

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## When God Speaks and Nobody Listens

The ministry of Jesus the Messiah — and of the prophets of God in general — might fairly be described as a sustained lament and complaint that their audiences failed to listen to their sayings and appeals. In other words, human beings constantly do not listen to what God tells them they must do. Many churchgoers know almost nothing of this “dark,” threatening side of Jesus. They bask in the wonderfully comforting words of Jesus — that he is their caring shepherd promising them rest from their labors. They are sustained by a selective, pick-and-choose appeal to words from Paul, mostly drawn from the book of Romans. They delight in the “Pollyanna” texts of the Apostle which reassure them, as they wrongly imagine, that they are saved the moment they make “a decision,” and will be “going to heaven” when they die. After all, most have swallowed the falsehood that they are naturally immortal. Thus death, they think quite mistakenly, is merely continuing to live on without interruption!

The question, the ultimate question of significance, is this: Do the churchgoing public take in firstly the full range of the sayings/teachings of Jesus, as he preached them for some 3 years? Have they not typically been lured into a sense of false security by not taking seriously the challenge of the words/teaching of Jesus himself? Have they in many cases been lulled into a dangerous misapprehension, namely that all that counts is that Jesus died to forgive their sins and rose from the dead? That challenge, that the Gospel is *more than* the death and resurrection of Jesus, comes over to us with unmistakable clarity from these passages of Scripture.

We may start with the public’s favorite book of John. In John 3:36 Jesus said that only those who obey him can hope to be saved. In that saying, **obedience** to Jesus is the opposite of not believing in him. In other words, to believe in Jesus or to believe Jesus (the same thing) always entails **obeying** what he taught. Paul calls this, framing the book of Romans in 1:5 and 16:26, “the obedience of faith.” No true faith without obedience and no obedience apart from faith. Is this not exactly Hebrews 5:9: “salvation is given to those who obey Jesus”? Unarguable clarity.

Some have tried to paralyze this easy Christian teaching by objecting that Jesus said that he “was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). That is a clever but very mistaken evasion! The

actual truth is that Jesus came *first* to his Jewish people in Palestine, and having exposed them to his teaching, he then commanded, in the Great Commission, that the *very same teachings* be taken to the whole world: “Go into the whole world and teach all nations everything I have taught you. And if you do this I will be with you to the end of the age,” which is the second coming (Matt. 28:19-20). Every professing believer in Jesus is bound by that Great Commission. Every professing believer in Jesus must thus be committed to living and teaching what Jesus taught for us all, until his return (Parousia).

We have written at our site ([www.restorationfellowship.org](http://www.restorationfellowship.org)) extensively on the definition of the saving Gospel as beautifully summarized in Acts 8:12. This text lays out in very simple language the process by which converts are made — how, that is, one becomes a true believer. It goes like this: The potential converts were exposed to the evangelism, Gospel preaching, of Philip. What was the content of that Gospel? “The Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus.”

The Gospel, in other words, began with a statement about the Kingdom of God, how we must prepare to enter it when it comes (“Thy Kingdom come”) and live a life in the spirit of the Kingdom now, in preparation and to qualify for inheritance of the Kingdom in the future. No Bible text says that believers have *already* inherited the Kingdom. We must be born again *now* (1 Pet 1:23; James 1:18), but we have not yet inherited the Kingdom of God.

What Philip preached as the Gospel, with the Kingdom of God being the first item, is exactly what Jesus had preached, beginning in Mark 1:14-15! No New Testament writer imagined that you could have Christianity without the teaching of Jesus! That would be an absurdity — Christianity without Christ! Hence the emphatic words of Paul in 1 Timothy 6:3, that anyone who presents the faith without “the health-giving words” (as the Greek says) of Jesus is dangerously ignorant and arrogant.

Here is where Isaiah 53:11 needs to come back center stage: “My righteous servant, the Messiah, will make many right, that is, justify them, by *his knowledge*” (as also Daniel 12:3: “those with insight will make many right”). As we all know, the death and resurrection of Jesus are equally essential in the content of the saving Gospel. But the death and resurrection of Jesus are according to Paul not the whole Gospel. The death and resurrection were preached as “**among things**

of prime importance” (1 Cor. 15:3). A part, not the whole.

