

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## End-Times Protection?

by Terry Anderson, Minnesota

I was in the Worldwide Church of God in the late 60's and early 70's. We had many other doctrines wrong, but one belief we held correctly was related to the "end times": we rejected the doctrine of the *pre-tribulation* rapture of the Church. The WWCg also taught the concept of a "Place of Safety" during the future Great Tribulation. Though it was not written in stone, the idea of fleeing to a particular destination to await Jesus' return was well entrenched in the church's thinking. And the place most often cited to avoid the Great Tribulation was Petra, a rock fortress in modern-day Jordan. I don't remember giving a lot of credence to the idea, but nevertheless continued my studies on the subject. So what do the Scriptures say about "end-times" Christians and protection? After all, I think it is quite natural to desire **not having to experience the future Great Tribulation.**

Let's begin with Luke 21:34. Jesus said, "Watch out for yourselves that you do not get preoccupied with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, or that day will catch you suddenly like a trap. For that day will come on everyone who lives on the face of the whole earth. **But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that must happen, and to stand before the Son of Man.**"

Here we are introduced, by Jesus, to the possibility that some will escape the Great Tribulation. But there are definitely qualifications, including living a Christian lifestyle in accordance with Messiah's teachings on morality and conduct. Jesus was looking into the future and seeing the troubles that would impact life throughout the world at that future "end-time" period. And for those who live in that time, hope is extended to them in the form of escape.

Isaiah 26:20-21 is one of my favorite "protection" Scriptures. The setting of the chapter, and the following chapter 27, indicates that it is about the end times. God says, "Come, My people, enter your inner rooms, and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the wrath is past. For look, the Lord is coming forth out of His place to punish the sin of the those who live on the earth. The earth will display the blood shed on it, it will no longer cover up its slain." In the following chapter 27, verse 12 describes a time when Egypt and Assyria will come to worship the Lord,

as we read also in Zechariah 14, definitely pointing to the Millennium.

Revelation 3:7-11 might very well be the most encouraging and hopeful prophecy in the New Testament referring to the time just prior to Messiah's return. There can be no doubt that John is depicting the Church in the final days just prior to the Great Tribulation. Beginning in verse 7, as Jesus was telling John what to write about the churches he says, "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write this: 'The words of the one who is holy and true, who has the **key of David**, who opens and no one can shut, and who shuts and no one can open.'" Back in 2006 I wrote an article with that title ("Key of David") for *Focus on the Kingdom*. Now, 18 years later, the world as we knew it then seems tame compared to what we are experiencing today.

Understanding what the "key of David" means is critical to understanding the prophecy. When you know the story of David, and his relationship with God, then you can begin to understand why David has or is the **key**. It has to do with the Davidic Covenant about the Messiah and promised King who is to sit on David's throne. And it has to do with David's character and heart. I don't know of a biblical character amongst God's righteous prophets and saints who sinned more grievously than King David. In the case of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite he broke at least 4 of the 10 Commandments. When Nathan the prophet confronted David (2 Sam. 12) with the parable of the rich man and the poor man's lamb, David at once understood and repented deeply and sincerely. Nevertheless, he paid an enormous price in his remaining years as king over Israel. And there are many Scriptures which speak of David's relationship with God from that point on and the promise that David would have a descendant, the Messiah, to sit on his throne to rule over a reconstituted Israel (Acts 13:22; 1 Sam. 13:14; Jer. 33:17; Ps. 32; Luke 1:32). This is the heart of the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

I'm certain that you are all familiar with Psalm 110 and its repeated use in the New Testament. Anthony has often instructed us on the use and meaning of *Adonai* and *adoni* as defining the crucial difference between the Lord God and the human lord Messiah. This is the preeminent Messianic and royal Scripture pointing us to a time when Jesus, the seed of David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:31), would sit on the throne of David ruling the world, not just Israel. I'm fairly certain that

this knowledge is the **key of David**. It is David's special place in history (along with Abraham) to be known as the ancestral "father" of Jesus.

