

Eschatology-
The Study of Last Things



From sermons preached by
W. E. Best

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Eschatology—The Study of Last Things

W.E. Best

Section One

The promise of the land to Israel is literal. It has been said, “A literal promise spiritualized is exegetical fraud.” The word “literal” means in accordance with the primary or strict meaning of a word or words, not figurative or metaphorical. The word “spiritualized” means to invest with a spiritual meaning or to make spiritual. The word “exegetical” means a critical interpretation. For example, a person cannot take the literal nation of Israel that was chosen by God (Deut. 7:6) and spiritualize the nation to mean the assembly of the New Testament that Jesus Christ is building (Matt. 16:18). That would be a fraudulent interpretation of the Scriptures. Such interpretation of either the nation of Israel or the assembly of Christ deserves condemnation. Distinction must be made between the choice of a nation and the choice of some in that nation to salvation by grace and redemption (Rom. 9:1-8).

Once chosen always chosen is the teaching of Scripture. God never retracts either His acts of grace in salvation or choices for other purposes. Whatever God does either in the realm of salvation by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ or in the realm of men and nations, His choices are independent of human merit or faithfulness. Scripture teaches both Israel’s election and temporary rejection, but the temporary rejection of God’s promise to Israel is not final. Nothing can prevent the accomplishment of God’s purpose for Israel (Rom. 11:1-32). God will not permanently reject His people or nation that He has chosen because He permanently promised in writing what He will do: “and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it has been written [perfect passive indicative of *grapho*]...” (Rom. 11:26—translation).

Paul dealt with some important issues concerning the nation of Israel in Romans 11. (1) Israel’s election is permanent because God’s purpose is unalterable: “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:28, 29 NASB). God does not cast away His people whom He foreknew (aorist active indicative of *proginosko*, to know or choose beforehand) (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; I Pet. 1:20; II Pet. 3:17; Acts 26:5). (2) Israel’s casting aside (*apobole*, noun nominative case feminine gender singular number—is derived from the verb *apoballo*, to cast aside) was temporary. There are mysteries, hidden things, revealed in the course of the history of salvation (Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 3:4-6; Col. 1:26). Both national

(II Cor. 3:14) and temporary (Rom. 11:25) blindness were predicted (Is. 29:10-14). (3) Blessings came through Israel's transgression, but greater blessings will come through her restoration. God will graft them in again: "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:23 NASB). This verse is not a just possibility because verse 24 is an actuality: "For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Rom. 11:24 NASB). This expectation is grounded on God's election and faithfulness (Rom. 11:25-28).

Paul had strong affection for unbelieving Jews: "BRETHREN, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [Israel—Rom. 9:27, 31] is for their salvation" (Rom. 10:1 NASB). However, he regarded the "Israel of God" with affection of a particular kind because it is distinguished from that which is ordinary. It is extraordinary because it involves the grace of the sovereign God. The apostle said to the Galatians, "Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by the rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen" (Gal. 6:12-18 NASB).

The apostle Paul made a distinction between national Israel and spiritual Israel within national Israel in Romans 9:1-9. Since Christ died for the elect, Paul endured much hardship on account of them, whether Jews or Gentiles. Every Christian reveals the depth of his experience; therefore, he is not an instrument who finds his satisfaction in himself. On the other hand, Paul did not want to be accursed from Christ for the sake of his brethren. The Greek word for "I could wish" in Romans 9:3 is an imperfect middle indicative of the verb *euchomai*, which means to pray or desire. His desiring that began in the past also stopped in the past. The imperfect tense draws a picture of linear action, which began and stopped. Therefore, Paul's desiring that began in the past also stopped in the past. There is no indication of the length of time the desiring continued, but Romans 8 proves it could not continue in the life of a Christian. Paul's desiring to be accursed from Christ was when he was an unsaved Pharisee.

Chapters 9-11 of Romans reveal God's dealings with Israel's past, present, and future. In one sense, these chapters seem to be parenthetical (some extra remarks of information). However, a closer look at the theme of Romans 1:16-17—"...to the Jew first and also to the Greek..."—shows that Paul could not

forget his experiences with the Jews. God vindicated the charge of unrighteousness in relation to Israel by Paul's critics: "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!" (Rom. 9:14 NASB).

The following are the leading ideas taught in Romans 9—(1) Paul had great sorrow for the Jews (vv. 1-3). (2) He showed the covenant relationship of the Jews (vv. 4, 5). (3) Election of the Jews is mentioned (vv. 6-13). (4) Election is according to God's purpose (vv. 14-24). (5) There are chosen Gentiles as well as chosen Jews (vv. 25, 26). (6) Although in a state of unbelief, the nation of Israel has a believing remnant (vv. 27-30). (7) The Person of Christ was the stumbling stone over which national Israel stumbled (vv. 31-33).

"Abraham's seed" is referred to in a threefold sense in Scripture: (1) Abraham has natural seed (Rom. 9:7; John 8:33-37). (2) He has spiritual seed (Rom. 9:7, 8). (3) He has spiritual seed that are not natural (Gal. 3:29).

Eschatology—The Study of Last Things

Section Two

Eschatology plays an important role in the interpretation of Scripture. Both advents of Jesus Christ are required to fulfill all the prophecies of Holy Scripture. By the agency of the Holy Spirit, Christ continues between His first and second advents what He began in His incarnation. Furthermore, He will perfect at His second coming what He began at His first advent. The One who came to suffer and die on behalf of those given to Him by the Father will come the second time to glorify them by making them like Himself (I Pet. 1:18-21; I John 3:1-3).

Prophecy includes the present age, the age to come, and the never-ending ages—eternity. Since there is so much confusion about prophecy, a study of the Greek noun *aión* is necessary. This noun is used about 105 times in the New Testament. It means age, period of time having a definite beginning and ending, and endless ages—eternity: “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age [present age], or in the age to come [kingdom age]” (Matt. 12:30-32 NASB). “...in the ages to come [eternity] He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7 NASB). The present age, the age to come, and eternity concern every rational person. The Holy Spirit mediates Christ’s presence in the present age. The duration of the present age is unrevealed. Christ’s presence will be unmediated in the age to come—the kingdom. The duration of the kingdom will be 1000 years. Christ’s presence will be unmediated in the ages to come—eternity. Duration, which signifies a period of time, does not apply to eternity.

The Bible is not a book from which a person gets a mere theoretical knowledge. Those who have been born of God apply its teachings. Unless doctrine and practice go together, an individual has nothing more than a human understanding of Divine truth. Without a subjective understanding of God’s truth, obedience to the objective revelation of God’s message is impossible. Therefore, where there is no true doctrine (teaching) of faith (system of Divine truth), obedience of faith cannot be expected.

No Biblical truth is taught without controversy. In most cases, the smoke of controversy conceals truth. Unless a person knows the truth, his controversy is like trying to burn wet wood. The smoke conceals the fire. Talking about truth where there is no evidence of Biblical truth is repulsive.

