obviously, plainly and clearly connects the fall of Jerusalem with the events of his future Second Coming.** The reason for Jesus’ doing this is equally obviously the plain fact that Jesus based his own understanding of the future on Daniel. Daniel had predicted trouble in Jerusalem and the Temple in connection with the unrepeatably Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:1), just prior to the future resurrection of the dead (Dan. 12:2). Jesus simply confirms the clear prophecy of Daniel and repeats the prediction that Jerusalem and the Temple will be invaded by a wicked antichristian leader just before the Messiah comes back.

This is the basis of the expected future extreme time of trouble for Israel and believers needing to be refined. This is the Great Tribulation, destined to happen *just before* the arrival of Jesus in glory. The church of course will be on earth during the coming time of great tribulation too; that is to say, there is no promise of a prior arrival of Jesus to remove the church to heaven! The so-called “PRE-Tribulation rapture” is not a doctrine of the New Testament.

“In the history of our faith, the image of the Antichrist came first and the passion (suffering) of Jesus afterwards. Israel would go through great sufferings, a sort of national martyrdom, *before* the glorious days of Messiah come. **The prophecy of Daniel is largely devoted to such a theme and it is the prophecy of**

Daniel which gives the decisive shape to Christ's prophecy on the Mount of Olives" (Farrer, *Studies in St Mark*, p. 174).

"The background [to the Olivet Discourse] presumed is that of Old Testament prophecy. There was an outline of events of the-end time familiar to all Jews through their reading of the prophets: A hostile army is to capture Jerusalem, and half of its inhabitants will be transported (Zech. 14:2); tribulations will follow for "a time, times, and a half" (Dan. 12:7); this interval will witness great missionary activity, to Israel and all the world, so that Scriptures like Isaiah 45:14; 49:22-23; 66:19-20 may be fulfilled. A final onslaught on Jerusalem will occur, accompanied by portents in heaven (Joel 2:30-31; 3:4) and the coming of the Messiah (Dan. 7:1-14), but by the hand of Yahweh Israel's enemies will be destroyed (Isa. 41:12; 45:1; Hab. 3:13). This background would have been in the disciples' minds when they asked, 'When will these things be?' (Mark 13:4). They did not want new information; they simply wished to know how it could be known that the day is near, and how long they had to wait...Jesus confirms the program of the prophets and applies it in many details but declines to fix a date.

"Jesus had given the indefinite sign from Zechariah 12 about the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies. Mark, followed by Matthew, was impelled to insert the far more definite sign about the erection of a statue on the altar in the Temple...Weiss: 'The conception of new heavens and new earth meant either a totally different world or at least the present world greatly changed in its physical features. Earthquakes will shatter and refashion it (Isa. 13:13; 24:19ff; Mic. 1:4). Jerusalem and the Temple Hill in particular will have a new form (Isa. 2:2; Joel 4:18; Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:1). This of course involved the wiping out of the present city of Jerusalem" (Beasley Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, p. 150-151).

James Dunn is equally clear that Jesus connected the fall of Jerusalem with his Second Coming in glory: "Mark 13:14 obviously refers to the inevitable attack on Jerusalem. And above all v. 14 links all this firmly with the cosmic catastrophe of the End itself — 'But in those days after *that* tribulation, the sun will be darkened' and the Son of Man will come...The desolating sacrilege [Abomination of Desolation] (a neuter concept to which he attaches a *masculine* participle) is associated with the Antichrist" (*Unity and Diversity in the NT*, p. 330).

Let us now look at the very straightforward prediction of Jesus in Luke chapter 21. As we know from Matthew 24:3 the disciples had asked Jesus about his "**second coming and the end of the age.**" In Luke's account, as in Matthew and Mark, Jesus answered this question. He said in Luke 21:20-21, "so when you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, then you are to know that its desolation is about to happen. Then those

who are in Judea must flee to the hills and those who are in the midst of the city should depart from it and those who are in the fields should not go into the city."

Jesus gave the reason for this urgent departure from Jerusalem "because these are the days of judgment in which **everything which was written** must be fulfilled" (v. 22). He warned that the days of Great Tribulation would be extremely hard on pregnant women and those nursing babies. Jesus called this terrible time "great distress on the land and wrath" (v. 23). He predicted that people in the land would "fall by the sword and be taken into exile to all nations, and Jerusalem would be trampled upon by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles end" (v. 24). The same information is found in Revelation 11:1-2.

Remember carefully that the question asked by the disciples is about his Second Coming. That, of course, is the question which Jesus answered. He was not playing tricks with them! In v. 25 Jesus spoke of signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth great distress among the nations. And then, he said, "they will see the Son of Man coming in power and great glory" (v. 27).

Then Jesus addressed the disciples as Christian leaders once again: "When these things begin to happen lift up your heads because your redemption is about to come" (v. 28). He repeated the same idea in verse 31: "When you see these things happening you are to know that the Kingdom of God is about to come."