Therefore, Jesus is the human descendant of King David, not preexistent (no one can be older than his ancestor!), not Deity, but a perfect human, sinless and able to be the perfect High Priest to mankind (1 Tim 2:5). This understanding unlocks the secrets (mysteries) of the Kingdom as referred to in Matthew 13:11 and many other places. The 13th chapter of Matthew begins with the "parable of the sower" and goes on to tell other parables about the Kingdom of Heaven/God. Without this knowledge of the Kingdom, the promises to Abraham and David are meaningless.

Getting back to the message to the Church of Philadelphia, we find a promise in 3:10: "**Because you have kept my command to persevere**, I will keep you from the time of testing which is about to come on the whole world, to test those who live on the earth." Once again, as in Isaiah 26, there is a promise of protection to those Christians who fit the requirements. And 3:8 says "**I know that you have only a little power, and yet you have obeyed my Gospel-word and have not denied my name.**" The Christian organizations which preach the Gospel/word about the Kingdom, as Jesus commanded, are few in number and indeed have little power. And God's "name" means everything that He stands for, what He has prepared for mankind through Messiah Jesus. Those who are seeking first the Kingdom (Matt. 6:33) will understand and be prepared for the days prior to the return of Jesus.

In summary, any Christian who understands even a modicum of end-time prophecies understands that there will be a period of unprecedented tribulation and suffering (Matt. 24:21). It is natural that we would desire to escape that trial. Many in the Christian community are relying on the "pre-tribulation rapture" to enable them to escape. However, this belief in a "catching away" *before* the Great Tribulation is nowhere supported in Scripture. Again, referring to Isaiah 26, those who qualify will be protected, in some fashion, right here on the planet that Jesus will return to and rule over with a "rod of iron" (Ps. 2; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:1-6). The Church of Philadelphia, the Church of Love, has been given this special promise.

Never in history have we been able to "watch" (observe) as we can now. Technology has brought us instant awareness of events unfolding in every area of the planet. We in the United States have been witness to an unprecedented deterioration of morals, descending into lawlessness that would have been unthinkable 50 years ago. Let us all pray that we may be accounted worthy to be a part of that Philadelphian Church which is promised protection. ✧

## Christian Duties and Graces to Be Observed and Cultivated after Baptism

by Wiley Jones

from *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (1879)

*"Be very diligent to add to your faith moral excellence; to moral excellence, add knowledge; to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love" (2 Peter 1:5-7).*

To suppose that any man can be saved merely by a general correctness of moral character without any reference to his faith would be a dreadful mistake. The words "add to your faith" prove that the faith must *first* be had as an essential foundation or starting point; and that all the shining list of Christian virtues are things to be *added* to it. Correct faith is as needful as correct conduct. (Remember what an excellent man Cornelius was; yet he still had to hear words of doctrine and be baptized, in order to be saved: Acts 10:2; 11:14.) The exhortation is addressed to those who have obtained the same precious faith as the Apostles (2 Pet. 1:1). Having believed the Gospel of the Kingdom, as preached by the Apostles, and having been baptized, they are now, as the commission requires, exhorted to the duties which follow baptism (Matt. 28:19).

These two features of the commission — giving the one kind of instruction before and the other after baptism — the Apostles constantly observed. Thus Peter begins and ends this list of virtues by urging them upon those who had been baptized. And Paul desired Titus to "emphasize constantly that those who have believed God would be careful to devote themselves to good works" (Titus 3:8). James too has warned his brethren that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). And thus the beloved disciple John, after assisting in planting many churches, when he found himself too old to travel and visit them any longer, wrote to them as to his own dear children, saying, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth" (3 John 4). No wonder it gave John so much joy to hear this, for our labor in preaching the Gospel is, to a great extent, lost unless the converts, after baptism, continue to "walk in the truth." We naturally feel an interest in the success and prosperity of any undertaking on which we have spent much labor and care.

Congregations which have displayed great and worthy zeal to have the Gospel of the Kingdom preached, and sinners converted, should show a similar zeal to build up and keep those converts in their most

holy faith, continuously exhorting them to love and to good works; the older brothers and sisters especially taking care to live so as to set holy examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:3; Titus 2:7).