Imagine a recipe for a cake. Imagine a perverted version of that recipe, in which essential ingredients are simply left out. A very different cake would result. So it is in the preaching of the Gospel. The essential and primary element of the Gospel is very frequently omitted! It is the announcement and knowledge of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43). The Kingdom of God, not “heaven when you die,” is the only authentic Christian objective. Imagine being told that the objective in the game of soccer is to kick the ball as high as you can in the air, rather than to kick it between two goal posts in front of you! Why would you want to go to heaven, when Jesus will not be there?!

Believers are in training now, as the elect people of God, kings and princes, royal family (Ex. 19:5-6 = 1 Pet. 2:9), who with Jesus will manage the future revolutionary government which Jesus will implement at his future Second Coming, his one single Parousia (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6; 1 Cor. 6:2; Matt. 19:28).

Much of this basic information is simply lost by Jehovah’s Witnesses who have been taught that Jesus returned in 1914! The same tendency to put the Parousia at the wrong point of time is taught by the mistaken idea that Jesus could come at any moment in a so-called “pre-tribulation” coming. Jesus in fact will come “at the end of the age” (which is never AD 70!). The end of the age and Parousia (Second Coming) is the equivalent of the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:15; 5:2, 4). Paul said this over and over and warned against false programs for the future. (See 1 Cor. 15:23 for the equation of the Parousia with the future resurrection of the faithful.) In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul gave us with great clarity the true program for the future. He first described the faithful dead as asleep in death (4:13, 14, 15, three times!). Paul is discussing the future coming (Parousia) of Jesus (v. 15) and he equates it with the future Day of the Lord (5:2, 4).

Whether we will be sleeping the sleep of death or still alive at the Parousia (1 Thess. 5:10), we shall all together be snatched up (1 Thess. 4:17) to meet the descending Lord Jesus and accompany him to his destination. Jerusalem will be the future capital of the Kingdom of God on earth, as promised, and Jesus will “inherit the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:33). These facts and words are, as Paul said, to be a constant comfort and strength to us all (1 Thess. 4:18). When perverted, misunderstood, omitted, or taught wrongly, they automatically lose their comforting, inspiring quality. They then poison the believer who has been taught “to believe what is false” (2 Thess. 2:11). Believing the truth conveys the energy and mind of Jesus to us (1 Cor. 2:16; John 6:63: Jesus’ words are spirit). Falsehoods of all types poison and confuse us!

Seek the truth always and develop a passion for truth, “in order to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10). ✧

## **The One: In Defense of God** by Dan Gill

### **A Book Review by Dennis Baldwin**

Dan Gill is quick to make the point in the introduction that “God hardly needs defending. Yet, because of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, the truth about God does require clarification and defense. It is not possible that humanity at large has apprehended the truth about him when we are at ever opposing views about him” (p. 2). He explores the worthy question, “Who then is worthy of our faith?” This question is fundamental to our thinking about God.

Dan suggests that “people who are willing to move out of their comfort zones, willing to look beyond the moment — beyond their friends — to see what they are missing, and are willing to question everything they know — or think that they know — about him, are people, men and women, of great courage” (p. 3).

This book takes a fresh look at what the Bible tells us. If we are to seek to know more about God we must *by all means* look in the Bible which is God’s book, His story, “his message to all who desire to know him.” “Who can write a book about God?” Dan asks. “The definitive book about him has already been written” (p. 3). But this requires “real faith.” It’s just as God reminded Jeremiah the prophet, “You will seek me and find me if you seek me with all of your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

### **Humanity Was Not Created Evil**

It is important to know God, for “only by knowing our Creator can we understand who *we* are and his purposes for us” (p. 4). At the end of the 6 days of creation, our Creator observed everything he had made, including that which he made in his image; and declared it to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Dan reminds us, which I think we need, “Humanity was not created evil.” Along with that it makes good sense that “It is not reasonable that we as humanity would choose evil and then blame God for *our* decision. Both choice and responsibility rest with us” (p. 10).

