

Focus on the Kingdom

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Was John Calvin a Christian in Name Only?

by Clark Barefoot (2009)

Introduction

Sometime about 1979 while I was living in El Cajon, California, the California Pacific Theaters held a playwright contest. My two sons, ages 22 and 20 at the time, entered a play entitled "Servetus." This play revolved around the lives of the Spaniard Michael Servetus and the French Reformation hero John Calvin. The rejection of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by Servetus led to his being burned to death in 1553. The execution, although supported by most churches in Switzerland, was engendered by Calvin. The unbelievable cruelty and horror of the execution was enough to make one sick, angry, and ready to cry out to God for vengeance (Rom. 12:19).

While this Servetus event was a family topic for a brief time, I was engaged in my own struggling efforts to preach God's purpose of bringing peace and justice to this troubled earth by means of the Kingdom in the hands of his beloved Son Jesus the Christ. After all, from the second or third century down to this day, one could multiply a thousand and one times the nameless people and groups who have been dealt with in a fashion similar to Servetus. But the key point is that Michael Servetus (and a few others) put a human face on those nameless, numberless victims. Truly their blood is crying out from the ground.

Only occasionally did the Servetus affair cross my mind for the next twenty plus years. In 2002 my wife brought home from her work at a bookstore a just-published book, *Out of the Flames*, written by a husband and wife team of researchers, Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone. Reading it, I was carried back to the sixteenth century, as they say, to "the good, bad, and ugly" of the Servetus affair. It came alive to me as never before. The Goldstones' book follows through the centuries three copies of *The Restoration of Christianity*, the book Servetus wrote, the only three copies of which Calvin, the other Reformers, and the Catholic Church could not find to burn.

Was Calvin a Christian?

The question posed by this title is perhaps shocking to many people. This is possibly especially so to persons affiliated with the Presbyterian faith or related groups. The adoption of Calvin's beliefs, particularly in regard to predestination and the Trinity doctrine, which he adopted from the council of Nicaea and Augustine of Hippo (354- 430), form two of the key links in the chain of Presbyterian theology.

Before we review the information available in reliable historical records, one main term needs to be defined: the word "Christian." We might start with a 1953 Webster College Edition dictionary which states among its definitions: "1. a person professing belief in Jesus as the Christ, or in the religion based on the teachings of Jesus... 4. Having the qualities demonstrated and taught by Jesus Christ as love, kindness," etc.. Leaving the dictionary aside, how might we reason on scriptural evidence? Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And Jesus' words at Matthew 7:22: "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, lord, did we not prophesy in your name?... Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'" The verse before this reads, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father." These texts, as well as others which could be cited, clearly show that many who take the name "Christian" are not really so. The words of the Lord Jesus the Christ should cause sober thinking for those who carry the distinguished name "Christian" — or so one would think.

Most likely when one wants to write, to express an opinion (whether positive or negative), it is due to some matter which is important, and which has not been dealt with honestly. This subject is such a discussion. I recently spent some time at a Reformed [meaning Calvinist] Evangelical Church website. On this site's resources one major section is "Calvinism/Soteriology." There one finds numerous articles and books on John Calvin (1509-1564). John Calvin and Martin Luther are the best known of the reformers of the 16th century.

The eminent British historian Paul Johnson writes, "Calvin was immensely intelligent, determined, and self-confident; he had, he said, 'received from God more ample enlightenment than others.'... He pounced on Luther's rediscovery of Augustinian predestination,

and drove it to its ultimate conclusion. He began by **doubling** it: men were not only predestined to be saved, but to be damned [‘double predestination’]. Satan and the devils [demons] acted on the command of God: ‘They can neither conceive any evil nor, when they have conceived it, contrive to do it, nor having contrived it lift even a little finger to execute it, but in so far as God commands them.’ God forewills all the tiniest events or actions from all eternity, whether good or evil.”¹

On the above-referenced website, part of which marks the 500th anniversary of Calvin’s birth, many articles and books in praise of Calvin appear. Typical in this regard is a long article, “A Defense of Calvinism” by C.H. Spurgeon, who writes, “Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God...God, not man, determines who will be recipients of salvation.” There follows a long sermon on election, grace, and one’s fate; each one’s destiny is fixed even before birth in the counsels of the triune God.

Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) said, “Calvin is incomparable — stands distinguished — above others, alone most indeed above all.” Calvin’s biographer Theodore de Beza wrote that he “was the most Christian man of his generation.” In view of the foregoing worshipful praise of Calvin and Calvinism, one must wonder how much or little those persons truly know or care about the life and policies of John Calvin.

To see Calvin as he was, one must look at his rule after he returned to Geneva the second time, when he had absolute power. A heretic to the Catholic Church, Calvin did not hesitate to embrace their methods, in truth the same methods as the Inquisition: death or expulsion from his theocracy in Geneva for rejection of his doctrine. He also adopted the code of the emperor Justinian of the sixth century, which decreed the death penalty (being burned at the stake) for rejection of the Trinity doctrine. In Geneva Calvin convened ecclesiastical courts, before which his opponents were labeled “libertines.” These enemies in turn were handed over to magistrates for expulsion, and in the process were often tortured or even executed.

Perhaps the most famous case involved the Spaniard Michael Servetus, a scholar in biblical languages and a physician and surgeon. Servetus was strongly anti-Trinitarian, had been marked for death by the Catholic Inquisition at Lyons, and was tipped off by a friend of Calvin, Guillaume de Trie. Calvin provided letters to him from Servetus in order to prove his identity and his anti-Trinitarian, “heretical” position. There were many twists and turns before Servetus was arrested in Geneva. Years before this, in a letter to Farel, Calvin showed that his act of murder was

premeditated: “If he comes, if I have any authority here [Geneva], I will not suffer him to get out alive.” Michael Servetus was arrested in Geneva, on his way to Naples, Italy, where with a colony of Spaniards who shared his views, he might be safe.

For 75 days Servetus was in a cold, lice-infested prison, often with little food or water. During this time his trial went on, and at the end he was convicted of heresy under the Roman Justinian code. According to Calvin, Servetus received the news with disbelief, crying out, “Misericordia!” (mercy). He then begged for an audience with the reformer, which Calvin granted. The gist of the meeting was that Calvin wanted to restore him to God and our Savior. Calvin concluded the meeting with this statement: “I told him that I would pass over everything which concerned me personally. He should rather ask the pardon of God whom he has so basely blasphemed in his attempt to efface the three persons in one essence...But when I saw that all this did no good, I...withdrew from the heretic who was self-condemned.”

Yet as Diarmaid MacCulloch writes in *The Reformation*, for Calvin “there was a political consideration: To show mercy would be to show weakness, and that would encourage his enemies in Geneva just at a moment when they hoped to triumph. He had ensured that there had been careful international soundings among Protestants about the sentence; after all, the legality of Geneva burning someone who had merely been passing through the city was not immediately obvious [!]”²

No time was wasted. The next day, October 27 1553, a procession led by the town council, with clergymen in their gowns, merchants, mounted officers, archers, the chief of police, and a mob of the city’s lower class marched about a mile outside Geneva to a hillside at Champel. Servetus was weak, dirty, unkempt with a long beard, and surrounded by clergymen exhorting him to confess his sins. Farel was right next to him, urging him to confess his errors and be spared the flames. Servetus prayed silently in reply. Once at Champel Servetus was seated and tied to a stake with chains, with a rope tied several times around his neck. Straw and sulfur were put on his head and his book was lashed to his arm. Green wood was lit. Servetus shrieked, and at the end of the half-hour it took him to die he was heard to moan, “O Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have pity on me.”

There was an uproar in many quarters of Europe over this legalized murder. “Sebastian Castellio [1509-63] was outraged at the cruelty and intolerance of what had been done, and...he wrote trenchantly on the subject of toleration...’I have carefully examined what

¹ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 1976, p. 287.

² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, p. 238.

a heretic means, and I cannot make it mean more than this: a heretic is a man with whom you disagree.’ ‘To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine; it is to kill a man.’...Calvin continued to feel that Castellio was one of his most dangerous enemies in all Europe...and Geneva devoted much energy to unsuccessful efforts to silence him and destroy his reputation.”³

Yet dozens of churches in Switzerland had sent letters to Calvin supporting his position: Servetus must die. Does that not make them equally guilty of murder? After this tragedy Calvin wrote a defense of his actions in a work entitled *Defense of the Orthodox Faith*, published the next year.

More Fruits of Calvin’s Theology

We might skip over a few years of infighting and torture to two well-recorded events as we view the fruits of Calvin’s theology. The Thirty Years’ War unleashed every hatred and ambition. As one historian wrote, “From 1618 to 1648 Catholic fought Calvinist, Calvinist fought Lutheran, Hapsburg fought Bourbon, nationalist fought imperialist. The wreckage was unthinkable...marauding armies that killed, burned, raped, stole every bit of food in sight...In the Netherlands they had eaten rats and leather to survive. In Germany they ate each other. No statistic is more chilling than this: there were 21 million people living in Germany in 1618 at the start of the war; by 1648, the war’s end, only 13 million were left. The plague was not so efficient.”

Overlapping the horrors above for about 100 years were the burning, hanging, and drowning of witches that swept over continental Europe and the British Isles. This paralleled and intensified a hunt for heretics, according to Paul Johnson. In his *History of Christianity* Johnson devotes three pages to witch killing. I quote him here:

“The Calvinists, in fact, were much fiercer against witches than the Lutherans. On the whole, Anglican Protestants were not keen witch hunters, and during the whole period 1542-1736 many fewer than 1000 were executed (by hanging) in England, against 4,400 in Calvinist Scotland during the ninety years beginning in 1590. The worst year in England was 1645, when the Calvinist Presbyterians were in power. Where English Calvinists could, they propagated witch-hunting. Bishop Jewel, who had lived in exile in Geneva, brought the craze with him on his return in 1559 [5 years before Calvin’s death], and in the 1590s, the Calvinist William Perkins lectured on the subject at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, a Puritan institution where some of the founding fathers of New England

were educated. Wherever Calvinism became strong, witches were systematically hunted.”⁴

Johnson does not exempt the Catholic Church in those unbelievable murderous crimes. Isaac Asimov in his *Chronology of the World* writes that perhaps in all of England in over a century as many as 40,000, mostly harmless old women, were killed as witches. The Salem, Massachusetts witch episode was at the tail end of this ungodly madness.

Do not call evil good

We now return to John Calvin, this man described as so brilliant above. In his dealing with those he considered heretics, Calvin acted in accord with Old Testament principles, not New Testament ones. Thus two questions are in order:

1. Did Calvin not understand Jesus, as recorded in Luke 22 and Matthew 26 at the last supper, when he said that he ratified a new covenant with his life blood?
2. Did Calvin not read all the reasoning in Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, that the Law was a tutor leading to Christ, that the Law was nailed to the cross?

We understand that God has delegated to His Son all judgment (John 5:22, 27). Jesus has strongly spoken his view, his words as he will judge events. How are we to look at an event like the killing of Michael Servetus, who loved God, His only begotten Son, and the Bible with all his heart? Servetus sent Calvin and the judges a letter, one of many, from prison. The gist of it was as follows: Did they not know that the New Testament nowhere sanctions executing a person for holding different beliefs as a Christian practice? The only punishment for heresy was excommunication, banishment; even Arius was not executed. Could they not see the truthfulness of that letter?

While carefulness should cause a Christian to leave final judgment to the Christ, the words of Jesus give strong indication of the answer to this article’s title question. Servetus cried out, “Mercy.” Matthew 5:7 says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” John 16:2-3 reads, “A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think that he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they **have not known the Father or me.**”

In conclusion it must be said that many church people have never had this information presented to them. But once known, we would not want to be found among those whom God accused through Isaiah with the words, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil” (Isa. 5:20).

³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 2004, p. 238.

⁴ *A History of Christianity*, p. 310.

