

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 26 No. 10

Anthony Buzzard, editor

July, 2024

The Charter for Mankind

by Anthony Buzzard

from *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*, chapter 6

To make sense of the ministry of Jesus and his unchanging message, we must enter the thought world of first-century Judaism and acquaint ourselves with Israel's Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures to which Jesus was devoted. In these precious documents are to be found the principal ideas which molded the young Jesus' thinking. Knowing himself to be the heir to the throne of David, he would be drawn to that section of the Hebrew Bible which contained the core of Israel's national hope. It had been communicated to Israel's beloved king David by an extraordinary revelation given to him through Nathan the prophet (found in 2 Sam. 7, with its parallel in 1 Chron. 17). These passages of Scripture record for posterity the divine arrangements made with the royal house of David.

From the point of view of many historians and some theologians the Kingdom of Judah amounts to a minor Middle Eastern empire. In Scripture, however, its significance for world history and the destiny of the human race cannot be exaggerated. The scriptural documents laying out God's intentions for the world through the royal line of David, representing the house of Judah, are vastly more significant than the Magna Carta or the Declaration of Independence. The contract established with David and his descendants is backed by no less a power than the Creator Himself. Underwritten by a divine promise, it guarantees the ultimate future of the human race under a beneficent government in the hands of the Greater Son of David, whom we believe to be Jesus of Nazareth. As the rightful heir to the throne of David (Luke 1:32), he is now temporarily removed from the earth. He will remain absent until a dramatic turning point in world history is marked by his arrival to take up power over the nations in accordance with the Plan revealed to David through the prophet Nathan and later announced by Jesus in the Christian Gospel about the Kingdom.

The Davidic covenant is thoroughly political. It deals, we might say, in divine politics. It is expressive of the Creator's intention to restore harmony to a distracted earth, whose present political arrangements have in their various ways failed to realize the ideal for which man was created. God's purpose for humans was that we should reflect divinity on earth. That is what it

means to be a "son of God," to mirror the character of the Father, and to manage the world God gave us (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 5:10).

Adam was put in charge of the world and instructed to rule it. Sustained by a continuing fellowship with their creator, the first pair could have carried out their mandate "to subdue the earth" (Gen. 1:28). But this was not to be. A fatal disruption of God's intention occurred when Adam and Eve yielded to the temptations of a rival power. They were overwhelmed by the lies of Satan. Falling for the fake counter-propaganda of the Devil, they abandoned the words of God which expressed His will for the conduct of affairs on earth.

To a large extent the pattern of disregard for the divine word, set by the original couple, has been characteristic of the whole course of human history. Israel herself, as custodians of the divine revelation which she preserved with meticulous care, failed to recognize her own Messiah when he came, the Messiah who was supremely the vehicle of the word and words of God. With notable exceptions — the family of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, as well as outstanding heroes of faith from every nation in every age — the course of history is marked by violence and disharmony at the level of the family and the nation. God's will has not been followed, nor His New Covenant laws observed. The Apostle closest to Jesus defined the condition of the world as "lying in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). Jesus believed that his Kingdom had an origin quite different from present societies, and that Satan was now "prince of the world" (John 14:30). The Bible sees the earth as at present a rebel province which has rejected its Maker. One has only to turn on the news, announcing yet another murder or robbery, to understand that the purpose of God for our race continues to be frustrated.

In the face of such obvious unhappiness and injustice, and what appears often to be purposeless suffering, many despair of finding any meaning for existence. The Bible responds to the tendency to abandon hope by assuring us that the world is in fact going somewhere. It is moving inexorably towards the goal for which it was created. But let no one think that human progress will lead us gently to a safe haven of peace and prosperity. It is the heart of the Bible's message that only a dramatic reversal of present trends will produce the world which theoretically we say we desire.