Dan reminds his readers that “For me, to know God is worth everything. It is the pleasure of God that we would know him. As we look at the cosmos, we might think that in the larger scheme of things we as human beings are entirely unimportant. Yet, to God we *are* important. We are important enough for him to have created us. And he is mindful of us. It is his desire for us to know him. Otherwise, why would he have made us with the ability to do so? There is no other being in all

of this world's creation that has the ability to really know our Creator" (p. 40).

### God Is Not a Trinitarian

Dan boldly makes this assertion: "It should be alarming for those who see the Bible as the inspired and best source for all matters of faith to find leading Trinitarian scholars speaking of this doctrine as 'developing gradually after the completion of the New Testament' under the sway of men who were 'deeply influenced by Platonic philosophy'...Monotheism was not conceived by Israel. Rather, it originated with the God of Israel. His words are, 'I am God and there is no one else; I am God and there is no one like me' (Isaiah 46:9)...Who would know better than the Father himself if there are persons who share his Deity? For all who really believe in the Bible, the words of the God of the Bible should be definitive." He borrows a question from a friend: "If the God of the Bible is not a Trinitarian, then why should I be?" (p. 94-96).

"The word *monotheism* is derived from the Greek terms *monos* (only, alone) and *theos* (God). Both words occur in John 17:3: 'And this is the real and eternal life: That they know you, The *one and only true God*, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent' (John 17:3, MSG)."

### The Word of God

"With the introduction of a supposed ancient or eternal being called the 'Word,' Gentile Christians were effectively creating a new Creator. What was really the Father's own spoken word was imagined to be a second person who shares with God the honor of being our Creator. This was unthinkable to God's true people of old. The cost of this change in theology was ultimately the unconscionable breaking away of post-biblical Christianity from the absolute monotheism of God's prophets, of Jesus himself, and his early disciples." Jesus attributed the creation to God, not himself. "By one count, the Genesis creation is attributed to God, not Jesus, in at least 50 verses of the Bible" (p. 135, 139).

### God as Witness

Dan puts God on trial in chapter 10. He allows God to testify. "Let us hear his testimony. What will our Father say about himself? Is he a reliable witness? And what will he say about objections that some people have raised who insist that there are one or two or other persons who are also God?" (p. 196).

"To whom then will you compare me? Who is my equal?" says the Holy One (Isa. 40:25).

"I am the LORD, and there is no one else; other than me there is no God. I strengthen you, though you do not know me, so that all may know; from the east and from the west, that there is no one other than me; I am the LORD, and there is no one else" (Isa. 45:5-6).

Regarding creation the LORD makes it very plain. The Father settles the matter. Case closed: "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: 'I am the LORD, who made all things; I alone stretched forth the heavens. **I spread out the earth by myself**'" (Isa. 44:24).

His voice thunders in the courtroom: "**I DID IT ALONE...I DID IT BY MYSELF!**"

"Only one is God! No verse in the Bible says that God is a group of persons with Deity operating in unity. God *is* in unity with his people — his kings — and in complete unity with his Messiah after he is born (John 10:30). But he is not in unity with anyone who is God. 'He' alone is God. Neither does anyone in the Bible talk about the post-biblical philosophical notion that God is two or three persons who are all one 'substance'!...The strange idea of God as one substance in three persons is spoken of or alluded to in various post-biblical statements from the 4<sup>th</sup> century on but never in the Bible itself...It is not the great 'We Are' who speaks to Moses; it is the great 'I AM'" (p. 206, 213).

### Jesus and Original Christianity

"Jesus did not come to bring the world a different definition of God. He came to affirm the same one that God's prophets and people of old had been proclaiming from the beginning. Confirming that the Father is the only true God, Jesus then speaks of himself not as God, but as God's Messiah, the Christ. The God of Israel is the God of Jesus. Original Christianity is the realization of true biblical faith from Abraham to John the Baptist...The overarching message of the Bible is not merely that there is one God. Rather, it is the more definitive declaration that there is only *one individual* who is God. That individual is YHWH — the Father of us all" (p. 243).