The Master's words, "What are you doing more than anyone else?" (Matt. 5:47) indicate that he requires Christians to be "a peculiar people zealous for good works." They are to be the conserving and illuminating element of society — the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13, 14, 47). "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). He who hears and does Jesus' words is like a wise man who built his house on a rock; like good ground that produces a hundred times as much; like a fruitful branch of a good vine (Matt. 7:24 ; Lu. 8:35; John 14:2, 6). But he who does not is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; like thorny ground that chokes the seed; like a withered branch that is gathered and burned. Therefore "be doers of the word, and not only hearers" (James 1:22). When the seven graces here encouraged, and all their kindred virtues are possessed in due proportion, they give to the Christian a beautiful and symmetrical character.

**1. Virtue, moral excellence or fortitude.** The Gospel found the Gentiles fearfully sunk in vice, as the first chapter of Romans proves. Nor were the Jews, under Pharisaic teaching, free from rebuke in this respect. But Christians, to whom Peter was writing, had been "called to glory and excellence" and had "purified themselves by obeying the truth" (2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:22). They were tenderly exhorted, "Since we have these promises, dearly beloved, let us purify ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

If this word *arete* is translated "fortitude," as some say, it then means that we must not only believe the Gospel of the Kingdom, but have the courage to confess it before men; for if ashamed of the Savior's words (summarized by "the good news of the Kingdom," Luke 8:1), he will be ashamed of us when he comes in glory (Luke 9:26). We should be "valiant for the truth" (Jer. 9:3), for "the fearful" are classed among the unbelieving and abominable who will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). This condemned fear is the fear of *man*, which "brings a snare," not the fear of the Lord, for *that* "is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 23:25; Ps. 110:10). Who would not rather burn at the stake for righteousness than in the lake of fire for sin? The fear of man causes persons not only to neglect religious duties, through dread of hurting their fortunes or of making enemies, but even to abandon the faith. Too fond of popularity or too timid, they always drift with the current, reminding one of the saying that *dead* fish float down

the stream. They cannot "dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, dare to have a purpose firm and dare to make it known." Daniel would not be restrained from worshipping the true God by the dread of the lion's den; nor would his three companions be constrained to idolatry by the terrors of a fiery furnace. Of holy fortitude, duly combined with and tempered by all the other graces, the blessed Savior's life on earth is a perfect illustration (1 Pet. 2:21).

**2. Knowledge.** Some "being alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance" will be "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Eph. 4:18; Hos. 4:6). This does not mean worldly "science," but a knowledge of the Scriptures, enabling us to understand for ourselves and to teach others "what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Such knowledge enables its possessor to give a right direction to his fortitude — when he strives, it is "to enter through the narrow gate"; when he contends, it is "for the faith once delivered to the saints"; when he provokes, it is "to love and to good works." He learns to rightly expound the word of truth, comparing Scripture with Scripture. He avoids "foolish chatter, and fighting about words, which is in no way beneficial but only ruins the listeners." He is not carried about by every wind of doctrine, nor persuaded into the belief of error by smooth words and fair speeches, or the high-sounding titles and arrogant pretensions of men. And with all this he is not haughty nor puffed up against those brethren who have not made the same attainments as himself, because any such disposition is restrained by his brotherly kindness, which he is also careful to cultivate.

**3. Temperance or self-control.** The Greek word implies moderation, self-control. There are many kinds of intemperance. "Every competitor must exercise self-control in *all* things" (1 Cor. 9:25). Now if the self-denial, abstemiousness, and severe exercises of the ancient contestants in public games were cheerfully endured in order to obtain a corruptible crown, the failure to obtain which would only be a temporary disgrace, how much more cheerfully ought we to endure all things in order to obtain an incorruptible crown, the failure to obtain which will bring "shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). Paul's contest was not a beating of air, for in himself he found a more substantial antagonist — "I discipline my body and bring it in submission." We must put to death evil propensities, or they will be likely to put us to death.

