



The
Church
that is
left behind

Kobus Swart

Exposing the strategy of the enemy behind the dispensational agenda

Highlighting our engagement with the Holy Spirit as we embrace our future

THE CHURCH THAT IS LEFT BEHIND

by

KOBUS SWART

- **Exposing the strategy of the enemy behind the dispensational agenda**
- **Highlighting our engagement with the Holy Spirit as we embrace our future**

Published by

SOUTHERN HARVEST MINISTRIES

Somerset West, Western Cape, South Africa

©2008 by Kobus Swart.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise – except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior permission of the publisher, Southern Harvest Publishers, P.O. Box 5532, Helderberg, 7135 South Africa.

kobus888@bizweni.net

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible. Copyright by the Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977.

EVALUATIONS

After almost forty years as a Christian and thirty-five years in active ministry, I am finally able to read a refreshing book on eschatology. In my opinion this book is a must read for all serious students and fellow Christians who are tired of the fantasy and speculation that surround the subject of the end times.

It is my strong opinion that the author, in a disarmingly vulnerable way, clarifies the real issues facing the authentic church in these present times. Throughout the book we are challenged to consult biblical text rather than allowing ourselves to be scandalised by our own naivety. Often, Christian authors have escaped the scrutiny of God's Word, publishing seductive titles, making bold and predictive statements much of which borders on the heretical.

This author, however, emphasises Christianity as "eschatology in action". This is so liberating and unashamedly pragmatic. What stands out clearly throughout is an appeal to the reader to become clear on what the Bible does have to say regarding the end times.

Kobus Swart is not afraid to tackle the controversial issue of the relationship between Christians and the Jews – a subject that is so often fraught with volatility. A good number of believers find themselves unsure and perplexed by these very issues. He successfully proceeds to take us in his thinking through the theological minefields, tackling what is really at stake for the church. This book is an attempt to help us make a serious minded pursuit of the truth in love.

Dispensationalism is challenged by the author. It is seen to be in need of a reality check. It is so heart warming to be exhorted to broaden our understanding of the centrality of Christ, embracing as it does, not only the church, but the whole universe. It is also clear that

the author has more than a superficial understanding and function of the five-fold ministries in the church.

In all, I can whole heartedly recommend this book! It will goad the reader into a serious consideration of what the Bible teaches concerning these end times. My prayer is that the cobwebs of sentimentality in our reasoning will be blown away in the wind of the Spirit of God as we all endeavour to do justice to the theology of the end times.

Alan Scotland

Lifelink Ministries International, UK

It is my privilege to write an evaluation of a book filled with challenges, addressing specifically the commonly held ideas and concepts of many people who consider themselves Christians. Brought up in a Brethren church and trained in the teachings of Darby, I can witness that I had lived, studied and taught the commonly received ideas about dispensationalism, namely, the rapture, apocalyptic interpretations, views on natural Israel, the millennial kingdom, the place of earth in God's purpose, a failing or a victorious church.

I believe this book will lay a good foundation for discovering what God's design is for His church. The contents will challenge you and will readjust your concepts of the end times. Even your salvation will find a perspective filled with purpose. You may even need time not only to digest the contents, but to read the Word with new glasses, and you will surely discover the far reaching impact of what otherwise could appear as mere theological argument.

In the end, one realises that it all has to do with this one prayer: "LET YOUR KINGDOM COME! LET YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!" The God of peace will soon

crush Satan under our feet. The way we view the future will have a tremendous bearing on the way we live, act, behave and move in the present.

This book is very prophetic. Take time to assimilate this and then lay an apostolic foundation, with which to shape lives after the Corner Stone. In order to derive the maximum benefit from this book, please pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit will guide you in all truth as He has promised to do.

Samuel Rhein

International Christian Leadership Connections, France

Most of the belief systems of the church are influenced by dispensationalist interpretation of Scripture. In this volume Kobus Swart points out that two groups are manifesting on the earth today – one group which is becoming one with the lie and the other which is becoming one with the truth. Our discerning has to be sharpened if we are to walk accurately.

Kobus clearly and effectively dismantles the dispensational myths. He points out that the covenant maker of Daniel 9 is Jesus Christ, not antichrist. There is no earthly Jerusalem where we are to worship. God does not have 2 different groups of people. The conversion of natural Israel is not something that will take place after the church is “raptured”. In fact there is no secret rapture. The first resurrection is the spiritual resurrection that takes place at the believer’s conversion. He presents clearly that to be left behind is not a negative fate, but the realisation of the inheritance of the saints. The Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee – the best is yet to come.

This volume is Christocentric and concludes clearly that we are not waiting to be rescued out of the earth. The victorious church will demonstrate the finished works of Christ in the power of the Spirit.

The Church That Is Left Behind

Dr S.Y.Govender
Acurate Building Concepts, Durban, South Africa

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe my sincere gratitude to a number of valued friends and colleagues whose support and encouragement helped to make the writing of this book possible.

To my wife, Hazel, who never wavered in her encouragement and patience during the many months of this writing.

To the Bizweni Community Church who became the hearing ear for the first delivery of these teachings, providing the feedback and conversations – especially with my leadership team – that followed.

To Dr Malcolm Magee, Alan Scotland, Dr Sagie Govender, Thamo Naidoo, and Samuel Rhein – colleagues and friends in ministry – for taking time to read through the manuscript, giving their suggestions and for writing their evaluations.

To Gert Nieuwoudt, Izel Lutz and Erica Briedenhann for their proofreading and editorial suggestions. To Geoff Brown, for the many hours spent with the manuscript, and his valuable editorial input.

To Adriaan Pretorius, friend and partner in ministry, for his countless trips to come to my aid with technical advice when my computer and I failed to communicate clearly to each other!

Most of all, my deep gratitude for the ongoing stirring of the Holy Spirit within, for keeping the blessed hope of the return of Christ and all it entails, alive in my heart!

Contents

EVALUATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why another book with this theme?

Brief overview of its contents

This apostolic season

PREDICT OR PRECIPITATE?

Dispensationalism

Different schools of interpretation

Preterist

Futurist

Historicist

Idealist

Influence of the media

A New Testament perspective of the last days

Our partnership with the Holy Spirit

The predictive nature of Old Testament prophecy

The transition: The Word made flesh

The creative nature of New Testament prophecy

Jonah, the prophet without love

THE GREAT INCARNATION OF THE LAST DAYS

A love for the Truth

A depraved mind

The mark of the beast?

Technological developments

A spiritual approach

The mark of God

A polarisation – no middle ground

How do I know when I hear truth?

Present truth

Two lineages

The devil's nature or the divine nature
A son of the kingdom or a son of the evil one
Christ or the antichrist
Antichrist simply means against Christ
The power of deception

THE REBUILDING OF THE END TIME TEMPLE

Origins of the literal view
Daniel 9:24-27
Seeing it through the New Testament
The process presently underway
The finished works of Jesus
The Feast of Tabernacles

ONE HOLY NATION

The centrality of Christ
Irrelevance of activities on old temple site
The real building
Replacement Theology?
One people
Any future plans for the Jews?
Branches, dwelling places, living stones and sheep
What Romans 11 does not say
Warning

A SECRET RAPTURE?

Leaving the truth behind
From where does the word "rapture" originate?
But when did the re-interpretation come into believers'
understanding about the Second Coming?
Caught up in the clouds
No secret rapture here
Who makes the U-turn in the sky?
One will be taken, one left behind
First gather up the tares
A Bride without spot or wrinkle
A more accurate theology of earth
The blessed hope of His return

THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

Jesus and the fullness of time

The already/not-yet tension

Two Ages

The coming of the kingdom

AD 70 – The end of which age?

“This generation”

Soon, very soon...

The imminent return of Christ

Why has it not happened yet?

Linking this age and the age to come: The role of the Holy Spirit

Millenarianism?

THE MILLENNIUM

Introduction

The year 2000

Apocalyptic symbolism

The binding of Satan

The reign of the saints

Two resurrections

Final fulfilment not yet

ARISING TO OUR TRUE IDENTITY

...And of his Christ

The forty-second generation

The Christ question

The power of promise

Pregnant with the future

Enlarged in the waiting

Gazing intently

The victorious church

The father-son relationship

A second coming of the Holy Spirit?

The Tabernacle of Moses

The Feast of Tabernacles

Another corporate baptism?

The spirit of the antichrist

TOWARDS THE FULL STATURE

The final thrust

The goal of our instruction

An administration suitable

Aliens in the land of promise?

A living word

Until

The kingdom of God

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Why another book with this theme?

Soon after I met the Lord at the age of eleven – through what was quite a radical experience even at that young age – I started underlining all the Bible verses I could find about the Second Coming of Jesus. I remember sitting on the threshing floor on the farm with my friends who also had similar experiences with the Lord, with only one topic in our discussions – the soon coming of Jesus! The year was 1954.

Years later – even though I pursued studies in a discipline that had nothing to do with theology (namely, mathematics and physics, and lectured in those fields) – my interest in prophetic passages of Scripture continued and I was often drawn to passages dealing with the future, or to be more specific, with the “end time”.¹ Throughout my research and through the materials I could lay my hands on at that time, I became aware of the many disparate views in this field. I became entangled in many distractions pointing me away from the real issue of the end time and soon I was another victim of confusion without knowing it. For example, while some scholars put most, if not all, the events prophesied in books such as Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation into the past, others put them in the distant future. And yet others tried to arrange these events into past, present and future time zones called dispensations. Some went as far as putting dates to end-time events, and especially for the Second Coming of Jesus. It was much later when I discovered that it was this (academic) pre-occupation with the “end” – and in particular, without having an *accurate definition* of the “end time”, that has led to a paralysis among Christians concerning the present purpose of the church in the world.

Looking back, the reason for my confusion is not difficult to find. I missed the forest for the trees! Instead of studying the Scriptures prayerfully to find a deeper revelation of Jesus Christ, my dissection of the “prophetic” scriptures only obscured Him. The Scriptures are all about Him – even (if not especially) the book of Revelation!

The turning point came years later for me. My initial motivation, which was largely one of curiosity, changed into a spiritual hunger to know Him more. My hunger opened me up to receive more than just sense knowledge and the Lord met with me again in a special way. It was as if my spiritual faculties became alive – ready to receive revelation knowledge. This new search also brought me in contact with others who had a similar hunger for more of the Lord. I discovered that certain insights do not come while one is in isolation. Gradually I began to discover that the “future” had already started some 2000 years ago!

In recent years I found others, like Christian author and theologian Eugene Petersen, confirming my own experience. In his introduction to 1 Thessalonians in the Message version of the Bible, Peterson writes: “The Christian faith has always been characterised by a strong and focused sense of future, with belief in the Second Coming of Jesus as the most distinctive detail.” Any discussion amongst believers about the end time will bear this out.

Modern dictionaries define eschatology simply as, “a study of the last things.” To limit the meaning of this word to such definitions, has probably contributed to the speculations and sensationalism concerning “end time” events, which have been made popular by certain novels exploring this theme, such as the “Left Behind” series by Tim LaHaye.

A profusion of materials on the subject of eschatology, or, as it has been more popularly known, “end time events” have been published

over the years. Rather than producing another book engaging in the detail of all the different views and speculations on this theme, this is the unfolding of a developing revelation of God's purposes. In order to pursue this task with integrity, it became necessary to first identify the basic building blocks of what constitutes the dispensational view of the end time.

A further purpose in doing so, was to investigate the scriptural foundations of such views. Only when these were exposed could the stumbling blocks be removed and the way made clear to focus the reader's attention on the real purpose and work of the Holy Spirit in the earth today.

The main thesis and burden of this book will no doubt challenge those readers who have sincerely embraced the dispensational view of the end time. That was my experience when I was first confronted with a different perspective. I grew up in a church environment where I was only exposed to the dispensational view. My journey into further research was triggered when a friend once asked me, in all sincerity, to show him from the Word of God where all these teachings that formed part of the dispensational perspective, could be found. In my subsequent search I began to see the true function of the church on earth and the kingdom of God as a growing reality. In the years that followed, through searching Scripture, it was not difficult to see how I had embraced an inaccurate view of the end time.

The question that many sincere believers often ask is, why make such an issue of the different view points about the end time if we all believe that Jesus is coming back anyway? Does it really matter? To answer that question, I would first like to emphasise that it is not my purpose in this book to be dogmatic. Whilst I do believe that there is an accurate view, and that it is my desire to see the whole truth, I make no claim to know that as yet. We will only see eye to eye when the veil is lifted and we see Christ. I understand that what I see is but

a part of a much greater whole. Truth is progressive and will unfold as God reveals it to us when we are willing to do his will. Revelation is not taught; it is “caught”.

At the same time I make no pretence of being neutral on what has been revealed and confirmed to my own heart. I must also add that I have seen and experienced how truth *can*, in fact, *does* divide people. This happens when we are confronted with views different to our firmly held ones of which we are reluctant to let go. Even Abraham faced this – while standing with Ishmael in his arms – when God showed him that the true Isaac was on his way. His cry, “O let Ishmael live in Thy sight!” is unfortunately the cry in many sincere believers’ hearts when they have to let go of a cherished misunderstanding and face the truth. Any doctrine which appeals to selfish desires or fears, such as dispensationalism with its escapist end time mentality, creates false centres. And these false centres become false viewpoints which lead to a faulty understanding of truth. My conviction is that the way we see the future, impacts the way we live in the present. My quest for that accurate, apostolic vision of the future, therefore, is not a pet doctrine as it might have been in the early years of my search; neither is it a luxury. As Jürgen Moltmann reminds us, “From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionising and transforming the present... Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, and of every Christian existence and of the whole church.”² This should be the characteristic of every prophetic believer who professes to have the Holy Spirit in him or her. Those who wait upon the Lord shall not lack vision. Rather, they learn to see things in the way God sees them. They are those whose hearts desire to partner with the Holy Spirit in God’s end time plan.

The final decision to write this book only came after I had several promptings from the Holy Spirit through colleagues in different

countries. A brief overview of the nine chapters of this book might help the reader to follow the golden thread throughout.

Brief overview of its contents

In chapter 1 some of the main pillars supporting the dispensational view are analysed. This is followed by a discussion on the transition from the predictive nature – typical of the futuristic approach of dispensationalism – of Old Testament prophecy, to the creative nature of New Testament prophecy.

Chapter 2 considers a dangerous trend, which seems to have become more obvious over time, the dual polarisation process underway in the world. On the one hand, there is the incarnation of truth and on the other hand, the incarnation of the lie. Consider the enemy's efforts to hinder the revealing of Christ in his many-membered body.

In chapter 3 we contrast dispensationalism's anticipation of a physical temple to be erected in Jerusalem, with the words of both Jesus and the apostle Paul, who refer to the real end time temple as being the Body of Christ on earth. Chapter 4 briefly analyses the Apostle Paul's explanation of the identity of the true Israel. "Replacement theology" is exposed, affirming that God always wanted to save the whole world – one holy nation consisting of Jews and everyone else.

Chapter 5 captures the heart of the purpose for the writing of this book. Apart from discussing the origins of the secret rapture theory, the basic Scripture references using dispensationalism to support the view of a secret rapture, are put into perspective. Erroneous interpretations of these Scripture passages are exposed, at no time are we to lose the blessed hope of Christ's return. In chapter 6 the terminology of "this age" and "the age to come" is looked at through the eyes of Jesus and Paul. What is the significance of the AD 70

events? We also take a critical look at the preterist view especially concerning the interpretation of the predictions of Jesus in Matthew 24.

Chapter 7 addresses the issue of a literal millennium, another building block of dispensationalism. Is it some golden age in the future? Or did it perhaps start with the ascension of Jesus? What really happened with the death and resurrection of Christ? What is Christ waiting for before coming back to present to himself a bride without spot or wrinkle?

Throughout the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to allow the golden thread of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to surface. In chapter 8 the enemy's strategy with his escapist mentality is exposed. Above all he seeks to hinder the emergence of the end time church, a multi-functioned, unified body willing for battle, equipped for victory and demonstrating the finished works of Christ on the earth. Will there be another outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring maturity of the harvest? Attention is given to the way in which God has chosen to make the saints partakers of the divine nature. In the last chapter I put it all together and conclude with a few comments about the final thrust toward the full stature of Christ's body. This fulfilment is not possible without the ultimate Lordship of Jesus Christ on earth, expressed through the kingdom of God.

As you read this book, you will find certain motifs recurring e.g. such as the Feast of Tabernacles or our partnership with the Holy Spirit. Certain Scripture passages similarly recur. This is simply because these contexts warrant the repetition. The various chapters are not meant to be discrete studies, since there is a consistent flow of argument throughout the text.

This apostolic season

Lastly, I would like to give a brief explanation of a phrase that

occurs in various places in the book, i.e., the “apostolic season”. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul refers to what has become known as the “five-fold” ministry: the ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Looking back over the last fifty or more years, we find the following unfolding pattern. The first season started in the early fifties of the previous century with evangelistic ministries – especially in the USA. They thrived and filled stadiums and large tents with great testimonies of healing and salvation experiences. This season soon manifested in a number of other nations. I remember, in the late fifties, the excitement when I attended tent crusades in Pretoria where local evangelists such as Rassie Erasmus and also Freddie Zeeman ministered. Another unforgettable experience during those years was when I had the privilege in 1956 to be at a packed Wembley Stadium in Johannesburg with the healing crusade of the world famous evangelist of his time, Oral Roberts from Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

As a result of the thousands who were touched in these crusades, the awareness for instructing the new converts became evident. This need became obvious after about ten years into the evangelistic season. (One should remember that seasons are seamless. It is not possible to find specific cut off points for the end or beginning of a season.)

The evangelistic season was followed by a teaching season. This season flourished as hundreds of anointed teachers filled the need for instruction. In the seventies another transition took place and the shepherding movement was born. New churches were formed and the pastoral ministry fulfilled an important role. Somewhere in the eighties the emphasis shifted to the prophetic ministry. I was deeply stirred when I sensed the impact several prophets had at a prophetic conference in Kansas City³, USA. Large prophetic gatherings attracted thousands of hungry believers who sought a “word from the Lord” – usually in the form of personal prophecies.

The transition into what has been identified in recent years as the apostolic season began in the nineties.

At this point, two things need to be said: Although these various seasons have been identified, it does not mean that these different ministries never existed before the “season” arrived. Since the early reformation (also known as the restoration of the church) associated with Martin Luther, God raised up strategic ministries to pioneer the unfolding revelation. It also does not mean that when a new season arrived, the ministry of the previous season necessarily ended. In fact, I believe that in the economy of God, these seasons were never meant to end, but were to be like building blocks (line upon line, precept upon precept), that would eventually form part of the complete five-fold ministry. However, there is a shift as the anointing of each new season seems to re-define the previous seasons. What we see happening now, for example, is the emergence of a new corporate dimension to the expression of apostleship as the apostolic season unfolds. The individual ministry organisations, such as “evangelistic associations”, which were characteristic of previous seasons, are being replaced by a more corporate expression. Apostles and prophets are finding each other across national and cultural divides in covenant relationships as “bone finds its bone”. As the apostolic ministry gains greater corporate momentum, it is becoming evident that the rest of the five-fold ministries are seeming to upgrade to higher dimensions. Many of the ways in which ministry found expression in the previous seasons have become obsolete, e.g. the evangelistic ministry that flourished in the fifties and sixties, will probably no longer be expressed in the same way. Likewise, the days of the loner prophet are also making way for apostles and prophets moving together. Furthermore, this apostolic season – also known as the Apostolic Reformation – is bringing new clarity to the governmental mandate of the believer, by exposing the lie of the “postponement doctrine” of the kingdom of God as propagated by dispensationalism. The proclamation of the kingdom of God will again take centre stage. True apostolic ministries will emphasise the

transitioning of local churches into a kingdom culture, shifting their vision to see the need for the restoration of *all things* about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets of old. The true father heart of God will be conveyed in an unprecedented way. The fruit that should flow out of this apostolic season is an apostolic people – manifesting as families or households – who will carry God’s government and peace into every sphere, impacting their surrounding cultures. *Equipping the saints* will no longer remain just a phrase. After all, the five-fold ministries were given as craftsmen to bring the saints to the full stature – nothing less than the standard height of Christ’s own perfection.