Epilogue

Here are a few more thoughts on Calvin and Servetus, and how their religion shaped their lives. Calvin, like Luther, adopted not only the Trinity, three who are God making one God, but also the predestination doctrine. This was inherited from Augustine who found it reading the book of Romans. This view that God's election determined one's eternal destiny before birth was rejected by Servetus, as it would contradict the Bible's message as a whole. Passages such as "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh 24:15) and "The spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'...and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev. 22:17), along with a multitude of further texts, demonstrate that God bestows the *invitation* to life on mankind through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Calvin's theology he never asserted that conscience should be free. Servetus wrote, "Natural righteousness is to give everyone what is his: that is, to help everybody in need, to harm nobody; to do what conscience and natural reason dictate so that whatever you want others to do to you, do to others."

The Geneva Justinian Code stipulated that an accuser must be imprisoned along with the accused until evidence to support the charges was produced. If no evidence were produced, the accuser would suffer the punishment set for the crime. In Servetus' case the penalty was death. Calvin wanted public recognition for leading the moral crusade against Servetus. He had no intention of going to jail, so he had his cook Nicolas de la Fontaine act as accuser in his place.

Voltaire devoted an entire chapter to Servetus in his *Essay on the Morals and Spirit of Nations*, and often referred to him in his correspondence and other writings. He called Servetus a "very learned doctor" and correctly credited him with the discovery of the pulmonary circulation of blood. To Voltaire, "Calvin personified all that was evil, corrupt, bullying, brutal, and narrow-minded about those who clawed their way to power in the name of God."⁵ He concluded that Servetus "had simply been murdered by Calvin...an assassination committed in ceremony."⁶

The judicial murder of Servetus caused protest from some reformers, especially in Italy. Camillo Renato denounced it in a long poem: "A fiery stake has been erected where we sought to discover a heaven." One of those who protested, under a pseudonym, was David Joris. "The true Church," he wrote, "is not the one that persecutes but the one that is persecuted." Joris died peacefully in Basel in 1556, but three years later

his secret was discovered and the Basel Protestants employed all the rites prescribed by the Inquisition for posthumous judicial procedure. Felix Platter left an eyewitness account:

"In the Square of the Franciscans stood a bier with the dug-up corpse. Faggots were heaped up in front of the...usual place of executions; there the executioner placed the coffin, and after it was smashed up the dead man could be seen, dressed in a cheap cloak and a pointed velvet cap, trimmed with scarlet. The corpse was quite well preserved and still recognizable."⁷

Were those persons Christians? ✧

Sorting Out Matthew 24

by Anthony Buzzard

A glance at the commentaries shows that there has been little agreement about what Jesus said in Matthew 24. What he intended to convey was information about events destined to happen in Judea: "I have told you in advance" (Matt. 24:25). But how well has he been understood? The radical skeptic thinks the Church made up the whole story *after* the fall of Jerusalem and put it on the lips of Jesus. This would give the impression that Jesus had made a prediction! But the prediction would not have the authority of Jesus behind it — just the enthusiastic guesses of his followers!

Some are persuaded that Jesus did not see beyond AD 70, and that the end of the age and even the second coming happened then. Others sense that there is more to the description of his "coming with power and great glory" (v. 30) than can possibly be squared with events in AD 70. But the problem is: Jesus speaks of a terrible time of distress *in connection with Jerusalem*, to be followed *immediately* (v. 29) by his appearance in glory. How can Jesus have spoken of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and of his coming *immediately* after that? One reaction has been to accuse Jesus of being mistaken about the time of his coming. Another is that Matthew wrongly edited the words of Jesus and thus misrepresented Jesus' mind.

The Second Coming Immediately After the Great Tribulation

All this is unsatisfactory and confusing. How shall we resolve the difficulties? Quite simply: by following the sequence Jesus gave and believing it! Truth is often simple, and there is a straightforward structure to Jesus' prediction of the future. It looks like this:

"When you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken about by Daniel standing in the holy place, flee to the mountains...For then shall be great

⁵ Goldstone, *Out of the Flames*, p. 258.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, p. 289.

tribulation... **Immediately after** the tribulation of those days [Mark 13:24: “In those days, after **that** tribulation”] the sun will be darkened...and **then** they will see the Son of man coming in power...And he will send forth his angels...to gather the elect” (Matt. 24:15, 16, 21, 30, 31).