### The Creed of Jesus

"Christians today often recite creeds which were devised by post-biblical Gentile Christians centuries after Christ. They do that, while at the same time having never learned the biblical creed which God himself gave to Moses. It is that creed which Jesus affirms. When he is approached by a Jewish man who asks him which is the most important of all of the commandments, Jesus responds that it is: '*Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one*' (Mark 12:29)" (p. 252).

### Christians Can Do Better

"Christians do not need to embrace the eastern religions, 'New Age,' or other philosophies. We do not need to discover Judaism, the Law of Moses, or Islam. Christians today need to *rediscover original Christianity*. Let us reclaim the spirit and heart of the first Christians. Let us recover their devotion to Jesus as the true Messiah and to the Father alone as the only true

God. Let us again embrace YHWH's own first priority: He is the only one who is truly God. Let us choose to obey from our hearts his prime directive: We shall serve him as the only true God and no one else" (p. 260, emphasis added).✧

## Colossians 1:15-16

In Colossians 1:15-16 Paul is talking about persons, authorities and rank. He calls them "things" as in "all things." Paul's use of "things" makes the reader think of the physical creation, but this is not what Paul has in mind at all. He defines the "all things" as thrones, powers, dominions, principalities. Paul's point is that Jesus is, since his exaltation, now supreme over them all. Firstly, Paul said that God was the creator of all (Jesus of course had said that in Mark 10:6). God as Creator had Jesus in mind, in intention. Thus Colossians 1:16: because of him (the "in" is *causal* here), with him in intention (not "by him"), everything was created (i.e. by God). Now, with an important change of tense in the Greek, all things are presently **through** (*dia*) Jesus. Paul has deliberately switched to the new creation and everything is now through Jesus. Paul goes on to say that Jesus is the firstborn, the preeminent one, and he has in mind Psalm 89:27 where David is God's firstborn, "the highest of the kings of the earth." (David was not the first to be born in his natural family.) Jesus now has the supreme royal rank. He is thus above all (v. 17) and he *achieved* this supremacy by being the first to rise from the dead. This Paul says in verse 18. By this fact Jesus **became supreme**. Paul cannot imagine that Jesus had *already* held that super-elevated position and then gained supremacy by being the first to rise from the dead. That would make zero sense! Jesus has in fact been supremely promoted.

Further light is found in the parallel in Ephesians 1:4-10 where Paul treats the same subject. He teaches us that God wanted **to head up all things in Christ** (v. 10). It is a matter of Jesus becoming supreme and chief in God's plan for immortality. Nothing Paul says in Colossians and Ephesians makes him contradict the detailed account in Matthew and Luke about the **origin of the Son**, how he **began to exist** (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). Neither Paul nor Matthew and Luke have a word about an imagined pre-human person, either angel or God, who *entered* the womb of Mary from outside! This latter idea is very pagan and Gnostic and distorts the Bible's presentation of the "man Messiah" (1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 2:22), the second Adam, the pure image of God. Adam was supposed to be God's vice-regent. Jesus is what man was intended to be. Adam failed and Jesus succeeded. Adam was the first Adam, and Jesus was the second and last Adam — in that order. (Please see our recently published book by Kegan Chandler, *The God of Jesus in Light of Christian Dogma*.)