There is more to the Christian life than gaining knowledge. The most effective Christian is not one who has gained much knowledge in the classroom and private study. He has experienced what he professes to know. Would you want a surgeon to operate on you who learned from textbooks and spent none or few hours under the instruction of a live instructor in the operating room? Theology learned merely from textbooks apart from experience is dangerous. In His providence, God provides experience for every God-called preacher.

Truth is both personal and purposive. It is for the elect and has a positive effect on them. Beginning with Romans 12, God's righteousness is demonstrated. An investigation of the first eleven chapters of Romans reveals righteousness needed, communicated, and vindicated. Service is not self-effort. It is the outliving of the inliving Christ. The fountain of service is the inward urge of regeneration motivated by the knowledge of condemnation, justification, and glorification.

Paul's exhortation presupposes the ability to carry out urgent advice: "I URGE you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1, 2 NASB).

The apostle followed his urgent advice by giving three spheres for the demonstration of what the sovereign God has done for His people: (1) The assembly heads the list because God comes first (Rom. 12:3-13). This is the sphere based on Acts 2:37-47. (2) The next is the social sphere. If possible, we should live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:14-21). Impossibility is objective because the Christian's goal is to live peaceably with all men. However, he knows the enemies of the one true God hate him. (3) The civil sphere is last because there is a difference between what belongs to governmental jurisprudence (department of law) and that which is proper in private relationships with God and fellow-men (Rom. 13:1-7). To transfer the order of the prohibitions and injunctions of the respective spheres—the assembly, social, and civil—would pervert the truth and lead to the gravest disaster.

Renewal of our minds includes the subject of prophecy because prophecy is part of the whole purpose of God. Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders is a lesson to not only every person who professes to be a minister of God, but also everyone who claims to be a Christian. Paul said, "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose [*boule*, purpose or plan] of God. Be on guard for

yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church [assembly] of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:24-28 NASB).

According to Paul, the kingdom is eschatological. He illustrated this in his teaching Timothy: “I SOLEMNLY charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths” (II Tim. 4:1-4 NASB).

Knowing the meaning of the Greek noun *epiphaneia*, which means appearance, appearing, or coming, is important in our investigation of eschatology. This noun is derived from the verb *epiphaino*, a compound verb made up of the preposition *epi*, which means upon, and *phaino*, which means to appear, be seen, or be visible. Paul used the noun *epiphaneia* five times (II Thess. 2:8; I Tim. 6:14; II Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13). In the light of the context of these verses, the noun refers to the appearance of Jesus Christ upon earth when He comes to establish His kingdom.

The mystery of revelation is not that God will manifest His power to ensure the triumph of righteousness, but He delays to do so. Knowledge of the past is important, but knowledge of the future is of greater value. Knowledge of the future will raise the mind above the contemplation of the present. Therefore, we have the record of the inspired prophets who beheld visions and recorded what they saw. Their writings have become part of the system of truth that has been completed and was once for all delivered to the saints (Rev. 1:1-3; Dan. 2; Jude 3).

Pentecost was an earnest of the coming kingdom. Peter did not say that all the elements of prophecies were fulfilled at Pentecost. The apostle was meticulous in the language of his first message to the Jews (Acts 2:14-47). He attributed the miracles to works that God did by Christ. The Jews did not deny Christ’s miracles (Matt. 21:12-16), but they argued that the source of His power was Satan (Matt. 12:23-26).

In answer to the problem present in the Jewish mind of how a crucified man could be the Messianic King of Israel, Peter related the resurrection of Christ to show His right to the throne of David. Both Christ’s death and resurrection were revealed to David (Ps. 16:8-11; 132:11).

The second problem was that if Christ were the Messiah, why was He not reigning on David’s throne? Peter answered this problem by referring to Psalm

110. The Messiah must sit at the Father's right hand until His enemies become a footstool for His feet (Acts 2:33-36). The throne in heaven cannot be equated with the throne of the Son of David on earth. This Psalm refutes postmillennialism, amillennialism and modernism. Christ does rule providentially over the universe, but all the people of the world do not recognize that ruling. His present reign is invisible, but His reign in the kingdom on earth will be visible.

Since the saved were meeting in the temple (Acts 2:46), Peter faced another problem with the Jewish temple worship. The saved Jews needed instruction because here, according to Old Testament prophecy, all worship would be centered in the future kingdom (Is. 56:7). The attitude of those early Jewish believers concerning property suggests the expectation of an imminent establishment of the kingdom. Selling their possessions and sharing the proceeds was not an adoption of a communistic policy. Their acts were voluntary (Acts 4:34-5:4). Moreover, the prophets assigned an important place for private rights in the coming kingdom (Micah 4:1-4; Ezek. 47; 48). The Grand Jubilee of all the centuries seemed to them to be at hand. Those converts to Christianity must have been encouraged in their expectation by the wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

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Section Three

Israel—The Chosen Nation

Deut. 7:1-11

Election is a fundamental fact of Scripture. This truth is used to speak of the nation of Israel, individuals within that nation, and Gentiles who will be recipients of grace (Rom. 9:4-13). When the truth of eternal election is avoided, the foundation of God's work is disregarded.

The kingdom, which is associated with Israel, was foreordained before the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34). The kingdom will be the fulfillment of God's purpose. Completion is the goal of history, life, and the assembly. History has a goal toward which it is advancing. God rules and overrules opposition to bring forth at His appointed time a glorious consummation of His work.

God's eternal covenant of grace is unilateral. His covenants of time are bilateral. His promises were given to Jews, not Gentiles. Salvation was first given to Jews, then to Gentiles (Rom. 1:16, 17). The elect Gentiles will inherit with the chosen descendants of Abraham only as they are incorporated—formed into a society of saints (Rom. 11).

God said to Israel, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:7, 8 NASB). If some wit asks, "Why did God choose Israel?" The reply should be, "Because He chose to choose her." The question by such a wit reminds me of a radio preacher who said, "God has chosen men, but the way He chose is that He gives men a choice to choose Him." That makes as much sense as another preacher's comment on Matthew 22:14, which reads, "For many are called, but few are chosen." He commented, "Chosen in this verse means that someone chose you, and prayed that you would be saved. My mother chose me and prayed for my salvation."

Israel was chosen for a special people unto God. Election must be viewed in the context of Divine sovereignty, the depravity of man, and the gift of faith. God's choice was the determining cause for the nation of Israel to become His own in a spiritual union. Not all of the Israelites were chosen for an actual experience of

grace in time and glory in eternity. However, some from the nation of Israel were chosen and caused to approach God in worship and dwell in His courts. The Psalmist David expressed this blessing: "How blessed is the one whom Thou dost choose, and bring near to Thee, To dwell in Thy courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, Thy holy temple" (Ps. 65:4 NASB). John Bunyan said, "The elect are under eternal mercy, and that when under present justice; and the reprobate is under eternal justice, and that when under present mercy."