It would be hard to imagine a less complicated outline of the future leading immediately to the Second Coming. Note carefully that the "you" addressed by Jesus were the disciples of the first century. Nevertheless he continued to say that "you" would see these events happening. Thinking as a Hebrew, Jesus incorporated into the "you" all those who in the future would be looking for his arrival in glory. This Olivet discourse has direct application to all of us living today. That is not to say that we can set any dates. But it is to say that we are obligated to teach our children Jesus' simple outline of the future.

Paul in 2 Thessalonians likewise instructed his converts in the detail of end-time events. He even said that he had given them these prophetic teachings repeatedly (2 Thess. 2:5). So today we must repeat the same astonishing prophecies, so that when they do finally come to pass, no one will be taken off guard.

The outline of Jesus' prophetic view of the future was **of course found in Daniel** and other verses of the Old Testament prophets. Particularly significant is Zechariah 12:3 where in the Greek version of the Old Testament Zechariah said that "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles; they will mock at the city, and all nations will be gathered against it." We find more information about this stupendous military operation of the future in

Zechariah chapters 13 and 14. There we read that two thirds of the nation of Israel will be eliminated and one third of the city Jerusalem taken into exile. Jesus knew these prophecies well and described them as the events connected with the time just before his Second Coming.

It is true of course that Jerusalem of the first century was captured in 70 AD. It is equally true that the event described by Jesus in Luke 21 was **not fulfilled in AD 70**. In AD 70 there were no cosmic signs and obviously and unarguably no spectacular second coming, and no arrival of the Kingdom of God (Luke 21:31). Only someone who has misunderstood the meaning of the term “Kingdom of God,” and thus the Gospel itself, could imagine that Luke 21:31 was already fulfilled in the past. The Kingdom of God definitely did not arrive in AD 70 (Luke 21:31)! Certainly we may say that the events of 70 AD were, as it turns out, *like* the events just preceding the future return of Jesus. But the account given by Jesus in Luke 21 concerns the yet future surrounding of Jerusalem by armies, a future time of unparalleled tribulation, a future set of cosmic signs and the future arrival of Jesus to bring in his Kingdom.

All this, as Jesus urges us to understand, was based on the prophet Daniel’s amazing revelations from the angel.

Jesus concluded his discourse by noting that “this generation” would not pass before these events had *all* happened (v. 32). If Jesus intended to speak of AD 70 only, then evidently he was a false prophet and should be exposed as such! We know, however, that Jesus is the true Messiah and that his prophecies are accurate.

That being so we know equally that the terrible time connected with Jerusalem and its great distress, with wrath falling upon it, must refer to the time still future to us in 2014. The meaning of the phrase “this generation” in Luke 21 cannot refer to a period of 40 or 70 years. If it did, Jesus would immediately have to be discredited as an unreliable prophet. Christianity would be destroyed.

In Acts 1:6 the disciples, after a detailed instruction on the Kingdom of God from the risen Jesus, asked about **times and seasons in relation to his future coming**. Jesus expressly denied that such information was available. If he had intended earlier to say that all would be fulfilled within 40 or 70 years, he could simply have reminded them of that fact. But of course he did not. The meaning of “generation” in this context is equivalent to “this present evil age,” this evil system of things which will prevail until it is replaced by the Kingdom of God at the return of Jesus.

Jesus used the same word “generation,” *genea* in that very sense of “evil society” in Luke 16:8 where he observed very wisely that people who belong to the present evil society are sometimes more intelligent in their

dealings with others of the same evil mentality (*genea*) in matters of finance.

In Mark 8:38 Jesus contrasted the present evil age, that is, the present evil society (*genea*), with the time which will begin at his second coming. *Genea* refers to the present evil “brood” of society organized against God. That same use of *genea* is found in Proverbs 30:11-14 to describe a group of people characterized by a common quality.

The straightforward story of the future, with its very clear sequence of events, taught by Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, should be standard instruction for all those who love the words of Jesus and who hope to qualify for immortality in that future Kingdom when Jesus arrives in glory. Prophecy is not some optional extra! It is at the very core of the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. And the Kingdom is the essence of the Christian Gospel (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31).

Clarity of hope is essential for healthy Christianity since as Paul said, love and faith are produced by hope (Col. 1:4) and faith “is the confident assurance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1). A lack of clarity in matters of the future automatically leads to a diminishing of Christian faith and love. The solution is to preach a clear hope based on Jesus’ words in Matthew 24, Revelation (also based on Daniel) and all OT prophecy.

When Jesus looked out on the Temple then standing, he included at the center of his prediction a Temple not yet built, but which must yet be built. When Jesus addressed as “you” the people standing right in front of him, he was addressing, as it turns out, people who were not yet born. Such is the nature of the Hebrew thought patterns, which incorporate different items as one. Note in Haggai that the prophet can speak of an actual Temple building standing at that time as “this temple” (Hag. 2:3, 7, 9), whether it be a Temple existing earlier and then destroyed, or a Temple of the future *not yet* existing — not yet built.

To set Luke 21 against Matthew 24 and Mark 13 is a fatal chopping up of easy information. “Christ evidently regarded the fall of Jerusalem as part of the judgment of the End, and therefore the time of the final tribulation would also witness the final deliverance” (Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the End of the Age*, p. 261).