The whole narrative is false if Jesus is really a pre-human angel, or, worse, fully God, which undermines monotheism, the greatest of all the commands in Mark 12:29, John 17:3, and 1300 occurrences of God in the NT meaning the Father (and the very easy Mal. 2:10). Not one of the approximately 11,000 occurrences of the various words for God means a triune God. Jesus is of course the "lord Messiah" of Luke 2:11 and the "my lord" (not Lord!) of Psalm 110:1. **Adoni, my lord**, occurs 195 times in the OT and never, ever means GOD. Psalm 110:1 is the NT's (and your!) favorite verse for describing who Jesus is in relation to the one God of true biblical monotheism. Always start by believing and obeying the command which Jesus called the greatest of all in Mark 12:29. You cannot do better than that! If only readers would let John tell them about his whole purpose for writing his Gospel: to teach us to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). That is exactly the purpose of Matthew, Mark and Luke also (Matt. 16:16-18; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20).✧

## Clear as Water

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

On the day of Pentecost, Peter (who had been entrusted with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven/God" by Jesus, Mt. 16:19) spoke boldly concerning which responses to his message were required. Wonderful, highlighted resurrection truths and ascension realities were presented by Peter in Acts chapter 2. Listeners, having been previously guilty of clamoring for Jesus' crucifixion, were "cut to the heart" and asked, "What shall we do?" Peter's clear response left nothing out: "Turn back! [Repent] Be baptized — every single one of you — in the name of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins can be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the holy spirit...Those who welcomed his message were baptized. About three thousand people were added to the community that day" (Acts 2:38, 41).

Though this record clearly links solid, Kingdom of God faith to: (a) repentance, (b) being baptized, and (c) receiving holy spirit (which is a **result** of obedience to the command to repent and be baptized), certain modern trends often dismiss or distort the simplicity of being baptized. Peter's bold directive undoubtedly came from Jesus' previous commands, just days or weeks before this day of Pentecost: "So you must go and make all the nations into disciples. Baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit. Teach them to observe everything I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20a).

Personally, when I was mercifully allowed to overcome a somewhat Gnostic tendency to regard baptism as worthless — a **mere** "physical" symbol — I received a great deal of deliverance!

“Do thoughtful Christians sometimes struggle with the idea of the physical action of water baptism as a required part of the entrance into Jesus’ heavenly Kingdom? Can one treat baptism as a mere detached symbol of a spiritual event, after the fact? The first-century Christian, with his Hebrew background, would not struggle in this manner. Hebrew thought never made the mistake of separating the spiritual and physical, since the God who was Spirit created the material world. Baptism...is a physical event with a spiritual effect. It marks the end of the old life and the beginning of the new, the end of the old human being in Adam and the resurrection of the new human being in Christ. Water baptism deals decisively with the past, granting a new future in the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup>

For over four decades, I failed to perceive — I mostly **did not want** to see — issues of biblical integrity as well as relevant vocabulary (which can be corroborated in any good dictionary, lexicon, etc.):

(1) “Baptize” and “baptism” are not generic (ambiguous) terms meaning “to immerse” into whatever. According to my old, erroneous, traditional paradigm, **I could choose** whether “baptize” meant: (a) into water, (b) into knowledge, (c) into holy spirit, etc., according to **my** ability to make inferences! Though it might seem that I am making a subtle distinction, such treatment of the words “baptize” and “baptism” represents a **bad** misunderstanding of basic terms.

(2) “Baptize” **literally** means to dip, dunk, or submerge into water. The idea of water is **embedded** in the term itself, similar to how the verb “pickle” includes the idea of using brine or vinegar (without stating those words themselves).

(3) When “baptize” does not refer to dipping objects (or people) in water, it is a non-literal (or figurative) usage.

(4) The six verses that say “baptize with holy spirit,” in reference to Jesus’ “pouring out” of holy spirit on Pentecost, and before (John 1:33), metaphorically exalt the activity of the Messiah. Since Jesus himself did not **literally** dunk anyone into water (Jesus did indeed baptize many, but his agents did the dunking, John 4:1-2), these six uses of “baptize” are clearly **figurative**. (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16).

(5) Two of those 6 verses mentioned above include the use of “baptize” with fire, another non-literal usage, pointing prophetically to Jesus’ role in future judgments (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16).

(6) “Baptism” (as a noun) “in holy spirit” is never once used in the Bible. There is **never** a Scriptural discussion of anyone “receiving baptism in holy spirit.”

<sup>1</sup> James E. Leuschen, *The Lost Gospel of the First Christians*, p. 70.