I had the privilege of being personally impacted by every one of the five seasons since the fifties and understand something of the trauma and dynamics of transitioning from one season to the next. Looking back over the last five or six decades, we can actually discern that each season carried with it its own “sound”. This became a real revelation to me when I was invited to minister at a church recently. This church was part of a family of churches that had their roots in the Hebrides revival more than a hundred years ago. Because I had my first encounter with the Lord at a conference hosted by the same movement in 1954, I immediately recognised the sound in their meeting – still the same! Unfortunately there has been no migration to new levels: often simply a result of stagnation. Churches impacted by the Latter Rain revival also carry a unique sound, reminiscent of the divine visitation that took place in North Battleford, Canada in 1948 where the worship soon became known as the *heavenly choir*.⁴

A new sound from heaven is becoming evident now among those who embrace this apostolic season. Although the acoustics of this new apostolic sound are presently discerned primarily in the ministry of the proceeding Word, I believe that this sound will soon be discerned in the corporate worship of particular congregations that are being transformed by the apostolic word.

The Church That Is Left Behind

This book is an invitation to everyone who reads it and who embraces the blessed hope of the return of the Christ, to prayerfully come to a responsible decision about the end time. Come and play a part in the unfolding! May your spirit be stirred as you too hear the new sound in the earth.

Kobus Swart
2008

PREDICT OR PRECIPITATE?

There can be no doubt that what gave birth to dispensationalism was the pre-occupation with the future. This pre-occupation led to the question of how to interpret the prophetic Scriptures. Were the predicted events – especially those referring to Daniel 9, Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation – past, present or future to us living in the 21st century?

In this chapter I invite the reader to identify with me the fundamental shift that took place as far as foretelling is concerned, when the Word became flesh in Jesus more than 2000 years ago.

But first, a brief overview of the basic pillars that constitute dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism – a comparatively recent development – which is essentially a futuristic literal interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures, has its origins in the early nineteenth century. According to Robert Norton in his *Memoirs of James & George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow(1840),pp 171-176³*, a fifteen-year old girl from Scotland had a vision of two comings of Christ: first a secret “rapture” of the church, then a Second Coming after a seven-year global tribulation, to establish a Jerusalem-based kingdom on earth. Although men like Irving and later Darby further developed this view, it was popularised by Cyrus Scofield with his Scofield Bible. In this Bible – the King James Version – he added his views in the form of headings and notes in the margin commenting on each prophetic passage. Weaving them into the biblical text itself, his dispensationalist views were elevated to a level of biblical authority. This became the version of the Bible quoted by a great number of

televangelists and writers throughout the 20th century⁶ (which include men such as Hal Lindsey, John Hagee, Jack Van Impe and many others).

Dispensationalism is a system of biblical interpretation which divides the history of mankind into seven distinct periods or “dispensations”, and affirms that in each period God deals with the human race on the basis of one specific principle. Scofield defined a dispensation as a period of time during which a person is tested in respect to obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. The Scofield Bible lists the following dispensations: (1) Innocence – from the creation of Adam and Eve until the Fall. (2) Conscience – from the Fall until the Flood. (3) Human Government – from the Flood until the call of Abraham. (4) Promise – from Abraham until Moses. (5) Law – from Moses until Christ. (6) Grace – the church age. (7) the kingdom – the Millennium, a one thousand year period, from the return of Christ until the end of His reign on earth. No scriptural proof is given for the above division. It needs to be said that not all dispensationalists agree on the number of dispensations. Some list only four, while others list eight.

Two basic presuppositions underlie the dispensational interpretation of Scripture: (1) The dispensational framework differentiates between God’s continuing purposes for the Jewish people and his purposes for the church. (2) The “literal” interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures.

As a consequence of the above presuppositions, God is seen to have two mutually exclusive peoples – national Israel and the gentile church – each with its own redemptive purposes and programmes. It remains God’s intention, therefore, not only to restore the nation of Israel to Palestine, but also to rebuild the temple and reinstitute the priesthood as well as the old sacrificial system. Christian Zionists believe the temple will be rebuilt, therefore, because of a pre-millennial⁷ eschatology, a futurist hermeneutic and the

dispensational distinction between Israel and the church. These foundational presuppositions stand or fall together.⁸

It should be noted too, that another prominent feature of dispensationalism is the doctrine that when the Jews rejected Christ's alleged offer of the Davidic kingdom, the kingdom was postponed and a "great parenthesis," also known as the church age, was introduced. Finally, once the Gentile church was taken out of the way or raptured at the end of the church age, God's purpose with natural Israel would continue and his kingdom be established. This view was based upon an interpretation of Daniel 9:25-27. More about this is discussed in chapter 3 of this book.

Different schools of interpretation

In addition to the *pre-*, *post-*, and *a-*millennial terminology (which we will look at in chapter 7), there are several other important terms which relate to the interpretation of the book of Revelation and need clarifying.

There are four basic schools of interpretation which developed over the years. Without delving too deeply, we find the following⁹:

Preterist

This school regards the predictions of Jesus in Matthew 24 as referring to the Roman army's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. They also argue that the book of Revelation was written before AD 70 and that it describes Nero Caesar's persecution of the church. This means that virtually all the Bible's teaching about future things was fulfilled within the lifetimes of the disciples of Jesus. "Full" preterists say that the Second Coming of Christ occurred in AD 70, while moderate (or partial) preterists argue that the events of AD 70 fulfil the prophecies of the Olivet Discourse and

the book of Revelation, but the general resurrection and final judgment have not yet occurred. We will look into more of this view in chapter 6.

Futurist

The opposite of preterism is *futurism*. This school believes that the entire block of predictions applies to the last few years leading up to the Second Coming of Christ. Their theological beliefs centre around natural Israel, and they believe that most prophecies concerning Israel still have a literal fulfilment *in the future*, after the Christian church has been taken out of the world. The predictions in the book of Revelation are seen to be a series of disasters leading straight into the end of the world.

Historicist

This school believes the predictions cover the entire church age between the first and second comings. They hold the traditional Protestant interpretation stressing the identification of Babylon the Great with the city of Rome. Few contemporary commentators hold this view, since, if true, it would mean that the apostle John was not speaking to his first century audience but to Christians living centuries later. In this school of thought there are different opinions such as *linear*, *cyclical* and *progressive parallelism*, reflecting disagreement concerning the correlation of Scripture and history.

Idealist

This school removes all time-specific references, thus, for example, the Roman Empire may be a type of the continual persecution of God's people throughout the church period. Revelation pictures the 'eternal' struggle between good and evil as ongoing. The prophetic pictures such as the battle between God and Satan can be applied to any century. In this way this school combines elements of the above mentioned schools.

* * * *

It should be obvious to the reader that there are pros and cons in each of the above schools of interpretation. Surely they cannot all be right or all be wrong? Is there only one of the schools that is right? This is the problem of being labelled or identified with one particular school. Each school contains some truths which could be verified by other Scripture passages. As you continue to read through this book, I trust that you may come to your own conclusion.

Influence of the media

Many books based on the above views have been published, and proponents have preached with great zeal and emotion especially when tensions in the Mid-East flare up every now and then. But it was no doubt the action packed *Left Behind* novels – the brain child of Tim LaHaye – that gripped the imagination of millions of (especially) Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians.

Here is what LaHaye says about the end times: “What does the Bible mean by its many expressions for the last days? At first glance there are several terms that seem interchangeable, but in reality they may not always be so used. Some terms for the ‘end times’ include ‘the latter days,’ ‘the last times,’ ‘the latter years,’ or Daniel the prophet's favourite term, ‘the time of the end.’

“In most cases the terms for the ‘last days’ or ‘end times’ refer to a period that may encompass no more than seven to ten or so years. We cannot pinpoint it more accurately because we are not certain how much time will elapse between the rapture, which ends the church age, and the

beginning of the Tribulation, begun by the signing of the covenant between the antichrist and Israel (Daniel 9:27). In short, the ‘last days,’ ‘end times,’ the ‘latter days,’ or even ‘afterward,’ usually refer to trends during the church age. Most of them point to seven to ten or more years, a period that pinpoints the end of ‘the times of the Gentiles’ to the end of the ‘Great Tribulation’”.¹⁰

Modern television evangelists openly declare that the countdown¹¹ to doomsday started with 9/11, when the Twin Towers in New York were brought down. Author Barbara Rossing refers to John Hagee’s comments to a BBC interviewer: “I believe in my mind that the Third World War has begun. I believe it began on 9/11”¹²

Do the above represent accurate definitions of the end? What does the Bible say?

A New Testament perspective of the last days

It is my conviction that the New Testament provides the controlling interpretation of the Old Testament. I will give two reasons for saying this. Firstly, the New Testament writers recognised the same spirit which had moved the Old Testament writers and interpreted their words accordingly, being themselves “men moved by the Holy Spirit who spoke from God”¹³ Secondly – and no doubt the most important reason – the Old Testament prophecies pointing to the coming of the Messiah, culminated in the Word becoming flesh. The New Testament writers had a living relationship with the Word made flesh (Jesus).¹⁴ In the case of Paul, he had a meeting with, a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and above all a mandate from God to proclaim the mystery of the Christ to the Gentiles.¹⁵

The author of the letter to the Hebrews opens his epistle with these words: “*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to*

*us in His Son...*¹⁶ Stressing the eschatological aspect of Christ's first coming, he continues: "...but now once at the consummation of the ages ('at the end of the age' – RSV) He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."¹⁷

Peter puts it this way: "*For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times (or 'days' – NAB) for the sake of you.*"¹⁸

From these Scriptures it is clear that Christ was born and did his work in the last days or end time. A more accurate definition which does not eclipse Christ in eschatology is a study of **Christ** and his future.¹⁹ The reason is that the "last days" started in the Incarnation. We can therefore safely say that Christianity **is** eschatology in action. And that means Christ is the foundation for the entire doctrine of the end. Eschatology must be Christ centred.

When we look at the above definitions of the end time, it should not surprise us that so many believers (including Christian leaders) feel that eschatology has divided the church. This becomes very obvious when one notes the great number of books on the "end time", of which many propagate different views and interpretations of the same scriptures deal with the last days. As a result, there has been a tendency in many churches as well as conversations amongst believers, to steer away from this subject.

Unfortunately, the absence of clarity, where it is possible, has created a vacuum. And as scientists profess, nature does not easily allow a vacuum to remain a vacuum. The same can be said for vacuums created by the absence of truth – they will be filled by something else. Add to this the fact that the way we see the future, greatly impacts upon the way we live in the present, and the reader will agree, we are doing nobody a service by hiding or compromising the truth.

As I mentioned earlier, it is vital that we avoid becoming dogmatic on every aspect of what has become known as “end time” truths. Although there are areas in which the Holy Spirit has shed enough light for us not to doubt the meaning, there are still other areas on which we await further insight. Confusion and deception, in the absence of clarity, should be arrested. There is a need for truth to be declared and made available to the hungry believer. Concerning the local church, every shepherd should become aware that he or she is no longer the sole input into the spiritual life of the flock. The Internet, television and the printed media are beaming multiple confused views into every home that is connected. Believers who are not firmly rooted in truth, and those who do not have the gift of the discerning of spirits, are vulnerable and could easily be led astray.

My motivation regarding these essays on the “end time events”, as indicated in the introduction, is not to be dogmatic. Rather, it is to establish a love for truth; which ultimately proves to be a person – Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is to uncover the deceptive scaffolding, platform and undercarriage of the power that holds the mind of the believer. As Paul and Timothy so aptly said to the church in Corinth, *“We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity”*²⁰

Our partnership with the Holy Spirit

In this chapter, therefore, we will lay a foundation for what is to follow. Although this may sound simplistic, it will prove vital for every reader. In order to gain correct insight into what is to unfold from now on to the end of this age, a living partnership with the Holy Spirit is absolutely vital. The enemy has a deadly purpose and is quick to exploit the confused and gullible mind with a narcotic deception. This will become clear as the chapters of this book

unfold.

Jesus gave us the following golden key concerning the understanding the future: *“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”* Then Jesus explained the twofold ministry of the Holy Spirit: to guide the believer into all the truth; and to glorify Jesus by disclosing what is to come. *“He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine and shall disclose it to you”* (Jn 16:13-14). It is crucial for us to catch this! Too many prophecies in the past lacked this qualification; Christ was not glorified. Prophecies were about satisfying the curiosity of the carnal mind; only wanting to know about the future. Eschatology, remember, is not just a study of last “things” or events, but rather a study of Christ and his future! Our future, therefore, (or at least the beginnings of it) arrived in Christ when he first came to this earth more than 2000 years ago.

The predictive nature of Old Testament prophecy

What we need to see at this point is that there is a difference between predicting (foretelling) and precipitating. The word “precipitate” is used in physics as follows: *moisture which is condensed from vapour by cooling and then deposited as rain and dew*. The spiritual application is evident: Words of promise which are still hovering as a cloud of vapour should be turned into a substance more tangible than vapour. A creative element is involved in the process.

Not many people would refuse to know more about the future; especially when what is going to happen, would affect their lives. I shall never forget the thronging crowds waiting at the doors to enter the meetings wherever the prophets were going to minister during the 80’s. This was especially evident in Kansas City in the USA, as I

referred to in my introduction. Thousands of believers flocked to those meetings, many of whom were eager to get a prophetic word from one of the prophets. I have been at the receiving end of prophecies over the last thirty-five years, and yes, receiving a true word that edifies and often points to what the Lord has in store for me, is very inspiring. But I have also seen how believers can get so dependant upon receiving prophetic direction for their lives through someone else, that they actually become gullible and open to deception without knowing it. A spiritual passivity sets in. The many casualties resulting from this phenomenon, bear this out.

The Old Testament prophets saw into the future and spoke primarily about the coming Messiah and his kingdom. This is powerfully endorsed in the story of the two men on their way to Emmaus. While these two men were on their way home, they were in a deep discussion about the Crucifixion, apparently very perplexed. At that point Jesus joined them on the road and surprised them by asking questions about their discussions as if he did not know what they were talking about. Of course, their eyes were prevented from recognising him. After listening to their version and explanation of the events that had taken place, as well as their efforts to understand what the Messianic prophecies were all about, Jesus finally opened his mouth. *“And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning (Concerning what? The dragon? The beast? The antichrist? Concerning who?) **Himself** in all the Scriptures.”*²¹ What an experience it must have been! No wonder their hearts were burning within them while Jesus was speaking! All the Messianic prophecies of the coming of Jesus in the Old Testament were fulfilled when the Word became flesh.²² Christ did, in fact, also come to sit upon the throne of David as prophesied in Psalm 132:11. This was made very clear by Peter in Acts 2:25-36 on the day of Pentecost. However, it was not to take place as they expected – in the political arena. Thus the futurist element of the fulfilment of those prophecies no longer exists, and therefore the dispensational view of a fulfilment in a future millennial age also

falls away.

Basically, dispensationalism embraces an interpretation of most Bible prophecies that relegates their fulfilment to a future millennial age. This view is under-girded by two basic suppositions: (a) a literal-fundamentalist interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures, and (b) assuming a distinction between the church and natural Israel.

The transition: The Word made flesh

When the Word became flesh and Jesus completed the mission of his First Coming, it signalled a message into the heavens, the implications of which are more relevant today than ever before. A major transition had taken place – a “watershed” – concerning the way prophecy should be viewed from that time onward.

The problem regarding prophecy over the last 2000 years, and especially since 1948,²³ is that most prophetic utterances concerning the future (whether it will be over individuals, groups or nations) are still rooted in and influenced by a dispensational interpretation of prophecy. For example, the views about the “end of the world” and a pre-occupation with the millennium (a literal one-thousand year period in the future— see chapter 7), can usually be traced back to the apocalyptic²⁴ speculations of the Jewish faith. I have no doubt, however, that in most cases, those who prophesy in this manner are sincere. But the results in the recipients of these prophecies are that many of them are candidates for disappointment.

Another Scripture in the book of Revelation will help us to follow this thought.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His Bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for

the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, 'Write, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb,' and He said to me, 'These are true words of God.'” Now listen to what happened, “*And I fell at His feet to worship him. And he said to me, 'do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'*” (Rev. 19:7-10.NASV). Maybe if we turn this last part around, we will get a better understanding of its meaning: **‘for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.’**

In this statement we find a very important key about prophecy.

The creative nature of New Testament prophecy

Remember, there is a profound difference between predicting and precipitating. This difference was effected by the transition from the old to the new paradigm with the advent of the Incarnation. For example, when the Israelites were still wandering in the wilderness, they had to be led by supernatural signs and wonders. But those signs ceased the moment the people of God went through the Jordan into the land of promise; no more quail, no more manna. They had to precipitate the miracle; they had to walk it out. The land was given to them as they claimed it by walking on the soil. This is the difference for those believers who have entered the land of promise: they are no longer in the wilderness, no more quail, no more manna. Many people think that by foretelling, or by having a promise, they have arrived at their destiny and they can now sit back and watch things happen. Many believers are finding out that it is no longer working that way. Maybe out there in their spiritual wilderness, some might still experience the old, but for the most part, the serious believer has been sensing lately that we are in a new season. In fact, the new season has been around for a long time.

“The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.” This truth will

help us in evaluating even personal prophecies. If somebody therefore prophesies over you, or over a church or a nation, and it does not download a fresh testimony and revelation of Christ to your heart, or it does not take of Christ and disclose it to you, it simply boils down to foretelling. For too long now, sincere believers' expectations have been held hostage by dispensational views of the future.

Two thousand years ago Jesus came and he was the Word made flesh; he was the fulfilment of those prophetic types and shadows. He came and moved into the neighbourhood. He was prophecy fulfilled. And that is what the Holy Spirit has as an assignment for us as New Covenant believers.

How often do we pray this little prayer, "Oh Lord, just give me a glimpse where things will be in five years"? No answer. Perhaps the Lord is saying with his silence, "You are the unfolding tomorrow. You are the future busy happening." What is prophecy? Rossing argues that predicting the future is not the biblical meaning of prophecy. This is true in both the Christian and Jewish tradition²⁵. Prophecy in the Bible has always been a timely warning combined with a promise. Quoting a Jewish theologian Landau, Rossing continues, "In the Bible, the prophetic outcome is always conditional, for it is dependant on human behaviour in response to God's word"²⁶.

As Chilton puts it, "The purpose of prophecy is not 'prediction', but evaluation of man's ethical response to God's Word of command and promise" (Chilton David. *The Days Of Vengeance*. [Dominion Press, Texas, USA 1987.] p11) Jeremiah confirms this view. "*At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to*

plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.”
(Jer 18:7-10)

Robeck has this to say about prophecy as a “prediction of the future“: “The commonly held understanding of prophecy as a predictive word of future events, and therefore as foreknowledge, has ancient precedence but it does not provide an adequate basis for understanding this gift. Prophecy more commonly includes a component of ‘forthtelling’, or the conveyance of a message with or without the predictive element.”²⁷

Jonah, the prophet without love

When we see prophecy as merely a prediction of the future it puts God in a box. It precludes him from extending his mercy and his grace. God can change his mind and usually will when there is a repentant heart when he speaks.²⁸ The book of Jonah contains a good example of how a correct response to a word from the Lord can influence the outcome. Here is Jonah; he is walking through the streets of Nineveh with this prophecy of judgment. Unfortunately, this is so often the kind of prophecy that dispensationalism breeds: Doom and gloom. It is as if they become evangelists of Armageddon! Isn’t it amazing too, how many Christians willingly get drawn into doom-and-gloom prophecies? I remember over the years how often as a young boy I heard about the communists who were going to take over our country. Another time it was going to be the Chinese. And these so-called “prophecies”, many accompanied by dates as well, came from Christians who seemed eager to share them with others. The ugly extreme of this drive to share bad news is manifested in the way that some authors prey on gullible readers, as they sell millions of books, showing handsome profits.

Jonah declares, “*Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown!*”
(How many present-day believers would actually love to have such

an assignment?) No room for mercy here. Then what happened? What was the response of the people of the city? The very next verse, says, *“Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself in sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. And he issued a proclamation and it said, ‘In Nineveh by the decree of the king and nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water’*”. This was serious repentance. The result? Verse 10 continues, *“When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it”*²⁹ What did Jonah do then? He sat down, waiting to see the judgment fall. He predicted it, didn't he? But when he saw that the Lord had changed his plan, he became angry. Then God taught him a few more lessons. Jonah, the prophet without love, had to learn more about the God of compassion!

When you go through your Jordan experience into the promised land, you leave the wilderness behind and subsequently fall under a new administration, that of the Spirit. The “voice” is no longer behind you; he is now *in* you! Being prophetic now means being in a living partnership with the Holy Spirit. We get a glimpse of this partnership in the words of James: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”³⁰

The Holy Spirit is busy taking of Christ and disclosing him to believers; writing on the tablets of their hearts. As the Word was made flesh 2000 years ago, so it is happening again. This time the Word is being made flesh and it means that the sons and daughters of the kingdom will embody the truth. They will precipitate end time events; not by foretelling, but by walking it out. God has decreed for a holy nation to set the pace of end time events because they will be a prophetic people.