The Bible's prognosis for mankind is grim. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. The prophets of Israel say two things. Firstly, things are bad and they are not going to improve — at least not to the point of achieving a genuine and lasting peace on earth. Secondly, when God in the future takes a hand in human affairs and removes the wicked and replaces them with the righteous, things are going to be transformed. It is only by an exchange of political systems that lasting improvement is going to come. More specifically, it is only when God's chosen and trained agents take over the reins of government that order will be restored worldwide. This is the essence of "God's Gospel," the announcement of the Kingdom. The one and only Gospel is the Gospel about the Kingdom.

Unfortunately this kind of analysis of our problem is not popular, and many reject out of hand the biblical solution. The idea that we are not going to "make it" without a divine intervention deals a blow to our sense of independence. Many who claim to be Christians pick from the Bible what is comforting and reject the massive amount of biblical material dealing with future judgment, an event described in both Testaments as the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is simply the future moment in history when God decides to intervene to change the course of world affairs dramatically, cataclysmically and forever. The Day of the Lord of the Hebrew Bible is equated in the New Testament with the future arrival of Jesus to rule in his Kingdom (the Parousia, second coming). This proves once again that the New Testament writers have not discarded the Old Testament. They assume that their readers will know what the Old Testament is about. They do not feel the need to restate what had already been declared by the prophets. They expect us to understand that what the Old Testament reveals about God's Plan will make sense in the light of the continuing revelation in Jesus Christ.

It is most unfair to claim allegiance to Christ if one decides to water down or otherwise explain away unwanted teaching dealing with the coming Day of the Lord, which is also the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was no benign Galilean peasant reassuring the world that everything is all right. He is first and foremost a prophet and spokesman for God, expressing both a tender compassion for human suffering and a fiery denunciation of the folly and wickedness of the world's ways. Above all Jesus is the bearer of Good News — of a bright future for the whole world when the Messiah comes to reign.

The mission of Jesus was driven by his overwhelming desire to carry out the will of his Father, the One God of Israel. Jesus summed up the reason for his ministry as "heralding the Kingdom of God." That

was the primary reason for which he was appointed (Luke 4:43). It must follow that a grasp of the Kingdom of God will provide us with the key to knowing the mind of Jesus and understanding the Christian mission.

Divine Arrangements with David

Little progress is possible in our quest for understanding Jesus' agenda until we subject to careful investigation the vastly important role of the Davidic covenant, which he treated as a blueprint for the unfolding Plan of God for the world. Jesus, as is well known, believed himself to be the central figure in the world's drama, the appointed legal agent of the One God, heir to David's throne and ordained to take his place as sovereign in the Kingdom of God.

From this central declaration of God's purpose, Israel derived its inextinguishable hope for a brilliant future. The text from 2 Samuel 7 is as follows:

"The LORD of Heaven's Armies says this: 'I took you [David] from the pasture and your work as a shepherd to make you leader of My people Israel. I was with you wherever you went, and I defeated all your enemies for you. Now I am going to make your fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will establish a place for My people Israel and plant them there; there they will live and not be disturbed any more. Violent people will not oppress them any more, as they did in the beginning and during the time when I instituted judges to govern My people Israel. Instead I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that He Himself will build a dynasty for you. When your days are over and you fall asleep in death with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir, your own son, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will make his royal dynasty permanent. I will be a father to him and he a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings. But My faithful love will never be withdrawn from him as I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your dynasty and your kingdom will ever stand firm before you, and your throne be forever secure.' Nathan related all these words and this whole revelation to David" (2 Sam. 7:8-17).

The terms of God's Plan for David and Israel are clear. David will not be the one to build the temple. Instead, God will build a dynasty for David. There is a blessing for the nation also. A place of permanent security will be provided for Israel. Associated with that promise is the guarantee of a king who will rule as David's successor forever. It is important to note that the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 17 *omits the reference to punishment appropriate for the immediate descendant of David, Solomon*. The later version of the

covenant thus places a greater emphasis on the ultimate object of the promise — the Messiah. Of him it is said: “I will set him over **My temple and Kingdom** forever and his throne will be forever secure” (1 Chron. 17:14).