(7) Other figurative uses of “baptize” (or “baptism”) include a time of anticipated suffering (Mk. 10:38-39; Lk. 12:50) and Israel’s passing through the sea, under the cloud (1 Cor. 10:2), being “baptized into Moses.”

(8) When such figurative uses of “baptize” or “baptism” are used, there are obvious **context clues** to make this very clear. This is a normal, usual way for distinguishing between figurative language and **literally** intended word meanings.

(9) When **no context clues** point to metaphorical meanings, there is **no reason NOT to take the terms literally!** Thus, the use of “baptize” and “baptism” in the following verses is clearly **literal**, with no ambiguity whatsoever: Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12. These terms (in these contexts) were obviously taken **literally** among the earliest Christians.

(10) Since the day of Pentecost, the earliest Christians enthusiastically baptized people who were coming into the faith (whether these converts had previously been Jews or Gentiles). For example, there are ten crystal clear records in the book of Acts in which new believers were baptized, over a span of at least a couple of decades.

(11) The records in which Peter, Philip, Ananias, and Paul baptized people are never once portrayed as a mistake, as if baptism were an outdated (or replaced) practice. In contrast to that, **all** outdated practices (from under the law of Moses) were strongly rebuked in Acts, Galatians, and other Scriptures! (Such practices included insistence on circumcision, Levitical food laws, calendar observances, and animal sacrifices.)

(12) There is never a single occasion on which literal baptism was shown to be in conflict with receiving (and evidencing) holy spirit. Even in contexts in which baptism and holy spirit reception are closely set side by side (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 19), “holy spirit” is **never** indicated as replacing or diminishing **baptism in water**. Never are these two factors blurred and blended together, as if they were two ways of saying the same thing in a very vague way.

(13) Point 12 is certain even if a baptism with incomplete information (John’s baptism) was corrected with another baptism in the name of Jesus. **After** being dunked a second time (with full information about Jesus), **then** these people received (and evidenced) holy spirit. There is no haziness with vocabulary here at all, as if one could infer that **mere** water baptism were replaced by superior “spirit baptism” (Acts 19:2-6).

(14) Since genuine, Biblical baptism is always accompanied by faith in Kingdom of God truths and individual repentance (Acts 8:12), the traditional christening of infants does not — for a moment — replace true, Scriptural baptism.

(15) As mentioned earlier in this article, avoiding baptism as if it were a mere “physical” symbol (and

therefore unimportant) reveals a Gnostic mindset, not the loving, God-fearing attitude of the earliest Christians. Shunning an activity as “merely physical” reveals a warped way of thinking.

(16) There was never any controversy in New Testament times about the simple, clear, required response of getting baptized. Modern confusions are due to anachronistic misunderstandings from later centuries, which are then wrongly imposed on the Bible.

If no one can honestly refute these 16 points, or even attempt to deny a single one of them, there is no good reason for anyone to keep rejecting literal baptism as commanded by Jesus. I pray that YHWH Himself enlighten the eyes of those of us who were previously misled! May we joyfully embrace a Biblically relevant, outward “new covenant” symbol — with spiritual enthusiasm and gladness of heart!

Just as on the day of Pentecost, Peter closely connected Jesus’ resurrection, his being seated at God’s right hand, repentance, and physical baptism, he intricately linked those **same** truths (in writing) many years later: “Noah built the ark, in which a few people, eight in fact, were saved through water. That functions as a signpost for you, pointing to baptism, which now saves you, not by washing away fleshly pollution, but by the appeal to God of a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. He has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him. (1 Peter 3:20b-22). ✧

## Having the Mind of Jesus, Who Loved the Words of Daniel

I am deliberately writing out for you here the spectacular final vision of Daniel. It is the basis of all the NT has to say about the future. It is the background of Jesus and his prophetic words. There are no less than 22 chapters of Jesus’ words in Revelation (1:1). “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). We need that inspiration in order to be like Jesus and sound like him. We begin at Daniel 11:21, a section which Jesus referred to the future events leading to his Parousia (Dan. 11:31 = Matt. 24:15).