Attempts to explain this material have often foundered and failed for one basic reason. The *critically important connecting time expressions have been ignored or explained away*. In this way Jesus’ message has been distorted. Vitaly important is the adverb “immediately” in verse 29. This links the great tribulation of verses 15-24 with the cosmic signs of verse 29 and the second coming which follows. These events occur in quick succession. They are not long, drawn-out processes stretching over thousands of years.

Commenting on verse 29, “immediately after,” A.H. McNeile, former professor of theology at Cambridge, says:

“This [verse] is the true sequel of v. 15, 19-22; the tribulation of v. 21 is the climax of the ‘pangs’ (v. 8) being followed *immediately* by the End. In Mark both the tribulation and the Parousia [second coming] are in ‘*those days*,’ i.e., they are successive events in the same period...The tribulation will be terrible, *but* the Parousia will follow it at once.”⁸

There is no gap between the tribulation, the heavenly signs, and the second coming. It follows, then, that the concentrated time of trouble Jesus described did not happen in AD 70. No cosmic signs followed that event immediately. Nor did Jesus come back.

Confirming Our Findings

There are two ways of confirming the simple series of events which Jesus says will happen in quick succession: tribulation, heavenly signs, second coming. Firstly, in verse 14 we read of “the end”: “This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to the nations, and then **the end** will come.” Now observe verse 15: “**Therefore** when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)...” The little Greek word translated “therefore” connects the Abomination of Desolation with “the end” referred to in verse 14.⁹ This confirms what we have already seen: that the Abomination of Desolation is a feature of the *end of the age*. Its appearance triggers the awful time of trouble

which precedes Jesus’ arrival. The Abomination of Desolation signals the approaching end of the age — the return of Jesus.

Connecting Matthew 24 with Daniel

Secondly, confirmation of Jesus’ simple scheme for the future is found in Daniel. Here we follow Jesus’ instructions carefully. The Abomination of Desolation is the one described by Daniel (Matt. 24:15). The precise expression “abomination of desolation” occurs in Daniel 11:31 with a further reference to its appearance in the holy place in Daniel 12:11. Daniel 9:27 contains a third slightly less direct reference. In all three cases (cp. also Dan. 8:13) Daniel describes a final evil ruler, King of the North (from the region of Assyria), who sets himself (or his image) up as “the abomination of desolation” and puts an end to temple sacrifices (Dan. 11:31). It is crucially important to see that in Daniel 12:11 **about three and a half years will elapse between the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation and the end of the age**. Jesus is merely elaborating (in Matt. 24) what was already laid out by Daniel:

- Abomination of Desolation (**Dan. 11:31**; Matt. 24:15);
- then tribulation for 3 1/2 years (**Dan. 12:1**, 7, 11; Matt. 24:21);
- then resurrection (**Dan. 12:2**) and Kingdom (**Dan. 12:3**)

The whole of Daniel 11:5-45 and 12 must be read as one connected story and must be kept in mind as the background to Jesus’ discourse in Matthew 24.¹⁰

Breaking the connection between Matthew 24:15 and Daniel 11:31 (12:11) is the one single factor leading to mistaken systems of prophecy. The link is established by Jesus’ own words: “Let the reader understand that I am referring to the book of Daniel” (see Matt. 24:15). Daniel 9:27 speaks also of an abominable person on the rampage (desolating) in Jerusalem for 3 1/2 years. Daniel 8:13-14 gives more information. All these verses form the background to Matthew 24:15-31 and harmonize with it.