The New Testament, quoting a verse from 2 Samuel 7, recognizes both Jesus *and the Christians* as Messianic sons and daughters of God to whom the covenant promises apply: “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch anything unclean, and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17-18, citing 2 Sam. 7:14).¹

The covenant’s concluding guarantee — a throne forever — summarized the national hope of Israel and provided the basis of the Christian Gospel about the Kingdom as proclaimed by Jesus. Most appropriately the term “Messiah” or “Anointed King” became the title for the expected king of the line of David who would preside over the temple and the Kingdom of God. It is the essence of Christian belief that the historical Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is the person about whom the inspired documents had spoken.

It is important not to miss the Bible’s own definition of the Kingdom. It means the reign on a permanently secure throne of the ultimate ruler, representing God in the Davidic Kingdom as the sovereign of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Messiah or Son of God is to be ruler in “My,” i.e. God’s, Kingdom (1 Chron. 17:14). We must emphasize that the divine Plan has to do with “a place for Israel” (2 Sam. 7:10), a throne and a Kingdom. None of these terms must be allowed to slip away from our grasp. These are words with normal, natural meanings. They have to do with an empire on earth and a king ruling in Jerusalem. They are exactly the terms taken up by Gabriel in Luke 1:32-33 which picks up the threads of the divine drama by pointing back to the Davidic covenant and forward to the arrival of the Davidic empire — a new world order which will successfully supersede our present world system forever.

The birth of Jesus, as the key figure in the divine scheme, was indeed proof that God, his Father, was at work in the world according to the promises made to the chosen people. Gabriel speaks to Mary and to the world in words strongly reminiscent of 2 Samuel 7:

2 Samuel 7:12-14

“I will make your own [David’s] descendant succeed you...I will make his royal throne secure forever. I will be a father to him and he a son to Me.”

Luke 1:32-33

“[Jesus] will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever; his Kingdom will never come to an end.”

The book of Chronicles recognizes the royal covenant as the substance of God’s dealings with His people. A king of Judah appeals to the separated northern kingdom of Israel: “Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel to David and his sons by a covenant of salt [a formal, irrevocable agreement]?...Now you intend to resist the **kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David**” (2 Chron. 13:5, 8). It is important to be reminded that David’s rule over Israel is called the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom, it should be noted, is not a kingdom in the hearts of David’s sons. It is in their hands, under their control, as they govern as Yahweh’s vice-regents. Looking back at the revelation he had received through Nathan, David reflected on the covenant with these words:

“God has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Israel. He said to me, ‘Your son Solomon is the one who will build My temple and My courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to Me and I will be a father to him’ (1 Chron. 28:5-6).

The success of Solomon depended on his faithful obedience. As is well known, he failed the test as did many of his descendants of the royal line. The ultimate permanence of the throne, however, was assured by the divine oath sworn to David:

The Lord has sworn to David

A truth from which He will not turn back:

“I will place one of your descendants on your throne.

If your sons will keep My covenant,
And My testimony which I will teach them,
Their sons will also sit on your throne forever.”

For the Lord has chosen Zion;

He decided to make it His habitation:

“This will be My resting place forever;

Here I will live, for I have desired it.

I will abundantly supply her needs;

I will give her poor all the food they need.

¹ Christians are said to be “anointed,” i.e., members of the Messianic community, in 2 Cor. 1:21. As saints, Christians are those appointed to rule (Dan. 7:27).

Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.
There [in Zion] I will cause the horn of David to
sprout;
I have prepared a lamp for My anointed [Messiah].
I will humiliate his enemies,
And his crown will shine” (Ps. 132:11-18).