Many, to all their faith, fortitude, and knowledge have neglected to add temperance; and so at last have sunk to a drunkard's grave. Oh, the inexpressible wretchedness produced by that one vice! The heart-rending scenes and blighted home circles which

drunkenness has caused are enough to make it universally hated as a foe to the human race. It is well-known that it blunts the moral sensibilities, dulls the intellect, empties the purse, ruins the health, and at last excludes its victim from the joys of a blissful eternity; for no drunkard “will inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:10)...

**4. Patience, perseverance or endurance.** “By your endurance you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:19). “For you need endurance so that, after you have done the will of God, you will receive the promise. For in a little while, he who is coming will come” (Heb. 10:36-37). “Let endurance perfect its work” (James 1:4). “Do not get upset; it leads only to evildoing” (Ps. 37:8). “The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit is of the highest value in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:4). “You have heard of the perseverance of Job” (James 5:11). It ought to be a sufficient encouragement to know that the Lord has said, “I will never leave you, nor will I abandon you” (Heb. 13:5).

*In trials and troubles 'tis heaven's design  
Our dross to consume, our gold to refine.*

**5. Godliness.** This grace throws a sacred luster over the entire conduct, and “is valuable in every way, because it holds promise for the present life and for the Life to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Piety and devotion are some of its meanings. It leads us to take delight in frequent prayer. The wording of the Lord’s prayer indicates that it is to be used, not yearly, monthly, or weekly, but daily: “Give us this day our daily bread.” When the Savior said that men should “pray always and not give up,” he gave two illustrations, one teaching perseverance and the other humility in prayer (Luke 18:1-14). We should not be content with mere prayerful thoughts at irregular times, but should observe both the spirit and posture of prayer, by at least once every day kneeling and offering up, through Christ, our thanks and supplications to our Heavenly Father. That kneeling is the most usual posture is evident from the fact that Paul uses the expression, “I bow my knees” as but another way of saying, “I pray” (Eph. 3:14). Thus Peter, Paul, Daniel, Solomon, and even the Redeemer himself used to pray (Acts 9:40; 21:5; Dan. 6:10; 2 Chron. 6:13; Luke 22:41). David and Daniel prayed “three times a day” (Dan. 6:10; Ps. 55:17).

Godliness prompts us to a regular attendance at the Lord’s supper, to commemorate with ever-grateful hearts the sufferings which he endured for our sakes. This virtue kindles in us a fervent zeal for the advancement of religion and the prosperity of the cause of Christ; weaning us from worldliness and placing our affections on holy things; leading us to “hate what is evil and cling to what is good” (Rom. 12:9). It implies

also a performance of the duties we owe to our fellow creatures.

**6. Brotherly kindness or mutual affection** (Greek, *philadelphia*). In other passages this word is translated “brotherly love,” or “love of the brethren.” Love of the same kind is common to men and animals. Even “birds of a feather flock together.” Both in sound and sense we can trace a relationship between “kin,” “kind,” and “kindness.” It is human to be humane. Love of the brethren is an evidence of our discipleship. “This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). It is an evidence that we have entered the Christian life. “We know that we have passed over from death to life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death” It is an evidence that we love God. “Whoever has this world’s material possessions and sees his brother or sister in need, and shuts off any compassion for him, how can God’s love live in such a person? (1 John 3:14, 17). “If he does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

It is the Savior’s new commandment: “A new commandment I give to you: love one another” (John 13:34). It prompts us to “bear one another’s burdens and in this way fulfill the law of Messiah” (Gal. 6:2). No need of “benevolent societies” for the members of a congregation where brotherly love abounds. They need not go to those worldly institutions as though the church of Christ were not sufficient for the temporal as well as the eternal needs of man. Loving brethren will speak often to another (Mal. 3:16), and will not be likely to forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10:25). “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1). “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1).

**7. Charity, or rather “love”**... Thus Jesus exhorts us to love not our brethren *only* (Matt. 5:46), but, as Paul expresses it, to “increase and abound in love for one another, and toward *all* people” (1 Thes. 3:12). This is not the mere giving of alms, for a person may give all his goods to feed the poor, and “have not love”; in which case his giving “profits nothing.” Nor is it a blindness to the errors and false doctrines of others, for love “does not rejoice in *evil*, but rejoices in *the truth*” (1 Cor. 13:3, 6). The two duties — love and earnestly contending for the faith — would not be commanded to us if they were incompatible and contrary to one another. None have been more perfect examples of *true* love than Christ and his Apostles, and yet they died contending against errors of doctrine and practice. Thousands of the early Christians were slain for their unflinching advocacy of the true faith, but if they had

worn the modern garb of a false “love” might they not have compromised with their opponents, and thus lived as completely at peace with them as the greatest moral coward or popularity seeker of the nineteenth century?