<sup>21</sup>“And his place will be taken by a contemptible person, to whom the honor of the kingdom had not been given: but he will come in time **of peace** [cp. ‘**When they say peace and security,**’ 1 Thess. 5:3] and will get the kingdom by fair words. <sup>22</sup>Armies will be utterly swept away before him; and even the ruler of **the covenant** will have the same fate. <sup>23</sup>And from the time when **they make an agreement with him, he will be working cunningly**: for he will take up arms suddenly with a small force, <sup>24</sup>against fertile places, and will make waste a part of the country; and he will do what his

fathers have not done, or his fathers’ fathers; he will make distribution among them of goods taken in war and by force, and of property: he will even make designs against the strong places for a time. <sup>25</sup>And he will put in motion his power and his strength against the King of the South with a great army; and the King of the South will go to war with a very great and strong army: but he will be forced to give way, because of their designs against him; <sup>26</sup>And his fears will overcome him and be the cause of his downfall, and his army will come to complete destruction, and a great number will be put to the sword. <sup>27</sup>And as for these two kings, their hearts will be fixed on doing evil **and they will say false words at one table; but it will come to nothing: for the end will be at the time fixed.** <sup>28</sup>And he [King of the North] will go back to his land with great wealth; and his heart will be against the holy **covenant**; and he will do his pleasure and go back to his land. <sup>29</sup>At the time fixed he will come back and come into the south; but in the later time it will not be as it was before. <sup>30</sup>For those who come from the West will oppose him, and he will be in fear and will go back, full of wrath against the holy **covenant**; and he will do his pleasure: and he will go back and be united with those who have given up the holy **covenant**. <sup>31</sup>And armies sent by him will take up their position and they will profane the Temple and fortress, and **take away the regular burnt offering and put up the Abomination of Desolation** in its place. <sup>32</sup>And those who do evil against the **covenant will be turned to sin by his flattery**: but the people who have knowledge of their God will be strong and do well. <sup>33</sup>And those who are the teachers among the people will make the mass of the people understand: but they will come to their downfall by the sword and by the flame, being made prisoners and undergoing loss for a time. <sup>34</sup>Now at the time of their downfall they will have a little help, but numbers will be joined to them under false pretenses. <sup>35</sup>And some of those who are knowledgeable will be refined, purified and made white, till the **time of the end: for it is still for the fixed time.** <sup>36</sup>And the King [of the North] will do his pleasure; he will put himself on high, lifting himself over every god, and saying things to be wondered at against the God of gods; and he will prosper **till the wrath is complete**; for what has been purposed will be done. <sup>37</sup>He will have no respect for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women; he will have no respect for any god: for he will exalt himself over all. <sup>38</sup>But in place of this he will give honor to the god of armed forces, and to a god of whom his fathers had no knowledge he will give honor with gold and silver and jewels and things to be desired. <sup>39</sup>And he will make use of the people of a strange god to keep his strongest places; to those whom he takes note of he will give high honor: and he will make them rulers over the mass of the people, and will make division of

the land for a price. <sup>40</sup>And **at the time of the end**, the King of the South will make an attack on him [the King of the North]; and the King of the North will come against him [the King of the South] like a storm-wind, with war-carriages and horsemen and numbers of ships; and he will go through many lands like overflowing waters. <sup>41</sup>And he will come into the beautiful land, and tens of thousands will be overcome, but these will be kept from falling into his hands: Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon. <sup>42</sup>And his hand will be stretched out on the countries: and the land of the south will not be safe from him. <sup>43</sup>But he will have power over the stores of gold and silver, and over all the valued things of the south: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians will be at his steps. <sup>44</sup>But he will be troubled by **news from the east and from the north**; and he will go out in great wrath, to send destruction on, and put an end to, great numbers. <sup>45</sup>He will put the tents of his great house between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain [Jerusalem]; but he will **come to his end [cp. Dan. 9:26b: 'his end']** with no helper.