So impressed was King David by the hope this provided for the world that he dedicated his last words to a celebration of the Messiah and his worldwide rule. We cite the version of these inspired words suggested by Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on 2 Samuel 23:1-6:

“These are the final words of David: The divine saying of David the son of Jesse, the divine saying of the man, the one highly exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel. The Spirit of Yahweh speaks through me and His word is on my tongue. The God of Israel says, the rock of Israel speaks to me, ‘There will arise a ruler over the human race, a just ruler, and he will exercise his dominion in the spirit of the fear of God. In the time of this Messiah it will be like the light of the morning when the sun arises, like a morning without clouds. It will be like the shining after rain which produces fresh grass from the earth.’ Does not my house stand in such a relation to God that the righteous ruler will spring from it? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, established by every assurance. All God’s good pleasure and all my salvation will spring forth from this covenant. But the worthless are like rejected thorns.”²

The Charter for Humanity

The plan of God for Israel laid out in the covenant had dealt with “the distant future” (2 Sam. 7:19). A complete fulfillment in the reign of Solomon is therefore impossible. A little-noticed phrase from David’s response to the information provided through Nathan deserves comment. From the words of an Australian theologian writing about the Davidic covenant we select this important excerpt:

“The tenor of David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18-29 indicates that David well understood the covenantal significance in the widest terms of the divine promises and their effect upon humanity as a whole...Puzzling in verse 19 is the Hebrew phrase *wezot torat ha’adam* (literally ‘and this is the law of man’ — it needs to be understood that *torah* is a word with a wide meaning range, basically having a sense of ‘guidance,’ ‘direction’ rather than that it has full legal overtones like our word ‘law’)...

“W.C. Kaiser has shown clearly that verse 19b is to be taken as a statement, and that the Hebrew phrase concerned serves to introduce or to summarize (as here) a set of divine instructions. Under the ‘this,’ the promises of the first half of the chapter are being referred to, while under the ‘law of man’ their implications for the future, as far as David understood them, are contained. The curious Hebrew expression, ‘law of man,’ has been shown to have parallels in the similar Akkadian phrase *terit nishe*, which carries a meaning of a ‘fateful oracle for man.’ What is conveyed by the Akkadian term is the notion of an utterance by which the destiny of mankind is controlled or provided for. Such a concept fits the Samuel context admirably and with more than some probability Kaiser suggests that the sense to be given to 2 Samuel 7:19b is ‘**this is the charter by which humanity will be directed.**’ That is to say, in the oracle delivered to him, **David rightly sees the future and destiny of the human race is involved.** The promises to David have built upon the broad history of covenant concepts as, from creation onwards, they have covered divine intent for human development, and David has seen the full covenantal connections which Nathan’s oracle has offered.”³

The implications of this extraordinary divine communication granted to David are far-reaching. They provide a vista view of the outcome of human history. The future of humanity is bound up with the future of the royal house of David. From that family there will emerge a statesman-Messiah competent to solve the world’s intractable problems. The covenant granted to David is nothing less than a divine charter authorizing the Messiah and his associates to rule the world. History is marching to that inevitable goal.

Ignored by historians, philosophers and anthropologists and neglected by theologians, this precious information illuminates the later story of Jesus and the early Christians. It helps to account for the passionate zeal with which they spread the Good News. They saw themselves as participants in the greatest venture ever conceived by man — or rather conceived by God. Convinced of the claims of Jesus, Christians aligned themselves with the Messiah and his Message. Knowing that Jesus was divinely appointed to govern the world *and that he was inviting them to share that authority with him*, they saw themselves as a kind of fifth column in a hostile world system. Their true status was unrecognized, as they worked in the service of an absent king, anticipating the overthrow of present governments at the reappearance of the Messiah.

The Roman authorities viewed Jesus as a potential political threat. They were not unaware of the

² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Hendrickson, 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 484-490.

³ W.J. Dumbrell, “The Davidic Covenant,” *The Reformed Theological Review* (39), May-Aug. 1980, p. 46.

implications of Messianism. Their worst fears, however, were not justified. Jesus organized no revolution and made no political move. When his less well-instructed followers attempted to make him king there and then, Jesus promptly removed himself alone to a mountain (John 6:15). The time had not arrived for him to accede to the throne. Nevertheless he was God's candidate for royal office. Jesus knew as well as his supporters that the role of the Messiah was to liberate Israel from foreign oppression (Luke 24:21).⁴ He also knew that the path to victory was via crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and a period of absence at the right hand of the Father. The time for an overt assumption of world power was not yet ripe.