Remember the one key to Matthew 24: The tribulation of which Jesus spoke is to be followed *immediately* by cosmic signs and the second coming. And the tribulation is to be triggered by the Abomination of Desolation already prophesied by Daniel 11:31. When these facts are held together they build up a composite picture of events destined to

⁸ *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 1915, p. 351-352.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

¹⁰ For a full-length study showing that Mark 13 (the parallel to Matt. 24) is a commentary on Daniel 11 and 12, see *Prophecy Interpreted*, by Lars Hartman, Conectiana Biblica.

happen just before Jesus arrives. When all this will happen no one knows. But when Christians see the Abomination of Desolation, and the events which follow, then they may “look up, because their redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28). The time will have arrived for the reordering of earth’s affairs under the supervision of Jesus, the Messiah. The Kingdom of God will be here. If the sighting of the Abomination was confined to AD 70 it would be no sign of the end of the age. Near to two millennia have passed since AD 70.

This Generation

Some will ask: Why did Jesus say that “this generation will not pass away before all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34)? He was clearly referring to all the great events of Matthew 24 including his arrival in power and glory. Did these events happen within 40 years of his giving the prediction? Clearly not.

The solution is that “this generation” can mean “this present evil era of human history” lasting till the second coming. Jesus said, in effect, “We will not come to the end of this present evil age until all the awful events I outlined have happened.” For the meaning “age” for “generation,” see Luke 16:8: “The sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own ‘generation’ than the sons of light.” “Generation” here means a type of society characterized by evil qualities. This sort of society will last until the Kingdom comes. For the same meaning for “generation,” as a group of people characterized by a single quality, usually wicked but sometimes righteous, see Psalm 24:1-6. (See also Proverbs 30:11-14 where translators have “kind” or “generation” for a related Hebrew word. The NET Bible note there says, “The word ‘generation’ as used in this passage refers to a class or group of people.”) “Generation” in Matthew 24:34 does not mean “race,” nor does it refer to some future period of 40 or 70 years. The erroneous predictions of the Jehovah’s Witnesses were based on that mistaken idea.¹¹

Jesus Did Not Know the Day or the Hour

Jesus himself did not know the day or the hour of his coming back to the earth (Matt. 24:36). He looked out over the temple building and knew from prophecy that there would be great trouble in Jerusalem and in the temple just before he came back. Jesus knew that

any temple on that site would have to be removed in order to make way for the building of a millennial temple when he came back to rule the world in the Kingdom. Jesus would not necessarily have known whether the temple then standing (in AD 30) was the one which would suffer trouble just before his return.

As it turned out, that temple was destroyed and no return of Jesus occurred “immediately after.” But Jesus saw a temple and an abomination of the future, close to his second coming. *Immediately after* the tribulation connected with the temple he would return (Matt. 24:29). It is reasonable to believe that a temple or sanctuary will yet be built in Jerusalem. That temple will finally give way to the new millennial temple which Jesus will build when he comes to rule as king with the saints (Rev. 20:1-6). The presence of the Abomination of Desolation in a temple remains the great sign of the end of the age and the coming of Jesus. But before that the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world, “and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). ✧

Further Proof of Two Future Resurrections

Some today are erroneously promoting what they call a “single resurrection” view of the future, which is just another way of saying amillennialism. This contradicts Jesus’ words in Revelation 20, as we have shown in previous editions of *Focus on the Kingdom*, but it also contradicts the whole New Testament, for these 8 reasons:

1. Generally, when the NT speaks of the resurrection of Jesus or of Christians (the first resurrection of Rev. 20:4-5), it uses a particular phrase: “**from** the dead” (*ek nekron*) — literally “**out from among** the dead.” This implies the resurrection of some, the righteous, while others are left dead until the second resurrection.

As George Peters says, “We have the simple phrase *anastasis nekron* or resurrection of dead ones (Acts 17:32; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:12, 21; Heb. 6:2)... Then we have a more particular resurrection as follows: *anastasis ek nekron* or resurrection *out of* or *from among* dead ones (1 Pet. 1:3; Luke 20:35; Acts 4:2).”¹²

• Luke 20:35: “those who are considered worthy to **attain** to that future age and the resurrection **from the dead.**”

headed toward eschatological judgment. In the context of the discourse it refers to that type of consummately evil people who deceive and persecute the disciples until the time of the parousia, when the true followers of Jesus are vindicated and ‘this generation’ passes away in judgment.”

¹² *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Vol. 2, p. 299.