Of course God may still have to bring judgment in certain situations. It is in the Scripture. But even then, God will first look for a prophet who will stand in the gap. “I’m going to destroy Nineveh!” Then Nineveh repents and God changes His mind. Why? Because mercy triumphs over judgment.³¹

If you want to understand “end time” terminology, go to the “dictionary” (if you will) whose name is Jesus. You will find the end time meaning in him.

Let us embrace this day. You don’t prophesy to the Jordan, “Stop, water stop!” In obedience to the word of the Lord, you put your feet in the water and the water stops. This is the difference between foretelling and precipitating. Many authors, who sold millions of books about the doom and gloom they predicted to come with the year 2000, should have repented after that year came and went, without their predictions coming true. Many students of the Word would have thought that the coming and going of Y2K and the new millennium being up and running, would cause people to question the dispensational interpretations of “end time” prophecies. Isn’t it time for the prophetic people of God to stand up and call for the truth?

In our next chapter, we are going to further unpack the end time scenario as the Word becomes flesh once more in those who love the truth. Unfortunately – as we shall see – it is not only the truth that is going to be fleshed out.

THE GREAT INCARNATION OF THE LAST DAYS

A love for the Truth

Buy the truth and sell it not!³² What wonderful words of wisdom! There is such urgency in our time for God's people to receive a fresh love for the truth.

The major strategy of Satan in our time is to deceive the nations. He will only succeed, however, with those who have either never had a love for truth, or who once had it but then lost or sold it out to the god of this age.

Two manifestations – identified in this chapter – will become evident as we reach the end of time as we know it. In this chapter we will follow this development carefully. It is a process that has been ongoing since the early church of the New Testament.

Jesus uttered these words shortly before his death and resurrection: *“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;”* exposing the great sin of unbelief, *“and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have many more things to say to you but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

It would be very difficult, therefore, for someone who is not filled with the Holy Spirit of Truth to tell you truly about the future. It would be mere speculation. Notice that the primary function of the Holy Spirit is revealing to us things about the future: *“He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine, therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.”*³³ He will make us co-heirs with Christ!

Something happens to a person who does not have an inherent love for truth. Stressing this principle, Paul writes to the Thessalonians and warns them against the consequences for such people: *“And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false.”*³⁴ I believe it is right to ask the Holy Spirit continually for a greater love for truth; for **the Truth**. This word “love” for truth is more than a “fancy” or “hobby.” It is the word “agape” – a divine love put into your heart by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said of himself, *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”* Loving truth and going after it, therefore, will lead to an encounter with the Lord Jesus! Paul continues, *“...in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our Gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by a letter from us. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ*

Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”³⁵

A depraved mind

It would seem that something goes wrong in the mind of a person who has lost his love for truth. Paul warns Timothy: “*And just as Janes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith.”³⁶* Many speculations about the end times have led to nothing but strife and divisiveness. “*Let all who are under this yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honour so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against. And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles. If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”³⁷*

Even when addressing the now highly controversial issue of homosexuality, Paul had this to say in his epistle to the Romans: “*...therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonoured among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,*

*and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind.*³⁸ These are hard words. Paul does not say the devil did it; he said **God** gave them over to a depraved mind! There may be an argument for those who claim to be born with certain tendencies in this regard, but it would be difficult to justify *practicing* a life of homosexuality and same-sex marriages in the face of the above Scripture. It is a challenge currently facing not only church leaders worldwide, but also the legal and socio-political spheres. But what exactly is a depraved or reprobate mind?

The mark of the beast?

Technological developments

Speculations about the mark of the beast³⁹ have been around for a long time. Will it be a physical mark on the forehead and the right hand? Will the mark be the number 666? Will it perhaps be hidden in a bar code? Is this the number of the antichrist? What about it being a micro-chip inserted under the skin?

Before we go into the spiritual implications of the above questions, it will be necessary to take note of certain practical developments that cannot be ignored in this debate. And this simply has to do with the technological developments of the time we are living in.

The move towards a cashless society is no longer just speculation. In fact, it has been on the “drawing boards” for a long time. In 1990 Toffler made the following predictions: “Of course, money, whether in the form of metal or paper is unlikely to vanish completely. But...electronic money will proliferate and drive out most alternatives, precisely because it combines exchange with real-time

record-keeping, thus eliminating many of the costly inefficiencies that came with the traditional money system.” He described “First Wave” money as tangible and durable, referred to “Second Wave” money as printed paper (with or without commodity backing), and saw “Third Wave” money as consisting of electronic pulses.⁴⁰

As the once beautiful agricultural fields were being invaded by dark smokestacks years ago, caused by sprawling factories with the emergence of the industrial era, they were soon referred to as “Dark Satanic Mills” by many. A similar reaction followed the introduction of bar codes on products in the supermarkets and other stores. I remember rumours about the number “666” apparently discovered somewhere hidden in the bar codes.

With the arrival of the microchip many dispensationalists saw red. From a technological point of view it was simply the next step in order to do away with crime such as counterfeit money, cash heists, or even helping to keep track of Alzheimer patients (implanted with the chip) to name a few. And one can understand their reaction. Perver⁴¹ describes a micro-chip about the size of a grain of rice, which can be injected by syringe (incision) under the skin. Scientists spent over \$1.5 billion working out the best location to inject the chip into the human body. They only came up with two places, namely the right hand, or the forehead, making them “scan-able” just like a jar of peanut butter in the supermarket checkout line. Both these locations in the body generate the most heat, and therefore will be most suitable for the special batteries to be used. The chip will be able to store 128 characters of information (about a paragraph). Ideally this would be used to store a unique number, which could reference a database on computer containing an individual’s medical history, financial assets, personal details, biometric data, etc. This chip would have a wide range of applications; security clearance and identification, secure financial transactions, retrieving essential data for medical emergencies, and the list goes on. Because the chip’s radio emission could be tracked by satellite, it also could be used to locate a person anywhere in the world. The chip emits a radio

frequency code when scanned by a reader. It will use a tiny Lithium Ion capacitor which generates electrical current using the temperature variations within the human body. The chip will be covered with a special chemical substance called polyethylene, which will help skin bond to it, thus enabling the chip to stay in place after insertion. In 2002, the VeriChip received preliminary approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to market its device in the U.S. within specific guidelines. Since its approval, about 80 hospitals and 232 doctors have elected to use the system.⁴²

Since developments such as the above became known, countless self-appointed and barely qualified prophets of doom have rushed to include the accelerating pace of information technology in their questionable books, most of which have been wildly speculative and technologically obsolete by the time they came to print. Strangely, given the thrust of their arguments, they are also, above all, tireless devotees of the internet as a means of publication.⁴³

A spiritual approach

May I suggest another perspective of the mark on the forehead? If 6 is the number of man, and 3 the number of perfect testimony or completeness, then the number 666 could represent man having reached a “completeness” in himself. This speaks of humanism – the cleverness of man, playing “god” – with all his achievements without God. This will give us a better understanding of the Scripture talking about the “man of lawlessness taking his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”⁴⁴ Compare this human achievement with what happened when man built the tower of Babel, and God’s reaction to it.⁴⁵ Having the number “666” on the forehead, simply refers to a depraved or reprobate mind which is not under the Lordship and direction of Jesus Christ, but displaying lawless activities that are under the direction of Satan. The Word of God says, that everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.⁴⁶

The mark of God

In contrast to the above, we have a beautiful picture of another company of people. They are identified as those who have the Name of the Lamb and the Name of His Father written on their foreheads!⁴⁷ This clearly talks about the renewed mind, also referred to as a sound mind.⁴⁸ Paul says, the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. But he that is spiritual appraises all things. He then concludes: *“But we have the mind of Christ.”*⁴⁹ What we should not overlook here, is that he did not say “I”, but “we”. The mind of Christ is going to be corporately expressed. The 144,000 (12 times 12 times 1000) denotes the number of God’s ultimate in creation.⁵⁰ The number 12 also speaks of governmental perfection and the number 1000 of completeness. E.g. the cattle on a 1000 hills belong to the Lord, does not mean a literal thousand, but *all* the hills. The renewal of our minds is not optional, but essential in the walking out of our call. If we are to be mature in our understanding, then we need our understanding baptised in truth, embracing the process necessary to have a renewed mind.

A polarisation – no middle ground

From the above we can see that two groups will manifest on earth. On the one hand, those who, because of a depraved mind, have become one with the lie, and on the other, those whose minds have been renewed, who have become one with the truth. There does not seem to be a middle ground. The options are: Truth incarnated or the lie incarnated; the sheep or the goats.⁵¹ The lie is gathering momentum, but thank God, the truth is gathering momentum too. *“Let evildoers do their worst and the dirty-minded go all out in pollution, but let the righteous maintain a straight course and the holy continue on in holiness.”*⁵²

Every person will have to make this choice: to receive or to reject the invitation offered by the gospel. Do you want a love for the truth?

Open your heart to the Spirit of Truth! Ask the Lord for the gift of discernment of spirits so that you will discern the deception that is beamed at the Body of Christ.

Many people believe they should study the strategies of Satan. In doing so, they often neglect studying the truth of what God is busy doing. Yes, Paul did say that we are not to be ignorant of Satan's devices, but how does one do that? For us there could be no better advice than the admonition in Ephesians 6 – to have our loins guarded by truth. Our loins are the area of reproduction; the area in which a seed can be planted that can give birth to something. Have your loins guarded by truth.

What is truth?⁵³ It is the substance lying at the basis of an appearance; the verifiable essence of a matter.

Jesus prayed, “*Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth.*”⁵⁴ The reader may say, yes, but look at the thousands of Christian denominations abounding, all quoting the Bible, yet look at their regular doctrinal sword fights. The answer to that is that the letter kills but the Spirit quickens—the Spirit brings life. It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth that we need when we read the Bible.

How do I know when I hear truth?

There is a heart condition required. “*If any man is **willing** to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.*”⁵⁵ Are we willing to do the truth once it is revealed?

You cannot simply sit back in your rocking chair and ask:

“Lord show me, show me these things.”

What for? “Well, I’m curious. I just want to know.”

Only when you are a serious seeker of truth and willing to walk in it, will you have discernment. Then will you understand the difference between truth and error. All of God's revealed truths are sealed until they are opened up to us through obedience. All truths are ultimately the revelation of The Truth, the person of Jesus who is known by revelation of the Father, not the meditations of men. Therefore, know the truth by **revelation**, even if it hurts. And remember, truth is sustained by worship. Continue to worship Him in spirit and in truth! Knowing truth changes the seeker, the chains of deception fall off his mind; the Truth setting him free!

Too many believers today want to join a church where they have their ears tickled. "Please tell me what I want to hear." Truth can be very confronting. In order to avoid the claims of the truth, some Christians will readily exploit the variety of available congregations and move on to where they are indulged. There is undoubtedly a price to pay: chronic immaturity in the church. *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you may have need again for some one to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to **discern** good and evil."*⁵⁶

Present truth

Watch how easy it is to fall back on the truth that confronted you yesterday when you are faced with **present truth**.⁵⁷

Christ is truth incarnate, and it is this ever-present continuity of the Word becoming flesh, that the dispensationalists deny and exclude from their futuristic views of the end time. The fact that there is present truth implies that there are past as well as future truths, and neither of them is invalidated by present truth. God's method has always been to build precept upon precept, line upon line. Majoring

on past truths leads to stagnation, but majoring on future truths usually leads to speculation. This distracts from what the Holy Spirit is presently doing in the body of Christ. Examples of speculating with the future abound in the fictionalised future such as the *Left Behind* novels by LaHaye and Jenkins. Similarly, being trapped in past truths and using that as an excuse to avoid (and even persecute) present truth, is equally corrosive to the purposes of God in the earth.

Two lineages

The devil's nature or the divine nature

When Jesus confronted the Pharisees with these words, “...and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”, how did they defend themselves? They answered him, “We are Abraham’s offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You shall become free?’”⁵⁸ How often do people fall back on something of yesterday, even though they didn’t even believe in it in the past? It is the **now** truth that shall set you free. “If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham’s offspring; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from **your father**. They answered and said to Him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.’ They said to Him, ‘We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desire of your father.’”

These are sobering words! Do we follow the implications of this? If people continue wilfully to believe the lie, they align themselves with another line of descent – the nature of the father of lies! *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks, he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”*⁵⁹

But, here is the good news. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord will raise a standard against him!

This apostolic season that is unfolding now will no doubt expedite the original mandate given to the five-fold ministry: *“...to bring the saints to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found in him.”*⁶⁰ While many people will accept the historical Jesus, not all accept what is happening presently as the body of Christ is coming into its full stature. However, those who will fall in love with the truth, *“escape the corruption that is in the world by lust, and become partakers of the divine nature.”*⁶¹

Jesus prayed for his disciples, and I believe this prayer is valid for us today: *“I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word... I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”*⁶² We are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That means you have to be in it but not of it.

Two groups of people are in the process of becoming manifest on earth: the truth incarnate in one group, and the lie incarnate in the other.

A son of the kingdom or a son of the evil one

Jesus depicted the son of the kingdom and the son of the evil one as follows: *“He presented another parable to them, saying, ‘the kingdom may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves and the land owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ And the slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.’”*⁶³

In several of the parables, the sower goes out to sow the seed; a type of a sent-one sowing the Word into the hearts of people. The seed is the Word of the kingdom. Jesus explains the parable: *“The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one.”*⁶⁴

Notice what happened here. The seeds that were sown by the Son of Man into the world became *sons of the kingdom*. Sadly, right alongside it, the enemy has sown his seed as well. The seed referred to in the parable, darnel, resembles wheat. It is very difficult to see the difference. In fact, Jesus suggested that it would be better to wait until harvest time to know the difference, because their character would become evident in the fruit they bore. This reminds us of the

enemy's deceptive ways. Satan usually disguises himself as *an angel of light, and his servants as ministries of righteousness!*⁶⁵ Satan is a religious spirit, and the believer should never forget that.

What happened to the seed? In those who heard and accepted the Word of the kingdom, it became flesh; an *incarnation* took place. It was no longer just a concept of the mind, it was written on the tablets of their heart, they became Living Epistles; the truth incarnated! God said *his Word shall not return to him empty without accomplishing what he desires.*⁶⁶ The same process took place in those who absorbed the lie. The end result was that they became the *sons of the evil one*; the lie incarnated.

Jesus explains what is going to happen at the end of the age: *"Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness..."* So who is going to leave first? All the stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness. *"...and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* And what is going to happen to those who are **left behind**? *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."*⁶⁷

Isn't this a different picture than what is predicted by dispensationalism?

Christ or the antichrist

Like many others, I went through a time, several decades ago, when I thought I had found the antichrist. His name added up to 666 (just about!). Unfortunately, that specific person died. This was the case with a number of candidates. Soon I ran out of antichrist potentials!

Then one day I discovered in the Word that the spirit of the antichrist had been in the world since the days of the early church! At the same time I realised he was a *plural* reality. This becomes very important as it removes from us the expectation of some future isolated and personified antichrist who is to arrive on the scene in the “end time”. This engaging lie blinds believers to the fact that the spirit of the antichrist is already at work on earth now.

Antichrist simply means against Christ

Jesus warned against those individual deceivers who would come with the claim, “I am the Christ”. Perhaps one of the reasons the word “antichrist” appears only in the epistles of John, could be explained as follows: The Gnostic⁶⁸ philosophers who were amongst the believers in the house groups under John’s care, argued that Jesus was not born in the flesh. The Gnostics have always denied the humanity of Christ.

John admonished his people not to believe every spirit, but to test their identity, because of the false prophets that had gone out into the world: *“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; He who knows God listens to us; He who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*⁶⁹

As this word becomes a reality, it is going to expose that deadly virus called dualism.

The power of deception

Wherever Christ is proclaimed in a community, there will be a manifestation of the antichrist. There is no sense for any manifestation of the antichrist in a vacuum. How can there be an *anti-Christ* where there is no Christ manifested? More than anything else, the antichrist will contest the coming forth of the corporate Christ in his many-membered body! John addresses this crucial issue directly: *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh”* (bringing this truth into the present) *“This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”*⁷⁰

This polarisation of a collective manifestation of the antichrist on the one side and Christ coming forth corporately in his body on the other will accelerate in the days ahead of us. The *“ploughman is going to overtake the reaper”*⁷¹ and lawlessness will increase. However, the good news is that *“the government will be upon his shoulders.”*⁷² What this means is, greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world. The battle will lead to total triumph. Too many prophets of doom major on “he that is in the world”, and seem to have a growing list of who that “he” is. It is endemic in dispensational thinking that it becomes more sin, doom and disaster conscious, because it refutes the truth of a victorious end time church.

Let us pray: “Spirit of Truth, minister to me; confirm these truths to me. You said ‘My sheep will know My voice.’” The only way to sustain a revelation is by being a worshipper, because He whom we worship, is The Truth. Let us worship Him in spirit and in truth! That takes on a new meaning, doesn’t it? Worship Him in spirit and in **Truth.**

In our next chapter we will look at what Jesus meant when he said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”*

Three

THE REBUILDING OF THE END TIME TEMPLE

The future is not something afar off; the future is even now systematically unfolding. It would therefore be easy to miss this present truth if one's focus is only on the distant future.

Take note again of this polarisation that is going to gather momentum in these days. On the one hand it will be those who love the truth and have become the truth incarnated, and on the other hand, those who have fallen into the depravity of the mind; those who have become one with the lie. On the one hand will be the corporate body of Christ, and on the other, the corporate man of lawlessness.

It will no longer be simply a matter of sitting in an armchair and predicting or trying to foretell. It will happen because they have been willing in the day of God's power to embrace the gospel of the kingdom and all it entails. Their revelation of themselves as the Word made flesh will shine out in their lifestyles and burst on their generation with great impact. Though they will be rich in partnership with the Holy Spirit, their substance will not be in prophetic utterance alone, but in a corporate life that has all the hallmarks of integrity. That very integrity will speak of their identity, that living expression of the Word Incarnate. Ezekiel captured such a moment when he prophesied "as he was commanded": "*Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.*"⁷³ What a wonderful picture of the Holy Spirit working alongside the prophetic!

Origins of the literal view

In this chapter we are going to take another look at one of those controversial eschatological issues, namely, the rebuilding of a physical temple in Jerusalem. With new tensions in the Middle East – as often happened in the past – speculation of a third temple is flaring up again. Of course, once this temple is completed the “millennium” (thousand years of Christ’s reign on earth) will follow. This view originated from the dispensational interpretation of a literal fulfilment of Ezekiel’s vision of the temple in chapters 38-48, and the implied re-institution of animal sacrifices. This was proposed as necessary for the atonement for the sins of the people in the “millennium”. At that time, the priests would officiate once more in the temple, and the people of the earth would go up to Jerusalem for the appointed feasts.

There are many views on this subject which differ on some details, which are not that important for the purpose of this study. Many books have been written on this subject. The purpose of this book is to uncover the strategy of the enemy in trying to distract the people of God from the real issue at stake for the church. In order to get to the basic process currently at work, we will need to first expose and deal with the obstacles in the way.

At this point I would like to make a clear distinction between Christian Zionists, who seem to have an absolutist war script for the Middle East and for the end of the world,⁷⁴ and those who have become known as Judaic anti-Zionists. The latter wish to show the world that not all Jews are Zionists and that they do not all identify with the State of Israel or with its actions in the name of Jews. Yakov Rabkin points to their (the Judaic anti-Zionists’ or Christian Zionists’) attempts to help save the honour of Judaism in the eyes of the nations – an undertaking known in tradition as *kiddush ha-shem*, which means sanctification of the name of God.⁷⁵ One such attempt, according to Rabkin, was addressed to the general public, in the form

of an advertisement published in the *New York Times* a few days after the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister of Israel:

“In the aftermath of the elections in the State of Israel it has become a commonplace expression that religious Jews and their parties support a candidate who was in favour of slowing down or stopping the peace process. The impression has been created that ultra-Orthodox Jewry, in accordance with traditional Torah belief, are the staunchest supporters of maintaining Israel sovereignty over “territories” and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

“In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

“Two thousand years ago, at the time of the temple’s destruction, the Jewish people were forbidden by the Creator (Kesubos [BT Ketubot] 111a) to exercise sovereignty over the Holy Land prior to the Messianic era. They were further forbidden to wage any form of war against other nations during their exile. Rather, the paradigm of Jewish existence in the Diaspora is to behave in a civil, honest and grateful manner towards their hosts throughout the world. For over two thousand years, the Jewish people accepted their exile as a Divine decree....

“In similar fashion, during the waning days of the second temple, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai defied the Jewish zealots of his time and initiated surrender talks with the Romans.

“This uniformity of belief and practice remained intact until about a hundred years ago and the advent of Zionism. Zionists, representing a tiny movement, sought the metaphysically impossible. Their stated goal was to reverse the Divine decree of exile.... Zionism represents a total and radical break with the beliefs and practices of the Jewish people throughout history....

“Recently, much militant rhetoric has been heard from those who

describe themselves “religious Zionist.” Sadly their stance is in violation of the millennial beliefs of Torah sages and masses of Jewry. The goal of Torah Jewry is to live in quiet piety and dwell peacefully with all nations and peoples. Those following this Divine agenda are not linked to any wars that are falsely depicted as Jewish wars but are, in reality, Zionist wars.”⁷⁶

Christians can only do well, in praying for the Jews. It is, however, important to be clear on this distinction regarding Zionism and Torah Jewry, since anti-Judaism and the anti-Semitic attitudes, coming from many Christians, have left a shameful testimony in their wake. Equally the alternate view does not imply supporting the dispensational agenda.

What are the origins of groups such as the Christian Zionist Temple Mount movement?

Speculation about the rebuilding of the temple, is largely the consequence of a futurist, literal hermeneutic⁷⁷ popularised in the early 19th century by Edward Irving and later by John Nelson Darby and then most effectively by Cyrus Scofield. The latter became known to most people through his Scofield Bible. Scofield’s notes and headings were woven into the biblical text in such a way that it elevated dispensationalism – even in the eyes of many sincere believers – to an unwarranted level of biblical authority.

One of the unresolved difficulties about the third temple issue, according to Sizer⁷⁸, is agreeing on the exact site where it is to be rebuilt. There is no unanimity among Jewish scholars today as to where the original temple stood. The theory supported by most Israeli archaeologists, is that the temple stood where the present Dome of the Rock is. According to many scholars, this site also happens to be where the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod stood in the past, which was centred on the original Holy of Holies. In 1983, however, Hal Lindsey (author of *The Late Great Planet*

Earth in 1970) suggested (changing his previous statement!) that the third temple could actually be built some 26 metres away from the Dome of the Rock, and still be correct. This means that the Dome of the Rock would not have to be demolished!⁷⁹ The fact is, that according to the dispensational script, Christ cannot return again until the Dome of the Rock is replaced with a new Jewish temple.

Sizer also furnishes the following information: Richman, a spokesman for the Temple Institute, claims that blueprints for the third temple have been around for several years. Rabbi Shlomo Goren supervised the construction of a replica of the seventy-seat Supreme Court building for the new Sanhedrin, adjacent to the Temple Mount in the Jewish Quarter. In 1998, Clyde Lott, a Christian and Mississippi rancher, formed a corporation called Canaan Land Restoration, Inc. for the purpose of raising livestock (which *have* to be pure bred red heifer) for (future) temple sacrifice. This was even reported in a *Newsweek* magazine!

And what about funding for these projects? According to Sizer the International Christian Embassy as well as certain mega-churches and prominent television networks and evangelists in the USA, have assisted with fund raising to help groups like Gershon Salomon's Temple Mount Faithful⁸⁰. For example, in a recent publication of *Christianity Today*, the head of the Chicago-based International Fellowship of Christians and Jews pledged to contribute up to US\$45 million in 2006 to the State of Israel. This money was donated by Christian Evangelical supporters, in what would be the largest-ever annual financial contribution the group has made in its 23-year history.⁸¹

It is apparent therefore, that disputes over that much contested little piece of land, whether it is based on an accurate interpretation of Scripture or not, has the proven capacity to trigger violence with potentially far reaching repercussions, even to other parts of the world. In a recent newsletter of the *Left Behind* organisation, this

threat is highlighted. In this newsletter, according to a recently published book by Joel Rosenberg titled *Dead Heat*, which became a New York best-seller, he made the following statement: "Israel is feverishly trying to complete the Third Temple."⁸²

But where does this pre-occupation with the erection of a physical "Third Temple" come from?

Daniel 9:24-27

There is no doubt that one of the pillars of the dispensational view is the interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27. According to this view, the following verses provide the framework for the world's entire prophetic future. Even though it is not our purpose to go into detail of these verses, we will highlight a few points. Here is what Daniel saw:

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place... "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

The dispensational interpretation of this passage is fundamental to the entire dispensational position. Take away the interpretation of the dispensationalists of the above passage of Scripture, and dispensationalism collapses. From these verses they have developed their doctrine of a secret rapture of the gentile church, which will be followed by a 7-year tribulation period. After the tribulation will follow a thousand year period of a Jewish kingdom. During this thousand-year period, God will complete his plan, shelved 2000 years ago, which he has for the Jews. He had to introduce “plan B” – which was the church – because of the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. In order for this interpretation to work, dispensationalism requires the insertion of a gap of at least two thousand years between the 69th and 70th week. According to Riddlebarger, this is a “self-contradictory violation of the dispensationalist’s professed literal hermeneutic”.⁸³ This postponement of the kingdom of God, has serious consequences for believers in their walk with God, as we will point out in later chapters of this book.

Most scholars agree that the seventy weeks, or literally “sevens”, refer to a period of 490 (7 times 70) years. This period is to be seen as being continuous. In the words of Mauro, “...the epoch-making decree of Cyrus in the first year of his reign (as sole king), by virtue of which the city and temple were rebuilt under Zerubbabel and Joshua, was both the *termination* of the 70 years of captivity and also the *starting point* for the prophetic period of 70 *sevens*, which had been ‘determined’ or measured out in the councils of heaven upon the people and the holy city. Thus the entire prophecy of the seventy weeks embraces in its scope the *rebuilding* of the city and the temple, and the *final destruction* of both.”⁸⁴ Riddlebarger agrees, “In the same year that Cyrus issued his decree for Jerusalem to be rebuilt, Gabriel appeared to Daniel, indicating that Jeremiah’s seventy years had concluded and that a new seventy ‘weeks’ would begin. At the conclusion of this seventy ‘weeks’, beginning with the decree of Cyrus, would come the Anointed One, Israel’s Messiah.

His mission would be to establish the new and everlasting covenant announced as the goal of the seventy ‘weeks’ in the opening verse of the prophecy.”⁸⁵

Dispensationalism holds that there is a gap between the 69th and 70th week, teaching that God’s dealings with the gentile nations in this present age, known as “the church age”, ought to be separated from the future course of natural Israel’s history which would continue in the “millennium”. Accordingly the dispensational literalist hermeneutic distinguishes between God’s continuing purposes for the Jewish people and those for the church. Some feel that this separation is forever.

The dispensationalist further argues that in this 70th detached week, a personal antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews for seven years. This supports their claim that the temple must be rebuilt, because only if the temple is rebuilt, can the antichrist desecrate it. This will happen halfway through the seven-year period of tribulation, which they believe Daniel 9:26-27 foretells.

Responding to the above interpretation, Sizer is unequivocal, “There is actually nothing in the text of Daniel 9 that requires a futurist scenario, or suggests a gap of 2000 years between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, or predicts the building of a Jewish temple.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, dispensationalists are confused about the identity of the Covenant Maker. “The failure to acknowledge the obvious covenantal context of the messianic Covenant Maker of verse 27, who confirms a covenant with many, leads dispensationalists to confuse Christ with the antichrist. A more serious interpretive error is hard to imagine.”⁸⁷ As we shall see later in this volume, it is a primary error that has provided the climate in which deception has grown rampantly, and which we seek to address.

Seeing it through the New Testament

Gospel writers in the New Testament saw the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We will therefore take the New Testament as giving the controlling interpretation of the Old, and not the other way round.

The apostle Peter, for example, gives us further insight into the basic burden that stirred the prophets of old: “...*who prophesied... (and) made careful search and enquiry to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow*”⁸⁸ If Jesus, Paul and the other Gospel writers are clear about the fact that so many of the Old Testament prophecies have already been fulfilled in Christ, then it is hopefully obvious to the reader that many of the dispensational arguments for a future earthly millennium simply evaporate. We will return to this.

When considering the issue of a rebuilt temple structure, it would be unthinkable not to take serious note of what Jesus himself said, “...*I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here!*”⁸⁹ In Christ, therefore, the future (or last days) has arrived. The central message of the New Testament is the future of the risen Christ. “Christianity that is not entirely and altogether eschatological has entirely and altogether nothing to do with Christ.”⁹⁰

The process presently underway

Standing on the steps of the temple of Herod, Jesus’ disciples pointed the temple out to him – for what reason we don’t know. Perhaps they wanted to know about its role or place in the future. The response of Jesus was straight to the point. “*Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.*”⁹¹ John’s Gospel expands on this conversation: “*Destroy this*

temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews therefore said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body."⁹² This prophetic statement by Jesus regarding the temple structure was of course literally fulfilled in the year AD 70 when the temple as well as the city were destroyed by the Roman army under Titus. This event signalled the final termination⁹³ of the old covenant era. Jesus warned them about this more than once.

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"*⁹⁴

John's record of the expanded dialogue affirms without doubt that Jesus indeed became the true Temple! But this building process did not stop there. This living **and growing**⁹⁵ temple was not complete yet.

In order to retain our eschatological direction, we now need to look at the purposes of God through the First Advent. Isaiah must have seen something too: *"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy...As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons."*⁹⁶ Jesus, the pioneer of our salvation, became the first-born of many brethren, and his purpose has always been to bring many sons to glory."⁹⁷

The church then, is the continuing expression of the temple, Christ incarnate. The apostle Paul makes it clear: *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* And elsewhere: *"For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they will be my people.'"*⁹⁸

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews refers to the Tabernacle of

Moses in the wilderness with one very significant omission.⁹⁹ Historically, we know that that tabernacle had three courts, of which the outer court was where all the daily sacrifices took place for the people's sins. Omitting the outer court, he now calls the inner court the *first* court and the Holy of Holies the *second* court. This simply confirms that when Jesus came and the Word was made flesh, he became the once-for-all sacrifice and the outer court with all its ritualistic sacrifices became of no value. Therefore when the new covenant came in Christ, he made the first obsolete, and whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.¹⁰⁰

By now it should not be difficult to see that the role of the temple, which played a very central part in the Old Testament worship, is now fulfilled and rendered redundant by the coming of Christ. The same is true therefore, of the sacrificial system, which dispensationalists claim will return in the millennium. Christ became *the* Sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Final atonement is accomplished. The old temple structure, the human priesthood, and the ritual have been abolished forever!

Not so, for the dispensationalists. Their mindset is locked into a different scenario. As Sizer puts it, "Fuelled by a fatalistic conviction of an imminent apocalyptic war associated with the rebuilding of the temple, Christian Zionists are indeed anxious for Armageddon."¹⁰¹ And this obsession might even be responsible for another temple being erected in Jerusalem. Who knows? But that cannot take away from the truth of the New Testament, i.e. that a living temple has been under "construction" since the day of Pentecost.

The finished works of Jesus

More than ever before, the finished works of Jesus should be fully embraced and proclaimed. At the cross, Jesus dealt with the sin problem once, for all.¹⁰² A revelation of this fundamental truth will

rid the believer of a sin-consciousness forever. Sin-consciousness cancels the finished works of Christ in the mentality of present-day Christians. Any reminder of what has been repented of violates the wonderful provision made by Christ's atonement.¹⁰³ It is time the sons of the kingdom stopped characterising themselves as old sinners from the world. It dishonours the work of redemption.

The present Jerusalem is in slavery with her children, says Paul to the Galatians. The Jerusalem above is our mother.¹⁰⁴ In the same way that the prophets and Jesus himself saw Jerusalem, i.e. as a hen with her chicks, Paul advances our understanding. Then the author to the Hebrews expands this truth: "*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*"¹⁰⁵

There is no holy mountain, earthly Jerusalem or temple where we ought to worship anymore. Jesus made that clear to the woman at the well. "...*an hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such people the Father seeks to be his worshippers.*"¹⁰⁶

The Feast of Tabernacles

Even in the Old Testament, the temple always represented the presence of God. It was one of the most important themes associated with the temple. A beautiful example of this is seen when Solomon completed the temple during his reign. When the temple was being dedicated during the Feast of Tabernacles, the glory of the Lord so filled the temple that the priests could not stand to minister.¹⁰⁷ God then spoke these words: "*I have heard your prayer, and have chosen*

*this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.”*¹⁰⁸ This is a wonderful type of what is coming when the glory of the Lord is going to fill the church! In fact, Haggai had a prophetic picture of this end-time temple and said, *“The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former...”*¹⁰⁹

When Jesus was about to be born more than 2000 years ago, the angel Gabriel told Joseph that this Son was to be called Immanuel, which still means “God with us.”¹¹⁰ Jesus was God “tabernacling” with man! And it is not by coincidence, that (as historians tell us) he was born during the Feast of Tabernacles. He was the initial fulfilment of this great Feast, which means there is going to be a final corporate fulfilment.

As we have seen in the Scripture references above, over the last 2000 years, which became known as the “Church Age”, those who are in Christ have been and are being indwelt by God’s presence and so can rightly be called “living stones” within God’s temple.¹¹¹

The imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles does not point to a return to the rituals, the sacrifices and feasts in a future millennial age. It rather becomes a prophetic picture of the final completion of his temple when the glory of the Lord is not only going to fill the church, but also the whole earth.¹¹²

Having looked at the real meaning of the temple in the New Testament, our next chapter will look at the people, the living stones, who form this corporate temple.

ONE HOLY NATION

The centrality of Christ

The central role played by Christ in the ‘construction’ of the end time temple cannot be overlooked. This is borne out particularly in the epistle to the Ephesians. Here, Paul emphasises that, believers *in union with Christ*, constitute the temple.

This temple is seen by Paul as a *growing* structure – implying that it is not yet completed – “*having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building...is growing into a holy temple in the Lord*”¹¹³ Peterson argues that the fact that Christ is referred to as the *corner stone* has great significance. This corner stone has a primary function in relation to the foundation of the apostles and prophets in as much as it determines the ‘lie’ or line of the building. This unusual term (also referred to as a ‘*precious*’ corner stone in 1 Pet 2:6; a ‘*tested*’ and ‘*costly*’ corner stone in Is 28:16) is employed by Paul in Ephesians 2 to give pre-eminence to Christ in relation to the divine building plan.¹¹⁴

Therefore let us not forget the function of the foundational ministries of the apostles and prophets in this regard. Paul makes it clear that there is but *one* foundation, and that is Jesus Christ.¹¹⁵ Does this contradict his statement in Ephesians 2:20? The answer is implied by the words of Jesus himself. Testing his disciples, to see whether they knew him by report or by revelation, it was Peter who responded to Jesus with these words, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*” To this, Jesus replied, “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*”¹¹⁶ The church, therefore, is to be built

upon the revelation of who Jesus Christ is in people's hearts and the confession of that truth. This implies that the church is made up of those who have a revelation of whom Jesus Christ is. The primary function of apostles and prophets, therefore, is, like Paul the master builder,¹¹⁷ to lay the foundation of the revelation of Jesus Christ in the hearts of those who respond to the gospel. They are also to prevent this from becoming a nationalistic or sectarian vision, limited to one nation. Paul clearly outlines his mandate, which was to take this revelation of the mystery of the Christ, to the Gentiles also. They were to become fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body (or temple), and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Furthermore, this centrality of Christ was not limited to the church only; it applied to *all things*! Paul explains this to the Colossians: "*For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*"¹¹⁸

A dispensational Christology entirely fails to give the sovereign Christ this central place; he is required to fit into a hypothetical structure of epochs, and a vital truth is lost. The understanding which flows from this foundation is therefore, dangerously eccentric since it is not centred on Christ. Too many end time theories have been constructed that simply eclipse the Christ. This kind of study is, in fact, a study of last *things* and not a study of Christ and his future, as pointed out in our previous chapter.

Barth was correct when he said, "Any attempt to investigate the meaning and significance of the temple (for example), without primary reference to Jesus Christ, would be pointless."¹¹⁹

Irrelevance of activities on old temple site

The “second temple” as it became known, which Herod repaired and added onto on the same site as the first temple, was completely destroyed 70 years after Christ. Not one stone was left upon another, exactly as Jesus had said. And for 600 years people were happy to leave that site in ruins – a vast piece of desolate waste, because of the words of Jesus. But in the seventh century the situation changed rather radically with the arrival of Islam.

Walker explains: “For the Muslims this large area of prime land, conveniently left undeveloped, was too good an opportunity to be missed. Without needing to damage the rest of the city, they could construct two impressive buildings on this commanding site, which would both emblazon the news of Mohammed’s victory and also give to his followers a lasting holy site. In this way the religious tensions, felt so keenly today, were embedded in Jerusalem’s stones. Judaism (symbolised by the temple as it existed in the days of Jesus) gave way to Christianity (seen in the temple area being left deserted). Christianity in turn gave way to Islam (the temple area being redeveloped for the El–Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock).”¹²⁰

As explained in our previous chapter, all the controversy and (expected) activity on the old temple site hold no more prophetic value. Even if the misguided, driven by their zeal to help “fulfil” dispensationalist end time expectations, should see such a temple built, it cannot change the impact of the words of Jesus himself. The building of the true eschatological temple of Christ’s body, became a continuing reality, on the day of Pentecost after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The redeemed community took its first baby steps!

The real building

The death of Jesus on the Cross, and his resurrection after three days, signalled the beginning of a new era for mankind. The fulfilment of his earlier words, “*Destroy this building and in three days I will raise it up again*”, entered its first phase on the day of Pentecost, and with this the “construction” of the temple of his body began! Here we see in the Gospel of John, the gracious fulfilment of what the old temple symbolised in Jesus himself and those who are filled with his Spirit.¹²¹

Jesus came to re-define the Covenant people, and that constituted a threat to his Jewish contemporaries. The Cross was God’s message to the world, that He was an inclusive God. “*This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.*”¹²²

Peter describes Covenant people as follows: “*...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession...*”¹²³

But who are these people? Will they be two groups of people – an Old Testament (Jewish) group and a New Testament (Christian) group – as dispensationalism maintains?

Replacement Theology?

As we study the Gospel of Jesus Christ, questions such as the following might be asked: Has the New Testament replaced the Old Testament? Has grace replaced the Law? Has gentile Christianity replaced Judaism in the purposes of God?

In short, do we believe in replacement theology¹²⁴?

The answer is an unequivocal NO! As Hopkins states: “Replacement theology is a complete misinterpretation of God’s truth.” The New Testament gospel of the kingdom is the **fulfilment** of every aspect of the Old Testament, not its substitution.”¹²⁵ Why? “In relation to Old Testament institutions, covenants and promises, ‘replacement’ – i.e. one thing taking the place of another as a substitute, means a complete discontinuity that leaves the original purposes of God with its biblical institutions incomplete and unfulfilled. Such an idea, being deceptive and misleading, is a profound falsehood. The truth lies in the reality of the New Testament fulfilling the types and shadows of the Old Testament”¹²⁶ There is a golden thread that runs through the Old Testament; line upon line, precept upon precept. In Christ (and the “42nd generation”¹²⁷) we find the fulfilment of all the purposes of God.

Paul reminds us that all the promises of God are “yes” and “amen” in Christ Jesus.¹²⁸ John adds the following: “*Whoever denies the Son, does not have the Father...*”¹²⁹ Hopkins is right when he says that fulfilment means that the latent potential and the incompleteness of the old covenant is perfected in the new. This is true for institutions like the Sabbath, which is only fully understood when we see that “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”¹³⁰ The same is true of all kinds of institutions from the Old Testament, such as food, drink, festivals, new moon or Sabbath days. Christ is their fulfilment and substance. In fact, even man’s creation in the divine image, is not fully understood unless we embrace the New Testament revelation, that Christ Himself, the Son, *is* the image of God!¹³¹ Those who love God and are called according to His purpose, are to become conformed to the image of the Son of God.¹³² Humanity, therefore, is only completed in the person and work of Christ. As Hopkins continues, “In Him these are so comprehensively perfected that they cannot be improved upon. Therefore, they cannot be developed further. He is the terminus of all truth, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.”

One people

God does not have two different peoples. He actually never had.

We get a glimpse of God's perspective when Abraham was asked to offer up Isaac. It always touches my heart deeply when I read this account. When Isaac, who was a grown-up young man at that time, was tied and put on the altar, the obedience in Abraham's heart was complete when he lifted that knife to kill his son. He was not waiting for someone to stop him. The New Testament says that Isaac was given back from the dead. "*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.'* He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type."¹³³ When Isaac was given back from the dead, according to God's view (always seeing the end from the beginning), it can be said that from that point on Isaac lived on the plane of resurrection. The apostle Paul explains this further: "*Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ.*"¹³⁴ God always had in view only one people. Whilst acknowledging that Isaac was a type of Christ (Abraham offering up his only son), God looked down the corridors of history and saw the one holy nation, a future made substantial only through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

While dispensationalism insists on a distinction between the church and Israel, we can see from the above that there is only one people, not two different groups of people. Hopkins observes that the Christian community is not a distant relative of God's Old Testament chosen people. The Son of God came to break down the barrier of the dividing wall. Paul explains this clearly: "*But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups*

*into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.”¹³⁵ Don’t separate what God has made one in Christ! The only differentiation is that the old people of God were exclusively Jewish; the latter is a universal people. The gentile world is a universal people made up of all tongues, tribes, languages and cultures. But in Christ these differences cease to be divisive. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.*”¹³⁶*

Abraham is the father of us all, as explained to the Romans: “*This is why the fulfilment of God’s promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does. God’s promise arrives as pure gift. That’s the only way everyone can be sure to get in on it, those who keep the religious traditions and those who have never heard of them. For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father – that’s reading the story backwards. He is our faith father. We call Abraham ‘father’ not because he got God’s attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn’t that what we’ve always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, ‘I set you up as father of many peoples’? Abraham was first named ‘father’ and then became a father because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing.*”¹³⁷

Those, like Noah, Abraham and all those wonderful people before Jesus came, who walked with God under the Old Covenant, had to wait for the atonement in Christ for their full inheritance. One could perhaps best explain their “salvation status” as follows: Those who died in faith were issued with ‘credit notes’ which were only redeemed after Christ paid the full price for their salvation.

Completeness only came in Christ.

This continuity from the Old to the New Testament is clearly affirmed in Hebrews 11, that the heroes of the faith are being perfected together with us: “*And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*”¹³⁸

Old and New, those who died in faith, now form the cloud of witnesses, awaiting perfection as the last generation running the race before the return of Christ crosses the finishing line. Hopkins calls this an eschatological principle: “All preceding generations of the redeemed, sanctified in Christ Jesus, from ancient to present times, will only be made perfect with the final generation which is yet to come. Only then will we all receive the fullness of what God promised to our founding fathers, and we, the whole redeemed community, will then receive Christ’s fullness together.”¹³⁹ And so when Jesus ascended to the highest heaven, it was to perfect the purposes of God in the entire universe! Our perfection is in Him!

Any future plans for the Jews?

What about the natural Jews, who are not part of the remnant, not having received Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, up to this point? This is a valid question. We know that although there are many Jews who have become Christians and have received Him as the Messiah, there are millions of Jews who still await the Messiah’s first coming. “*He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”¹⁴⁰

Christ first offered the gospel to “his own”. And, as the next verses

show, spiritual conditions in those days had deteriorated considerably. *“And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you are making it a robber’s den.”*¹⁴¹ At this point Christ still called it, **“MY HOUSE.”**

Then later in his ministry, the situation seems to have changed. *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!....”* No longer does He say “My house”, but rather **“your house”**. And with these words He disowned it. But then He continues, *“For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”*¹⁴² These words open a very important door to the future of natural Israel.

In the parable of the marriage feast Jesus gave us another perspective of what happened when he first came to earth. *“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son.”* It is not difficult to see here that he was referring to himself, having been sent by his heavenly Father. *“And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.”* This refers to the first apostolic mission when the ascension apostles were commissioned to take the gospel. *“Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, ‘Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.’”* In this verse Jesus referred men like Paul and Barnabas and the other apostles with their apostolic mission. *“But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged and he sent his*

armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.” In this last verse could be the reference to the destruction of Jerusalem with the invasion of Titus and his armies in the year AD 70. “Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast. And those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.’”¹⁴³ From the above we can see that when the Jews rejected the invitation of the gospel brought by Jesus in his first coming, the invitation was directed to the Gentiles.

But let us go back to what Jesus said in Matthew 23:39. The word “until” would suggest that a change of heart might be in sight some time in the future. But there was a condition implied, “... you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” Paul picks up the theme in Romans 11, and writes something that links with the words of Jesus: “And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.”¹⁴⁴ What we see here is that because they rejected Jesus’ words when he first came, they were cut off. If they now accept the word that comes through God’s messengers (sent ones) – apostles and prophets in this current season – and recognise those who come in the Name of the Lord and believe, (not because they are a special people anymore) they will be grafted back in again. In Christ we **all** become special – a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people for God’s own possession!¹⁴⁵

Paul expresses his burden in this regard. “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.”¹⁴⁶

The success of the gentile mission, would result in the hardness of the Jewish people being removed. As already stated, if they repent,

believe those who are **sent**; receive Jesus as their Lord, and fully obey the gospel, they will be grafted back into the people of God whose roots are in Christ himself. He is the Olive Tree. This gives the Gentiles no right to be arrogant, because if God could cut the Jews off, He could cut them off! *“Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfilment be!”*¹⁴⁷

Branches, dwelling places, living stones and sheep

A dispensational interpretation insists that the olive tree, referred to in Romans 11, is Israel, meaning that the Gentiles are the ones grafted into the tree perceived as Israel.

Fortunately the word of God refutes this position through several other pictures of the church. In these which we find a central theme, all confirming who the Tree or Root is.

Jesus said, *“I am the Vine, you are the branches...”*¹⁴⁸

Jesus also said, *“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places...”*¹⁴⁹

Elsewhere Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd and I know my own...”*¹⁵⁰

Then Peter uses another metaphor. *“...you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house...”*¹⁵¹

The above references should remove all doubt that it is the Lord who is the Olive Tree into which we all are being grafted.

Paul calls the church, this new creation, the Israel of God. *“Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.”*¹⁵² *“For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who*

*will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”*¹⁵³

Through the above mentioned, Abraham becomes the father of us all. “*For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*”¹⁵⁴ When Paul now uses the phrase “all Israel”, he speaks of all the elect of God, whether Jewish or Gentile in origin. Robertson puts it this way: “The full number that are the product of God’s electing grace, coming from both the Jewish and the gentile communities, will constitute the final Israel of God. ‘All Israel,’ then, consists of the entire body of God’s elect from among both Jews and Gentiles. This is the group whom Paul calls ‘the Israel of God’ in Galatians 6:16, where he insists that Christians must practice no distinction in their walk between circumcised and uncircumcised people (v.15). Here Paul clearly uses the term *Israel* to refer to elect Jews and elect Gentiles as together constituting the Israel of God. If he said otherwise, he would be countermanding his own ‘rule’ for life that no distinction be made between circumcised and uncircumcised people with respect to their possession of the blessings of redemption.”¹⁵⁵

What Romans 11 does not say

The apostle, therefore, envisaged a time of restoration for those Jews **who come into the faith** . However, nowhere in these chapters, or anywhere else in the New Testament for that matter, is it stated that the Jews will or must return to the “promised land”. One of the propositions offered by Robertson is the following: “It cannot be established from Scripture that the birth of the modern state of Israel is a prophetic precursor to the mass conversion of Jewish people.”¹⁵⁶ Neither is there any reference to a millennial kingdom in the chapters discussed. “The present state of Israel is not a concrete realisation of

the messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives either by its location in 'the land', by its constituency, or by its distinctively Jewish practices."¹⁵⁷

Warning

God is serious about this temple which is his people. The Spirit of God dwells in this holy nation. Theologians agree that one of the most important themes associated with the temple is that of His holy presence. In this truth lies the only true hope, not just for Jerusalem in the Middle East, but for New York, Cape Town, Hong Kong and the whole world. Paul cautions us: "*If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is who you are.*"¹⁵⁸

This one holy nation¹⁵⁹, the church of God on earth, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus the corner stone, has a purpose here on earth.

Paul gives us a glimpse of what God had in mind for the church from the beginning. It is **through this church**, a victorious church built according to the pattern in His Word, that God wants to demonstrate His manifold wisdom to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places!¹⁶⁰

The diagrams at the end of this chapter, should help the reader to understand some of the statements I made, especially concerning this **One Holy Nation**, and its roots being **in Christ**.

It would be very difficult to reconcile the dispensational argument that the church is a "parenthesis" or "plan B", with what Paul describes in Ephesians. It is this view of the church, based upon the postponement doctrine of the kingdom, that paved the way for a "churchy" or institutional mentality to rob believers of their

governmental mandate. Why would God want to take a victorious church away before a great tribulation breaks loose upon the earth? We will seek to address this question in our next chapter.

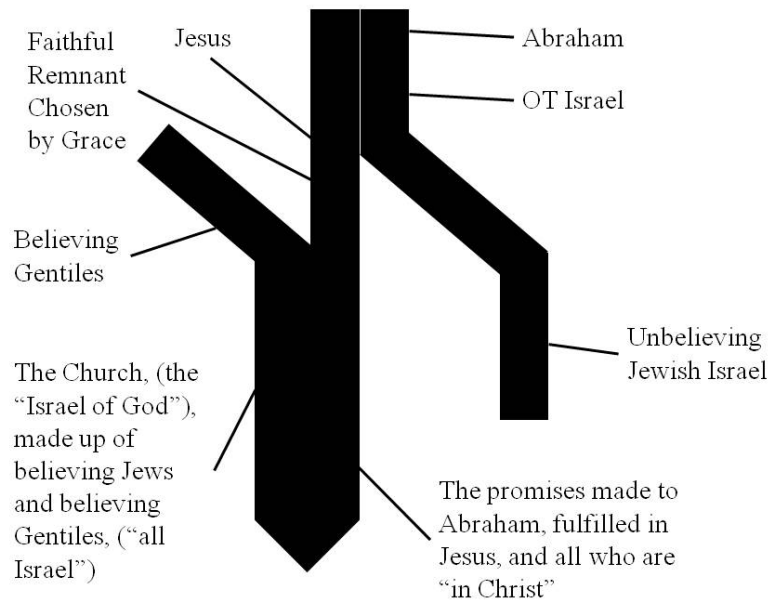


Chart A

Used with permission. Keith Gillmore, retired lecturer, Bible College of Wales. 2008

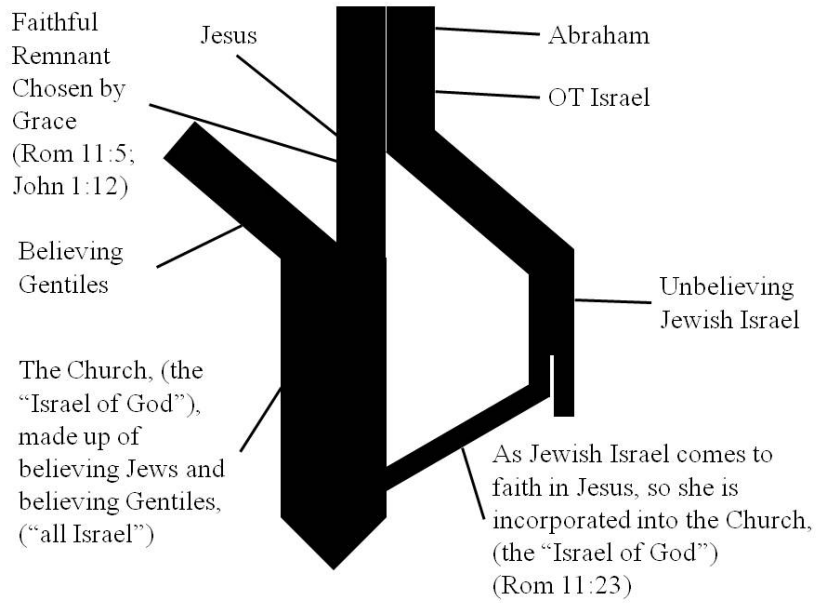


Chart B

Used with permission. Keith Gillmore, retired lecturer, Bible College of Wales. 2008

A SECRET RAPTURE?

Leaving the truth behind

It is true that when some Christians are asked about eschatology, the first thing that usually comes to mind, is the idea of a secret rapture. And although the general perception is that this position about our Lord's return is held by most Christians, the truth is that only a small minority fall into this category. The reason for this perception is fairly obvious. This minority view seems to have the ability to dominate the popular Christian media. The dispensational teaching about a secret rapture has been proclaimed by certain popular American television preachers to such an extent that many Americans (as well as some viewers in other nations who receive these broadcasts) assume that it must be in the Bible. In addition, the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, generate enough sensational news to fuel this end time view.

The doctrinal position which promotes the concept of a sudden secret rapture lends itself very easily to "vain imaginings" and sensationalism. It easily finds a voice with those who have a love of rhetoric. Unfortunately their first casualties are sober judgment and a love for truth.

Referring to the Second Coming, Paul describes the saints being "...caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..."¹⁶¹ and in another epistle he says, "...we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..."¹⁶² Over the last hundred years especially, these (and other) Scriptures have been used to support what has become known as the dispensational view of the Second Coming of Christ. To most Pentecostal and Charismatic people, the

word “rapture” brings to mind a picture of white robed saints leaving the earth, soaring through the air to a meeting on clouds somewhere in outer space. Pre-tribulation dispensationalism holds that the rapture takes place before a seven-year tribulation period. The saints will enjoy receiving their rewards and celebrating the marriage feast of the Lamb in the air whilst those left behind will go through the great tribulation on earth. At the end of this seven year period, Christ and the saints will return to earth and the millennial kingdom will be instituted. According to this view, the first resurrection, the rapture, and the first judgment take place more than a thousand years before the end of the world.

The context of 1 Thess 4:13-18 certainly carries the thought of believers suddenly, and even forcefully, being "caught up" to **meet** the Lord (who is being accompanied by those who have died in Christ) in the air in His descent to earth from heaven. Although the being "caught up" may well be forceful, there is nothing whatsoever in the use of the word *harpazō* in this context to suggest that believers who meet with the Lord, then go on to heaven in a so-called "rapture." Rather, the passage implies that believers will accompany Him back to earth, and there, on earth, "we will always be with the Lord" (vs. 17).

From where does the word “rapture” originate?

The word *rapture* used as a noun, does not appear anywhere in the Greek translation of the Bible. It appears 14 times in the Greek New Testament as *harpazō*, meaning to seize, carry off by force, to seize on, claim for one's self eagerly, to snatch out or away. Used as a verb: **caught**, 5 times; Acts 8:39, 2 Cor 12:2, 2 Cor 12:4, 1 Thess 4:17, Rev 12:5; **seize by force**, 3 times; Matt 11:12, John 6:15, Acts 23:10; **snatch away, catch, pull away**, 5 times; Matt 13:19, Acts 8:39, John 10:12 John 10:28-29, Jude 1:23. It is used to describe Paul's spiritual experience in which he was *caught up to the third heaven*. John the beloved had a similar experience, which he

described in Revelation 1:10 as being *in the Spirit*. Philip's experience of being *snatched away by the Spirit* is described by the author of Acts in chapter 8:39. These supernatural *harpazō* experiences did not transport the recipients permanently to the heavenly abode. To those involved in a "rapture", it was an endowment by the Holy Spirit to expedite their ministries. The Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel made mention of such supernatural spiritual experiences, where the spirit- realm became visible. They were not taken away from the earth into the heavens. The experience led to ***a new revelation of the redemptive plan of God to humanity***, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

In Revelation 12:5 mention is made of the child that was *caught up to God and to His throne*. This refers to a spiritual experience, and not to a physical activity. The Bible teaches that believers, filled by the Spirit of God, and who *know their God, will display strength and take action*. (Daniel 11:32). The Spirit-filled believer longs after the repetition of these endowments by the Spirit, in order to fulfil the ministry of the last day in which the greater works that Jesus foretold would break loose upon the earth.

From the examples above, we get a glimpse of possible experiences awaiting the saints as we approach the consummation of this age and as the gospel of the kingdom is being declared across the nations. Like Paul and John, some of the raptured might be taken up in the spirit to receive revelation insights, while others – like Phillip – might even be physically transported to expedite certain tasks.

But when did the re-interpretation come into believers' understanding about the Second Coming?

For more than 1800 years since the days of the early church, Bible scholars agreed that there would be only one Second Coming of Christ, and referred to it as the day when the Son of Man comes in

his glory, and all the angels with him. This would be the same day when he will sit on his glorious throne separating the sheep from the goats; the day of judgment.¹⁶³

Then researchers came across two incidents that introduced a twist to the above understanding – splitting the Second Coming into two events.

Doug Fortune found that in 1812 Emmanuel Lucanza, a Jesuit priest, published his book titled *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* in Spanish. He wrote this book under the assumed name of Rabbi Ben Ezra, supposedly a learned Jew who had accepted Christ as his Saviour. His purpose for doing it this way was to give his book a hearing in the Protestant world. Protestants would not even permit writing coming from a Jesuit pen coming into their homes. However, as the earnest work of a “converted Jew”, they would consume it with avid interest! Fortune writes that within the pages of this elaborate forgery, Lucanza taught the new idea that Jesus returns not once, but twice. At the first coming he “raptures” his church so they can escape the reign of the future antichrist.¹⁶⁴

Then in the spring of 1830 a young Scottish girl by the name of Margaret MacDonald described a vision in which she had seen a two-stage return of Christ, after being in a trance. The first coming would be when the saints leave the earth before the tribulation. Many years later the story of her vision was adopted and amplified by John Nelson Darby.¹⁶⁵ Darby’s system was further popularised by the *Scofield Reference Bible* which was published in 1909, and it was the dispensational headings in this Bible that found their way into the homes of millions of Americans as noted in earlier chapters of this book.

Add to this, the popularity and success in recent years of the Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins’ *Left Behind* novels. All twelve of these are based on the dispensational view of the Second Coming and have

sold in excess of 60 million copies. It is surely time to revisit these ideas and respond to them afresh. Having considered the above, we will now briefly take a closer look at some of the Scriptures used to justify the dispensational position.

Caught up in the clouds

Since we have dealt with this topic under the previous headings, the following will suffice:

Paul refers to a man (most probably talking about himself) who was caught up to the third heaven receiving visions and revelations from the Lord.¹⁶⁶ He admits that he was not sure whether this man was taken in the body or “apart from the body”. In the light of him still being physically on earth to tell the story, we could safely conclude that he was only in a trance.

John had a similar experience on the island of Patmos. After hearing a voice telling him to “come up here”, he was “in the spirit” and was shown (given insight) about the things to come.¹⁶⁷ No indication is given of him being whisked away in body.

No secret rapture here

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and

remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."¹⁶⁸ This is considered the primary proof text of the dispensational secret rapture event.

The context opposes this. It can hardly be referring to a silent, secret, unseen event. Instead, it would rather seem to be the noisiest verse in the Bible! Heralded by a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, it should be seen and heard by everyone! Paul also says that Christ's coming occurs "*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*"¹⁶⁹

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul further describes the Second Coming as a **revelation** (unveiling) of the Lord Jesus from heaven "*with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed – for our testimony to you was believed.*"¹⁷⁰ By no stretch of the imagination can this revelation be a secret event. Rather it is described as happening in flaming fire, abundantly visible to the entire world. It will be a time of dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, while simultaneously, it will be a time of glorifying those who do know God and these saints will marvel amongst themselves. To call this a secret event, only heard by believers, "turns this thrice-repeated announcement of Christ's return into something akin to a cosmic dog whistle."¹⁷¹

Who makes the U-turn in the sky?

Rapture proponents also use the above mentioned verses to argue that Christ, descending **to the earth**, will meet the saints in the air, and will immediately turn around in mid-air to take them back to

heaven for seven years. This passage, however, clearly proclaims that Christ will “descend **from** heaven”. This means he is coming down from heaven to earth. There is no indication that he switches directions. There is no mention about spending seven years in heaven after that. In fact, there is no hint about a seven-year tribulation here.

The verb "meet" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is *apantēsis*, (*apo*, "from," *antaō*, "to meet with" or "come face to face with", is according to Strong's a [friendly] encounter). *Apantēsis* was a technical word in Greek culture to describe the "official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary" (Vine). The picture is one of believers being snatched up from earth to meet with the Lord as He comes from heaven, and joyfully accompany Him on the final leg of His journey down to earth. It is not the Lord who makes a U-turn, but rather the believers who reverse direction.

Paul also used the word, *apantēsis*, in at least two other places in the Scriptures. People would go outside the city to meet the dignitary and then accompany him back into the city. There is no hint of the dignitary changing direction, but there is of those meeting him. *Apantēsis* is also used in Matthew 25:6 to describe the bridesmaids who go out to “meet” the bridegroom and then accompany him into the feast. In Acts 28:15 too, the word is used to describe the Romans going out to “meet” Paul as he arrives in their city. Paul does not make a U-turn. Rather, he accompanies those who met him, into their city. In the same way, Paul is talking about the **coming** (*parousia*) of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4, not the departure of the saints! When Jesus was taken up in a cloud after his resurrection, two angels comforted the disciples with these words: “*This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you watched him go into heaven.*”¹⁷² Notice, he did not start from the cloud and ascend to outer space. “In just the same way” means if we reverse the order, we will see him appear from a cloud descending back into our visible presence where we can see

him and be with him! This must be why Paul says in verse 18, “*comfort one another with these words.*”

Hebrews 12:1 leaves us in no doubt about the identity of this cloud. This “cloud” (of witnesses) represents all those who died in the faith, some of whom are listed in Hebrews 11. When Paul therefore says in 1 Thessalonians 4 that all those who have “fallen asleep in Jesus” will be brought with him at his coming, he was simply confirming what those two angels had told the disciples at Christ’s ascension. That same cloud that took Christ up will bring him back “in the same way”. This time, however, he will come to be glorified in his saints and will be marvelled at among all who believe. Jesus tried to explain this wonderful transition to the Greeks who wanted to see him. His answer, which may not have been understood by the curious Greeks, conveyed another aspect of the deep purpose of his death on the Cross. “*Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over.*”¹⁷³ We will return to this truth in a later chapter.

One will be taken, one left behind

*"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left."*¹⁷⁴

By combining these verses with 1 Thessalonians 4, dispensationalists have concluded, that those to be taken away are those Christians who are caught up with Christ to heaven. The others (unbelievers) would be left behind on earth to go through tribulation. Rossing is right

when she says, “This is a huge leap, since Jesus himself never specifies whether Christians should desire to be taken or to be left. In the overall context of Matthew’s Gospel, both the verbs ‘taken’ and ‘left’ (Greek: paralambano and aphiemi) can be either positive or negative.”¹⁷⁵ In order to understand better who is taken and who is left behind, Jesus opened his discourse about his Second Coming by referring to Noah and the time of the great flood. Here we can clearly see that those who were taken first were actually swept away in **judgment!** This is not a positive fate. Those who were left behind were preserved and protected for a new beginning in the world after the flood. In his high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prayed, “*I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one*”. This would lead us to conclude that being left behind is actually the desired fate for Christians.

First gather up the tares

In the well-known parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13, Jesus gave another account of the sequence of events at the end of this age. *"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves *said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he *said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."*¹⁷⁶

In contradiction of the Scriptural order above, a dispensational view

argues that seven years before the end time harvest, the wheat portion of the crop is first to be gathered, leaving only the tares. Jesus, however, finally explains this parable to his disciples: "*So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"¹⁷⁷

The same principle is brought out in the parable of the good and the bad fish in the nets. The fishermen first threw out the bad fish.¹⁷⁸ The picture is clear. First the wicked would be removed, or taken away in judgment, then the righteous would shine forth (here on earth) as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Isn't that why Jesus urged us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven"?¹⁷⁹

A Bride without spot or wrinkle

One of the strongest arguments that caught my attention years ago, related to the role of the church here on earth. When I listened to or read about what some dispensationalists said about the powerful role the devil was going to play in the end time, I became troubled. Great emphasis was placed upon the "falling away" and the tribulation that awaited the church in the last days. The catching away of the saints was proclaimed by many as the only way out. This began to sound like an escapist theory to me; or even like an eschatology of defeat.

Jesus put it very clearly, that believers are to be the salt of the earth. The church has an important leavening role to play in its cultural context. Jesus' view of the church, was that of a city on a hill that cannot be hidden.¹⁸⁰ How does one reconcile the escapist theories with the following words also by Jesus himself: "...upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it"?¹⁸¹ In addition, note the list of guidelines Paul and other New Testament writers provided to ensure a victorious role for the church

in the world, and it is clear that God has serious intentions for the church here on earth.

Another Scripture that is often (wrongly) quoted to imply a rapture of the church, is that Jesus is coming for (or to fetch) a church that is without spot or wrinkle to become his bride. The more accurate reading of that verse, is that Jesus is coming to “...**present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing...**”¹⁸² Not a hint of the church being whisked away!

In the light of this truth, Peter’s sermon following the first miracle after Pentecost makes more sense. “*Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.*”¹⁸³ Instead of a thwarted church waiting to get out of messy earth, it is Jesus who will be **retained in the heavens** until the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets. He is seated at the right hand of his Father, waiting until his enemies have become the footstool under his feet.¹⁸⁴

A more accurate theology of earth

Perhaps a few comments about the future of planet earth might help. How does the expression: ‘the way we see the future, affects the way we live in the present,’ affect our view of earth and its future? How we see the ultimate will shape the way we live in the immediate.

What do Scripture references really mean when they speak of a new earth **and** a new heaven? Peter talks about the earth being burnt up. While in a vision on the island of Patmos, John saw a new heaven and a new earth. The dispensational approach to these verses is that

this earth as we know it will literally be destroyed by fire, possibly nuclear wars. They fail to refer to the fact that there will be a new heaven as well! In their minds many have already given this earth over to the devil; while waiting to be taken up to heaven.

A different picture is conveyed when we look closer at what Peter said in connection with the end time judgment. In the same context Peter refers to the days of Noah's flood, when the world of that day was destroyed by the flood waters. We know that the flood was not the destruction of creation. Peter continues to say that the "*present heavens and earth by his word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*"¹⁸⁵ From this we may conclude that heaven and earth would be redemptively renewed. A new heaven and earth does not mean "the destruction or disappearance of the original creation, but the passing of creation in its present state of fallenness, as the original creation is brought to the glorious destiny for which it was all along designed."¹⁸⁶ When a person is born again into the redeemed community, he or she becomes a *new* creation¹⁸⁷ in Christ. This does not mean the old person is physically destroyed first. So also, the earth is being purged by the spirit of burning and the spirit of judgment.¹⁸⁸

We should not submit, therefore, to the futility imposed upon this earth at the Fall in Eden any longer. Rather, we should appropriate the full implications of the finished works of Christ and believe for the recovery of Eden, as well as the fulfilment of the promises of the new covenant through the redemptive work of the incarnation. The earth is still the Lord's and the fullness thereof.¹⁸⁹ This world is not written off. Jesus is coming back to reclaim it. Some may ask the question, "But why don't we see all things subjected to Christ yet?" That may be a valid question, but the author of Hebrews cautions us in that case to keep our eyes on Jesus.¹⁹⁰ While the kingdom (or government) of God is not *of* this world, it is quite certainly *over* this world. God's original plan for creation is still his ultimate intention. In Christ he is supreme over all things as the Lord of creation. We

read that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.¹⁹¹

A dispensational view of the future generates a passive mind-set, awaiting a golden millennial age, and fails to engage with God's victorious purposes here on earth, for his church. In embracing the "postponement" theory of the kingdom of God when the Jews rejected it, believers have been robbed of their mandate to rule. Even worse, its abdication of the role God has given, makes room for Satan's destructive agenda. At its roots is a Gnostic lie, which sees the physical realm as evil and a spiritual heavenly realm as good. The sons of God must rise up and expose this deadly strategy of the enemy to rob us of our inheritance. Dualism was given a death blow in the incarnation. The Word became flesh. The invisible God became visible in Christ. Heaven came to earth in Him. Paul expresses the following which should echo in the hearts of every son and daughter of the kingdom: *"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."*¹⁹²

I believe that as this present apostolic season further unfolds, and the hearts of the fathers are restored to the hearts of the sons, we will transcend the curse on the land as spoken by the prophet Malachi.¹⁹³ The restoration of all things includes the earth. It does not belong to the devil. There is an eternal fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.¹⁹⁴

Now is the time, for the church – a kingdom community – to shift from its previously passive position, and appropriate what is theirs in Christ. The kingdom of God was never suspended for 2000 years when the Jews failed to produce the fruit of it. God has always been

looking for an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, to bring all things in subjection to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And this will only happen when the body of Christ comes out of its futuristic mindset, and grasps the biblical meaning of what church is supposed to be. When believers walk under the Lordship of Christ, they also walk in authority. Jesus told the Jews that he would take the kingdom, and give it to a nation (a holy nation; the church) producing the fruit of it, and he has been doing that ever since.¹⁹⁵ For too long an institutional understanding of what church is all about, has created a vacuum in terms of its government. When Jesus came more than 2000 years ago, he ushered in the kingdom (or government) of God. Many years earlier, Isaiah proclaimed of the coming Messiah, that of the increase of his government and of peace, there shall be no end.¹⁹⁶ Although the final consummation of the kingdom is not here yet, it has never been postponed.

More than ever before, it is time for the five-fold ministry to rise to the challenge to equip the saints, in this apostolic season. “...*for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*”¹⁹⁷

The blessed hope of His return

Although Christians might not agree on all the detail, there is not a born-again Christian who does not believe in the Second Coming of Christ. The Holy Spirit in us is responsible for this. Known as the Spirit of promise in the believer, he is given as a pledge of the inheritance to come.¹⁹⁸

Why is the Second Coming also known as our blessed hope? “From the day that Jesus ascended into heaven, His followers lived in expectancy of His return. He told them He was coming back. They believed He was coming back. They continue to believe it. For

Christians, this is the most important knowledge to possess and to believe about the future. The practical effect of this belief, is to charge every moment of the present with hope.”¹⁹⁹ John narrows this down: “*Every one who has this hope fixed on him, purifies himself, just as he is pure.*”²⁰⁰

When Jesus was taken up into a cloud, the two angels told those who were looking on, that he would return *in just the same way*. I believe we can take these words to have a wider meaning than just referring to the act of going up. While he was departing, the bystanders were *gazing intently* into the sky. Strong’s Concordance (G816) points out that this means that they were beholding earnestly, fastening their eyes on the departing Jesus. It was an inner focus. In just the same way the saints can have that same inner focus and expectation, which would hasten the day of Christ’s coming. We read in Hebrews, “*Even so it is that Christ, having been offered to take upon Himself and bear as a burden the sins of many once and once for all, will appear a second time, not to carry any burden of sin nor to deal with sin, but to bring to full salvation those who are [eagerly, constantly, and patiently] waiting for and expecting Him.*”²⁰¹ Peter adds the following, giving us an even better picture of what can happen with the right spiritual focus: “*While you wait and earnestly long for (expect and hasten) the coming of the day of God ...*”²⁰²

Is there a delay? We are told that He who is coming **will** come, and will not delay.²⁰³ Is there a process underway that we cannot see with the naked eye? I have no doubt that there is. Through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in us, we have tasted of the powers of the age to come.²⁰⁴ It may not be fully visible yet, but soon the great unveiling will take place, and the “it is finished” will become visible, a vast multi-faceted, many-membered body of Christ on earth!

It is now 2000 years since Jesus accomplished the atonement. The question before us now is, “*when the Son of man comes, will he find*

*the faith?*²⁰⁵ The “faith” in question is not a feeble imagining but faith made flesh, embodied in an engaged church. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews cautions all believers who might be troubled by what seems to be a delay in the parousia: “*But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*” Let us rather identify with those who say, “*But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*”²⁰⁶

In the meantime we will continue to live in the tension of the “already” and “not yet”. The next chapter will provide a closer look at this tension.

THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

I believe that as long as our vision is confined to life in a time-space bubble, our whole perception of *time* – the past, present, future and especially eternity – will remain problematic and vague. This also impacts the problem we have, with what we perceive as *delays*. Time (or history) as we know it, will come to an end. We read in the book of Revelation that a strong angel will appear at the end of this age, with his one foot on the sea and the other on land, and declare that “*there shall be time (chronos) no longer!*”²⁰⁷ According to Strong’s Concordance, the word *chronos* (space of time) in this context, denotes by implication, a *delay*.

Because God is eternal, not temporal, He lives in an eternal NOW. Accordingly He knows the end from the beginning because they are experienced in His eternal now. God created time for his own purposes. That does not mean he is contained in time or has ever been confined or limited by it. It is ourselves only, who experience events sequentially, because we live in the realm of time. The frustrations sincere believers often experience, is the result of having tasted of the powers of the age to come; they are born from above. Not being of this world, they sometimes sense a hostility to the existing reality of this world. In fact, even those who profess to be unbelievers (meaning, outside the born-again community), cannot escape who they are at the core of their being. God has put eternity in the heart of every person.²⁰⁸ Even in their fallenness, humankind still carries the stamp of the divine image, though it may be marred by sin. Evidence of this truth is found in people’s ongoing quest for fulfilment somewhere outside themselves.

Jesus and the fullness of time

When Jesus first came to earth two thousand years ago, angels affirmed that all the hope of Israel had found its realisation in him. He came in *the fullness of time*; the kingdom of God had reached its climactic phase – in their eyes.²⁰⁹ The future arrived with Jesus two thousand years ago! Or was it perhaps “an arriving future”?²¹⁰

We are living in the time between the comings – the first and the Second Coming of Jesus. And the fact that the Old Testament prophets never spoke of a “Second Coming” (they only saw the **one** Messianic age), helps us to see the relationship between the first and the Second Coming. It also helps us to understand the concept of *two ages* – the present and the future – from a New Testament eschatological perspective. This means that the New Testament believer, “while conscious that he was living in the new age predicted by the prophets, realised that this new age, ushered in by the coming of Jesus Christ, was perceived as bearing in its womb another age to come.”²¹¹ The one glorious Messianic age predicted by the Old Testament prophets, unfolded in two different ages: “this age” and “the age to come.”

It is within the concept of the two ages that we find the seeds of extreme tension. The poles of this tension dominate the entire New Testament declaration and are identified in the expressions, “already” and “not yet”.

In this chapter, therefore, we will focus on the origins and consequences of this tension, and perhaps most importantly, the reason for this tension. It was always meant to be a **creative** tension. Many, who overlook the origin and consequences of this tension, in grappling with end time thinking, have lost their eschatological direction.

The already/not-yet tension

Two Ages

The terminology of two ages is found in the teachings of Jesus. When asking about the rewards for leaving all to follow Jesus, Peter was told, "*Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the Gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in **the present age**, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in **the age to come**, eternal life.*"²¹² The age to come in this statement, therefore, is linked to eternal life.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus contrasts the "sons of this age" with "the sons of light".²¹³ In the Qumran literature we find "the sons of light" contrasted with "the sons of darkness".²¹⁴ In Matthew we find a further parallel where the sons of light are identified as *the sons of the kingdom* and the sons of darkness as *the sons of the evil one*.²¹⁵

Jesus made a clear distinction between this age and the age to come in this answer to a leading question by the Sadducees: "*The sons of **this age** marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to **that age** and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.*"²¹⁶ Here we see that the age to come refers to resurrection life when death has been defeated.

This terminology is also found in the epistles of Paul.²¹⁷ When we consider some of the texts in which Paul refers to the age to come, it becomes clear that he refers to a period after the resurrection, the judgment, and the restoration of all things. For example, evildoers will not inherit the kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-10), while flesh and blood cannot (1 Cor 15:50). A preterist view, which defines "this age" as

the Jewish era, and “the age to come” as that which followed God’s judgment on Israel in AD 70, is clearly problematic, in the light of these Scriptures. More about this view is discussed later in this chapter.

Riddlebarger explains that the Second Coming of Christ is the event that marks the end of this age as we know it (with all of its temporal qualities) and commences the age to come (with its eternal qualities).²¹⁸

The New Testament, therefore, presents us with a distinct eschatological tension between things fulfilled in Jesus in the present age and things yet to be fulfilled when the kingdom is fully consummated. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us to keep our focus in the right place: *“For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus...”*²¹⁹

This tension has also triggered many a debate concerning the kingdom of God: Is it a present reality or still a future hope?

The coming of the kingdom

I believe that any discussion on biblical eschatology will be incomplete without the kingdom of God forming a fundamental part of such a discussion. That includes not only its arrival, but also its ongoing unfolding and consummation.

The New Testament speaks in no uncertain terms of the kingdom of God as a present reality. Jesus himself declared, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel.”*²²⁰ It arrived in the person of Jesus. He demonstrated its power over the demonic realm,²²¹ performed miracles,²²² and even saw the Fall of Satan.²²³

But later Jesus also cautioned his hearers: *“The kingdom of God is*

not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."²²⁴ His kingdom was not of this world (denoting origin).

In the parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13) Jesus used examples such as a mustard seed and leaven to illustrate certain aspects of the kingdom. The kingdom is presently small like a little seed, but eventually it will be like a big tree. In the case of leaven, the entire mass of dough is leavened through a process. It is the same with the kingdom. One day it will displace all other rival kingdoms and spread throughout the earth. This parable, however, did raise some questions in the minds of the Jews at that time. Ladd asks the question: "The mighty, irresistible character of the eschatological kingdom would mean a complete change in the order of things. The present evil order of the world and of society would be utterly displaced by the kingdom of God. The problem was that Jesus' ministry initiated no such transformation. He preached the presence of the kingdom of God, but the world went on as before. How then could this be the kingdom?"²²⁵

On the one hand, the kingdom is a present and victorious reality; on the other hand, it is a thing of the future and far from victorious in the present. It is the signal failure of dispensationalism to appreciate the importance of this (already/not yet) tension between the present kingdom and the coming fullness of the kingdom, which has resulted in the propagation of a view relegating the kingdom of God to the future reign of Jesus Christ. That future reign, according to dispensationalism, will be in Jerusalem during a thousand years; known as the *millennium* after the Second Coming of Jesus. Dispensationalism, therefore, implies that God delayed (or postponed) the kingdom for two thousand years after the Jews had rejected his offer.²²⁶ The church age emerged during this period. We know that, according to some dispensationalists, it was supposed to have expired by the year 2000! In this dispensation of 2000 years, the nature of the kingdom is seen as a "mystery." If this view is

correct it would mean that humanity has the apparent ability to frustrate the redemptive-historical purposes of God.²²⁷

The truth, however, is that the kingdom of God (which, essentially, starts with his government in our lives) takes effect within our heart the moment we embrace the Word of the kingdom and become a believer.²²⁸ Our submission to the Lordship of Christ is first a reality in our spirit, from where, like leaven, it finds its way into other areas of our lives. We are to work *out* our salvation,²²⁹ gradually bringing all of ourselves – thirty, sixty and finally a hundred percent under his Lordship. It was the apostle Paul who said, “*For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,*”²³⁰ and with this statement he shattered any expectations born of misconceptions of the Old Testament prophets regarding the establishment of a political kingdom.

Reformed writers concluded that the kingdom of God is hidden beneath its opposite: “...its freedom is hidden under trial, its happiness under suffering, its right under rightlessness, its omnipotence under weakness, its glory under unrecognisability.” I agree with Moltmann²³¹ that this is a true insight that cannot be relinquished. This is not, however, the final picture of the kingdom of God. “Its paradoxical hiddenness ‘under the contrary’ is not its eternal form.” We are promised that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.²³² In all senses, that which is hidden is destined to be brought to the light.

AD 70 – The end of which age?

According to the preterist view, AD 70 marks the “end of the age” which refers to the end of the Jewish era, and the beginning of the age of the Gentiles, also known as the church age.

Preterists have therefore been uncomfortable with the eschatological tension throughout the New Testament. Their understanding of biblical prophecy sees all Christ's predictions on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24) as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman army in AD 70. In fact, radical preterists argue for a *literal* fulfilment of the entire Olivet Discourse within the forty years that followed Jesus' utterance.

A closer look at the words of both Jesus and Paul when they refer to "this age" and "the age to come", however, will show that they were not referring to the end of the Jewish age as such.

What we can agree with, is that when Titus and the Roman army invaded Jerusalem in AD 70, it was a cataclysmic event. It was the final visible conclusion of *an* age, but it was the age of Moses, even though we know that the age of Moses actually ended when the veil was torn in two at the point of the death of Jesus. The implications of the earlier prophetic words of Jesus were inconceivable: "*Behold, your house is being left to you desolate...*"²³³ In the words of George Kouri, "For the city to be destroyed, the seat of political power and the structure of the nation would be left in ruins. For the Temple to be desolate, the religious life of the nation would cease. The sacrifices would cease. The Levitical Priesthood would cease. Therefore, the age of Moses would cease. No temple, no Old Covenant, no age of Moses, would mean the culture of the nation would no longer exist."²³⁴

Soon after Jesus referred to the coming destruction of the temple, the disciples were obviously deeply concerned. They wanted to know more about the consummation of the age they were living in. Was this the end of the world as they knew it? It is inconceivable that they were asking about the end of some future generation, or about the end of an age thousands of years removed from their own day. They were asking about the age in which they were living. While it is not difficult to see that most of what Jesus answered them took

place at the destruction of the temple in AD 70, his answer also included prophetic pointers to a greater consummation just before his Second Coming.

A sound principle of interpretation is that any book or epistle, addressed to a particular people, has its primary reference to their condition, needs and times. The interpretation must be intelligible to its first readers. This is true for the Olivet Discourse, the book of Revelation, the epistles of Paul and even for prophetic passages in the Old Testament.

Therefore, without taking away from what happened in AD 70, we must understand that there are lessons and principles applicable to other ages as well. The Bible is not just a historical account; it is a prophetic book as well. Too often, we limit the interpretation of all prophecies to one single event. There are prophecies that have already had their primary fulfilment (usually literal), but will have further levels of fulfilment as well. One such example is Malachi 4:5 and 6. We know that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah and made ready a people prepared for the Lord. But later, when Jesus said that Elijah came and was not recognised, he also said, "*Elijah is coming and will restore all things.*"²³⁵ The Book of Revelation contains similar types of prophetic utterances as we will see in the next chapter.

"This generation"

Just prior to Jesus' teaching on Mount Olivet about the sign of his coming and of the end of the age in Matthew 24, he uttered these words, "*Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.*"²³⁶

What did Jesus mean by "this generation"?

Many have put forward different arguments to explain which generation Jesus was referring to. I mention just a few of the

arguments.

Dispensationalism defines “this generation” as the one immediately following 1948 when Israel officially became a nation again. Bible scholars usually define a generation as 40 years. As a result of this, several writings saw the light shortly before 1988, declaring the end of the world. One specific writer sold millions of his book, “Eighty-eight reasons why Jesus was coming back in September of 1988.” Lindsey wrote in 1970 that “within forty years (from 1948) or so, all these things could take place”, but as 1988 approached, he backed off, as it became clear that the rapture and the end of the world were not going to take place within the forty years of Israel’s founding. Rossing comments that this is just one of several changes Lindsey has quietly made in his writings as world events turned out differently from his predictions.²³⁷ In a later writing, Hal Lindsey had this to say, “His (Jesus’) message was carefully addressed to one specific generation somewhere in time, a generation to which his fig tree reference would make sense. That generation had to be able to identify the time in which it lived to the exclusion of all others.”²³⁸ He then goes on to redefine “a generation”: “If you were around in 1948, then, barring being hit by a bus, or run down by a runaway shopping cart, you can expect to be around to see all these things. All of them.”²³⁹ By now it must be clearly apparent that no adequate scriptural basis can be found for the above interpretation.

Preterists, on the other hand, see the reference of Jesus to “this generation” not as speaking about some future generation, but rather to the generation that was living at the time. They base their view on the following words of Jesus himself: “*For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.*”²⁴⁰ The transfiguration that took place six days later is seen by some as the fulfilment of Jesus’ prediction. But that would then imply that Jesus predicted that within a week some of his disciples would not die

(while others would)!

Another statement of Jesus on Mount Olivet, in their view, adds further strength to their argument: *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations [ethnos=ethnic groups], and then the end shall come.”*²⁴¹ Kouri concludes: *“Before the burning of the old city in AD 70, the stipulation the Lord had placed upon his disciples had been completed. The gospel of the kingdom was preached to the Jews scattered across the Roman Empire producing the new city, the New Jerusalem, the church of Jesus Christ. Judgment could begin!”*²⁴² This judgment is seen to be the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The preterist’s interpretation of the following prediction of Jesus is even more problematic: *“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”*²⁴³ I agree with Sproul who states that no portion of the Olivet Discourse provides more difficulties to the preterist view than this one.²⁴⁴ Yet Kouri explains these words in this way, *“The New Covenant began with the Lord’s triumphant resurrection and ascension to the throne of David in heaven. Yet, it would be forty years before the sign of this transition would appear on the earth. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 would be the sign on the earth that the Old Covenant age had ended, and the New Covenant had been fully inaugurated. On the basis of the New Covenant, Jesus would then be administrating the kingdom of heaven as Messiah – King of kings and Lord of lords.”*²⁴⁵

What about other, secondary or spiritual, levels of fulfilment?

If we take another look at Matthew 16:28 and continue reading

chapter 17:1-8 as well, we get a glimpse of events preceding the Second Coming. Jesus makes a prophetic statement pointing to the generation that would see him coming in his kingdom. Jesus' statement is immediately followed with the phrase, "and six days later", at which time a cloud covers them on the mountain, with Moses and Elijah appearing to them. This picture reminds us of the Second Coming with the words of the angels to the disciples, "*This Jesus...will come in just the same way...*" as they gazed into the skies at the ascension of Jesus in the cloud. The cloud from which Moses and Elijah appeared, is most likely the cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews 11 & 12. Add Peter's suggestion to build three tabernacles, and we seem to have a good picture of what to expect when the Feast of Tabernacles will be finally fulfilled at the Second Coming.

The following verses from the Olivet discourse had their primary or literal fulfilment in AD 70. However, they also had other levels of fulfilment, e.g. "*For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.*"²⁴⁶ Much has been written about "The Great Tribulation", as it has become known through the years. One reason for this has to do with the definite article "the" before "great tribulation" as found in some translations of Revelation 7:14. Even in the text above (Matthew 24:21), Jesus was only talking about "a" great tribulation. The word "great" (Greek: *meg'-as* = big, large, loud, mighty²⁴⁷) is also used by Jesus in the same chapter when he referred to great signs and wonders (verse 24) and great glory (verse 30). If we look at the words of Jesus in verse 21, it was certainly not an ordinary persecution that took place in AD 70. Few people know all about the horrific details of that invasion, though several accounts have been published. A full description of them is beyond the scope of this writing. However, I do believe that there are enough Scripture references that would indicate that tribulation as such, has always been the experience of sincere believers pressing into the kingdom in every generation.²⁴⁸ The politics of the Middle-East have been a

continuing fertile field for aggression, oppression and conflict, defying repeated efforts for peace. There are also other signs that point to other troublesome times ahead, which would obviously reach a breaking point before the Second Coming of Christ. The onslaught of the spirit of the age upon the church has reached subtle but powerful dimensions, resulting in many falling away from active engagement in church life and with a number of side effects in the lives of believers.

Other Scriptures also support a wider interpretation of the Olivet Discourse and caution us to consider further levels of fulfilment. Jesus refers to the “end of the age” as the time when the wheat and the tares as well as the sheep and the goats would be separated, and points to it being the day of judgment.²⁴⁹ Another sign will precede the coming of the Lord: *“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction...”*²⁵⁰ This means the day of the Lord will finally come only when the eschatological (corporate) man of sin (lawlessness) manifests on earth as discussed in the second chapter of this book.

Jesus commanded his followers to go and make disciples of all the nations, and promised to be with them until the end of the age.²⁵¹ This must be understood in relation to what Jesus said just prior to his ascension: *“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’”*²⁵² What

followed in the upper room days later was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, equipping the believers to be those witnesses of whom Jesus spoke. And, as we read in Acts 1:1, this power packed covenant community simply continued to do the works of Jesus through the ages even to the uttermost parts of the earth in our day.

In conclusion to the discussion regarding the generation to which Jesus referred, reference must be made to a certain attitude of heart required from the true believer. In the words of Bruce, “The period between the first advent of Christ and his parousia is the end time, the ‘last days’, the ‘last hour’. Whatever the duration of the period may be, for faith ‘the time is at hand’ (Rev.1:3). Each successive generation is called upon to live as the generation of the end time, if it is to live as a *Christian* generation.”²⁵³

Radical preterism basically sees the entire New Testament eschatology as having been fulfilled. Moderate preterism, although it sees the coming of Christ predicted in the Olivet Discourse as having been realised, does leave room for a future consummation of Christ and his kingdom.

Compared to the above, New Testament eschatology contains a future hope for the church; a “blessed hope“ for the believer when Christ will return and set up his kingdom on earth. And this is not a false hope.

Soon, very soon...

*“For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.”*²⁵⁴ No one can deny the paradox built into the above verse! Is ‘coming’ ... ‘will come’?

The imminent return of Christ

A number of utterances by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, undoubtedly leave us with the expectation that the Day of

the Lord is always at hand; his return is always imminent. For example,

“...when you see all these things, recognise that He is near, right at the door.”²⁵⁵

“Therefore, be on the alert – for you do not know when the master of the house is coming...”²⁵⁶

“...be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”²⁵⁷

“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”²⁵⁸

“The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand.”²⁵⁹

“...the time has been shortened, so from now on, both those who have wives should be as though they had none...”²⁶⁰

“...the coming of the Lord is at hand...the Judge is standing right at the door.”²⁶¹

Lastly, John’s Revelation emphasises that Christ will come swiftly, also as seen in the last words of the Bible: “Yes, I am coming quickly.”²⁶²

This imminent expectation of the Second Advent is a typical characteristic of most New Testament tradition.

We must bear in mind, however, that this message about the nearness of Christ’s coming has its roots in the Old Testament. From its very beginning, therefore, Israel’s hope was that very soon God would intervene. This expectation that God would suddenly step into the world to chastise his foes and set up his kingdom was the very core of the apocalyptic hope of Israel. The heart of the Old Testament expectation was that the Lord’s coming was near. God is always near. “This gives eschatology an immediacy and relevance to the present.”²⁶³

The Day of the Lord is always at hand, his return is always imminent. This was true not only for the early apostles; it is true also for us.

Why has it not happened yet?

It is also true that while most parables told by Jesus indicate the imminence of his return, there are some that suggest a delay. In at least two parables this is evident.

*“My master is not coming for a long time...”*²⁶⁴

The ten virgins fell asleep because *“...the bridegroom was delaying...”*²⁶⁵

Two other parables contain similar themes: first, there is the story of the nobleman who “went to a distant country”²⁶⁶, and who returned “after a long time.”²⁶⁷ Then Luke tells of the parable about the man who planted a vineyard and then “went on a journey for a long time.”²⁶⁸

König suggests however, that these examples do not necessarily refer to a remote expectation. “In fact, they are not critical of imminent expectations *per se*, but rather of a faulty version of such expectation and especially of attempts to calculate the time of the Lord’s return.”²⁶⁹

Linking this age and the age to come:

The role of the Holy Spirit

Our perception of what the kingdom is, clearly has powerful implications for what we are expecting and when. For example, when the disciples asked Jesus just prior to his ascension whether he was going to restore **the kingdom** to Israel at that time, his reply was, *“It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the **Holy Spirit** has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*²⁷⁰

Jesus clearly linked the coming of the kingdom with the power and

characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Paul explained that the **kingdom of God** was not in eating and drinking but righteousness, peace and joy **in the Holy Spirit**.²⁷¹

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the kingdom of God becomes a personal reality in the life of a believer when he or she submits to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and it becomes a public confession.²⁷² However, Paul reminds us that His Lordship is communicated through the Holy Spirit. No one can say “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit.²⁷³ This further endorses the Holy Spirit as the key to Christian life “between the times”, that is, the period between the ascension and the final consummation at Christ’s *parousia*.

Towards the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he made what appeared to be two conflicting statements. On the one hand he said, “...*lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*”,²⁷⁴ and on the other he told his disciples that he was going to be with the Father.²⁷⁵ The key to these two statements is found in this explanation: “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he might be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth...*”²⁷⁶

Is Christ then absent in this period between the comings? According to the above Scriptures, clearly not. As mentioned earlier in this book, eschatology is a study of Jesus and *his* future. If Jesus, the *eschatos* is absent, “there is no eschatology; no end-as-goal can be reached.”²⁷⁷ The work of Jesus is continued in and by **another** Helper (like Christ) – the Holy Spirit. Often he is referred to as the Spirit of Christ.²⁷⁸ Christ is not missing; he is here, represented by the Holy Spirit. His work on earth is not interrupted. That which Jesus began to do and teach, was continued through the early church, which was empowered by the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus.²⁷⁹ Believers are an extension of Christ on earth through the Holy Spirit. John says, “...*as he is, so are we in this world.*”²⁸⁰

This mystical relationship and interaction between Christ who dwells

in the heart of the believer, and the Holy Spirit who strengthens the inner man, is explained by Paul: “*That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...*”²⁸¹ We will expand on this principle in later chapters.

The eschatological nature of the Holy Spirit is further illustrated by Paul referring to him as “...the Holy Spirit of **promise**, who is given as a **pledge** of our inheritance...”²⁸² In the epistle to the Corinthians, Paul puts it this way: “*By his Spirit he has stamped us with his eternal pledge – a sure beginning of what he is destined to complete.*”²⁸³ The Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee; the rest is coming in due course. God’s character is such that he cannot withdraw from his promise.

At this point I would like to focus attention on the basic thesis of this book. While some scholars, such as the preterists, feel that end time prophecies have all been fulfilled, and others – like the dispensationalists – propagate a futuristic interpretation of the prophetic scriptures, there is an ongoing work taking place in the hearts of those who believe.

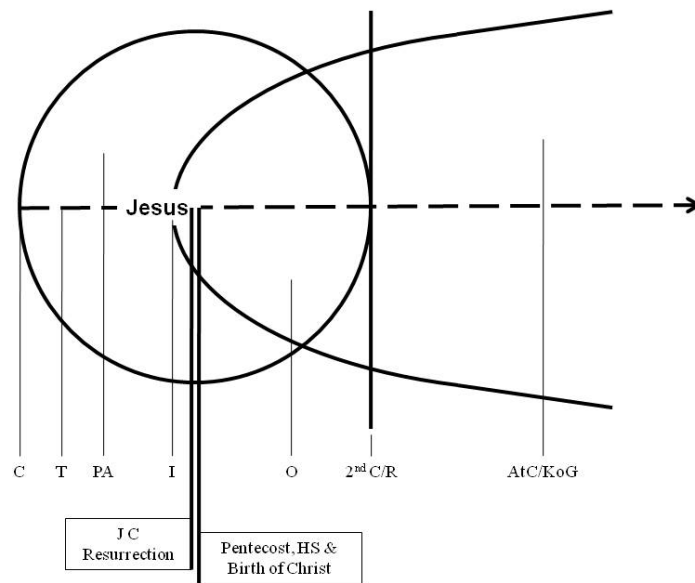
Millenarianism?

In the light of all the above considerations in this chapter, we have to ask ourselves, “What about the millennium?” As the year 2000 is getting further and further behind us, and none of those catastrophic millennial “prophecies” have come to pass, it would probably be in order to take another look at this concept. We will do this in the next chapter.

To conclude this chapter, I include a diagram to illustrate the

The Church That Is Left Behind

overlapping of this age and the age to come in relation to the resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ.



THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

Used with permission. Keith Gillmore, retired lecturer, Bible College of Wales. 2008

Key to the Diagram

- C – Creation
- T – Time
- PA – This Present Age
- I – The Incarnation
- O – The “Overlap” between the two ages
- 2nd C/R – The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the dead
- AtC/KoG – The Age to Come/kingdom of God

THE MILLENNIUM

Introduction

Broadly speaking, three different interpretations of Revelation 20:1-10, have emerged over the years which set forth the teaching of Scripture regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the future course of the kingdom. They are: Pre-millennialism, Post-millennialism and Amillennialism.

Premillennialism claims that the return of Christ precedes the millennium. Postmillennialism holds that Christ returns after the millennium, and Amillennialism holds that the millennium is not limited to a literal thousand years, but includes the entire period of time between the first and the second comings of Christ.

The year 2000

In the months leading up to the dawning of the year 2000, many thousands of Christian pilgrims arrived in Jerusalem. The reason? They expected to witness the apocalyptic events they believed had been prophesied in the Bible. Those events included the battle of Gog and Magog, the return of Christ on Mount Olivet and the final judgment. According to Hunt²⁸⁴, among those people were about a hundred North American Christians. These Christians even rented apartments around the Mount so as to be ready for the 'end of the world'. Another group that showed up in Jerusalem in 1999 was called *Concerned Christians*. They had to be arrested because they were plotting extreme acts of violence, hoping to precipitate the Second Coming of Christ. It was found that some of them had a 20-page booklet containing pictures of earthquakes, plagues and man-

made disasters. People with this kind of worldview are usually known as millenarians.

Once again, we will see how a dispensational approach to the book of Revelation has distracted sincere students and steered them away from a simple explanation of Revelation 20 which would be in harmony with the rest of Scripture!

This dispensational interpretation is not clearly found in the earliest Christian writings. Neither Jesus nor Paul made any specific reference to a thousand year golden age in the future. The earliest New Testament writers did not conceive of Christianity as a millenarian movement, and one can therefore conclude that millenarian movements could be seen as a deviation from early Christianity.²⁸⁵ I have to agree with Hunt, who says that this pre-occupation with the millennium to come, constitutes majoring on a theological minor, and it has separated the fanatics and heretics from the rest of Christianity.²⁸⁶ Those seeking to promote the idea of a literal future millennium have seen Rev. 20:1-10 as a “proof text.”

Apocalyptic symbolism

The book of Revelation was addressed first and foremost to the seven churches of Asia Minor and the contents cannot be dissociated from their historical setting. The book would therefore be intelligible to its first readers. However, there are evidently levels of application, principles and lessons for other ages as well.

Writers differ about the date when the book of Revelation was written. Chilton writes that some scholars uncritically accepted the statement by St. Irenaeus (AD 120-202) that the prophecy appeared ‘toward the end of Domitian’s reign’, which was around AD 96. Chilton finds the language of St. Irenaeus “somewhat ambiguous” and further established that St. Irenaeus was, in fact, the *only* source for this late dating of Revelation, and that all other “sources” were

simply quoting from him!²⁸⁷ Of course, the late dating of the book of Revelation, moves the focus on the prophesied events to a future date, potentially strengthening the *futurist* views of dispensationalism.

The most convincing arguments, however, would indicate that it was written several years before AD 70. Kenneth Gentry Jr., for example, has written extensively regarding the dating of the book of Revelation in his book, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation: An Exegetical and Historical Argument for a Pre-AD 70 Composition*.²⁸⁸ Alfred Edersheim also notes that the book of Revelation (as well as the fourth Gospel) must have been written before the temple services had actually ceased.²⁸⁹ That means it was written before the final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and this would explain some (if not most) of the warnings contained within the book. Mauro concludes that "...a painstaking examination of the matter has satisfied me that the futurist interpretation lacks the support of scriptural evidence; whereas, for the historical fulfilment of many of these prophetic visions, we have *all the proof there can ever be in such a case*; namely, the correspondence of the event with the thing foretold."²⁹⁰

Fletcher²⁹¹ points to another example of the inaccuracies of the premillennial interpretation of Revelation, found in the way the premillennialists interpret Revelation 17:9,18. Rome was built on seven hills, and was the only city reigning over the kings of the earth at the time John wrote the book. But if the woman was the city of Rome (as John says she was), then the beast that carried her was the Roman Empire, and not some future personal antichrist of a tribulation period some 2000 years later. The rule of Pagan Rome and Papal Rome were never contemporaneous and co-operative. The Papacy had not yet risen when John wrote the book. It was centuries later when it reigned over the kings of the earth.

Because of the hostility of the Romans at the time, the author of

Revelation used symbols, pictures and numbers to convey a cloaked message of deep spiritual meaning which was clear only to those to whom it was written. For example, the seals, trumpets and vials (recurring and in cycles, but constantly deepening in intensity) symbolise the judgments that would afflict the Romans and the rest of pagan world.²⁹² Further examples are found in John's description of the same event from different angles. We see God's judgment on Satan in Revelation 19:20, as we read about the beast and the false prophet, while in Revelation 20:7-10, we look at the same event as if from a different camera angle.²⁹³ Chapters 19 and 20 of Revelation are of one piece.

The dispensational approach (characterised by a literal and futurist interpretation) to Revelation, creates a number of problems right from the beginning of chapter 20. It is fairly obvious that the writer could not have meant a literal key and chain (verse 1). Neither would we understand that John wrote about a literal serpent or dragon. And yet dispensationalism insists that the thousand years are to be seen as a literal period (verse 2). This selective literal interpretation lacks integrity.

The same holds for the way numbers are used in the book of Revelation. The thousand-year period is a symbolic number. In the words of Boettner, this term "is a figurative expression, indicating an indefinitely long period of time, a complete, perfect number of years, probably not less than a literal one thousand years, in all probability very much longer. It is, however, a definitely limited period, during which certain events happen, and after which certain other events are to follow."²⁹⁴ Ladd suggests that "ten to the third power (=1000) symbolises an ideal period of time, a time of completion."²⁹⁵

The binding of Satan

The meaning of verses 2 and 3 of Revelation 20 has produced a wide variety of discussion. The interpretive debate, however, centres on

the action taken by the angel who bound Satan for a thousand years and threw him into the abyss so that he would not deceive the nations.

As for the identity of the angel, we know that the risen Christ holds the keys of death and Hades,²⁹⁶ but we also know that angels can serve as intermediary delegates exercising Christ's authority over death and the grave.²⁹⁷ One needs to bear in mind the symbolism in this book. We can therefore safely assume that it was in fact Christ who bound Satan in this picture: "*And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed...*"²⁹⁸ We are told right in the opening verse of this book, that essentially, it communicates a revelation of Jesus Christ.