The Non-Fulfillment of the Covenant

The failure of Jesus, as Messiah, to effect a world revolution or even a change of government in his own country has presented Bible readers with a problem. In what sense can Jesus be the Messiah if he never inherited the throne of David in Jerusalem? How can the Davidic covenant have been realized as long as the Messiah is not in possession of the throne of the royal house of Judah? A traditional solution espoused by churches is to say that Jesus has in fact been exalted to the status promised to him, by being taken to the right hand of the Father. His position at present satisfies the conditions of the ancient promises. This theory is most problematic. Such an explanation entails giving the Messianic idea an entirely new meaning, divorced, as we think, from the ideas which clustered around the Messianic hope in its historical setting.

Jewish commentators faced with the same facts argue, on the other hand, that the failure of Jesus to accomplish what the Messiah was destined to do — rule as King in Israel — merely goes to show that Jesus was not the Messiah. He obviously never became Messiah in the sense demanded by the prophets and the covenants.

The tension caused by this enigma is at the root of much of the division amongst those calling themselves Christians as well as between Christians and Jews. But neither the Jew nor traditional Christian holds a position justified by divine revelation. We believe with the Jews that any claimant to Messiahship is a fraud if he never accedes to a restored throne of David. Without such promotion to royal office, possession of the land, accompanied by the liberation of his people and world rulership, he simply cannot be the biblical Messiah.

We believe with the historic Church that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah and that he was

brought back from death by resurrection, but we strongly object to the distorted notions which the Church has attached to Messiahship. The “received” opinion of many Bible readers that Jesus does not need to ascend the throne of David in Israel in order to justify his claim to be the Messiah seems to us to be clearly mistaken. It leaves the whole Messianic drama unresolved. It calls in question the divine covenants. The churches have spent much energy trying to explain away the obvious import of the role destined for the Messiah. They have had to do this because they want on the one hand to affirm that Jesus is the Messiah and, on the other, to deny that he is going to reappear again on earth in order to reestablish a Davidic empire with power to rule the world.

The great difference between traditional Christianity and the faith of the New Testament believers has to do with *the future*. It appears to us that churches constantly attempt an exposition of the Christian documents without taking account of the great climax to which the Bible everywhere looks forward. They are trying to read the biblical story — which from start to finish is colored by its dynamic Messianic hope for the future — with the final chapter, to which the entire narrative looks forward, torn from the book. This anti-Messianic tendency afflicts Bible readers both in the professional “theological” camp as well as those seeking a more “devotional” relationship with God.

The debate is critical for the future of the Church. It is a debate about the meaning of the term Kingdom of God, which it was the concern of Jesus to preach and teach. We are dealing, therefore, with fundamental questions about the nature of the Christian faith and the Christian Gospel. The problem presents itself in this way: If we grant that the covenants made with Abraham and David express the divine intention for the world, we must either abandon our faith in Jesus as the object of the promises, because he has not fulfilled them, or maintain that much yet needs to happen for the Messianic story to reach its goal. It is the latter alternative which we adopt, believing that this is the view of the Apostles and of Jesus who taught them. The resolution of the difficulty presented by the non-fulfillment of the Plan (the world has obviously not returned to paradise under a restored Messianic Kingdom) is possible only when the future coming of Jesus to rule the world with his followers is restored to the prominence it everywhere enjoys both in the Hebrew prophets and in the New Testament (Dan. 7:22, 27; Rev. 5:10). ✧

⁴ Josephus refers to the common belief of Jews of the first century that “one from their country would become ruler of the world” (*The Jewish War* 6:5).