People of the world and religion operate on the slogan that "big is better." Compare that with the operations of God. He said to Israel, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples" (Deut. 7:7 NASB). The Israelites were no better than the people of the nations that God passed by because all were children of wrath. Israel was the means chosen by God to destroy the Canaanites (Num. 21). God could have destroyed them as He had the antediluvians and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, He could not bring His people into what His love purposed to give them without teaching them the profound lesson of their weakness and sins of the flesh. After witnessing God's faithfulness in many ways, it is dreadful that the mind of the flesh remains the Christian's number one enemy (Rom. 7). The mind of the flesh speaks against God and His servants (Num. 21:4-6). Assemblies are filled with pious people who would not think of speaking against God. However, before the day has passed, they complain about the weather or providence in general. The path of the just has its inconsistencies, but it also has its encouragements.

Believers need discouragements that are brought about by providence in their Christian journey. Discouragement is part of our training (Ps. 78). The important thing is not the discouragement but how the Christian handles it. If he sees nothing but the precursor of darkness, he is in a condition to accept any suggestion to remove his pressure. Through the gate of prolonged discouragement the enemy wanders at will. Does the cloud of discouragement obliterate hope, or does it only conceal it for a time? If a soldier never fights, of what value is he? Does a soldier rise in rank in time of peace or in time of war? Asaph's statement in Psalm 78:9 is an eye-opener for the Christian: "The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, Yet they turned back in the day of battle" (NASB). How can we who are so well armed be so cowardly? As we are called to fight the good fight of faith, may we never feel ourselves morally superior to our enemies, but remember that we owe everything to the electing love of God. God chose to love us for a reason that is discovered in God, not in ourselves.

Election is proved by Christ's statement in Matthew 22:14—"For many are called, but few are chosen." Arminians would have this verse to read, "Many are called, but few choose." Advocates of free grace are accused of teaching that only a small percentage of the human race will be saved. Opponents to free grace say a

great portion of the race die in infancy, and all who die in infancy are safe because they did not reach the age of accountability. This verse exposes and refutes two serious errors: (1) the free offer of the gospel, and (2) the idea that election discourages missions and kills churches.

The call of God goes out to both elect and reprobate, but for different purposes (II Cor. 2:14-16). There is a major difference between the general and special calls. The general call does not have the quickening work of the sovereign Spirit to make it effectual, but the special call has the work of the Spirit. God sent His word to harden (Ex. 4:21), make the heart insensitive and ears dull (Is. 6:9, 10), make blind (John 9:39-41), and condemn reprobates who judge themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). On the other hand, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:21).

Truth creates problems with religionists and reprobates. Both hated God the Father's teaching so much that they killed the Son of God and many prophets and apostles who proclaimed it. There are two gates and two ways. One leads to destruction and the other to life: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14 NASB). The conclusion of these verses is that the path to survival is narrow.

The astronauts must follow a narrow path to survival in their trips into space. The least deviation from their prescribed course would mean disaster. Very precise calculations and preparations are made to deal with God's law of gravity. What if the astronauts and mission control manifested the same attitude toward God's law of nature as men by nature do toward the path of life? Men by nature are incapable of directing their path: "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23 NASB). "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12 NASB). Someone has said that he who makes a bridge of his own shadow shall surely drown. (See Rom. 10:1-4.)

The following points portray a Biblical preview of the major truths concerning Israel:

1. The Jewish nation was chosen with a view to the kingdom of prophecy: "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Ex. 19:5, 6 NASB).
2. The election of Israel embraces a nationality—the natural descendants of Abraham in their associated capacity (Rom. 9:4, 5; 11:28). The kingdom was

offered only to this nation until the nation was enlarged to include others by way of adoption as the seed of Abraham.

3. Their election, with its enlargement, was unconditional according to God's eternal purpose (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 3:11).

4. The unbelief and sinfulness of the nation may remove God's favor, but this does not affect their election (Is. 12; 13). Therefore, the restoration of the nation is invariably linked with the establishment of the kingdom.

5. The same elect nation, chastened and scourged, will be recalled and exalted (Ezek. 16).

6. While the nation comprising the natural descendants of Abraham is chosen, it does not follow that every individual in it is personally chosen. The election is twofold: (1) national and (2) personal: "...For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (Rom. 9:6 NASB). The nation in its corporate capacity may reject the truth, but "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3:9 NASB).

7. God has made provisions for the elect Gentiles by adopting them and grafting them in with preceding believers. Therefore, they become heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5). The "faith" of Abraham refers to the spiritual seed of Abraham. The dividing wall that was broken down between Jews and Gentiles was between believing Jews and believing Gentiles (Eph. 2:14; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 2:16).

8. Israel was not a type of a future people. To say that she would apply the word "type" incorrectly. The reason is apparent because a type prefigures or foreshadows something that will be accomplished or realized in the future. Israel was not typically chosen to represent some future choosing. The elect of this age are presented in the Scriptures as being grafted to the root in order to partake of Israel's blessings (Rom. 11). The nation is not a type because it composes the real kingdom of God. Certain acts were typical: "Now these things happened to them as an example..." (I Cor. 10:11 NASB), and certain religious rites foreshadowed "good things to come" (Heb. 10:1 NASB).

9. The root stump that remains is a holy seed (Is. 6:13). As a living seed that is buried in the earth does not perish, Israel will not perish even though she is buried among the nations of the world.

10. The kingdom is given to the natural descendants of Abraham in their corporate capacity. By covenant and by oath, the kingdom will surely be given to the seed of Abraham. When national Israel rejected Christ in His first advent, the Lord assured us that His covenant would not fail (Rom. 11).

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Section Four

“I SAY then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED THY PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN THINE ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE. But what is the divine response to him? I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL. In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace” (Rom. 11:1-6 NASB).

Following Paul’s personal reference, he referred to history to prove that God was faithful to His promise to Israel. God safeguards His testimony. There has never been a time when some of God’s nationally chosen people were not faithful to Him. Elijah’s sense of aloneness during the dark time of Israel’s idolatrous apostasy received rebuke. Here is an important lesson for Christians. A person of personal fidelity is prone to become occupied with his own faithfulness and fail to take account of what God is doing in His faithfulness. God’s faithfulness reached out to seven thousand when Elijah thought he was the only one. God reserved a remnant for Himself during the dark time of Israel’s apostasy and then during the time of their dispersion. Furthermore, God has a remnant according to the election of grace during this present time.

Before 1948 when Israel again became a nation, an amillennialist said that Israel would never again be a nation because God is through with Israel. However, Scripture proves that God is not through with Israel.

Three foundational subjects to consider in the study of eschatology are Israel, the covenants, and the kingdom. The name “Israel” appears 2,539 times (according to my count) in the Bible, 2,465 of which are in the Old Testament and 74 in the New Testament. Every book in the Old Testament, with the exception of Esther, Job, Jonah, Habakkuk, and Haggai, uses this word. Thirteen of the 27 New Testament books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Hebrews, and Revelation—record the word.

Israel was the name given to Jacob when he wrestled with God in prayer (Gen. 32:28). Jacob’s name means supplanter (Gen. 27:36), which signifies to take the place of another by force or scheme. The name “Israel” means a prince with

God. He who was a swindler became a prince with God. Jacob prayed to the God of his father who is the God of the covenant. The patriarch laid hold of Divine faithfulness: "...I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Gen. 32:26 NASB). He had striven with God and men and prevailed: "And He [God] said, Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:28 NASB).

Knowledge of God in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures forms the basis for all power with God. He who wrestled the whole night with Jacob told him he had power with God. The conflict was unequal because it was God against man. When he became conformed to God's will, Jacob learned that he was not dealing with a foe, but with the best Friend a man could have.

The name "Israel" in the New Testament refers to national and spiritual descendants of Israel. The Israelites are the descendants of Abraham through his sons—Isaac and Jacob—to whom the covenants concerning the seed and land were given. Although most of the Israelites are apostates from God, that does not indicate that God is through with Israel as a nation (Rom. 11).

Some who spiritualize Israel think literalists are led astray by apocalyptic fantasies. They believe the name was first given to one man and then to one nation, which foreshadowed the full Israel of God. Their opinion is that Israel was fulfilled in what they call the church/kingdom of the New Testament. They think national Israel fell into a spiritual grave through disobedience, and the belief that she will be restored is a modern fad. These persons say that Jesus Christ brought about a transfer from a physical to a spiritual nation; therefore, Israel after the flesh (I Cor. 10:18) was cast away (Rom. 11:15), and the kingdom was given to someone else (Matt. 21:43; Rom. 9:24-26). They conclude that this new Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) is destined for a better country than any on earth. They label every premillennial group within the last 150 years as a cult or a sect.

Students of Scripture do not deny that Israel is a mystery: "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery [*mysterion*], lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLIENESS FROM JACOB" (Rom. 11:25, 26 NASB). The word "mystery" (*mysterion*) means a hidden thing, secret, or mystery. The thing hidden is truly only in the realm of the uninitiated: "...in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret..." (Phil. 4:12 NASB). The things of God cannot be understood apart from Divine initiation.

Two questions should be raised: (1) Has Israel played out her role in human history? No! (2) Is Israel still relevant in some mysterious way? Yes! Those who deny a future kingdom say that millennialism is racist—Jewish supremacy—and no one should encourage the millennialists' antichristian trait of natural conceit.

Millennialists are accused of being anti-semitic because they bypass the “church” and offer the Jews salvation in the future; therefore, their anti-semitism is worse than the Hitler-Nazi type.

On the contrary, those who deny the abiding actuality of Israel's election are guilty of anti-semitism. The German church helping to shape the climate to exterminate six million Jews under Hitler's regime proves this. However, recalling what anti-semitism has done is insufficient. We must examine the religious instruction of amillennialism that created the climate for such atrocities against the Jews. Is Christendom representing herself as the executioner of God's judgment?

Christendom should take another look at what the Scriptures say about Israel. God's election of Israel is not dependent on man, and it cannot be negated by human unfaithfulness. Whether election refers to an individual or a nation, God's choice of Israel cannot be invalidated: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:6-8 NASB). “For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession” (Ps. 135:4 NASB). “WHEN Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son” (Hos. 11:1 NASB). “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29 NASB).

Israel's election cannot be changed into final rejection. Although she is chastened and scattered, she will be recalled: “Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, in order that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done, the LORD GOD declares” (Ezek. 16:60-63 NASB).

The root that remains is a holy seed. God temporarily forsook Israel: “...I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, My name shall be there” (II Kings 23:27 NASB). That generation was set aside, but God said through Zechariah: “And I shall strengthen the house of Judah, And I shall save the house of Joseph, And I shall bring them back, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am the LORD their God, and I will answer them” (Zech. 10:6 NASB).

After Christ said to Israel, “Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!” (Matt. 23:38 NASB), Paul said that God has not disowned His people He foreknew: “God has not rejected [aorist middle indicative of *apothéo*, refuse, reject, or cast off] His people whom He foreknew [aorist active indicative of *proginosko*, to appoint as the subjects of future privileges—Rom. 8:29]. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?” (Rom. 11:2 NASB). The eleventh chapter of Romans gives argument for, certainty of, and purpose in Israel’s future. Through Israel’s trespass salvation came to the Gentiles. However, in the light of the context, the purpose for Israel’s stumbling was that some might be broken off. Her stumbling and trespass were the overruling design of God directed to fulfill His purpose with the Gentiles. Israel’s national blindness is not total (Rom. 11:7-10), fatal (Rom. 11:11, 12), or final (Rom. 11:13-32) in fulfillment of Isaiah 6:13 and Ezekiel 16:60-63. The breaking off of some natural branches does not affect the root.

Election cannot pass from Israel to the assembly to make the assembly the new Israel. The nation was not typically elected to represent some future election. The elect of this age are presented in Scripture as being grafted into the root (Israel) to partake of her blessings (Rom. 11). God has made provision for the elect Gentiles by grafting them with preceding believers. Therefore, we become heirs of the kingdom that was given to the natural descendants of Abraham in their corporate capacity. So sure is the kingdom to be given to the seed of Abraham by covenant and oath that when national Israel rejected the prerequisites to the kingdom, the Lord assured us that His covenant will not fail.

Those who enjoy kingdom blessings will be regarded as descendants of the children of Abraham (Rom. 11). The promise of salvation is related to the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:16). Therefore, the “seed” of Galatians 3:16 refers to Jesus Christ. God’s covenant with Abraham was confirmed in Christ (Gal. 3:17). The Mosaic covenant, which came 430 years later, did not invalidate the Abrahamic covenant. Had the Mosaic covenant annulled the Abrahamic covenant, the promise would have been of no effect (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 3:17). The adding of the Mosaic covenant was not for a condition of life, but it was a means of enjoying and retaining its blessings. The believing Gentiles are the spiritual seed of Abraham and the heirs of the unfulfilled promise of the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:29; 4:7). Therefore, through the Spirit we wait in hope.

Eschatology—The Study of Last Things

Section Five

Eschatological Events

Of the three ages—present age, age to come, and the never-ending ages—the age to come (millennium) is the most controversial. Postmillennialists believe the millennium is presently taking place in heaven. Amillennialists deny a millennium. They think the kingdom is taking place on earth in the church/kingdom. Premillennialists believe it is future and will occur when Christ comes at His second advent to establish His kingdom on the earth.

1. THREE DISTINCT AGES CONCERN CHRISTIANS.

- (1) The present age already exists:
“Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come” (Matt. 12:31, 32 NASB).
- (2) The age to come will be the millennium. Time will continue throughout the millennium:
“...the age to come” (Matt. 12:32 NASB).
“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5 NASB).
- (3) The eternal ages (eternity) will be realized at the conclusion of the millennium:
“to Him be the glory in the church [assembly] and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:21 NASB).
“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (I Tim. 1:17 NASB).
“And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, who was and who is and who is to come. And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever” (Rev. 4:8, 9 NASB). (Read Rev. 5:13, 14; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5.)

2. THE DURATION OF ONLY ONE AGE IS REVEALED.

- (1) The duration of the present age is unrevealed:
“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matt. 24:36 NASB).
- (2) The duration of the age to come is revealed as 1,000 years:
“And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them, And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison” (Rev. 20:2-7 NASB).
- (3) The eternal state is revealed as having no duration because it is endless:
“And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:5 NASB).

3. THERE ARE PRECEDING EVENTS TO EACH OF THE AGES.

- (1) Many historical events, types, and shadows preceded the present age (I Cor. 10:11).
- (2) The age to come will be preceded by the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21).
- (3) The great white throne judgment will precede the eternal state (Rev. 20).

4. SAVED AND UNSAVED WILL BE IN EACH OF THE AGES.

- (1) Saved and unsaved are mixed in the world in the present age (Matt. 13:30).

- (2) In the age to come, all will be saved at the beginning of the millennium (Matt. 25:34). Many will be unsaved at the conclusion of the kingdom (Matt. 13:49, 50).
- (3) Only the saved will be in the eternal city in the eternal ages (Rev. 21:1, 2). The unsaved will be eternally excluded (Rev. 21:8).

5. GOD'S TEMPLE IS EXCLUDED IN ONLY ONE OF THE AGES.

- (1) The assembly is God's temple in the present age (I Cor. 3:16, 17).
- (2) A temple that will surpass Solomon's temple will exist in the age to come (Ezek. 40-48; Hag. 2:9).
- (3) No temple will exist in the eternal ages (Rev. 21:22).

6. THE GOSPEL IS NECESSARY IN ONLY ONE OF THE AGES.

- (1) The purpose of the gospel in the present age is to convert the regenerated during Christ's mediated presence (Rom. 1:16).
- (2) Christ's unmediated presence makes the gospel unnecessary in the age to come.
- (3) Christ's unmediated presence in the eternal ages makes the gospel unnecessary.

7. SATAN EXISTS IN EACH OF THE AGES.

- (1) In the present age, Satan is on the loose seeking those he may devour (I Pet. 5:8).
- (2) In the age to come, Satan will be chained in the abyss, his temporary prison, for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-7).
- (3) In the eternal ages, Satan will be in the lake of fire, his eternal prison (Rev. 20:10).

8. PROFESSING CHRISTENDOM IS DESCRIBED IN EACH OF THE AGES.

- (1) In the present age, there are many false religions inside and outside of professing Christendom (II Tim. 3-4; II Pet. 2-3; Jude).
- (2) Jesus Christ, the King, will not tolerate false religion in the age to come. True worship will be enforced (Zech. 14:16-21).

(3) In the eternal ages, only true worship will be exercised (Rev. 22:3).

9. WARFARE IS IN ONLY ONE OF THE AGES.

(1) In the present age, there are wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6, 7).

(2) In the age to come, there will be no war (Mic. 4:3, 4; Is. 2:4), but the millennium will conclude with a final rebellion by the unsaved (Rev. 20:7-9).

(3) In the eternal ages, there will be no war or rebellion, "...the first things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4 NASB).

10. LANGUAGE IN EACH OF THE AGES IS DESCRIBED.

(1) In the present age, there are many languages (I Cor. 14:10).

(2) In the age to come, there will be only one language: "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph. 3:9 NASB).

(3) The language in the eternal ages is unrevealed, but communication with one another will be on the highest level.

11. BODIES WILL VARY IN EACH OF THE AGES.

(1) In the present age, all have natural bodies (I Cor. 15:43, 44).

(2) In the age to come, resurrected saints will be in glorified bodies (I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5). Those who will go into the kingdom out of the tribulation will be in natural bodies.

(3) In the eternal ages, all bodies will be adapted for eternity (Rev. 21-22).

12. DEATH IN THE THREE AGES IS DESCRIBED.

(1) In the present age, men are under the curse of physical death (the norm) (Heb. 9:27).

(2) In the age to come, resurrected saints will be in their glorified bodies. People in earthly bodies will enjoy unusual longevity, but occasional death will be the exception (Is. 65:20).

(3) In the eternal ages, there will be no more death (Rev.21:4).

13. SICKNESS IS EXPERIENCED IN ONLY ONE OF THE AGES.

- (1) Abundant weakness, sickness, and disease are experienced in the present age.
- (2) There will be no sickness in the age to come (Is. 33:24).
- (3) Neither sickness nor pain will be experienced in the eternal ages (Rev. 21:4).

14. THERE IS A TERMINATION POINT OF TWO OF THE AGES.

- (1) The present age will terminate with Christ's coming (II Tim. 4:1).
- (2) The age to come will terminate by the release of Satan from the abyss (Rev. 20:7).
- (3) The eternal ages will have no termination point.

15. THERE WILL BE RESURRECTION IN EACH OF THE THREE AGES.

- (1) Resurrection for the living is future for the present age (I Cor. 15:51).
- (2) Resurrection in the age to come will be preceded by the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4, 5).
- (3) The eternal ages will be preceded by the second resurrection (Rev. 20:5, 13-15).

Eschatology—The Study of Last Things

Section Six

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

(Rev. 1:1-3)

The reason eschatology is the most controversial of all Biblical sciences is that the differing views of prophecy touch all the other sciences.

1. The following reasons make this truth hard to grasp: (1) All lack understanding of some parts of Scripture. (2) We are prone to impose our own preformed opinions. (3) Some with good intentions in handling the word of God are careless. (4) Some present a lot of truth mixed with a little error, and others present a lot of error mixed with a little truth.
2. Some are intentionally deceptive because they are false teachers (II Peter; Jude). They focus on the naive and uninformed.
3. Many are blinded by their denomination. They are unwilling to investigate anything that does not carry their denominational label.
4. There are those who say the Revelation is filled with figures of speech, allegories, and symbols. Therefore, it is a puzzle to them.
5. The attitude that advocates not studying, teaching, or preaching a book that is so full of things that cannot be understood is not complementary to God the Father. This exalted opinion of oneself will be abased.
6. Peter laid down a fundamental principle of hermeneutics that condemns the so-called “proof text fallacy” in II Peter 1:20—“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation” (NASB). Every verse must yield to whatever cross-fertilization is available from other Scriptures. No Scripture teaches anything without the possibility that other passages will illuminate it further.

What some call a mysterious puzzle, God calls an unveiling. He made known what was previously concealed; therefore, Revelation provides illumination for the elect of God. God has given us a panoramic—a continuously passing scene

or unfolding—view of future events. Revelation remains an enigma only to those who have not been initiated by grace.

The book of Revelation is primarily a book of prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19) to which we must pay close attention (II Pet. 1:19). God has given us a panoramic view of future things, and by grace we welcome them from a distance (Heb. 11:13). One-third of the Bible is prophetic; therefore, one-third of our time should be given to its study. A diet that lacks one-third of its nutritional value requirement results in bad health. What about our spiritual health?

God's longsuffering will soon come to a conclusion. The events of Revelation will come to pass with swiftness once they begin: "FOR YET IN A LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY" (Heb. 10:37). Like a magnet, Revelation lifts the heart out of this world. If Christ is not coming back, men must work out their own destiny, as they are trying in vain to do. The fact of a past advent should cause us to expect a future advent. The events of Revelation proceed from suffering to reigning, weakness to power, and humiliation to glory.

Christ was seen in eclipse at His first advent (John 1:14). He will be seen out of eclipse shining in all His glory at His second advent (II Sam. 23:4; Phil. 2:9-11; John 17:24). As a cloud that covers the sun makes no change in the sun, Christ's human nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh, made no change in His Divine Person. Only by the doctrine of the coming kingdom can the Revelation be understood and consistently interpreted. Christ came to suffer. He will come to reign. He came in weakness. He will come in power. He came in humiliation. He will come in glory.

Revelation as a whole must not be classified any way other than prophecy because it is clearly stated to be prophecy (1:3). Some do not know the difference between history and prophecy—past and future events.

The prologue includes verses 1-3. Included in the prologue are God the Father, Jesus the Christ, Christ's angel, Christ's slave, the reader, the hearer, and the observer. In the prologue are the past in the word of God, the present in the witness of Christ, and the future in the things John saw. The salutation includes verses 4-8. The Patmos vision includes verses 9-18. The command to write includes verses 19-20.

Verse 3 records the first of 7 beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). It also includes the one reading publicly, those hearing, and those observing. Furthermore, there is a phrase in the Greek that should in its translation be made a clause—"for the time is near." The Greek conjunction *gar* connects with the preceding prologue. With respect to what had been said, John concluded the prologue with the words "for [*gar*] the time [*kairos*] is near [*eggus*]." The noun *kairos* means time, age, season, destined time, or short season. (See Rev. 1:3;

11:18; 12:12, 14; 22:10.) The adverb *eggus* in reference to time means near, close to, and on the verge of (Rev. 22:10).

Since this is God's word, not man's word, He alone can inform us of the meaning of "near or close." Prophetic time, with reference to its beginning or conclusion, is reserved by God to pertain to Him. Since prophetic time is given according to God's estimate of time, nearness carries a purposed indefiniteness. It gives an impression that it may be near, and it is conducive to watchfulness and an excitement to hope. Hence, Christians are not confined to time for enjoyment of life. We behold not only the things of time, but also the things of eternity. By God-given faith we welcome eternal things from a distance: "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb. 11:13 NASB).

Before proceeding further in the study of Revelation, we must settle the controversy over the first part of verse 1—"THE Revelation [*apokalupsis*] of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place...." Is the Greek noun *apokalupsis* an objective or a subjective genitive, the case of description? Some argue for the objective and others for the subjective. There is an actuating agency in the gift of Revelation that should put a stop to the debate about Revelation 1:1. It is "THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him [Christ]...." Every God-given gift is received. The Revelation is objective because it originated with the Father, and it was made subjective when it was given to Christ. His receiving the gift made it one of personal interest.

God the Father is the Author of the Revelation. Jesus Christ is the medium of the Revelation. Slaves are the communicators of the Revelation. This Revelation given to Christ was shown to John (1:1, 10, 11; 4:1, 2) and by him (John) to the slaves. Jesus Christ is viewed as the God-Man. He, the coming King of the kingdom, is the central Object of this prophecy.

The Father gave the Revelation to His Son to give to the elect. The Revelation was given to Christ. Is He not God? How can God give God something? Consider the strange statement of Mark 13:32—"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (NASB). Christ's residential nature was not the subject of omniscience. Therefore, the Lord Jesus in Revelation 1:1 was waiting for the time when God the Father would give Him the kingdom that He has gone to receive (Luke 19:12ff.).

In Revelation 1:1, Christ is viewed as the God-Man, not in the capacity of God absolutely considered. Therefore, the gift of Revelation to Him includes Christ's kingdom in which the elect will share: "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I

will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware” (Ps. 2:7-9 NASB). The substance of this pledge constitutes the bulk of Revelation. This Revelation is given to the God-Man.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is not too vague, obscure, or complex to be understood. Do not forget that it is called “the word of God,” “the testimony of Jesus Christ,” and “His prophecy.”

Revelation is not a continuous history of the assembly after 70 A.D. One of two things is true: (1) Christ is coming to establish the kingdom on the earth, or (2) the coming of the assembly in greater power and glory by her achievements is drawing near. If the latter were true, the assembly would be getting better every day no matter what the Scriptures say. The kingdom is Christ’s because of who He is. As the God-Man, He has gone to receive it from the Father (Luke 19:12, 15). The Revelation refers to Christ’s assemblies, resurrected and glorified saints, judgments, triumphs, kingdom, reign, power, majesty, glory, perfected redemption, and eternal glory.

Our study of Revelation is out of solemn reverence for all that God has written. Objective and subjective revelation must be properly distinguished. Having been distinguished, the purpose for each must be accurately understood. The following things exemplify ways the gospel is revealed: (1) The Spirit reveals it objectively to mankind in general and subjectively in the elect. (2) Externally, it refers to means. Internally, it refers to agency. (3) Externally, it is revealed in various ways. Internally, the Holy Spirit reveals it in only one way. (4) Objectively, it is incomprehensive and confusing. Subjectively, it is comprehensible and clear. (5) Objectively, it is revealed to the natural intellect and reason. Subjectively, it is made known to the understanding, affection, and will. (6) Objectively, the message is lost to many (II Pet. 2:20). Subjectively, the message is permanent to the elect (I John 3:6-9).

Eschatology—The Study of Last Things

Section Seven

The Revelation of Jesus Christ—(Continued)

Many professing believers think the book of Revelation is a puzzle, but God calls it an unveiling, making known what was concealed. Only through the coming kingdom of prophecy in the last days can the Revelation be understood and consistently interpreted. How can this Book be mysterious because of its symbols when it is a revelation? It is not mysterious to God's chosen people who have been born of God. However, it is concealed from those who have not been regenerated by the sovereign Spirit (Matt. 11:25; Eph. 3:5; Luke 2:32).

Many claim the book of Revelation makes people nervous, erratic, and fearful. If this is true, I Thessalonians 4:18 should read, "Therefore scare [instead of comfort] one another with these words." (See I Thess. 4:13-18.) There is a goal for creation, a purpose to be fulfilled, and a will to be accomplished. That includes everything from eternity, through time, and into eternity when time will be no more.

Revelation is not the apocalypse of the apocalypse. It is the unveiling of Jesus Christ in all His glory. From the viewpoint of objective truth, Jesus Christ is revealed, not being revealed. The Greek noun *apokalupsis* means disclosure, revelation, manifestation, appearance, or spiritual enlightenment. The noun is used eighteen times (Luke 2:32; Rom. 2:5; 8:19; 16:25; I Cor. 1:7; 14:6, 26; II Cor. 12:1, 7; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 1:17; 3:3; II Thess. 1:7; I Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13; Rev. 1:1). The verb form *apokalupto* is used 26 times. It means to reveal (Matt. 11:25); and in the passive voice, it means to be disclosed (Luke 2:35; Eph. 3:5), declared (Rom. 1:17), and manifested or to appear (Rom. 8:18; II Thess. 2:3, 6, 8; I Pet. 1:5).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ concerns His Person, redemptive work, resurrection, translated and glorified saints, judgments, triumph, kingdom, reign, power, majesty, glory, and perfected redemption. The true motive for this study is not out of conceit from superior wisdom, vain ambition to make all mysteries plain, or mere curious desire to pry into future things. It is out of solemn reverence for all that God has written for the spiritual benefit of His people. Peter's use of two participles as imperatives (aorist middle and present active) and an aorist active imperative are important warnings for Christians: "Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the

grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:13 NASB). Peter used the noun *apokalupsis* twice in the first chapter of his first Epistle in the sense of manifestation or appearance.

The ground of hope is in Jesus Christ, not believers. No wonder Peter spoke of hope as living: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (I Pet. 1:3 NASB). Paul spoke of that blessed hope: “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13 NASB).

Hope is the expectation of something excellent, which is righteous to its highest degree. The personal unmediated presence of Jesus Christ is the object of hope. Christ’s kingdom and eternal reign are the conclusion of hope. As the cross demands the throne, revelation in the past cried out for revelation in the future. Therefore, no man sees the greatness of the present unless he regards it as the means of access to the future. Not until dying hopes expire does the never disappointing living hope, live (Rom. 5:5). There are many worldly and religious hopes that are never realized, but Christians are assured that the hope which is the fruit of the new birth is to a living hope through Christ’s death and resurrection out from among the dead.

Simeon’s hope was realized when he saw the Christ child. Each day Simeon went to the Temple he no doubt said to himself, “Soon He will come.” Likewise, believers living between the first and second advents of Jesus Christ should be saying, “Christ will come soon.” As Simeon was not occupied with events, Christians should not be enamored by the things of this world system that lies in the power of the evil one (I John 5:19). We must be occupied with Jesus Christ who controls Satan and the events of this evil world system. Satan has no authority (*exousia*, authority) unless it has been given from above (John 19:11).

As the temple was a sanctuary scene to Simeon, the meeting of the assembly of Jesus Christ should be a sanctuary scene to Christians. (Study Ps. 73; Acts 2:41-47; Heb. 10:25.) Simeon’s last days were his best. This should be a reality in the life of every Christian regardless of circumstances.

When Jesus Christ was eight days old, His parents brought Him to Jerusalem to be circumcised. Simeon, whose name means “one who hears,” was in Jerusalem waiting for the consolation (*paraklesis*, comfort, deliverance—national, or setting free) of Israel. Waiting, which denotes character, is more difficult than working, which denotes vocation. Waiting is an inward grace that did not cause him to neglect the outward and visible signs appointed by God. Four hundred years of spiritual darkness before the incarnation did not blind Simeon to the promise of the incarnation. This faithful man of God did not neglect the temple services, and

he was rewarded with the great privilege of seeing the Christ Child, holding Him in his arms, and blessing God.

Unlike so many who claim that God has disowned Israel, Simeon had great insight concerning the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. His view of Christ went beyond Israel to include some Gentiles (Luke 2:32; John 10:16). However, he did not eliminate all Israelites (Luke 2:32; Rom. 11:1, 2). The inclusion of some Gentiles in the Abrahamic covenant was unacceptable to the unregenerate Jews. Both the noun *apokalupsis*, which means a revelation, and the verb *apokalupto*, which means to reveal, are found in Simeon's biography: "And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Thy people Israel. And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:27-35 NASB). This was Simeon's swan song.

At the time of Simeon, Jesus Christ did not have David's throne, but He had the affectionate embrace of one who knew how to appreciate Him as the salvation of God. This is an experience in man that can never be known apart from the regenerating Spirit. God's purpose of salvation involved the Jews as the source from which the eternal Son of God would assume a human nature (John 4:22). Jesus Christ is the Savior because He is God manifested in the flesh, not because He was a Jew in His incarnation. This in no way detracts from God's choice of national Israel through whom the seed of Abraham would originate.

Simeon's reference to the "fall" (*ptosis*, fall or collapse) and "rise" (*anastasis*, resurrection or rise) of many in Israel was prophetic. The noun *ptosis* is used in Matthew 7:27 and Luke 2:34 to refer to the foolish man who built his house on the sand: "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall" (Matt. 7:27 NASB). The verb *pesosin*, aorist active subjunctive of *pipto*, means to fall, fall to one's ruin or destruction, or fall in the moral or religious sense. Paul used this same word to apply to the Israelites' falling and rising: "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall [aorist active subjunctive of *pipto*], did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" (Rom. 11:11, 12 NASB).

Eschatology—The Study of Last Things

Section Eight

The Conclusion

Simeon recognized that Jesus Christ had come to redeem the elect from among the Israelites and the Gentiles:

“Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32 NASB).

Paul perceived the same truth and proclaimed it to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians:

“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS” (Rom. 11:25-27 NASB).

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU. So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM. Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH. However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:8-14 NASB).

Subsequent to his discussion of salvation by grace in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul said,

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into

one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity” (Eph. 2:13-16 NASB).

Most of the Israelites’ apostasy from the truth, which God gave them through His patriarchs, left them with nothing but a few traditions. Their traditions were given to them as supplements, but they placed them on a level above God’s word. Religious and political histories are repeating themselves. Like the Jews of history, religionists of all denominations and non-denominations have turned to forms without substance. During the time of Christ, Pharisees and scribes came to the eternal Son of God on a fact-finding mission to investigate His words and works. Christ told them they were “...invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down...” (Mark 7:13 NASB).

Multitudes of religionists are shackled by an undue reverence for human authority. If their information does not come out of Nashville, Salt Lake City, Rome, etc., they reject it as untrue. This philosophy has spilled over into politics, education, and life on earth in general. Men commit a heinous sin when they exalt their confessions, creeds, and political views and ignore God’s eternal truth. No one is exhorted to search these, but he is commanded to search the Scriptures (John 5:39). Creeds, confessions, and political platforms are at their best only witnesses to what men think is truth. None of these can replace God’s objective truth, the Holy Scripture, which furnishes the standard for every person.

The Pharisees and scribes who were steeped in tradition knew enough about the Old Testament Scriptures to expect the King and His kingdom. However, they did not know that Christ must first suffer before He establishes His kingdom. After His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to His apostles: “To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3 NASB). Observe two things in this verse: (1) Christ’s suffering took place at His first advent. (2) His kingdom will be a reality at His second advent “by His appearing, and His kingdom” (II Tim. 4:1 NASB).

Christ revealed nothing about a kingdom to be established before His second coming. The kingdom will be consistent with the Abrahamic covenant and prophecy, former teaching and instruction, and desire and hope. In answer to the disciples’ questioning the time of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, the Lord “said to them, It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:7, 8 NASB).

Christ did not tell the disciples they were mistaken in their idea of the kingdom or that the kingdom already existed as the church/kingdom. This erroneous belief is a present popular human idea. Furthermore, the statement “...It is not for you to

know times or epochs...” proves that the apostles did not misapprehend the nature of the kingdom. During His ministry, the Lord Jesus nowhere said the kingdom had come. He did not diminish the kingdom, which was the object of the oppressed apostles’ hope. Christ had instructed the apostles and sent them forth to preach, but He never contradicted their views of the kingdom. After Christ’s ascension, the apostles did not preach that the kingdom was established. In his sermons, Peter said nothing about a present kingdom. Paul associated the kingdom with Christ’s second coming (II Tim. 4:1). James spoke of the “heirs of the kingdom, which He promised to those who love Him” (James 2:5 NASB). Jude quoted Enoch’s prophecy of Christ’s coming “with many thousands of His holy ones” (Jude 14). John wrote of the future kingdom when the saints will reign with Him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

The New Testament writers said nothing about a present kingdom. Some misinterpret Galatians 6:16 to teach a present church/kingdom—“And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (NASB). They believe the assembly is the kingdom during the absence of the King. This passage of Scripture does not indicate that the assembly fulfills God’s promises to Israel. The term “Israel” is never used to refer to the assembly or to the kingdom. The assembly Christ is building does not fulfill the promises God gave to Israel.

There are two serious errors about Christ’s coming and His kingdom: (1) Dispensational premillennialists represent Christ as wanting to reign before He suffered for the sins of the elect. Therefore, He offered Israel the kingdom before He died. (2) Amillennialists use Galatians 6:16 to represent Christ as presently reigning before His manifested glory.

The term “Israel of God” of Galatians 6:16 has become a problem text with many Bible students. There are three views: (1) Some think it refers to the church/kingdom. (2) Others believe it refers to the chosen Jews within the chosen nation of Israel. (3) There are others who believe it represents the Gentile assemblies that were being disturbed by non-Christian Jews.

The term “Israel of God” is restricted to the remnant of Jews who belonged to God (Rom. 9:6-8). The grammatical construction and the contexts of Galatians 6:16 and Romans 9:6-8 do not justify the inclusion of Gentiles in Paul’s term. The apostle distinguished the Jews, Greeks, and church (assembly) of God: “Give no offense either to Jews, or to Greeks or to the church [assembly] of God” (I Cor. 10:32 NASB).

Two important Greek words occur in Galatians 6:16—“And those who will walk by this rule...” The first is *kanon*, a noun that means rule or standard. The second is *stoicheo*, a verb that means to be in line with or to conduct oneself by a certain rule or standard. The verb *stoicheo* is a future active indicative third person plural and is translated, “All those who shall follow this rule, peace and mercy shall be upon [*epi*, basic meaning is upon] them.” Since the Judaizing false teachers were disturbing the Galatian Christians, Paul’s blessing first went out to them because God sent him to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Paul had strong affection for the unbelieving Jews (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1-4), but he had particular feeling for the “Israel of God.” That is the reason he said, “...and upon [second use of the preposition *epi*] the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16 NASB). He wanted his blessing to apply to both Jewish Christians and Gentile believers, but he made a distinction between the Jews who were of God and those who were not: “What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written, GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY” (Rom. 11:7, 8 NASB).

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul expressed his concern about the Jews and the Gentiles. The Greek noun *ptosis*, derived from the verb *pipto*, is found in Simeon’s statement concerning the fall of Israel (Luke 2:34). The verb form occurs in Galatians 5:4—“You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from [*ekpipto*, a compound verb made up of *ek*, which means separation, and *pipto*, which means to forfeit or fall away from] grace” (NASB). Some Arminians misinterpret “fallen from grace” to teach that one who has been truly saved can lose his salvation. Some of the professing Christians may have been truly saved, but false teachers had confused them. Others professed faith in Christ, but they were apostates who had turned from the principle of grace.

Paul addressed those in Galatia who were seeking to be justified by the law. By doing so, they were not only estranged from Christ, but they also forfeited the principle of grace. There is no evidence in the text or context of Galatians 5:4 to prove that the ones spoken of as “have fallen from grace” had actually lost their gift of salvation. The issue is not the loss of saving grace. They had forfeited the system of salvation by thinking they could be justified by law. Christ died in vain if law justifies anyone: “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly” (Gal. 2:21 NASB).

“Grace” is a word used more than any other in the study of soteriology, but a diligent study of the science of soteriology will reveal much ignorance concerning the meaning of grace. Apart from the grace of God, no one would ever acknowledge his need of Jesus Christ: “So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy” (Rom. 9:16 NASB). The blessings of peace and mercy enumerated by the apostle were for the Gentiles who had become “new creations” in Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:12-15).

Grace has always appeared as an insult to the natural man. However, grace is more than an objective fact presented to us. It is a subjective experience: “For by grace you have been saved [perfect passive participle of *sodzo*] through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8 NASB). The perfect tense in the Greek denotes completed action with continuing results. It looks at both ends of the action. The punctiliar and the linear are combined in the perfect tense.

The struggle in our age is between two opposing sets of principles— (1) the absolute sovereignty of God over all things and (2) a set of materialistic policies

whose preferred aim is to establish a heaven on earth. The latter is foreign to the word of God. It changes when change becomes expedient and always ends in despotic control by a small group of ambitious and ruthless men. The people of God alone know and advocate that responsibility came into the world in Adam (peccable) who Satan could and did touch. However, grace came into the world in Christ (impeccable) who could not be touched by Satan. Jesus Christ is man's only hope.

A general proclamation of grace does not disturb people, but natural men despise illustrated grace. This was demonstrated in response to Christ's examples to illustrate grace: "But I [Christ] say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff" (Luke 4:25-29 NASB).

Grace is God's eternal choice of some in Christ to be saved (Eph. 1:4). The Biblical view of the electing God does not eliminate the Person and Work of Jesus Christ: "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 2:13, 14 NASB).

There is no truth that does not have to contend with error. Two dangers to be avoided in the study of election are activism and passivism. Activism is a restless zeal excited to opposition because election finds in the best nothing to attract and in the worst nothing to deter. Passivism is the other extreme. It is the concept of election that eliminates the means to the Divinely appointed end that results in a do-nothing attitude concerning the Christian's responsibility to witness.

Those who believe in an elected plan of salvation have the same concept of God in soteriology that deists have of God in theology. Deists exclude God from nature except at the point of origin. In order for these propagators to be consistent, they should encourage people to pray not to the God of the Bible, but to sinners.

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