¹¹ For an excellent study of the meaning of “generation,” see Neil Nelson, “‘This Generation’ in Matt. 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Sep. 1995, pp. 369-385. He writes, “‘this generation’ in Matt. 24:34 refers to a kind of people characterized by Matthew as unbelieving and

- Acts 4:2: “proclaiming the resurrection **from the dead** through Jesus.”

2. Philippians 3:11: Paul’s goal is “to **attain** to the **out-resurrection** [*ex-anastasis*] **from among the dead.**” Note that one would not strive to “attain” to the second resurrection when everyone is raised, whether they like it or not!

3. Luke 14:14: “You will be rewarded at **the resurrection of the righteous.**” That is the *first* resurrection.

4. In John 5:28-29 there are *two* resurrections — a “resurrection of life” and “a resurrection of judgment.”

5. In 1 Corinthians 6:14 “he will also raise us up,” literally “**out-raise** or **preeminently raise**” (Peters, p. 299).

6. 1 Corinthians 15:23: *Christians* are raised at Jesus’ coming, not everyone.

7. Daniel 12:2 says, “**Many** of those who are sleeping,” not *all* the dead. All the dead are not raised at one time.

8. The phrase “the rest of the dead” (Rev. 20:5) makes absolutely no sense if there is just one future resurrection of *all the dead*, as some are claiming. If you’ve eaten “all the pie” there is no “the rest of the pie”!

To summarize: In the NT, “the predominant view is that of a double resurrection (John 5:29: resurrection of life/of judgment)...Jewish tradition is followed and the resurrection to life is seen as a prior act in time at the beginning of the millennium.”¹³ ✧

“Society is divided into two antithetical classes: those who hear and receive the word of the Kingdom and those who either do not know it or reject it. Furthermore, it is Satan’s purpose where he can to snatch away the word of the Kingdom from hearts that are too hard to receive it (Mk. 4:15).” *See also Luke 8:12.*

George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 1993, p. 48.

Comments

- “I was going through my Bible library and came across your small booklet, *Who is Jesus?* Wow, what a dynamic and powerful research work you did on Jesus’ identity! I’ll be handing some of these out to my believer friends shortly. I know through the years you have had to stand against the religiosity and erroneous teachings of the mainstream denominations. We both know that the enemy hides in the Christianized churches throughout the world, especially in the major denominations. Sadly today the Roman Catholic Church leads the way for erroneous teaching, and mainstream Protestantism follows right behind it. Thank you for your example of strength and godly character through the years and your willingness to swim against the current of ‘religiosity.’ You have blessed **MANY** across the world.” — *Virginia*

- “Thank you for your prayer on behalf of our God’s work and perseverance. It is my sincere prayer that things shall go well in the meetings that you have scheduled out there. Also, it was good to learn that you have faithful brethren out there who are good prayer partners — who bolster you in your service to the God and Father of the lord Jesus, and pray for other servants of the Lord as well. Be assured of our prayers for you there and during your various meetings. I’m very encouraged by your selfless efforts to share the good news of the Kingdom of God, when the only hope and way of salvation is found in Him. I heavily use the book *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus* to lend to borrowers who hold the Dispensationalist fallacies.” — *Philippines*

- “I am confident from reading *Focus on the Kingdom* that I am speaking with a fellow believer of the Gospel of the Kingdom. I have sought biblical Truth for decades now, wandering in and out of various churches/denominations, experiencing different levels of confidence in what was presented, what I heard and saw. I spent some time in Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God. However, I became seriously uncomfortable when I realized he had been elevated to a height I could not accept. I won’t detail the road that led me finally to Anthony Buzzard’s *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. I think I now have all of his books. Greg Deuble’s *They Never Told Me This in Church!* has had quite an effect on my life.” — *Virginia*

- “I am currently reading *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah* and agree wholeheartedly with you that “the New Testament be reattached to its Old Testament background...and that Jesus be understood as the Messiah of Israel and the world and be studied in the light of his impassioned proclamation of a new political order on earth which he will supervise as king.”

¹³ “Resurrection,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 371.