Does the Great Crowd = the 144,000? by Carlos Xavier

Revelation 7:1-9: “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind would blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel rise up from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. He shouted out to the four angels who had been given permission to damage the earth and the sea, ‘Do not damage the earth, the sea, or the trees until we have put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.’ I heard **the number** of those marked with the seal: 144,000, sealed from **all the tribes of the children of Israel**: from the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000...from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 were sealed.

“After that I looked, and there was a huge crowd which **nobody could count**, from **every nation, tribe, people and language**.”

Over the millennia different views have been proposed as to the identity of the 144,000 in the book of Revelation. Since they “come out of the Great Tribulation” (Rev. 7:15), we understand them as national Israelites who will come to faith under the pressure of the Great Tribulation. The “great crowd” would then be Gentile believers from the other nations. Recently I have become aware of a view often promoted by amillennials — that the 144,000 *are* the great crowd, or in other words, that the great crowd *equals* the 144,000.

The following are some reasons why this interpretation just does not fit the vision given to John:

1. It is argued that there is a “hearing-seeing” pattern in Revelation: when John *first hears* something, they say, he then *sees* the same thing. But Revelation 7 begins with seeing, not hearing. You can’t just start in the middle of the scene and say that hearing comes first. And in Revelation 14 John *sees* the 144,000 he *heard* about in Revelation 7 anyway, once again showing that the so-called “hearing-seeing” pattern does not work.

2. John never calls the Church “the twelve tribes of Israel” or speaks of them as 12 tribes of 12,000 people each. The *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary* adds:

“No clear-cut example of the church being called ‘Israel’ exists in the NT or in ancient church writings until A.D. 160...This fact is **crippling** to any attempt to identify Israel as the church in Rev. 7:4. Such an attempt becomes even more ridiculous because it necessitates typological interpretation that divides the church into twelve tribes to coincide with the listing of Rev. 7:5-8, even with all the irregularities in that list....The approach is so misconceived that it does

serious violence to the context. It cannot be exegetically sustained. The term ‘Israel’ must be referred to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the natural understanding and the word’s normal usage in the NT as well as the OT.”

3. The fact that some tribes are left out and others added (the “irregularities” noted above) doesn’t make them somehow Gentiles. The *Wycliffe Commentary* again notes that “In about 18 lists of the sons of Jacob or Israel in the OT, different tribes are omitted at different times...the absence of Simeon and Issachar from Deuteronomy 33, of Simeon and Judah from Judges 5, and of Gad and Asher from 1 Chronicles.”

4. The 12 tribes are clearly counted, and then there is “the great multitude **which no one could count**”! Therefore these two groups cannot be the same.

5. The 144,000 are from the 12 tribes of Israel, but the huge crowd is from “**every nation, tribe, people and language**.” Again, these two groups cannot be the same!

6. John says in 7:9 “after these things I looked,” introducing a different group from the previously mentioned group. John is not continuing a description of the same group.

7. If all numbers in Revelation are symbols or figures of speech, no number in the book could be taken literally. ✧

Satan is not currently bound!

“Hundreds of years before the first coming of Christ, Satan was ‘roaming about on the earth and walking around on it’ (Job 1:7), and now, hundreds of years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Satan still ‘prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour’ (1 Pet. 5:8). His ultimate fate is sealed, but **the Devil is not currently bound and sealed in the abyss as described in Rev. 20:1-3**. As [Robert] Saucy explains:

‘All attempts to apply this picture to the present period, either as a limitation of Satan’s deceptive power on believers or his inability to prevent the spread of the gospel in the world, are difficult to harmonize with the language of the passage and other teaching of the New Testament. **The text gives no indication that the limitation on Satan is one of degree.**’

“To the contrary, the confinement of Revelation 20 is absolute and therefore the binding of Satan is not a present reality. Instead, the thousand years in John’s vision represents a millennial kingdom which will take place between the present age and the eternal state (cf. Isa. 24:21-23), just as premillennialism teaches.”