All classes of “errorists” might be fellowshipped by sacrificing the truths and duties which the Bible teaches; but this, instead of resembling Christ and his Apostles, would resemble Pilate and Herod, who made friends with one another in condemning Christ. As long as the word of God is held in proper value and esteem, there *must* be disputes and divisions among men (Matt. 10:34). What remedy is there for it in the present condition of the world, which is not infinitely worse than the disease? A total *indifference* about all the teachings of the Bible would indeed end all disputes about it; but that indifference would be punished by the consuming wrath of God in the day of judgment.

It is a loving action to warn one who is in danger, even if you get no thanks for it. The Psalmist calls the reproof of the righteous *love* and a *choice oil* (Ps. 141:5) and Solomon says, “Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover to the ear of the one who listens” (Prov. 25:12). We must avoid casting pearls before swine, however (Matt. 7:6). After the Jews in a certain place had heard and *rejected* the word, Paul said, “It was necessary that God’s Gospel be spoken to you first. But now that you are rejecting it and judging yourselves unworthy of the Life of the Age to Come, we are turning to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:45-46). And so after one has manifested hatred and contempt for “the word of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:19), let us turn to others, in hopes of finding better and more hospitable soil for that precious word.

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor” (Rom. 13:10). Hence the Christian refuses to arm himself with carnal weapons and slay his fellow man upon the battlefield. The disciples were reprov'd for quoting an instance under a *former* dispensation to justify *them* in slaying their enemies (Luke 9:54-55). Every Christian should be imbued with the same disposition as his Master who did “not come to destroy people’s lives but to save them.” “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5; 1 John 2:6; 2 Tim. 2:24). “Give to Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” refers to *taxes* (Matt. 22:21). The money bore the image of Caesar and was to be rendered to him; but the Christian bears the

image of God, has been “*bought* with a price,” and his body belongs to God by an infinitely better right than the money to Caesar; hence he is to glorify God in his body, and to render his body, blood, and life to God alone (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1).

Love is beautifully analyzed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. It is the crowning of Christian virtues, and is the only acceptable principle of obedience, whether under the law or the gospel. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37, 40).

I have scarcely given more than a few seed-thoughts on the duties and graces of the Christian life. If we believe and advocate the gospel, and illustrate it in our lives, we will fully accomplish our mission,<sup>1</sup> for others beholding our good works will glorify our Heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16), we will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. 2:15), and finally obtain “entry into the Kingdom in the age to come of our lord and savior Jesus the Messiah.” O glorious destiny! O blissful fruition of all our hopes and labors! Therefore, brothers and sisters, “keep yourselves in the love of God, expectantly awaiting the mercy of our lord Jesus Messiah which brings the life of the age to come” (Jude 21). “Be firm, immovable, always abounding in the lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the lord is not for nothing” (1 Cor. 15:58). ✧

“Twelve thrones will be prepared for the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. It seems that they will be intimately associated with Christ in the government of his kingdom; and will eat and drink at his table. They may constitute a part of his wise cabinet.

“Is this too literal for you? Then listen to the plain words of the Savior. Speaking to his Apostles, he says, ‘When the Son of Man will sit on the throne of his glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, governing the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Matt. 19:28). Here it is clearly proved that the Apostles will sit on twelve literal thrones, as it is that Christ will actually sit on the throne of his glory. Both, doubtless, will be most literally and gloriously fulfilled.”