<sup>12:1</sup>“**And at that time** Michael will take up his place, the great angel, who is the supporter of the children of your people: and there will be **a time of tribulation**, such as there never was from the time there was a nation even till that same time: and **at that time** your people will be rescued, everyone who is recorded in the book [of life]. [Jesus cited this unique Great Tribulation in Matt 24:21, as immediately before the Parousia, 24:29.] <sup>2</sup>And a number of those who are sleeping in the dust of the earth will come out of their sleep, some to eternal life [= Life of the Age to Come] and some to eternal shame [shame of the Age to Come]. <sup>3</sup>And those who are wise will be shining like the light of the outstretched sky [quoted by Jesus in Matt. 13:43, of the future Kingdom]; and those by whom numbers have been turned to righteousness will be like the **stars for ever and ever**. <sup>4</sup>But as for you, O Daniel, let the words be kept secret and the book rolled up and kept shut till **the time of the end**: numbers of people will be going to and fro and knowledge will increase. <sup>5</sup>Then I, Daniel, looking, saw two others, one at the edge of the river on this side and one at the edge of the river on that side. <sup>6</sup>And I said to the man clothed in linen, who was over the waters of the river, **How long will it be to the end of these wonders?** <sup>7</sup>Then in my hearing the man clothed in linen, who was over the river, lifting up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, took an oath by Him who is living for ever that it would be **a time, times, and a half**; and when the power of the crusher of the holy people comes to an end, **all these things will be ended** [cited in Mark 13:4 in the disciples' question]. <sup>8</sup>And the words came to my ears, but the sense of them was not clear to me: then I said, O my lord, what is to be the last phase before the end? <sup>9</sup>And he said, Go on your way, Daniel: for the words are

secret and shut up till **the time of the end**; <sup>10</sup>Till a number are tested and make themselves clean; and the evil-doers will do evil; for not one of the evil-doers will have understanding; but **all will be made clear to those who are wise**. <sup>11</sup>And from the time when **the regular burnt offering is taken away, and the Abomination of Desolation is put up, there will be 1290 days**. [Moffatt: ‘1290 days will pass after the daily offering has been stopped and the Appalling Abomination has been set up.’] <sup>12</sup>A blessing will be on the man who goes on waiting, and comes to 1335 days. <sup>13</sup>But you, go on your way and take your rest: for you will rise to your assigned position at the end of the days. [Moffatt: ‘Arise to enjoy your share at the end of the days’]” (Dan. 11:21-12:13). ✧

## Comments

“I am seeking likeminded fellow believers in rightly explained Scripture. I have been excommunicated from my local congregation and cannot function as an ordained minister, because I believe the dead are dead until the resurrection of the dead. Now being 71 years of age and fully retired, I would just like to be with those who worship the Father and have eternal life through His Son, my Lord. UU’s (Unitarian Universalists) are not an option since they are liberal; and most everyone else dumping the Trinity is either a cult or just way off in so many other areas.” — *Connecticut*

“I left the JW’s over 18 years ago and since then have been on one rollercoaster ride of doubt and disbelief. I’ve been heavily involved as of late with many secular/skeptical websites that maintain a critical approach to God and Christianity in general. From doubting Jesus’ historical existence to the atrocities in Joshua, I’ve definitely entrenched myself in some real anti-Christian rhetoric! Being a JW was far from easy. I was always made to feel that no matter what I did, it just wasn’t enough! I suffered a lot psychologically as a result. Anxiety/depression was a common experience for me. I thought that with all my backsliding that God hated me and that I sinned against his Holy Spirit! When I finally mustered the courage to disassociate myself from the JW’s, I went on an anti-God rampage that has only recently slowed down. Now that I’m older (and hopefully wiser) I’ve gained a new appreciation for Jesus. He is always at the back of my mind. I’m not sure what to do though. I feel deeply disconnected from the Scriptures in a fundamental way! I’m not too concerned with my personal salvation as much as I am with Justice and Peace finally being brought to this wretched planet! My thinking is definitely more in accord with Biblical unitarianism (probably due to my JW background) and that’s how I read the scriptures, but I’m seriously at a loss on what to do.” — *California*