Matt Waymeyer, “The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, Spring 2015, p. 45-46.

Jeremiah 27:5

“I am the All-Powerful God of Israel, and with My power I created the earth, its people, and all animals. **I decide who will rule the earth**” (Jer. 27:5, CEV. See also Dan. 4:17).

More on the Age to Come

“To interpret God’s pledge of the promised land to Abraham and his seed as being anything else than a pledge of ultimate and everlasting possession to each and all of them, is to rob it of all substance and make sheer nonsense of the patriarchal faith. No, Abraham died; died and was buried; a stranger and sojourner in the country promised him; and he died in the faith that that promise would still be his. The same applies to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and to all the rest of the Old Testament saints...What God offered them was not merely Himself in life and in death; rather, it was the Land that is seen, though from very far off; it was the pleasures that are in His right hand to bestow for evermore upon His holy one; it was the resurrection; it was immortality; it was death swallowed up in victory; it was Eden, or Paradise Regained” (Rev. Norman Logan, “The Old Testament and a Future Life,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1953, p. 170-171).

“The idea of an immortality of the soul as the natural birthright of every human being is foreign to the Bible. No Jew could think of disembodied life...The biblical answer to the problem of death is resurrection. And resurrection requires an act of God as climactic as was the creation described in Genesis...A Platonic doctrine of immortality has for so long captured Christian thought and imagination, replacing that of resurrection, that it is desperately difficult for us to see the realistic biblical view in its stark grandeur” (*Interpreter’s Bible* on Eph. 2:1).

Traditional Christianity views the world as “a vast transit camp, in which the Church’s job is to issue tickets for heaven and pack people off to paradise”! (John Robinson, *On Being the Church in the World*, p. 133).

Comments

• “I’m a subscriber of the monthly *Focus on the Kingdom* magazine for over seven years now. Thank you and the writers who you feature monthly telling truth about the faith and monotheism and what the gospel message is truly about, the Kingdom of God and its future coming.” — *New Jersey*

• “Your April *Focus on the Kingdom* which discussed the treatment and killing of brother Servetus brought me to tears. Catholics killing Protestants, Protestants killing Catholics, and the witch hunts killing so many women tell us volumes about how dangerous organized religion can be. Brother Servetus was murdered for being a true follower of Christ. The persecutors are the false Christians obviously.” — *Youtube*

• “A few years ago, I read your book *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*. This book turned my mind upside down. If I used to imagine Jesus as an incarnate angel, now I consider him the best of people. Thank you very much for this wonderful work. After reading the book, I began to respect Christ even more.” — *Email*

• “I have been studying a lifetime to try and get back to the original truth of Jesus and his followers because what we have been taught just never rang true in my mind. You make sense of the simple, loving message and truth of our God and His Son.” — *Canada*

• “I just received the May edition with the article entitled, ‘How to Study the Bible,’ an excerpt from *The Gospel of the Kingdom* by Wiley Jones (1879). I enjoyed it tremendously. It will be useful for my Bible study class.” — *New Hampshire*

“After what has been said in the foregoing pages, we are prepared to re-assert, in conclusion, that **the modern doctrine of the Trinity is not found in any document or relic belonging to the Church of the first three centuries**. Letters, art, usage, theology, worship, creed, hymn, chant, doxology, ascription, commemorative rite, and festive observance, so far as any remains or any record of them are preserved, coming down from early times, are, as regards this doctrine, **an absolute blank**. They testify, so far as they testify at all, to the supremacy of the Father, the only true God; and to the inferior and derived nature of the Son. **There is nowhere among these remains a co-equal Trinity**. The cross is there; Christ is there as the Good Shepherd, the Father’s hand placing a crown, or victor’s wreath, on his head; but no undivided Three — co-equal, infinite, self-existent, and eternal. This was a conception to which the age had not arrived. It was of later origin.”

Alvan Lamson, *The Church of the First Three Centuries*, 1865, p. 396.