Joseph Marsh, *The Age to Come*, 1851

<sup>1</sup> Each dispensation, systematically, has had its *beginning* and *foundation* laid in miracles: the Patriarchal in the miracles of creation and of Eden; the Mosaic in the miracles of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan; and the present dispensation in the miracles of Christ and his apostles. Prophets and apostles worked miracles to confirm their words as a part of the volume of revelation; but when the Bible became a *completed* book, to which we dare not

add (Rev. 22:18), miracles were discontinued, as the scaffolding used in constructing a building is taken down when the building is finished. Hence in *this* part of the Gospel dispensation men are not to claim apostolic powers. The prediction in Mark 16:17-18 was fulfilled in the apostolic age and ministry. Mark actually records its fulfillment in v. 20: “The Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the accompanying signs.”

## The Extraordinary Transition from One “Orthodoxy” to Another

Compiled by Anthony Buzzard

“The millennial reign on earth does not rest on an isolated passage of the Apocalypse, but all Old Testament prophecy goes on the same view (cf. Isa. 4:3; 11:9; 35:8)” (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown *Critical and Exegetical Commentary, Revelation*, Vol. 6, p. 722).

“It is admitted on all sides that these [millenarian] views were, if not general, at least very common in the ancient church” (“Millennium,” *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1919, p. 116).

“During the first hundred years of Christian history...millenarianism was commonly taught and accepted within the church” (*New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, 1966).

“Millenarianism had been, in the earliest days, almost the official political theory of the Church” (Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 1976, p. 255).

“Bishop Papias of Hierapolis [c. 60-130 AD], a disciple of St. John, appeared as an advocate of millenarianism. He claimed to have received his doctrine from contemporaries of the Apostles, and Irenaeus narrates that other ‘Presbyteri,’ who had seen and heard the disciple John, learned from him the belief in millenarianism as part of the Lord's doctrine” (“Millennium and Millenarianism,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*).

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 AD) was a millennialist who was “in perfect agreement with a great number of his brothers” and considered himself a “guardian of the more orthodox doctrine.” Similarly, for Irenaeus (c. 130-202 AD) “millennialism is part of the traditional teaching...necessary if one wanted to explain the Scriptures correctly” (*Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, Vol. 10. columns 1761-2).

### How the Shift Occurred:

“The third century, however, saw the decline of millenarianism...Already in Rome, the priest Caius shows himself to be its determined adversary: in vain does Saint Hippolytus...expound in long detail the millenarian thesis...he does not succeed, it seems, in

convincing his adversary, who absolutely denied the Apocalypse [the book of Revelation] and the Gospel of Saint John in order to overcome millenarianism...

Later “Dionysius wrote...a formal refutation of millenarianism, and in order to prevent [his opponents] from relying on the Apocalypse of Saint John, did not hesitate to declare that the book could not be authentic[!]” (*Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*).

“The influence of Greek thought upon Christian theology undermined the millenarian world view...In the theology of the great 3<sup>rd</sup> century Alexandrian Christian thinker Origen, the focus was not upon the manifestation of the kingdom within this world but within the soul of the believer, a significant shift of interest away from the historical toward the metaphysical, or the spiritual” (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, 1998, p. 406).

“The most powerful adversary of millenarianism was Origen of Alexandria [c. 185-253 AD]. In view of the Neo-Platonism on which his doctrines were founded and of his spiritual-allegorical method of explaining the Holy Scripture, he could not side with the millenarians” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*)

Augustine (354-430 AD): “His mind was the crucible in which the religion of the New Testament was most completely fused with the Platonic tradition of Greek philosophy” (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, p. 397).

“Augustine finally held to the conviction that there will be no millennium...He gives us an allegorical explanation of chapter 20 of the Apocalypse. The first resurrection, of which this chapter treats, he tells us, refers to the spiritual rebirth in baptism... This explanation of the illustrious Doctor was adopted by successive Western theologians, and millenarianism in its earlier shape no longer received support” (“Millennium and Millenarianism,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*).