“In Luke 21 Jerusalem’s fall is still viewed eschatologically. While in Mark we have mention of tribulation which has never occurred before, followed by cosmic signs and then the Advent, Luke’s presentation [really Jesus’!], though more detailed in some respects, retains the same pattern. Both Howard Marshall and E. E. Ellis agree that Luke has not altered the outline of end-time events given by Jesus in Mark and Matthew” (Desmond Ford, *The Abomination of Desolation in Prophecy*, pp. 71, 72).

“It was widely believed, based on Dan. 7:25; 8:14; 9:27; 12:7, 11-12 that the period of the Antichrist’s dominion would last 3 1/2 years” (*Word Biblical Commentary* on Revelation, p. 1084). Irenaeus (5:25. 3 5.30,4) and Hippolytus simply reflect the instructions given by Jesus and Daniel. So also Victorinus (*Commentary on Apoc.* 11:2).✧

A Saint: One Appointed to Rule

Christians sometimes spend so much time bewailing their inadequacy and lack of spirituality that they forget why they are Christians in the first place. Followers of Jesus Christ are called “saints.” The title “saint” in the New Testament applies to every true believer. True believers are those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36; 12:44ff, etc; Luke 8:12; Acts 8:12). It is not reserved for a special class of Christians who demonstrate a holiness superior to the run-of-the-mill disciple.

In fact, there cannot really be any run-of-the-mill believers, because a saint is one appointed to the royal family of Israel. A saint is one selected by God to rule. A saint is one invited to kingship. Christianity is the call to kingship in the Kingdom of God. The saints are to be God’s choice people.

Most of the great truths of the Christian faith are rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. The notion of the saint and his role in God’s plan is found there too — and in a chapter of Daniel which all Christians should practically have memorized. This critically important section of the Old Testament contains a veritable blueprint for the Abrahamic/Davidic faith revealed in Christ (cp. Gen. 12, 13, 15, 17; 2 Sam. 7; Gal. 3:29).

Daniel 7:13-14 describes an investiture with royal office. The recipient of this authority to rule is the “Son of Man,” a figure who, in the interpretation given by the angel (7:18, 22, 27), signifies the saints of the Most High. “Son of Man” is the favorite self-designation of Jesus. Naturally so, for he reckoned himself, as Messiah the King, to be the chief of the body of saints. The saints are the ones appointed to rule in the Kingdom. This is made clear throughout the seventh chapter of Daniel. Jesus is the new Adam reversing the failure of the first Adam to rule for God.

The point to be noted is this: The saints receive the Kingdom, possess the Kingdom, and all nations serve and obey them. Some translations are shy of the shocking (as they think) notion that human beings, Christians, should be destined to rule as kings. To some that sounds regrettably “political,” and so the whole promise to the saints that they are to rule the world with Jesus is often toned down, sentimentalized and obscured. It is much more palatable to think that “souls go to heaven” where they cannot make much of an impact on the earth!

Daniel knew of no such evasions of plain truth. The saints are to possess the Kingdom “under the whole heaven” and to rule in it forever. All nations are to be subject to them as immortal kings (Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, 27). See also Revelation 1:6; 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6 and Isaiah 32:1.

John the Baptist, Jesus said, is the most celebrated human being in history up to his time. Yet he is who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John (Luke 7:28).

What a world it will be!✧

You can verify at Wikipedia the fascinating fact that the second lord in Psalm 110:1 is *adoni*, which designates a **lord who is not GOD**. We might say, echoing the solemnity of President Reagan — “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall” — “Translators of the Bible, take away that deceiving capital ‘L’ on the second lord of Psalm 110:1!”

Comments

“I am sending this in memory of my wife who died recently. My wife and I have looked forward to *Focus on the Kingdom* for years. We have strengthened our beliefs through the many good articles.” — *Oregon*

“I have had a long journey of Bible study since I first started caring what the Bible had to say back in 2010. As a new student of the Bible I was thrown around in different teachings, starting with extreme Calvinistic teachings of Family Radio led by Harold Camping who predicted judgment day on May 21, 2011. And then I was very lost and confused but eventually got back to the Bible and continued on my search for truth, thanks be to God. Then my search led to a Church of Christ assembly in my city where I went to be immersed in water in 2013. Recently I had a revelation in the Word and have rejected the Trinity doctrine and have been online searching different unitarian websites and articles, praise be to God. My search for truth continues and I thank God for my zeal for truth instead of contentment with a tradition. Your site I found last night and have read more articles today and have bookmarked it. I really enjoy this site and God bless you, brother. It is one of the few unitarian sites that can see the simple command for water baptism in Scripture. Keep up the good work in this race to the finish that the brethren partake in.” — *email*

Please do listen to “What Good is Jesus without his Gospel?” This audio can be downloaded (and place them on your amazing hand-held instruments!) as well as other free audio files at www.focusonthekingdom.org/av.htm This will help with our training for sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom.