

• Apostolic Eschatology

EXPOSING GOD'S INTENDED FINISH



Volume 1

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Chapter One

An Introduction

It is of utmost importance that the doctrine of the Church be continuously critically analyzed and apostolically redefined to ensure that it is in line with the doctrine of Jesus and His apostles. We must interpret the Word of God like Jesus and His apostles did: “by the Spirit”, and not let majority pressure or popular views influence us to stray away from the unadulterated Word of God. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture and remain Christ-centred, interpreting the end from the beginning to discover the original intent of God and the unfolding mystery of His eternal Kingdom.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophesy never came by the will of a man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” – 2 Pet 1:20

“These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” – 1Co 2:13

Inaccurate mindsets, traditions and wrong paradigms can frustrate the acceleration of God's Kingdom purposes in the earth. Defining this current Apostolic season and understanding the Rhema Word of God by the revelation of the Spirit is essential for the Church to stay relevant and accurate.

The leaders of dead religion have always been seeking new ways to gain power, rule and dominion to enrich themselves through others. This season is not about the title of Bishop or Apostle, or of

men trying to outrank one another. Entitlement has always been a way of hiding insecurities. Thus we must rely on God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, to distribute His gifts in and through us according to His will and not our ambition. We have the assurance of the Lord in Rev. 3:8 that He has given us an open door that no one can shut. In fact this is the season of an open heaven.

The most important issue in the Church is the issue of God's Kingdom. The message of the Kingdom was and is the priority of God and must therefore become the priority of His Church.

The Season has Changed

"He changes the times and the seasons; He removes Kings and raises up Kings" – Dan 2:21

In past times, the Kingdom of God was understood, defined and administered by the Holy Spirit through a pastoral grace in the local Church. The shepherd heart of Moses is a good example of this grace. Through this pastoral grace, God gave Moses the ability to deliver and lead Israel out of Egypt in their journey to the Promised land for 40 years.

One generation later the season changed, and Moses from the tribe of Levi, had to make way for Joshua the commander from the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim) who had the grace to possess and prosper through the Book of the Law. When God changed the season for Israel, He also changed the leadership grace through which the new season would be administrated.

Then after Joshua, Caleb from the tribe of Judah started leading Israel towards their victories in the Promised land. His grace was different from that of Moses and Joshua. Caleb's grace is that of a conqueror. He conquered the giants of Hebron and possessed and ruled the land he spied. David was from this same tribe - Judah. This

became the ruling and leading tribe in Israel. The tribe from which the Kings of Israel and Jesus Christ, the Greater Son of David, the King, would eventually come.¹

Caleb operated in this spirit of the Kingdom. Caleb is a type of the leadership grace God is currently restoring to lead the Church. He said that He would restore the House of David.² In this current Apostolic season of reformation God is awakening us to the reality of the Church as the restored House of David, the Kingdom of God and the rule of Jesus Christ as Lord.

Dear friend, God's season has changed. God is currently administering His kingdom purposes on the earth through the Prophetic and Apostolic grace. Moses could take Israel out of Egypt but it took a commander, Joshua to take them in. Joshua took them in and taught them to walk by God's Word and how to prosper. But it was only when Caleb from the tribe of Judah came that the remaining land was conquered. David from this tribe possessed the stronghold of Jerusalem and established Zion.

The Apostolic grace is foundational and governmental in nature. Therefore we can expect all Church doctrine to be re-evaluated. This is critical because doctrine forms the foundation of the mindset of the Church and ultimately determines our behaviour. We are and behave according to what we believe.

"For as a man thinks in his heart so is he." – Pro 23:7

¹ Gen 49:10

² Acts 15:16-17

The Importance of Doctrine

Doctrine is of the utmost importance. When the first Church met under the grace of the Apostles of the Lamb, their first and foremost focus was Apostolic doctrine, for without accurate doctrine their fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers would have been rendered inaccurate.³ Apostolic doctrine is more than creeds and ancient beliefs. It is a proceeding Word that allows the Church to walk accurately in what is relevant for its season, without ever violating the Scripture. The accuracy of the interpretation is that which makes the Scripture alive and effective in our lives.

Jesus defeated the devil with 'present day truth' in the wilderness of temptation through an accurate interpretation of the Scripture. Thus Scripture without the revelation of the Spirit can become a dry well.

Paul the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 3:6

"...the letter kills but the Spirit gives life."

In this season we are not ministers of the letter but of the Spirit. This is one of the most important aspects of this current Apostolic season. Apostolic grace has the ability to interpret the Scripture by the Holy Spirit. Accurate interpretation can only take place by the Holy Spirit and it makes the Church relevant, dynamic and powerful.

I still remember in the apartheid years of South Africa how the Church (in South Africa) was influenced by the apartheid government. The government influenced the whole nation. It even determined how we related to fellow Christians. Some denominations operated and structured their whole organizations accordingly. They even found Scripture (letter) to justify their prejudice.

³ Act 2:42

I grew up in a Pentecostal Church, but I could never understand why we could not treat all Christians equally and without prejudice and why pastors of a different colour and culture had to come through the 'back door'. One pastor got in to trouble because he invited a non-white gospel singer to pray with the elders before the meeting.

Inaccurate, social and political policies can influence even Spirit filled people. No wonder Paul confronted Peter openly in Antioch concerning certain inaccurate doctrine and behavioural issues.

This was also the greatest reason for the fall of Jerusalem in the first century. The religious leaders of that day did not know the power of God nor the interpretation of the Scriptures. They followed their own private interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. Their traditions made the Word of God null and void ⁴

Inaccurate doctrine will ultimately render the system that embraces it ineffective and irrelevant.

Eschatology

Eschatology is the understanding concerning the End. True eschatology must be Christ centred. Apostles and Prophets make sure that Christ remains the centre of it all. They are master builders, laying the foundation of Christ.⁵ Eschatology is not so much the sequence of the 'end time' events, but rather concerns itself with rulership. The real issue is: Who has the right to rule? True Eschatology is all about the finish and the ever-increasing Kingdom of God.

⁴Mat 15:6

⁵1Co 3:10

Most books about the 'end times' were written in the previous century by people whose ideas have proven to be inaccurate and outdated. Most of the popular modern-day eschatology is fear based, pre-occupied with the antichrist and pessimistic about the future. Because of its sensational nature it has become popular and well advertised, rather than an accurate doctrine.

Modern day popular eschatology with its futuristic dispensational theories has created an inaccurate and incomplete picture of the end. Therefore most Christians have a negative expectation about the future.

Darwin's evolution theory is only a theory; although most will agree that there are developments within species we know that there is no evidence supporting evolution from one species to another. Even Darwin did not believe that his theory was factual or scientific, yet it has influenced the mindsets of millions of people. Today it forms the basis of most secular educational systems of the world and many use it as the foundation of their thinking. They argue from this theory as though it is a fact. Even many Christians influenced by the theory of evolution struggle to understand the Bible's creational account of mankind and try to fit the Bible into their inaccurate philosophy and doctrine.

In the same way the faulty theories concerning 'The fullness of time', 'The return of the Lord', 'The Rapture', 'The Great tribulation', 'Armageddon', 'The rebuilding of the Temple', 'Antichrist', 'The number 666', and many other concepts, influenced the mindsets of millions of Christians.

This is a very serious matter because it influences the way we think, believe, and respond to current events. If we are misinformed and have inaccurate concepts about the future we will come to wrong conclusions that will render us ineffective today.

The first weapon of mass destruction used on mankind was the weapon of misinformation. The snake used this weapon in the garden when he said: "If you eat you will be like God". Man was

already created in the image and likeness of God. This misinformation led to an identity crisis. For if you don't know who you are and where you come from, you will not know your destiny.

If we do not have an accurate picture of the end it influences our current direction and effectiveness. We must understand that the Lord's return can be hastened or delayed.

The Apostle Peter puts it in this way:

*"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive **until** the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."* – Acts 3:19

If the restoration of all things that the prophets spoke of since the world began, are a prerequisite of the Lord's return, then we need to find out what these things are, and accelerate His coming. One of these things that must take place before the Lord returns is that:

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" – Heb 10:12-13

The Church will have to operate with a Kingdom mentality here on earth and rule in the midst of its enemies until they are all under His feet. This current Apostolic season has the finish and fullness at heart and therefore it will of necessity involve itself with eschatology. The questions we need to ask ourselves are:

'Are we waiting for Him or is He waiting for us?'
and
'Whose move is it now?'

This Book is called 'Apostolic Eschatology' and it seeks to answer some of the questions that lead to much current confusion existing in the Church. We know that school is not out and there remains grey areas. But we want to be good stewards of Kingdom truth and therefore we need to bring forth from our treasure old and new things.

"Then He said to them, 'Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.'" - Mat 13:52

If you are serious about the truth and willing to be challenged and transformed by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, knowing that there must be more, then this study is for you. The intention is not to explain everything in detail, but to provoke you to seek a more accurate interpretation of the Scripture. May God Himself by the revelation of His Spirit finish the good work He started in you.

The best is yet to come!

Chapter Two

Who has the right to rule?

The prophet Daniel gives us a very useful insight into the Kingdoms that would come into power from the time of the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (B.C. 604), until the Roman Empire with its ten Caesars at the time of Christ and the first century Church.

The Dream of the King

Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning the last days.⁶ He dreamt of five kingdoms until the end. There will be four passing gentile Kingdoms before the fifth and final Kingdom. This final Kingdom is an ever-lasting Kingdom that would fill the earth. This Kingdom would belong to the saints of the Most High and would never be given to another nation again.

The four kingdoms represented in the image were:

- ❖ The first kingdom would be the head of gold, representing the Babylonians with Nebuchadnezzar as king (604B.C.)

⁶ Dan 2:28

- ❖ The second lesser kingdom would be the breast and arms of silver, representing the Medo-Persians under king Darius. (from 538 B.C.)
- ❖ The third kingdom would be the belly and thighs of bronze, representing the Greeks under Alexander the Great.
- ❖ The fourth and final gentile kingdom would be the legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay. This represented the terrible, cruel Roman Empire with its ten Caesars.

This dream concerns the four gentile kingdoms that would tread Jerusalem underfoot until the time of the nations would be fulfilled. Jesus mentions that Jerusalem will be tread underfoot by the Nations until their time is fulfilled.⁷ This dream would later be confirmed to Daniel in a vision concerning four beasts.⁸

The Four Beasts of Daniel Chapter Seven

Daniel the Prophet had a vision concerning the four winds that stirred up the sea and four beasts coming out of the sea. We know from Biblical imagery that the sea is a metaphor for the heathen nations.⁹ These four beasts came from the sea and were the same gentile kingdoms that were represented in the image. When the Bible speaks of beasts it refers to worldly governments or kingdoms.

- ❖ The Lion with Eagles wings represents the Babylonian Kingdom
- ❖ The Bear represents the Medo-Persian Empire.

⁷ Luke 21:24

⁸ Daniel 7

⁹ Rev 17:15

- ❖ The Leopard with four wings represents the Greek Empire.
- ❖ The terrible Beast with iron teeth represents the fourth and last worldly Empire. This is the Roman Empire with Caesar Nero who killed other Emperors to come into power. The numeric value of the name "Nero Caesar" was 666. This beast killed his own mother, wife and other Caesars and vigorously persecuted the Church. He reigned 3½ years before he committed suicide. It was during his reign that Jerusalem was surrounded; Vespasian eventually destroyed the City Jerusalem, through his son Titus in 70AD.

The Jewish general Matthias Joseph, whose name was changed by Caesar to Flavious Josephus, was an eyewitness to the Jewish Revolt. As an historian he left valuable writings that confirm Bible prophecy. History teaches us the accuracy of these prophetic encounters of Daniel.

Daniel also told us of the appearance of the fifth Kingdom after the last gentile kingdom. The Messiah would come and establish His kingdom on the earth and His kingdom would be everlasting and fill all the earth and never be given to another nation.

"And in the days of these kings, the God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other peoples, but it shall crush and destroy all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." - Dan 2:44-45

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar does not end with the Roman Empire as the final Kingdom on earth. During the time of these kings a Stone (a Rock) came from a high mountain. It was cut out without human hands and crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, and became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

The key to understand dynamics of God's Kingdom is found in the following passage:

*"...and the kingdom shall not be left to other people;"-
Dan 2:44*

Daniel also tells us that the saints of the Most High will receive this Kingdom.¹⁰ The critical question that we need to ask ourselves is: When will it happen? Many have agreed about the Roman Empire being the fourth Kingdom but have postponed the Kingdom of God until the 'second coming' of the Lord Jesus.

I believe we need to study the Scriptures and let the Word interpret the Word concerning the timing of the fifth and final Kingdom – The Kingdom of God.

His Death, Resurrection and Ascension

Daniel saw not only the four worldly kingdoms arising from the nations, but also their judgment through the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Son of Man.

"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the

¹⁰ Dan 7:18

beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

I was watching in the night visions, And behold, one like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him." Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" - Dan 7:9-14

The court of the Ancient of days was set up in heaven and the books were opened. In this vision Daniel prophetically witnesses the victory of Christ. This is the victory accomplished through the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord Jesus. Jesus told us what His death and resurrection would accomplish in the following verses:

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out." - John 12:31

"...the ruler of this world is judged." - John 16:11

"He destroyed him that had power over death that is the devil" - Heb 2:14

All the above scriptures refer to the victory of the Son of Man through the Cross.

When Daniel sees the Son of Man coming with the clouds, he sees Him coming *to* the Ancient of days and not *from* the Ancient of days. This obviously is not a return of Jesus, but it refers to the ascension of the Son of Man. Of this event the disciples were witnesses as they

saw Him ascending with clouds unto His Father, the Ancient of Days.¹¹

It is in the crucifixion and resurrection that He destroyed him who had power over death at Calvary. At the cross the authority of these kingdoms was taken away, while their existence was prolonged.

As the Son of man came on the clouds to the Ancient of Days He received Kingdom, power and dominion. This is not a description of the return of the Lord to earth but His ascension to the Father. As He Himself declared, He has already been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

"...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." – Mat 28:18

The only Kingdom that is legitimate with real authority in heaven and on earth and under the earth is the Kingdom of His Son and the saints. And this Kingdom will never diminish nor ever be overthrown.

Isaiah, the prophet confirms this by telling us that it is an ever-increasing kingdom:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." - Is 9:6

¹¹ Acts 1:9-10

The Throne of David

The statement “upon the throne of David” in Is. 9:6 is of great importance. Most scholars agree that when Jesus sits on David’s throne, the ever-increasing Kingdom is established. God promised to David a Seed that would sit on his throne after his death.

“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” - 2Sa 7:12-13

We know that this promise to David really refers to the coming of the Christ, the seed of David. Solomon was inaugurated king before David rested with his fathers, indicating the Messianic nature of the promise.¹² David understood that this Seed was the Christ. And although He would come from his lineage, David called Him Lord. This Lord would build not a natural temple, but His own body in three days.

The Jewish Messianic expectation was that the Messiah would come to Jerusalem and sit on the natural throne of David to rule a Jewish Kingdom. But the throne of David represented the eternal throne of God. This throne was there before time and before David. David’s throne only represented *God’s* Kingdom and Throne. He ruled on the earth on God’s behalf and therefore his throne was called the throne of David.

Christ would sit upon this eternal throne that David’s throne was a type of. This, Jesus accomplished through His resurrection and ascension.

David prophesied in the Psalms:

¹² 1Kings 2

"The Lord said to my Lord. 'Sit at My right hand till I make your enemies your footstool.'" – Ps110:1

"I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. - Ps 2:7

This decree of the Father was fulfilled in the New Testament when the Father declared Jesus as His firstborn Son in whom He delights. The writer of Hebrews also confirms that this affirmation took place when Jesus purged us from our sins and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.¹³

To remove all doubt, the Apostle Peter declares on the day of Pentecost, that Christ is now seated upon the throne of David at the right hand of the Father.

"Men and brethren let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ,..." – Acts 2:29-31

In this scripture it is clear that the *Resurrection* is the time at which Jesus went to sit at the right hand of the Father, referred to as the throne of David. This Scripture is not about the second coming of Christ to be seated on David's throne. But it is fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. From that time onward the Kingdom was established and given to the saints forever.

"... Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and

¹³ Heb 1:3-5

justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” - Is 9:6

Christ and His Church is the fifth and final Kingdom ruling and reigning in the earth since the resurrection of Christ. Every day the defeated devil is in more trouble as the Kingdom and glory of God is starting to fill the earth and the enemies are placed under His feet. We do not have to be removed from the earth. No Sir! The enemy is not growing stronger and stronger and the Church weaker and weaker. This lie is now being exposed. The truth is that we are moving from glory to glory and from strength to strength.

Jesus explains to us the nature of the Kingdom of God by using many parables. The Kingdom is like a mustard seed. It begins as a very small insignificant seed, but eventually becomes a very large tree in which even the birds, who at first threaten the seed, can come and make their home.

The Kingdom is like leaven that is placed in three measures of dough. Although it is outweighed in measure, it works itself in and through the dough so that it will eventually permeate all of the dough in such a way that it can never be separated from the dough.

The Kingdom of God is like sowing seeds in a field. Then the farmer goes to rest and the seed grows and develops on its own in an unseen manner to finally produce a great harvest.

The coming of the Kingdom of God does not mean that the night is completely over and that we are left without enemies and challenges. No! The Kingdom comes for this very reason – to displace all illegitimate rule and reign.¹⁴

“Rule in the midst of your enemies!” – PS 110:2b

“But this Man, after he offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time

¹⁴ Act 3:21

*waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” – Heb
10:12-13*

*“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His
feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” 1Cor
15:25-26*

When God created the heavens and the earth, He showed us His rhythm. He started each day with the evening and ends it with the morning. With God the best wine is saved for last. God’s design always moves from the seed to the full harvest.

Chapter Three

The God of Excellence

God is a God of excellence and throughout the Old and New Testament we are confronted with this principle. To me this is the secret seal of Gods authenticity. Like the DNA in man that identifies his individuality. The DNA test can verify the identity of a person clearing all uncertainty. God has an unfailing and unmakeable code called His Excellence. Proverbs tells us that excellent things are threefold.

“Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, That you may answer words of truth To those who send to you?” - Pro 22:20-21

Excellence: (Strong’s H7991 -“shâlôsh”) triple, triangle, a threefold measure, third rank officer.

Excellence is threefold

Everything that God is and does contains this hidden element called excellence. Therefore when God introduced Himself to us He introduced Himself as a Triune God. This one God manifests himself as Father, Word, and Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Genesis God said; “let us make man in our image and likeness.” Man carries this threefold

characteristic of His Maker. Man is spirit, possesses a soul and dwells in body.¹⁵

The apostle Paul tells us that he was taken to the Third Heaven where the Throne is. (I personally believe that the natural creation is the first heaven. The second heaven is a higher, invisible dimension, where principalities and powers operate from.)

This threefold excellence is also displayed in the Patriarchs. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This threefold excellence of God is all over His creation and his dealings with man. The whole Word of God is filled with this code. Here are just a few examples that shows us that God left his seal and image all over His creation. It is the assurance of truth and authenticity. We should always search for this code in any teaching and especially doctrine.

Here is a list of some more threefold examples:

- ❖ He is the Way, Truth & Life
- ❖ His salvation is through Death, Burial & Resurrection
- ❖ His Ministry as Prophet, Priest & King
- ❖ These three remain: Faith, Hope & Love
- ❖ For Thine is the Kingdom, Power & Glory
- ❖ His seed produces 30 fold, 60 fold & 100 fold
- ❖ He is, was and is to come

Therefore the number three speaks to us of the completion of excellence. Here are some examples of that:

- ❖ Jesus rose from the dead on the Third day.
- ❖ The Kingdom is like yeast mixed into three measures of dough.

¹⁵ 1Th 5:23 - Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

- ❖ To Herod Jesus sent a message about the threefold nature of His ministry.

“And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.'" - *Luke 13:32*

- ❖ God told Joshua get ready today and tomorrow for on the third day they would cross over the Jordan.
- ❖ Moses said to Pharaoh: “let us go three days into the wilderness to offer to our God”
- ❖ When Moses went up the mountain God said He would descend on the third day.
- ❖ Abraham walked three days to the mountain to sacrifice Isaac.

The third day is more than just a literal number it is part of the excellence of God.

Excellence & Eschatology

The three fold principle must also therefore be reflected in our eschatology. Our doctrine concerning the end cannot violate this principle. Throughout the Bible numbers symbolize important principles. Let's look at three very important examples of Excellent things in the Old Testament. They are dealings and instructions of God with His people Israel. These examples will show us how God moves and progresses from glory to glory with His people. The apostle Paul writes about the Exodus of Israel and their journey through the wilderness and says:

“And all these things happened to them as examples; and it is written for our warning on which the ends of the world have come.” - 1Co 10:11

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” – Rom 15:4

Thus to understand where we come from and where God is taking us, let us examine some of the prominent Old testament examples together.

Israel’s redemptive journey

Firstly let’s look at Israel’s redemptive journey from Egypt to the Promise land:

- ❖ God delivered His people *out* of Egypt where they were little children behaving like slaves;¹⁶
- ❖ He took them *through* the wilderness. There He formed them into sons;
- ❖ Then He brought them *into* the promise land where they became fathers.

Not only was it a three-stage journey from Egypt to the Promised land, but they also developed their identity from slaves to mature fathers. The apostle John also writes in his epistle about this growth within the Saints:

“I write to you, little children... I write to you, fathers...I write to you young men...” – 1John 2:12-13

¹⁶ Gal 4:1

The three feasts

Secondly, God gave Israel three Feasts to keep in each calendar year:

- ❖ The Passover in the first month signifying salvation through His offering;
- ❖ The Feast of Pentecost in the third month signifying sonship through the infilling of the Holy Spirit;
- ❖ The feast of Tabernacles in Seventh month signifying maturity, and the fullness of the glorious harvest.

These feasts signify the spiritual migration of Gods people from little children to fathers.

Historically the first Passover was kept in Egypt in the first month. The first Pentecost, fifty days after their departure from Egypt in the third month, was in the wilderness at Mount Sinai.¹⁷ The first feast of Tabernacles was held in the Promised land.

Personally, in our spiritual journey we have to experience our own Passover where we meet Jesus, the Passover Lamb. This feast is the beginning of our spiritual journey. Without a personal Passover in our lives we are stuck in slavery. The second feast, Pentecost, is where we are baptized by Christ into the Holy Spirit. Then we must move unto the fullness of the image and stature of Christ, after the pattern of the Feast of Tabernacles. We need to make this journey in our personal lives and grow and mature in Christ.

This truth also has a corporate application for the Church in the earth. The Church must also move toward the fulness of the harvest signified by the feast of Tabernacles. There is a maturity that lies beyond the experience of Pentecost. It is what Paul spoke about:

“till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the

¹⁷ Ex 19:1; Lev 23:16

*measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" – Eph
4:13-14*

Pentecost was never meant to be the final feast. But a door to the fulness of God's plan for us. The Historical feast of Pentecost was experienced in the wilderness. It gave them power to endure hardship and directed them to the promised land. Much of the Church today have camped at one or both of the first two feasts, but are reluctant to embrace or even acknowledge the Feast of Tabernacles. Just like historical Israel, our lack of understanding God's unfolding plan, delays our progress towards the inheritance of the Promise and the celebration of the final feast of the fulness.

We must remember that the promised land is not a symbol of heaven but rather our inheritance in the earth, still occupied by the enemy. There were giants and fortresses that needed to be displaced in the land of Promise. The promise had to be possessed. Many have become complacent in the wilderness, wanting God to provide for them through signs and miracles, rather than taking personal responsibility in possessing the promise.

Israel was ready to cross the Jordan river into the Promised land in the seventh month after their exodus. This would allow them to have the first feast of Tabernacles in the promised land according to the instruction of the Lord. But their lack of faith and affinity to the desert and Egypt kept them in the wilderness for another forty years.

If we do not understand the excellence of God's plan, thinking that the wilderness is our final destination, we will continuously look for a way to escape, instead of looking towards the possession of the Promised land and the rest.

The Tabernacle

Thirdly, God gave Moses a three-fold pattern for the layout of the Tabernacle. Within the temple there were three courts.

- ❖ The Outer court;
- ❖ The Holy place;
- ❖ The Holy of Holies.

This Tabernacle is a shadow and a type of Jesus Christ, the crucified Lamb and Dwelling of the Father.¹⁸

In the Outer court we find the following:

- ❖ The door into the outer court represented Jesus as the only door.
- ❖ The brazen altar represented the Cross where the Blood flowed for our forgiveness.
- ❖ The brazen laver with its cleansing water represented Baptism.

The Outer court represents the Passover feast. Here Jesus is the the door through which we enter. This is made possible through His death, burial and resurrection. And in baptism we identify with Him in his finished work. In the Outer Court we find Jesus as Saviour.

Passing through the Outer court you enter into the second court - the Holy Place.

In the Holy Place we find the following:

- ❖ The candlestick on the southern side represented Christ as the Anointed One in the midst of the Church and the Light of the world.

¹⁸ Col 2:9

- ❖ The table of show bread on the northern side represented Christ as the bread of life, the fresh Manna from the Father.
- ❖ The golden altar of incense in front of the veil represented Christ the heart of the Father. This is a picture of Christ who is the pleasant aroma the sweet smelling offering of praise and worship before God.

The Holy Place represents the feast of Pentecost, where He is the baptiser with the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Place we know Jesus as Christ the anointed One.

Once a year the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies beyond the veil. The Holy of Holies housed the golden ark of the covenant. This Ark of the covenant had a solid golden lid called the Mercy seat and inside the ark there were three objects:

- ❖ A golden pot filled with Manna.
- ❖ The rod of Aaron that budded and bore ripe fruit in one night.
- ❖ The Law on two tablets of stone.

Here He is the Bread of heaven, the Anointed rod that budded and the eternal Word and Law of God. In the Holy of Holies, Jesus is King and Lord that rules forever.

This Holy of Holies represents the ultimate feast of the Tabernacles in the seventh month. Israel could only celebrate this feast once they entered the promise land. In this feast people come out of their dwellings and dwelt in booths under an open heaven.

Therefore the Tabernacle of Moses is a picture of Jesus the Dwelling place of the Father. In Him the salvation of God progresses from the Outer Court where Jesus is Saviour, to the Holy Place where Christ is the Anointed, to the Holy of Holies where He is King and Lord of all. God always moves from glory to glory.

The above examples of the progressive nature of God's excellence is very important when we consider the study of end time things. God always progresses his purposes from glory to more glory.

Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God is like the complete leavening of three measures of dough. The leaven makes its way progressively throughout all three measures until it has completely leavened the lumps.

The Cross is only the beginning of His rulership. Here Daniel's rock, Christ, hit the image at its feet. From that time forward the Kingdom is established and grows to progressively to become a mountain but eventually it will fill the earth. This Kingdom is of an everincreasing nature and will not be aborted. ¹⁹It does not need to be rescued through any form of escape, but it carries inside itself the Seed of God that will produce a glorious harvest of sons.²⁰ Christ rules and reigns from the Cross to the end. The enemy has been defeated.²¹ The heavens and the earth is the legal possession of Christ Jesus and His bride.²²

God's excellence will prevail.

¹⁹ Is. 9:7

²⁰ Rom 8:19

²¹ Heb 2:14

²² Mat 28:18

• Apostolic Eschatology

EXPOSING GOD'S INTENDED FINISH



Volume 2

Frans Du Plessis

Chapter Four

Like a Thief in the night

As a young Christian I remember the fear these words created in my heart. Waking up in the middle of the night, and thinking that I might have been left behind. The preacher's message haunted me:

"If you have done anything wrong, in word, deed or even in thought, you will be left behind, for the Lord is coming like a thief in the night to take his people home. Are you ready?"

As teenagers, in the late sixties, we were greatly influenced by the 'end time' movies. I remember praying: "Please Lord don't come now, I would like to marry that beautiful girl that I saw in the church"

But the preacher was so anointed when he explained to us: "the fig tree, Israel, blossomed in May 1948 with Israel's independence, and within one generation (40 years), we will see the secret return of the Lord." Quoting Jesus, that said; "This generation shall surely not pass away until everything has come to pass." His interpretation of this passage was that the generation that sees the fig tree blossom would surely not pass away until all the things that He spoke about in Matt 24 would happen.¹

We waited with fear and anticipation for the year 1988, forty years after Israel's independence. For the preacher said: "You only have one shot at it, if you miss it you will have to face the great

¹Mat 24:32

tribulation,² and the only way to be saved would then be to die for your own salvation.”

I remember how many people refused to send their children to university because they felt that it would be a waste of time and money. It was a sin to have any long-term vision. Many books were written during those days, books that were revised shortly after their predictions failed. New books explained when the rapture did not happen and explained what the new expected time of fulfilment would be. At first some said it would happen in 1988, others added the three and a half years of *“the great tribulation”*. So the new prediction was 1991.

I was a young pastor in my first church in 1976, and convinced that we will experience the rapture at any moment. South Africa went through great racial unrest that year. It was the 7-Day Israeli War and Soweto was in uproar against the apartheid system. Many Christians were gripped in fear. This was a great climate to preach the secret rapture of the Church.

I was so convinced about it that I organized a whole drama on this subject. It was such a success that I was invited to do this drama also in other churches. I still remember seeing the fear on the faces of the people. During the altar call the people ran forward with fear and trembling.

Can we ever forget the panic the Y2K threat caused when the economy of the world was supposed to come to a standstill at the turn of the 20th century? The year 2000, would see the collapse of the computer world and with it the economies of the world. This again was used by the so-called end time prophets who saw this chaotic time as the opportune time for the antichrist to step forward and bring solutions to the world. One pastor showed me his basement, stocked with all kinds of survival necessities, non-perishable foods packed to the ceiling, paraffin and power generators.

² Mat 24:21

All these events were always related to the Book of Revelation and the last days. The year 2000 AD came and is now far gone and the same prophets keep on writing more books.

I could never understand why God would design a plan for the future that would create fear, pessimism, passivism, poverty, and apathy in His Church? Why would He, like a thief, break into His own house and steal His own property? This is against His nature of excellence. He is not a thief that steals, the devil and religion are the only thieves.

How then must we understand Jesus' word "like a thief in the night". Paul the apostle, interprets the words of Jesus:

"For you yourselves know accurately that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night." - 1Th 5:2

At last, after many years of searching the Scriptures, the Lord started to show me that there are great inaccuracies and misunderstandings about the end. What is generally preached about the end, the last days, and the future was not His idea or that of His apostles. These theories, just like the theory of evolution, have perverted the mindset of thousands, even millions of God's people.

The Last Days

A vital key to the understanding of all these very important events is the difference between: ***The 'Last days' and 'the End'***.

Firstly one must understand that the 'last days' Jesus and the apostles spoke about is not 'the end of time' or the fulfilment and restoration of all things spoken by Peter³ and Paul⁴ in some of their

³ Act 3:21 - whom Heaven truly needs to receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by *the* mouth of His holy prophets since the world began.

⁴ Eph 1:10

writings. The restoration of all things refers to things such as, the maturity of the Church, all His enemies being placed under His feet, the physical return of the Lord to the earth, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgement.⁵

The Lord's Day, when Jesus would come like a thief in the night, as in the days of Noah, referred to the last days of the Old Covenant. He would come to judge the religious who did not receive their Messiah. Jesus mourns over the City, Jerusalem, declaring its desolation.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate;" – Mat 23:37-38

John the Baptist, as he was preparing the way for the Messiah, declared to the Pharisees: 'Repent' and if not 'judgement is coming on you'.⁶

Jesus came to inaugurate the New Covenant and bring the Old to its fullness.⁷ This was the last days of the Old Testament age. Jesus, through His resurrection, would be positioned at the right hand of the power of God, receiving all authority in heaven and on earth and then return to judge all those who violated His covenant and refused His grace. Jesus confirmed this by saying to the high priest on the night of His trial:

"It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." – Mat 26:64

⁵ "Pleroma":Strong's From G4137; *repletion* or *completion*, that is, (subjectively) what *fills* (as contents, supplement, copiousness, multitude), or (objectively) what is *filled* (as container, performance, period): - which is put in to fill up, piece that filled up, fulfilling, full, fullness.

⁶ Mat 3:7

⁷ Heb 8:13

He was not referring to his final return, or as some say: His 'second coming'. This coming was to the ones who pierced Him.⁸ This would be a time of great mourning and would bring the four seven-fold judgements on the transgressors of the Old Covenant.⁹ This was the trouble of Jacob.

"Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it." – Jer. 30:7

All the prophets foretold the Day of the Lord. Jesus explains Isaiah chapter 5 in the parable of the vineyard.¹⁰ The Vineyard (Kingdom) would be taken from the house of Israel and be given to another nation, the Church, made up of Jew and Gentile who will bear the fruit thereof.¹¹

The Pharisees themselves answered Jesus in this parable when He asked them what the consequences of killing the Heir would be:

"They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.'" – Mat 21:41

After Jesus cursed the fig tree, He went to the Temple in Jerusalem and over turned the tables and merchandise. This was uncommon to Jesus who loved and forgave everyone. This was a prophetic action foretelling the end of the Old Testament age.

In Matthew chapter 23, Jesus decrees the woes of God to that generation. He accuses them of the blood of all the prophets from Abel to Zachariah and told them that they will also kill the Lord and his apostles. He ends the woes with these words:

⁸ Rev 1:7

⁹ Lev 26:18, Lev 26:21, Lev 26:24, Lev 26:28

¹⁰ Mat 21:33-44

¹¹ Mat 21:42 (Is 5 1:13)

“Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” – Mat 23:36

The Mt. Olivet Discourse

The coming like a ‘thief in the night’ is connected to the Olivet Discourse of Matthew, chapter 24. Here Jesus explains His earlier declaration over Jerusalem, its people and the temple.

In Matthew 24 Jesus answers the question of His disciples:

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when these things will be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?’” – Mat 24:3

It is very important to understand what they wanted to know:

- ❖ When will the temple be destroyed?
- ❖ What is the sign of Your coming?
- ❖ When is the end of the age (aeon)?¹²

They asked these questions in response to His announcement over Jerusalem and the temple. The questions could have been combined and asked in the following manner:

“What is the sign of the coming of the Son of Man that will bring the Day of judgement, the destruction of the temple and the end of this Old Covenant Jewish age?”

¹²*Aeon: ahee-ohn': age; Strong's: From the same as G104; properly an age; by extension perpetuity (also past); by implication the world; specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future): - age, course, eternal, (for) ever (-more), [n-]ever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end). Compare G5550.*

It is very important to remember that they did not know or understand at this point, that He would die and be resurrected in three days, let alone return. It was only forty days after His resurrection, that the angels told them that Jesus would physically return to the earth.

Thus their question was not referring to a physical return, for He had not even left them yet. But it is more likely that they were referring to a cloud-coming in Judgment according to the Old Testament prophetic utterances.

The Coming in Judgment

Jesus explained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the coming judgement to the House of Israel:

"But know this that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." ¹³

He explained the coming fire to the unfaithful servant and his house.

"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" - Luke 12:49

Jesus was telling them that their city will be visited by judgement. It would be during *their* generation, like a thief in the night. *This* is the coming of the Lord like a thief in the night. No one would know the day or the hour and it would be as in the days of Noah.

³⁵ Luke 12:39

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” - Mat 24:36-39

Only God knew the time of the flood. Noah had to prepare the Ark not knowing from the beginning when it would rain. God only informed him seven days before the time.

“For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made. And Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded him.” - Gen 7:4-5

The disciples knew the day of vengeance would be in their day because Jesus told them that their generation would not pass until all things had been fulfilled. In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus gives them clear indication of what the warning signs would be before the coming of this great and terrible day. But the Pharisees were not able to discern the signs of the times, just as the people in the time of Noah.¹⁴ To them, His coming would be like that of a thief, bringing destruction, loss and desolation to their house, at an hour they did not expect.

The Father revealed the time to His Son and the Son sent His angel to inform John His servant to warn His disciples in the seven churches of Asia.

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.

¹⁴ Mat 16:2-3

And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.” – Rev 1:1

Those in Jerusalem also knew the imminence of His coming. Jesus gave them certain warning signs. Like the fact that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies. Also, there would be rumours of wars, persecution, false prophets, famines, earthquakes etc. These things were the order of the day in Rome and Jerusalem according to the historical account of Flavius Josephus.

Therefore the first Church was not surprised by His ‘thief-like’ coming. The apostle Paul tells us that only the unbelievers would be caught unaware.¹⁵ Just like the unbelievers in the days of Noah were surprised by the sudden and unexpected coming and were swept away by it.

Who will be taken and who will be left?

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.”¹⁶ - Matt 13:38-42

Contrary to previous teachings that led us to believe that it was the unbelievers that were to be left, we see the opposite to be true. The Lord told them that His coming would be like the flood of Noah.

¹⁵ 1Th 5:1-5

¹⁶ Mat 24:40-43

The unbelievers were taken (*destroyed*)¹⁷ in judgement when the flood came. Only Noah and his family entered the Ark and were left untouched by the devastation the waters brought. The coming of the Lord paralleled this.

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of man be.” – Mt 24:37

The city Jerusalem, the Temple and the unbelievers in it, were taken by surprise and were destroyed by the coming of the Lord. The Church was left untouched and safe just as Noah and his family. This is consistent with the Psalms of David in which the righteous always remains and the wicked are removed.¹⁸

The parable of the wheat and the tares confirms this pattern.

“The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Reading historical accounts of the judgment that came upon Jerusalem, we learn that the judgment came against Jerusalem in the form of the Roman armies in 69-70 AD. The Christians, remembering Jesus' words, left Jerusalem in time and fled from the city. Almost 1.5 million Jews died in and around Jerusalem in the most horrific tribulation and almost 800,000 were taken captive and sold as slaves.

¹⁷ Luke 17:27-29

¹⁸ Ps 37:9

Truly the axe was at the root of the tree. The winnowing fan was in His hand to remove the tares and burn them with fire.¹⁹ This happened 40 years after the ministry of the Messiah. Truly, that generation did not pass away until everything Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24 was fulfilled.²⁰

A Thief to us?

It is the apostle Paul that puts perspective to the words of Jesus in the following writings to the Church in Thessalonica:

“But of the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need that I write to you.

For you yourselves know accurately that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety! Then sudden destruction comes on them, as travail upon a woman with child. And they shall not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness, that the Day should overtake you like a thief.” – 1 Thess. 5:1-4

All the New Testament books were a warning to the Church, but also a comfort to those who belong to the Lord. They would not be overcome by the Day of the Lord and taken out in Judgement but be protected against this judgement.

The Church was left behind but the religious unbelievers and their city was taken out and destroyed by fire. I think they proclaimed with joy:

“Left behind, left behind. Thank God, Almighty we are safely left behind!”

¹⁹ Mat 3:7-12

²⁰ Mat 24:34; Mat 23:36

Chapter Five

The Vineyard

What does the Vineyard have to do with Eschatology? The answer is: Everything!

The apostles were taught by Jesus and the Holy Spirit to interpret the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. They used Scripture to interpret New Testament realities. Jesus would use the Old Testament to show how it testified of Him.²¹

The devil and the religious leaders used the letter of the written Word and not the Spirit, and so it produced death and legalism instead of revelation and life. It always amazes me that the religious and educated leaders did not understand Jesus and the Scriptures. They were so self-conscious, money controlled and position possessed that they were not willing to hear the mysteries of the Kingdom, repent and be changed.²²

The Old Testament is the shadow and type of the substance of Christ. All things find their fullness in Him who was there before the shadow and type. In fact you cannot have a shadow without a substantive object that casts the shadow.²³

Jesus said: "...before Abraham was, I AM."²⁴ Even John the Baptist said: "...He was there before me"²⁵

²¹ Luke 24:27

²² Matt 13:11-15

²³ Col 2:16-17

²⁴ John 8:58

Israel, custodians of the vineyard

It is clear from the Old and New Testament that God saw His people, Israel, as His precious Vine that was supposed to represent Him.²⁶ He delivered it from captivity and planted it on a fruitful hill. He built a wall around it and separated it from the nations that it would produce the best quality grapes. He also dug a winepress in it. But this precious vine produced wild and sour grapes.

The Prophet Isaiah declared this over Jerusalem and its inhabitants:

“Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; [and] break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts [is] the

²⁵ John 1:15

²⁶ Is 5:7

house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” - Is 5:1-7

He chose the nation Israel, as custodians of His kingdom, to produce the fruit of the Kingdom. God separated them from the other nations by a wall of divine favour and love. He dug a winepress in their midst to make it clear what He expected from them. They had to produce His wine to the nations. Then He set watchmen on the towers to give early warning of any approaching danger. He came time and time again to clean the vineyard, fertilise it and gather its grapes through the Prophets.

But they refused to produce His Kingdom fruit. They produced their own rotten traditions and religion. Not only was Israel seen as a pleasant Vine, but the Psalmist says that the Vine is also the son of God's right hand:

“You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations and planted it. You cleared before it, and caused it to take deep root; and it filled the land. The hills were covered with its shadow, and its boughs were as the great cedars. It sent out its boughs to the sea, and its branches to the river.

Why have You broken down its hedges, so that all those who pass by the way pluck it? The boar out of the wood wastes it, and the wild beast of the field eats it. Return, we beg You, O God of Hosts; look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this Vine, and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the Son that You make strong for Yourself. It is burned with fire, and cut down; they perish at the rebuke of your holy face. Let Your hand be on the Man of Your right hand, on the Son of man whom You have made strong for Yourself.” - Ps 80:8-17

The Vine, Israel, was likened to a first-born son of God. Hosea the prophet said that God called his son from Egypt.²⁷ This nation was supposed to bring God's kingdom to the nations, to be carriers of His Spirit and instruments of His joy. But their heart was divided. Israel disobeyed God and followed the ways of the nations. They did not keep the vineyard, and did not produce the rule of God on the earth. Therefore the Lord throughout history sent prophets and messengers to His Vineyard to inspect and collect the fruit. Some they mistreated others they stoned and murdered.

The Prophet foretells their fate in Isaiah chapter 5:

"And now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard; I will take away its hedge, and it shall be eaten up; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down." - Is 5:5

The problem with Israel was its leaders. This is still the problem today. Inaccurate, selfish leaders spoil the Kingdom and turn it into a wilderness:

"Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard; they have trampled My portion under foot; they have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness." - Je 12:10

But the vineyard was about to be given to another. A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people would proclaim His praises. A nation who once were not a people but now have obtained mercy²⁸

The Vineyard is a picture of the Kingdom of God on the earth. When Jesus told the religious leaders the parable of the Vineyard and the vinedressers who killed the heir, their reply sealed their judgement:²⁹

²⁷ Hosea 11: 1

²⁸ 1 Pet 2:9-15

²⁹ Mat 21: 41-45

“They said to Him, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.’

Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. THIS WAS THE LORD’S DOING, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?’

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.’

Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.” - Mat 21:41-45

The Vineyard, Israel, was supposed to produce Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit. But it never produced the wine of Kingdom. Thus when Christ, the true Vine³⁰ was manifested, He also chose new wineskins in the disciples, who would carry the wine of the New Covenant and fill the earth with God’s joy. For Zion is supposed to be the joy of whole earth.³¹ But the old wineskins would always prefer the old wine.³²

According to the parable of the vineyard the following things were about to happen to this rebellious Old Testament nation, who were the custodians of the Kingdom:

- ❖ Destruction of the wicked custodians
- ❖ The Kingdom given to another nation, *The Church*, bearing the fruit of it.

³⁰ John 15:1-2

³¹ Ps 48:2

³² Luke 5:39

Jesus is the True Vine

In the New Testament, Jesus is the True Son of the right hand of God, the First fruit of the resurrection, and the beginning of the new creation. Those who are in Him are part of the new creation. The old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new.³³

Jesus Himself is also the Vine and the Owner of the Vineyard. His Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles are the co-heirs of the Kingdom. We are the city on the hill according to Isaiah chapter 2.

*"I am the True Vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." -
John 15:1*

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear
fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you,
unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the
branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much
fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." - John 15:4-5*

According to Psalm 80, the Vineyard is also a picture of the Son of His right hand. God's intention with Israel was to raise them up and strengthen them as a firstborn to bring His Kingdom and its blessings to the nations. Moses was instructed to tell Pharaoh that God viewed Israel as His firstborn son.

*"And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD,
Israel [is] my son, [even] my firstborn" - Ex 4:22 (KJV)*

Unfortunately Israel disobeyed God's instruction and fell short of this calling. So in the fullness of time God sent His true firstborn Son, Christ Jesus to fulfil His original intent.³⁴ Interestingly enough Matthew interprets the prophecy of Hosea as a prophecy concerning Jesus the first born Son.

³³ 2 Co 5:17

³⁴ 1 Pet 2:8b

"and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." – Mat 2:15

God always wanted a nation of true sons who would be a blessing to the nations of the earth. God's intention for Israel to be a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation was a conditional promise.

*Now therefore, **if** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then** you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth [is] Mine.*

And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These [are] the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." – Ex 19:5-6

Jesus Christ is the true Son and precious Vine. Whosoever believes in Him become partakers of His promise of Grace. The apostle Peter confirms this position of those who are in Christ, saying to the Church:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;" – 1 Pet 2:9

Thus everyone who is in Christ has become part of the true Vine and the Kingdom of God producing precious fruit to be a blessing to the nations.³⁵ Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is that fruit.

³⁵ John 15:8

Chapter Six

Christ and the Olive Tree

The Olive Tree in the writings of Paul is greatly misunderstood by those who forgot what happened in Christ. Everything in the Old Testament must move through the Cross of Jesus and find its fulfilment in Him.

The Imagery of the Olive Tree

The branch that the dove brought to the Ark of Noah, indicated the water had subsided, was an Olive branch. This was the first plant seen after the flood. It brought the message of hope and salvation to the only family that survived the judgement. Jesus Christ is our hope and our salvation.

The second time this tree is mentioned is when Moses commanded the children of Israel to bring pure olive oil as the basis of the holy anointing oil. Another four spices would be mixed with the olive oil. This five-fold anointing oil was half bitter and half sweet. This clearly speaks of Christ, the Anointed One, who would come. He distributed His ministerial grace into five portions, giving it to some in the Church to minister on His behalf as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.³⁶

³⁶ Eph 4:11-12

Solomon used the wood of the Olive tree in the Holy of Holies.³⁷ Inside the Temple, Solomon made the Cherubs of Olive Wood. He also made the door of the innermost part of the temple with Olive Wood and overlaid it with solid gold. The temple is a picture of Christ, the anointed One. When Solomon used Olive wood he symbolized that the real temple and dwelling of the Father is Christ His Anointed Son.

The booths Israel made during the feast of Tabernacles were from olive branches they collected from Mount Olivet. This surely points to Christ our Dwelling. For in Him we live and move and have our being. Without Him we can do nothing. Our anointing, ability and grace flows from Him who was pressed and crushed at Gethsemane, the place of the Olive press.³⁸

The Olive tree is probably best known from the Book of Zechariah. Here the Prophet sees two Olive trees standing next to the Golden candlestick.

“And he said, these are the two sons of fresh oil who stand by Jehovah of the whole earth.” - Zech 4:14

These are the two anointed ones standing with the LORD that channel fresh anointing from Him to the Church, the Candlestick.

In the Old Testament it was Moses and Elijah, representing the Lord as the Law and the Prophets to the people. The number ‘two’ symbolises ‘witness’ in the Bible. The Law was written on two tablets of stone.

The New Covenant is also written on two tablets: the hearts and the minds of God’s people. In the New Testament God uses Apostles to write on the tablets of the mind and Prophets to write on the tablets of the heart. Apostles and Prophets are foundational,

³⁷ 1Ki 6:23

³⁸ Thayer Definition: Gethsemane = “an oil press”;The name of a place at the foot of the Mount of Olives,

governmental offices that are directly connected to the head, Christ. These two offices are channels through which revelation and anointing flow to the Church.

The Revelation of John also tells us of two witnesses that would witness in the land. Jesus said to the early Church that they should not go away from Jerusalem until they have received the Holy Spirit and then they would be His witnesses. On the other hand, Revelation Chapter 3 verse 14 tells us that Jesus himself is the True and faithful Witness.

The imagery of the two witnesses finds its fullest and most accurate expression in Jesus and His Church, One in the heavens and the other in the earth.

Paul concerning the Olive Tree

Paul, the apostle describes the natural nation Israel as part of the Olive tree.

The Olive tree as a nature of oil represents the Anointing. The Root, the Anointing One, produces and carries the branches of the Olive tree. The Branches carry the DNA of the Root.

"...and if the root [is] holy, so [are] the branches." – Rom 11:16b

"...and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree," – Rom 11:17b

David was such an anointed branch, bearing the fruit of the Root. Scripture declares Christ Jesus is the root of David:

"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse," - Is. 11:10

“And again, Isaiah says, there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.” - Rom 15:12

“And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” - Rev 5:5

The Olive tree represents all those who carry the same DNA as the root, Christ Jesus. In the Old Testament, just like the Vineyard, Israel was this tree that represented Christ, the Root. In the New Testament the shadow is replaced with the substance. Before the crucifixion only the natural seed of Abraham, Israel, represented the Kingdom of God. Now in the New Testament God removes the unbelieving branches³⁹ who do not represent the nature of the Root and engrafts new branches, who accept Christ the Root, as Lord.⁴⁰

It is important to understand that the true Olive tree is the Anointed Tree. This tree is Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles. For whosoever believes in Him becomes partakers of the fatness of the Root of David. This does not mean that the natural Jew, who was cut off because of their unbelief, cannot be engrafted back in again if they do not remain in unbelief. In fact, Paul tells us that there is a hardening of their hearts and their rejection of Christ opened the door of opportunity to the rest of humanity.

When the fullness of the Nations have entered and have become part of the Root, then God will make them jealous. Their jealousy will challenge them to return to the Messiah so that the veil over them can be removed in Christ. For whosoever believes in Him will be included and whosoever does not believe in Jesus Christ will be excluded from the Olive Tree.

Just like the Vine, the Olive Tree is Christ Jesus and the branches are those who are part of His Kingdom. There is only one Olive Tree.

³⁹ Mat 3:8-10

⁴⁰ John 15:2; Rom 11:17,21

The Gospel of the Kingdom cuts off every branch that does not believe in Him and engrafts every one who does.

The statement of Paul that all of Israel will be saved does not mean that all Jews will be saved. For Paul already said:

"Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved."" - Rom 9:27.

He also made the statement:

"they are not all Israel which are of Israel." - Rom 9:6

In the context of the eleventh chapter of Romans this means that all who are Israel indeed, Jews and Gentiles, circumcised at heart, shall be saved. Understanding the meaning of Israel is a vital key to help unfold the original intent of God concerning the end.

Apostolic Eschatology

EXPOSING GOD'S INTENDED FINISH



Volume 3

Frans Du Plessis

Chapter Seven

Israel and the Kingdom

Paul says that not all those who are of Israel are Israel,¹ and not all who Jews outwardly are Jews.² Israel was the name God gave to Jacob when he had an encounter with Him in Genesis, at Peniel. There Jacob struggled with God through the night and cried out: *"I have seen God face to face and my soul is saved"*. The name Israel means prince or ruler with God and man. Jacob later became a nation and God would address the whole nation by this name.

God's covenant with Israel was always conditional with regards to them being a royal priesthood and enjoying special blessings and privileges:

"And now if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all the nations; for all the earth is Mine." - Ex 19:5

"And it will be, if you shall listen carefully to the voice of Jehovah your God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command you today, Jehovah your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth." - Deut 28:1

¹ Rom 9:6

² Rom 2:28

The Firstborn Son called out of Egypt

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He said to Moses:

“And you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord: Israel is My son, My first-born” - Ex 4:22

This Scripture is amazing because it has great prophetic fulfillment. One man, Israel became a whole nation and God calls them His son, His firstborn. The Prophet Hosea prophesied hundreds of years later:

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt.” - Hosea 11:1

Hosea, the prophet, referred to the Exodus of Israel as a young nation. But approximately 1500 years later, in the fullness of time, God brought His *eternal* Israel into the world - Jesus, the firstborn Son that would become a nation, the Israel of God.

When Matthew wrote the story of Jesus' birth he said:

“And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt. And he was there until the death of Herod; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the LORD through the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I have called My Son.’” - Mat 2:14,

The Gospel of Matthew interprets this prophecy of Hosea as pertaining to the boy Jesus. He declares that Jesus is the firstborn Son, who was called out of Egypt and so God identifies Jesus His firstborn, Israel.

This is the key to understand the meaning of 'Israel.' Jesus is the true Vine and the Olive Tree. He is the Root of David, the Builder of David's House. He was before Abraham, David and Jacob. This Anointed tree is the tree of Life, the Olive tree and every one who does not bear His fruit is removed.

Jacob was a type and a shadow of the eternal Israel. Jacob fought through the night with a Man. This Man blessed him and gave him the name Israel. After this experience, he declared that he saw the face of God. In the New Testament, we learn that the face of God is Jesus the Christ.³

Jacob met the Lord in this Man, just like Abraham met Him in Melchizedek, Moses met Him in the burning bush and Shadrach Meshach and Abednego met Him as the fourth man in the fire.

The Israel of God includes everyone who believes in Him and carries His seed. In the Old Testament it was limited to one nation in the season of the Law, but now after the Cross, grace is available to all who believe. Those who do not believe in Him are removed and those who receive Him are engrafted into the Root of David, Jesus Christ, the Firstborn Son, the Vine, the Olive Tree and true Israel of God.

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” - Gal 3:16

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”
- Gal 3:26*

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” - Gal 3:27

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” - Gal 3:28

“And if you [are] Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” - Gal 3:29

³ 2Co 4:6

When the Son gave His life at Calvary, He died to multiply Himself⁴ and became a Holy nation and Royal priesthood as Peter declares in 1 Pet 2:5-10.

One New Man

When Paul addressed the issue of Israel he said that if the natural Israel does not remain in unbelief, they would be engrafted back into Christ, the Olive Tree. There is no salvation without faith in Jesus Christ. Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ make up the Church and the Israel of God.

The Church must stop confusing the Jews who believe in Jesus by calling them Messianic Jews. The Bible calls them brothers, saints and believers. They are part of the Church of Jesus Christ. They are not another plan of God. If we understand this very critical issue, many misunderstandings and confusions will be resolved.

There are not two temples, two nations and two kingdoms. The Church is Jew and Gentile. Together we are His Temple and the New Jerusalem. There can never be a separation between the Church and Israel again, for together in Him we are the Israel of God - One New Man,⁵ A New Creation.⁶

'For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, [that is], the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man [from] the two, [thus] making peace,' - Eph 2:14-15

⁴ John 12:24

⁵ Eph 2:11-22

⁶ 2Co 5:17

“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner[stone] in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” – Eph 2:20-22

The writer of the Hebrews in chapter twelve calls the Church, “the Church of the firstborn.” Jacob was not a firstborn in the natural but God gave him the blessing of the firstborn by naming him a prince with God and man. Jacob had a face-to-face encounter with the firstborn Son and received the nature of the Prince of Peace.

In the same way everyone who encounters God through the work of the cross of Christ receives the same Nature and becomes an heir and part of the Israel of God in Christ.

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son”. - Rev 21:7

“...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature,..” – 2Pe 1:4a

The Church is a corporate son and a holy nation that encompasses all cultures, gender and race.

The Church is not a gentile Church: it the new creation and the Israel of God. I do not believe that the Church replaced Israel. The Church was the original and eternal plan of God. Israel in the Old Testament foreshadowed the Church. The Kingdom has already been introduced and we do not have to wait for the natural restoration of the Jewish nation. The wall of separation has been removed and we are now one Holy Nation in Christ. Paul says that there is no more distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, or male and female. In Him, all prejudice has been dealt with forever.

In the Law, God commanded the priests to bless the children of Israel in the following way:

“And The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, In this way you shall bless the sons of Israel, saying to them: The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD cause His face to shine on you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His face to you, and give you peace. “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”- Num 6:22-27

Through this blessing God confirmed that Israel was the carrier of His Name.

In the New Covenant Jesus says that the overcomers will be the carriers of the Name of God. This is the inheritance of the Church of the Firstborn, and also a sign of the legitimacy of the church as the Israel of God.

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [who are] registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than [that of] Abel.” – Heb 12:22-24

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And [I will write on him] My new name.” – Rev 3:12

Chapter Eight

The Fig Tree

Adam and Eve used fig leaves to substitute the glory they lost. This symbolises a religious system that covers up but cannot change the heart.

“And the eyes of both of them were opened. And they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made girdles for themselves.” - Gen 3:7

The Fig tree, just like the Vine and the Olive tree, has a very significant role in the imagery of the Old Testament. Trees in general are symbols of people. Different nations are portrayed by different types of trees.

The leaves of the fig tree in the Garden of Eden, were used to hide the shame of Adam and Eve after they had sinned. It was the first covering man made, as they sewed the leaves together to hide from God's presence. Therefore it is a symbol of dead religion, trying to impress and hide its true nature through pretence. Like dead religion that is preoccupied with the outward appearance of things, instead of the inward nature. These actions are like filthy rags in the presence of the Creator. Man was made to be clothed with the glory of God alone.

The fig tree is a picture of the Jewish religious system within the Nation Israel. Dead religion is driven by fear, insecurity, poverty, and a lack of identity. Religion is man's attempt to replace the glory of God. It is the Glory of God that fills us with His love, provision and identity. Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day that they serve Him with their lips but that their hearts are far from Him.

When God created man it was not to start a religion on the earth, but a Kingdom. A Kingdom of sons who are to rule and reign over the family affairs in creation. Even Jesus did not come to start a religion called Christianity, but to establish His Father's Kingdom on the earth and to restore the sons' identity and destiny as kings and priests.

The Fig Tree in the Vineyard

When Jesus, the Beloved Son, came to the earth He came as the true Vine from Heaven. He was also the True Son of the right hand and came to His Vineyard as the owner and heir. He inspected this vineyard, and found an unfruitful fig tree within it

In fact, Jesus told them a parable of a fig tree planted in a vineyard.

7

"He also spoke this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard. And he came and sought fruit on it, and found none. And he said to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down, why does it encumber the ground? And answering, he said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and throw manure. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.' " - Luke 13:6-9

God, the owner, told the Vine dresser, Jesus, to remove the fig tree, which bore no fruit in the Kingdom. The fig tree in the vineyard made the soil unfruitful. This was the religious spirit within Israel after the flesh. And just as the tares were removed out of the field so also

⁷ Luke 13:6

those who were not sons of the kingdom had to be removed if they would not repent.

“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”
– Mat 3:8-10

We know that Jesus ministered in Israel for three and a half years. For three years there was no fruit on this religious tree. Jesus pleaded with the Father so that the unfruitful fig tree would be given another year to hear the Word of the Kingdom, and if there was still no fruit, then it should be removed.

One day at the end of Jesus’ ministry, just before He went to the Cross, He was on his way to the temple in Jerusalem. He had a whip in His hand. As He travelled He passed by a fig tree and was hungry. But there was no fruit to be found on it, only fig leaves; a cover up for the lack of glory.

He publicly cursed it by saying: *“let no man ever eat of this tree again.”*⁸

He then went to the Temple and overturned the tables and chased out every one who was selling and doing business. From there he rebuked the Pharisees and spoke the woes of God over them.

Jesus ends these dramatic events with these words:⁹

“Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some

⁸ Mar 11:14 “And Jesus answered and said to it, No one shall eat fruit of you forever. And His disciples heard.”

⁹ Mat 23:34

of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' "- Mat 23:34-39.

The withered Fig Tree

When Jesus returned with His disciples they saw this fig tree withered from its roots and they were amazed. He told them that if they had faith like God they will be able to say to this mountain: “*be cast into the sea*” and it would happen.

They were looking at a cursed fig tree but Jesus spoke about a mountain that would be cast into the sea, if the apostles would speak by faith not doubting.

In the Old Testament nations and kingdoms were also described as mountains. The Book of Revelation tells us of a burning mountain that would be thrown into the sea. The two greatest opponents of the early Church were the religious Jews (Jerusalem) and the Roman Empire (Rome). Both these world renowned cities burned with fire within a few years (68-70 AD).

The cursing and the removal of the fig tree from the vineyard, indicated that Christ came to purify His people from this dead religious system, by opening a new and living way into the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness. But now this Gift was not only to the natural Jewish nation but also to the gentiles who would believe in Him. Even of the Jewish nation who would not receive Him and bear the fruits of repentance would be cast out and removed.

When Jesus saw the faith of the gentile Centurion, He marvelled and said to those who followed Him:

“Assuredly I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the sons of the Kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” – Mat 8:10-12

This clearly indicates to us the intention of God that even, Jew and Gentile, who believes is included in the Kingdom. And those sons of the Kingdom who do not believe and bear the fruit of the Kingdom, even if they are Jews, are removed.

In the next chapter we will examine the Visions of Daniel concerning the coming of the Messiah, His cross, resurrection and the consequences of His Kingship upon Jerusalem and the temple.

Chapter Nine

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

Daniel Chapter Nine forms the foundation of most of the dispensational teachings. These teachings promote an “any minute rapture” before the appearance of “the antichrist”. His coming, they say, will cause the start of the seven years of great tribulation for Israel and Jerusalem.

There are two distinct extreme views concerning the ‘End Time’ events: the Dispensationalists and their futuristic view and the full Preterists and their past view of biblical events. Both these views have partial truth, but have paralysed the Church for more than a hundred years through the errors that accompany them.

Dispensationalism and Preterism

Dispensationalists view everything the Lord spoke concerning His coming in the light of their understanding of His “secret return” to rapture the Church to heaven. According to them He will then remain there only to return after seven years of tribulation on the earth. This time to return with His Church to end the reign of the antichrist on earth. This will culminate in the battle of Armageddon, somewhere in the valleys of Palestine.

They place most of the Revelation of John after the rapture. Those who prescribe to this view are preoccupied with the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist and the natural Jewish Nation.

There are three main streams within this Futuristic view.

- ❖ Pre - Tribulation;
- ❖ Mid - Tribulation; and
- ❖ Post - Tribulation.

To them all the 'end time' events centre around the great tribulation. The Church must be removed from the earth in an 'imminent rapture' just before the Tribulation.

Another preoccupation is with the natural seed of Abraham, the natural Temple and the Middle East. To them the next great prophetic event is the rapture of the Church and thereafter all the 'end time' events. They focus on "*the Jerusalem that is now*" which Paul says, is Hagar and Ishmael.

"... for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children" — Gal 4:25

Those who prescribe to this view, see everything as literal and natural. They expect a literal antichrist in Jerusalem, a literal mark of the beast (666), the exact number of 144,000 Jews, and a literal 1000 years of peace on earth. They often say that Israel and the Middle East are the hands on God's prophetic clock.

They say: "If you want to know how late it is prophetically, you need to look at events in and around Jerusalem."

Besides the many pitfalls of the dispensational view, the greatest danger is the paralysing effect it has on the Church. They are waiting to escape the earth and its responsibilities. Because of this theory the Church has been ineffective in its Apostolic mission to disciple the nations. I'm not referring, to the planting of more of the same kind of hopeless and fearful institutionalized gatherings that calls itself

Church, but a Church as a mature corporate son in the earth. A church that will influence the nations of the world in all its diverse composition of spiritual, political, social and economical facets.

This is the Kingdom and Apostolic commission of the Church. But because of their futuristic view they are not establishing His domain in the heart of the nations. Instead they are waiting to go to the Kingdom, which they say is in the future and in heaven.

We need to bring the nations to a bended knee, confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and baptizing them into the very nature of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

Instead of praying like Jesus taught us: "Let thy Kingdom come" some are praying: "Come Lord Jesus and catch your Bride away". When we are preoccupied with going to heaven we are rendered useless and ineffective in the earth.

This mindset has made the Church fearful and pessimistic about the future, always looking for disaster ahead, forever watching the television and scanning the newspapers to interpret the Scriptures.

This theory is strongly based upon an inaccurate interpretation of the Ninth chapter of the Book of Daniel. Therefore, we must re-examine Daniel chapter Nine with a Christ centered mentality.

The Apostolic season seeks to keep Christ as the centre of all prophetic utterances.

On the other side of the spectrum, full Preterism is just as dangerous because to them, all prophetic Words have already been fulfilled. Events like the final return of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead and final judgement have already taken place.

Both these extreme theories were engineered by two Jesuit priests at the same Catholic meeting. This meeting went on for 18 years. Jesuit priests were a special, devoted group of Catholic priests who infiltrated the Protestant movement to defeat them from within.

¹⁰ Mat 28:19

Rome was under threat during the time of Reformation. One of the main onslaughts was against the Pope. Many reformers started to point fingers at the Pope as the antichrist and the man of sin. Rome called for a very important meeting to discuss how they could counter the momentum of the Reformation.

This meeting is known as the Council of Trent between December 13, 1545 and December 4, 1563 held over twenty-five sessions for three periods. Pope Paul III invoked the Council of Trent. The main topic at this all important meeting was "Protestantism" and the "Counter Reformation".

The Catholic Council leaders and devoted Jesuit priests came up with a brilliant scheme. At this historical meeting the Inquisition of Trent was decreed. They decided to counter the Reformation by severe threatening, torture, death and by distracting theology. Two Spanish Jesuit priests came forward with opposite prophetic views to divert the attention away from the Pope. They took the prophecies concerning the Beast, the man of sin, the antichrist and the 70 weeks of Daniel and re-interpreted them.

One, Luis de Alcasar (1554-1613), took the Preterist position showing that the Pope cannot be the antichrist because everything is already past. The other, Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) took a futuristic view. He said the Pope could not be the man of sin or the antichrist because all prophetic utterances are for the distant future. It was a brilliant scheme. It distracted the Protestants and confused them.

It was Cyrus Ingerson Scofield who popularized and promoted the futuristic view in the USA when he translated and published his "Scofield Reference Bible" at the beginning of the 20th century (1902) containing his dispensational notes. Many have read his notes as though it was part of the original Bible. But this dispensational view was not his brainchild. He was a student of John Darby for 40 years and Darby was influenced by Edward Irving of the British Isles.

The rapture theory is not very old, maybe only 150 years. K. Varner eluded to it being the “new kid on the block”. The time period from 1825 to 1870 saw many erroneous movements coming on the scene. Here is a list of some of the inaccurate movements that were started.

- ❖ The Mormons,
- ❖ The Seventh Day Adventists,
- ❖ The Jehovah’s Witnesses,
- ❖ The Old and New Apostolic Movements.

It was as if the spiritual world anticipated that something important was about to happen in the Church of Jesus Christ and wanted to distract and divide their attention.

What would happen early in the 20th century, was the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street, Los Angeles in 1900. It flowed to the rest of the world during the end of the 20th century. This historical event, one hundred years ago, changed the face of the Church. Many traditional Christians migrated to the new season, called Pentecost. Hundreds of millions were affected by this experience, called the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. During that time the futuristic view of eschatology was promoted by Darwin, Larkin and Schofield. Without investigation many took this view and started to preach it. It was included in the curriculum of most Pentecostal teleological bible schools and soon became the norm.

This futuristic, dispensational view of the end is very dangerous, not only because it is unscriptural but also because it gives the Church of Jesus Christ a false sense of security: ‘Escape to heaven, leaving chaos on the earth to the antichrist.’ The writer of Hebrews clearly states that Jesus will only return when all His enemies are made His footstool.

“But this Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins or ever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” – Heb 10:13

“and He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, who the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” – Act 3:20-21

This escapist and defeatist mentality has paralyzed the Church for the last 150 years. It subtly nullifies the finished work of Jesus on the cross where Jesus defeated the enemy and promotes the antichrist and the tribulation to the centre of the end time events.

This whole theory is fear-based and we know God never operates and motivates **through fear of things or persons**. Jesus always rebuked fear. Paul says:

“God has not given us a spirit of fear but love power and a sound mind” - 2 Ti 1:7

Daniel Chapter Nine

Let us now turn our attention to the Book of Daniel and in particular, the ninth chapter that concerns the seventy weeks assigned to Israel and the city Jerusalem.

A distorted interpretation of Daniel chapter nine forms the “grandfather clause” and basis of the dispensational theory. If you interpret Daniel chapter nine accurately, the whole dispensational theory is dismantled. In this Apostolic season we must critically evaluate all doctrine including the traditional Eschatology of the past season.