“Augustine’s allegorical millennialism became the official doctrine of the church, and apocalypticism [i.e., belief in the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth] went underground...The Protestant Reformers of the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican traditions...remained firmly attached to the views of Augustine” (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, p. 407).✧

## The Unifying Theme of the Bible: The Kingdom

“The concept of the Kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible. Not only does it loom large in the teachings of Jesus; it is to be found, in one form or another, through the length and breadth of the Bible — at least if we may view it through the eyes of the New Testament faith — from Abraham, who set out to seek ‘the city...whose builder and maker is God’ (Heb. 11:10; cf. Gen. 12:1ff.), until the New Testament closes with ‘the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God’ (Rev. 21:2). To grasp what is meant by the Kingdom of God is to come very close to the heart of the Bible’s gospel of salvation...

“There exists even among Christians a widespread biblical illiteracy...Indeed, one might go so far as to say that Protestantism will not forever survive if steps cannot be taken to remedy it...Uprooted from the Bible we have no place to stand; we cannot, in fact, be Protestant. It is therefore no light thing that the Bible should have become so strange a book to the average churchgoer and to many a minister as well...

“But surely many a reader will complain that the Bible is a most confusing book of very unequal interest, so varied in content that he is unable to follow a line through it...But is there in the Bible some unifying theme which might serve to draw its diverse part together into a complete whole?...

“There runs through [the Bible] a unifying theme which is not artificially imposed. It is a theme of redemption, of salvation; and it is caught up particularly in those concepts which revolve about the idea of a people of God, called to live under his rule, and the concomitant hope of the coming Kingdom of God. (This insight is of course not original.) This is a note which is present in Israel’s faith from the earliest times onward, and which is to be found, in one way or another, in virtually every part of the Old Testament. It also unbreakably links Old Testament to New. For both have to do with the Kingdom of God, and the same God speaks in both.”

John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 7- 11

## Comments

• “Thank you again for another edition of the magazine. Today I read the article on a pre-tribulation rapture (Sept.), something that is an error. You firmly believe and teach about a post-tribulation rapture. I remember twice being at church and a pastor saying that the rapture might happen at the time of the service. Since at the time I did not know that the rapture would take place at the last trumpet, I was in confusion about

that. Eventually I did learn that the pre-tribulation rapture is false.” — *Email*

• “We are a small group of true believers according to the Scriptures and therefore believe in the only true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of Jesus and our God and Father as His newborn children according to the Scriptures. We believe in His Son of Man and Messiah Jesus, our Lord, whom God has made King in His future kingdom on earth and us His helpers in the establishment and administration of the kingdom. We recently published our own website, which can be read in various languages (including English): [www.jesus-der-messias.de](http://www.jesus-der-messias.de) Germany is difficult terrain when it comes to faith. The church world with high membership numbers confidently calls itself ‘Christianity,’ but according to the Scriptures they are pagans and idolaters. We have turned our backs on the churches we belonged to since birth (left them) and have found each other and joined together in the knowledge of the truth. On our path of study we have also benefited from some articles on the 21st Century Reformation website ([21stcr.org](http://21stcr.org)) and especially from articles published by you and other authors on your website. The Scripture ‘Test everything and keep what is good’ has brought fruit in so many different ways. We also get your monthly newsletter. For this we thank our heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ!” — *Germany*

• “My family and I believe God is one God, not a Trinity. We used to attend Grace Communion International, formerly known as the Worldwide Church of God. The church became very much focused on the Trinity which we knew was a false teaching and we could not support a church that didn’t follow what the Bible was teaching, amongst other things that we felt weren’t biblically based. We very much enjoy as a family watching Restoration Fellowship and Focus on the Kingdom on YouTube; we enjoy Carlos’ debates. We’ve also enjoyed listening to Dan Gill.” — *England*

• “I was a Trinitarian for 24 years and I didn’t know any better. In the last year I struggled because I learned that Jesus is the Messiah and Saviour and he has a God. To make a long story short, I woke up one morning and said out loud, ‘I don’t believe in the Trinity any more’ and thought I’m dead, but I typed in ‘what to do when you don’t believe in the Trinity any more?’ On YouTube I learned about biblical unitarians and I repented of course for believing in the Trinity. Anthony Buzzard and all the brothers and sisters are like family now. I just mentioned to my friends that I’m not Trinitarian any more and they ghosted me. But you learn to be grateful and have compassion on your family and friends. Trinitarians need prayers and so does everyone else!” — *YouTube*