But where and how did this binding of Satan take place? The answer to this question will also help us to know when the "thousand years" started.

To start with, let's look at a few Scriptures in this regard:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise (Literally: **crush**) **you on the head**, and you shall bruise him on the heel."²⁹⁹

"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to **destroy the works of the devil**."³⁰⁰

"Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first **binds the strong man** ? And then he will plunder his house."³⁰¹

"When He had **disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a**

public display of them , having triumphed over them through Him.”³⁰²

“...and concerning judgment, because **the ruler of this world has been judged.**”³⁰³

The above scriptures seem to convey one truth: Satan has already been bound by Christ, and this happened at His first coming. This implies that the “thousand years” started then. Christ overcame Satan by dying on the Cross and by rising again. If we do not believe this, then what other event are we waiting for to accomplish this?

What definitely does need explanation, however, is what exactly the binding of Satan entailed.

Firstly, it is clear from Revelation 20:3 that Satan was bound so that he would not “deceive the nations any longer.” Because of the ongoing wickedness in the world, premillennialists have relegated the “thousand year” period to the future. However, it was not meant to be an absolute or complete binding in a general sense. Even in Genesis 3 where God spoke judgment on the serpent in the garden, the latter part of verse continues, “...and he (Satan) shall bruise him (the Seed) on the heel.” Even though the serpent was “crushed” on the head, he had enough life left to bruise the Seed on the heel. But then Paul reminds us that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”³⁰⁴ The Cross of Christ **was** Satan’s defeat and he **was** judged, but the saints (the true believers) must execute that judgment.

Another question one might ask is whether Satan has stopped deceiving the nations. To this we must answer that his power to deceive is, and has been, bound by the truth of the gospel that is being proclaimed in every nation. Although this proclamation is being resisted in some nations, he can no longer deceive nations as such. The light of the gospel is stronger than the darkness of satanic deception. This is proven especially in nations like China where the

church had to go underground, and yet is growing at a phenomenal rate.

If Satan is bound – others might ask – why are there so many (even Christians) still being assaulted? Is he not powerful? What we have to remember is that Satan remains a liar and the father thereof. He still has a voice! We must not be ignorant of his devices. Even when he comes to you and quotes Scripture, don't believe him! He will always have a hidden agenda or twist to lure you away from what God has actually instructed you. This is well illustrated in the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.³⁰⁵ Everyone who has not become a lover of truth, will be very vulnerable when Satan comes with his lies. And, as with Eve in the Garden of Eden, Satan will always make you question the Word of God with his question, "*Has God said?*"³⁰⁶

Satan is bound by those who are grounded in the truth and truly believe in the finished works of Jesus. Do we choose to believe what Jesus himself has said: "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*"?³⁰⁷ Peter asks the question, "*And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?*"³⁰⁸ John assures us that to those who are born from above, "*...Christ's divine presence within him preserves him against the evil, and the wicked one does not lay hold (get a grip) on him or touch him.*"³⁰⁹ Does it surprise us then, that we are urged to "*...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*"?³¹⁰ Job admitted that which he had feared came upon him. Fear is faith in the negative. That is why superstition is such a powerful thing. Satan thrives in an atmosphere of fear, which often is simply faith that he is powerful. James advises all believers to "*submit to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you.*"³¹¹ This is why it is so important for true believers to multiply in the world. A greater momentum of faith will eventually expose the lie on a wider scale. The path of the righteous will shine brighter and brighter, and evil will not be the last word in history. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father,

waiting until his enemies are made a footstool of his feet.³¹² He is waiting because one of the purposes of his first coming was to destroy the works of the devil. Just before he breathed his last on the Cross, he uttered these words, “*It is finished!*”³¹³ Because of this, it is time for the saints to blow the whistle on Satan’s lies.

Accordingly, as the above illustrates, this period of a “thousand years” is referring to what has become known as the church age or gospel era³¹⁴ – a period between the first and the Second Coming of Christ.

Why is Satan to be released for a “short time” after the period of a “thousand years” have been completed? Lewis explains: “John makes it very clear in his final book that Satan’s power is closely guarded and controlled by God. Only after an angel with a key opens the ‘bottomless pit’ can the demons come out (Rev 9:2-6). The Beast has to be brought up from the pit at God’s command (Rev 11:7-8). He is later allowed to make war on the saints (Rev 13:7). All of this language supports the secondary line of thought in the New Testament, which states that in some very real sense the devil is ‘bound’ and no longer free to deceive the nations as he did before Christ.”³¹⁵ Although there are a number of theories regarding the brief release, I believe an additional reason for his brief release, is for God to point to the victorious church, those in whom the Word has become flesh, who have called Satan’s bluff. This company of overcomers has overcome the devil because of the blood of the Lamb; because of the word of their testimony, and because they did not love their lives even to death.³¹⁶ After being released, Satan will try one more time to deceive the nations and to gather them for war, but God will intervene and crush the powers of darkness forever. After all, “hell” was made for him and his angels in the first place.³¹⁷

The reign of the saints

The idea of the present reign of the saints with Christ on earth is

common in the New Testament. Paul says, “*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*”³¹⁸ The context clearly indicates that this is in the present earthly reign with Christ. In Colossians Paul explains clearly that when we are born again, we are delivered from the kingdom of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. The Scripture connects the gospel directly with the kingdom of God, rather than with the church. First, we become citizens of the kingdom of God, and then we heed the admonition not to forsake the assembling together with those who had similar experiences.³¹⁹ To claim that this reigning only refers to an alleged millennium in the future, Hamilton argues, would not help the premillennialist, “for it is the believers, not the Jews, who reign with Christ, and the literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies demands that it shall be a *Jewish* kingdom. Not only are the adopted sons and daughters part of the royal family, sharing Christ’s reign with him in the spiritual realm now, but they will also reign with the Father and the Son throughout all eternity.”³²⁰

Throughout the whole book, thrones seen by John in Revelation 20:4 are in heaven, and not on earth. Many have seen this verse as referring exclusively to decapitated Christians sitting to rule and reign after the resurrection. While it is true that those who died as martyrs for the gospel, will reign in heaven, every born-again saint has been made alive together with Christ who “*raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in heavenly places...*”³²¹ The saints on earth and in heaven are one in Spirit. Given the historical context when John wrote this Revelation, a time of severe tribulation for the saints under Nero, (54–68 AD rather than Domitian 95–96 AD) these words must have been very encouraging. Stephen, James, Paul and Peter had already been martyred. Persecution threatened God’s people scattered throughout Asia Minor.³²² Confession of Christ meant martyrdom. The same principle applies to true believers

today. All those who refuse to bow down before the god of this world or to receive his mark, whatever that “mark” implies, can also reign with Christ now.

The future literal fulfilment of a premillennial view is not a trivial or neutral issue. If you argue for a seven year tribulation preceding the Second Coming which is succeeded by a 1000 year “Golden Age”, you have robbed the saints of their present position in Christ. Their faith for now, has been undermined and their victorious expectation in this life has been supplanted by a survival mindset, awaiting a victorious millennium they may see in this life.

Great tribulation, as described in Matthew 24:21 as well as referred to by John in Revelation 7:14, did take place literally just prior to and during the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the Scriptures are full of reminders that in this world, all those who live a godly life will have tribulation. It would be difficult to convince those who have been, and still are, being persecuted in certain Eastern countries, that a great tribulation is still coming! The postmillennial view is equally problematic since it holds that in this period following the first coming of Christ (which is much longer than a thousand years) satanic activities will eventually be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule and that Christ will return to a truly Christianised world. The problem is evident, in that we know from the Scriptures that lawlessness will increase and the Lie will incarnate just as the Truth will become flesh too.³²³

Riddlebarger summarises the above picture as follows: “It is also important to notice that the thousand-year reign is said to take place where the disembodied souls of the martyrs are (in heaven) in contrast to the abyss. Furthermore, these souls reign during the entire period of time when Satan is bound from the resurrection of Christ until the thousand years are over, when Christ returns in judgment and to raise the dead (Rev 20:7-10). After Christ returns,

disembodied souls no longer reign because after the resurrection, body and soul are reunited when the perishable becomes imperishable. Once this occurs, the saints will reign ‘for ever and ever’ (Rev 22:5). This is what John was getting at when he said: “*To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*” (Rev 3:21).³²⁴ It is also important to notice, that these souls of Revelation 20:4 – as well as true believers on earth, of Ephesians 2:6 – reign with Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Isn’t that why Jesus taught his disciples (which includes us) to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? All the above is a powerful argument in favour of the amillennial position which holds that what is depicted in Revelation 20:4-6 belongs to the present, not the future.³²⁵

Two resurrections

Ladd – a premillennialist – suggests that the two resurrections mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6 are both bodily resurrections: “The first resurrection includes believers at the return of Christ. The second resurrection includes unbelievers at the end of the thousand years.”³²⁶ Riddlebarger regards such views (i.e. Ladd) as arising from an understanding that the events of Revelation 20 are subsequent to those of Revelation 19. “This is the *sine qua non* of all forms of premillennialism. Premillennialism stands or falls at this very point.”³²⁷

How then, are we to understand the “first resurrection”? When we simply allow other Scripture references on this subject to enlighten us as to the correct meaning of this question, it is not that difficult to grasp.

The first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:5, is clearly defined by Jesus himself when he told Martha that her brother

Lazarus would rise again. “*I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die...*”³²⁸ Paul puts it this way: “*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*”³²⁹ But when we are born again, we are made “*alive together with Christ...and raised us up with Him...*”³³⁰ In Christ, therefore, we have been given a heavenly position. This takes place before, and not after the Second Coming. It is a spiritual resurrection and takes place at the believer’s conversion. Over these, the second death has no power. Believers will never die spiritually again. They may die physically, but their spirits are alive in Christ forever.

The second resurrection is a bodily resurrection. For unbelievers, who died without confessing the Lordship of Christ over their lives, this means being raised up unto everlasting punishment. “*The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.*”³³¹ Those who died in the faith are then clothed in resurrection bodies.

Final fulfilment not yet

John wrote the Revelation only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, accompanied by all the atrocities of the invasion. That explains the urgency that comes through his writings, for example “*...things which must shortly take place...*” and “*...the time is near*”³³²

Much of what John saw on the Isle of Patmos had already taken place by AD 70. It was understood and appreciated by Christians of the first century because of the prevailing circumstances of that time. However, it would be unwise to limit our interpretation of the book of Revelation to what happened literally in those days. This is the approach of the *historicists*, who have often found themselves in the

maze of potential historical applications that muddied the waters rather than cleared them.³³³ We cannot overlook the prophetic value of the book of Revelation. As indicated in chapter 2 of this writing, there will be a final manifestation of lawlessness in the world. It will include manifestations of the spirit of the antichrist and the spirit of Jezebel amongst other things at the end of this age, just before the final judgment. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus cautioned his disciples not to force the separation of the wheat and the tares. *“Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”*³³⁴ Once the obedience in the many-membered body of Christ is complete, the disobedient will become glaringly obvious.³³⁵

Creation is still in travail, waiting to see the manifestation of the sons of God and creation finally freed from slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory the children of God. And the guarantee that this liberation **will** take place is the fact of the indwelling of the first-fruits of the Spirit of God in the true believers.³³⁶

It is time for the redeemed community to arise to its true identity and to realise its purpose to partner with the Holy Spirit to shepherd history to its conclusion.

ARISING TO OUR TRUE IDENTITY

In the chapters leading up to this one, I have endeavoured to expose and dismantle the basic framework that supports the dispensational view of the end time. I trust that the reader has been able to see that the end time arrived with Jesus at his first coming; that we are now living in the period called “between the comings” – a period also known as the “church age”. In this age there are those believers who – because of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in them – have tasted of the powers of the age to come. These believers have a growing awareness of the fact that they have a part to play in the final winding up of this age – a part they can play only because of the indwelling Holy Spirit’s ongoing work in them.

These believers are not looking for an escape from this world because of worsening conditions around them. Instead, they are more aware of the fact that he (the Holy Spirit) who lives within them is greater than he (the spirit of lawlessness) that is in the world; that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father waiting until his enemies have been made a footstool to his feet! There is a growing awareness that the responsibility rests upon believers to partner with the Holy Spirit so that Jesus can present to himself a church without spot or wrinkle at his return. This church is not to be a struggling church, needing to be rescued from the forces of darkness.

To these believers the prayer, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” was never meant to be a religious utterance or a begging prayer. Rather, it was meant to be a declaration of faith confirming the belief that the earth and all it contains is still the Lord’s.³³⁷

...And of his Christ

We have yet to see the final manifestation of what John saw while in the Spirit on the Isle of Patmos: The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord **and of his Christ**!³³⁸ John also heard a loud voice declaring: “*Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ have come...*”³³⁹ Although Jesus accomplished the victory in his death and resurrection, it remains for the corporate Christ to finally execute this victory. I agree with Varner who reasons that “it’s time for Christ to be fully formed in a people. Whatever we have done to excuse ourselves from the responsibility of this high calling must cease.”³⁴⁰ The Word must become flesh again – this time in the corporate Son.

The forty-second generation

Matthew 1:1-17 contains the genealogy of Jesus Christ (please note the usage of both Jesus and Christ here). Verse 17 says, “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.” Counting the preceding generations as described in verses 1-16, however, we find that from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ, there are only thirteen generations, not fourteen. Looking closer, we notice that there are thirteen generations to the birth of Jesus. The fourteenth generation which is the Christ generation therefore, must have a deeper meaning.

This fourteenth generation, or 42nd if we take into consideration all the generations from Adam, is the corporate Messiah, the body of Christ. This includes all those who have been born again, i.e., transplanted from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s dear Son throughout the generations since the ascension of Jesus. Jesus is now the federal head of this holy nation!

Isaiah the prophet declared about the coming Messiah, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the **government will rest on His shoulders**; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”³⁴¹ The metaphor Paul uses to describe the redeemed community is the “body of Christ” of which the “shoulders” are a part. He also explains that, “...even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.”³⁴²

Over the last two thousand years many generations have come and gone. Some of them, especially since the reformation in 1515, have taken their responsibility to live as overcomers seriously, while others were content to wait passively for a divine intervention. Dispensationalism has fostered this desire in many Christians to abandon earth and go to heaven.

There remains therefore, a generation – a **finishing generation** – without whom the finished works of Jesus will never be fully manifested. Without them, all those who died in the faith without having received what was promised, will not be made perfect.³⁴³ Those believers upon whom the ends of the ages have come, will experience an accumulation of the faith and anointing handed down through previous generations. They will grow into Him who is the Head and will see the Christ manifest in the fullness of his body. Satan must be finally crushed under their feet, and in so doing, they will execute the victory of Calvary. This **one corporate man** will cross the finishing line victoriously! Until then, Jesus will be kept in the heavens. The restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets of old must first be fulfilled. Only then will he return!³⁴⁴

Jesus, the head, will only connect with that which is of the same nature. The body of Christ cannot be of a different nature or have two natures. Out of the same fountain cannot flow both fresh and bitter water. A fig tree does not produce olives.³⁴⁵ For too long the

church has produced mixture. We are called to become partakers of the divine nature, and this was not merely meant to happen someday in heaven.

His word will not return to him empty without accomplishing that for which it was sent.³⁴⁶ While it is impossible to separate the final consummation of the kingdom from what God has done in the historical person and mission of Jesus, his mission would be incomplete without many sons coming to glory. Is this perhaps why the prophets of old only saw one coming of the Messiah? The coming of Jesus the Messiah 2000 years ago will only be completed once the word has become flesh again – this time in the corporate Messiah, the Son manifesting in the sons.

The redeemed community needs to take another in-depth look at the identity and function of this corporate man. This will not be possible without making a paradigm shift in our thinking. For too long we have been disconnected from Him whom we are supposed to manifest.

The five-fold ministries as recorded in Ephesians 4:11 were never destined to merely become positions or titles in the church. Their task is very clearly spelled out: to build up the body of Christ and bring it to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As we currently experience a fresh season in which the ministries of the apostle and prophet are particularly breaking into a new dimension, sincere believers and even churches must draw on these ministries to bring adjustments and accuracy to obsolete theologies. Many of the old structures may have served a purpose in the past, but they now need to be upgraded and in some cases, even dismantled.

The Christ question

Tozer in one of his great devotional writings, had this to say about

the Christ question: “Those celebrated European painters, whose works adorn the world’s great art galleries, undoubtedly did their best to depict our Lord. They were limited, however, by their finite concepts of the Subject. To be frank, I do not want to hold in my mind an unworthy concept of my divine Saviour. We Christians should earnestly desire the Holy Spirit to sketch a true and transforming portrait of Jesus Christ across our innermost beings! Our delight should be in the assurance that lives within us, moment by moment. And that assurance must come from God’s holy Word. Do you personally desire with me that the Holy Spirit will dip his brush and begin to paint across the canvas of our souls a living portrayal of Jesus Christ, complete with blood and fire?”³⁴⁷

Those who knew Jesus during his earthly walk must have had a difficult time after his departure from earth and his return to the Father. To those and everyone since who wanted to know him, the apostle Paul offers this advice: “...*even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.*”³⁴⁸ This revelation must have come to Paul soon after he made his defence before King Agrippa, because, from what we can find in Scripture, this was the last time he referred to Jesus of Nazareth who walked on the earth as the Son of Man. From that time on, Paul began to grow in the revelation of the Christ now seated in the heavens, yet who is concurrently present in the believing community by his Holy Spirit. It comes as no surprise therefore, that he was the apostle to whom grace was given to proclaim the glorified Christ, especially, but not only, to the Gentiles.³⁴⁹ I say not only to the Gentiles, but also to those Jews who felt that Jesus the Nazarene came only for them.

Some of the questions needing to be answered – especially in the light of the preterist views discussed in earlier chapters – include the following: what kind of environment will expedite the conclusion of this age and project us into the age to come? What kind of atmosphere will accelerate the maturing of the corporate Christ?

The power of promise

Jesus told his disciples he was coming back. For Christians this is the most important message to believe about the future. As Peterson says, “The practical effect of this belief is to charge each moment of the present with hope.”³⁵⁰

Why the language of *promise*? Moltmann says, “Promise announces the coming of a not yet existing reality from the future of the truth.”³⁵¹ It has the DNA of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

Eschatology is the language of promise. We have seen in earlier chapters that eschatology speaks of Christ and his future. The promise of the coming Messiah, running throughout the Old Testament, was made true in Christ. “*Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus.*”³⁵²

But it does not end here. The first coming of Jesus was not the end of the promise. His coming soon awakened the expectation in his followers of a still greater (part of the) future. Paul says, “*...in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*”³⁵³ As we have seen above, the Holy Spirit is given as a pledge or guarantee of more to come – the *eschaton* of fulfilment.

This is how God chooses to do it: He gives a word and that word contains a promise. The promise sparks a hope in us and this hope activates faith. The way we appropriate a promise is by faith. God made a promise to Israel of old that they would enter his rest, but they failed to enter because they did not mix the word of promise with faith. “*There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God...*” And having said that, the author of the epistle to the

Hebrews continues, “*For the word of God is living and powerful...*”³⁵⁴ This indicates the condition, that when the people of God now hear the word by faith and obey it, the promise would move towards fulfilment. It is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God.

But it all starts with hope. Without hope faith falls apart. It was in hope against hope that Abraham (our father of faith) believed.³⁵⁵ In every promise of God the hidden future announces itself and exerts its influence on the present through the hope it awakens.³⁵⁶

It is this hope that keeps the Christian believer un-reconciled with the present reality, in order to be reconciled only at the final fulfilment of all God’s promises.

Pregnant with the future

Whenever we receive a word from the Lord with faith, we become pregnant with the future. Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary in the same way. When the angel delivered the prophetic word to her – even though she could not have comprehended it with her mind – she received it with faith. “*...be it done to me according to your word.*”³⁵⁷ Then the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. In the same way, able ministers of the New Covenant are called by God to deliver a living word on earth today. Those who receive this word with faith, will soon find themselves “with child” – pregnant with the future!

Moltmann correctly observes that in essence, the divine promise itself contains the power of its fulfilment in the faithfulness of the God who promised. The God who promised is faithful also to fulfil. But in his great end-time plan, God so elected that there is a part for man to play. The power of the promise to attain to fulfilment lies no longer only in the faithfulness of God himself, but in **the obedience of the believer.**³⁵⁸

Enlarged in the waiting

Having received the imperishable seed of the living and abiding Word of God, a process has begun. This new creation in us cannot forever feed on milk; we must move on to solid food, the word of righteousness.³⁵⁹ Believers must awaken to their true identity in Christ. In this growth process we soon leave behind that sin-consciousness that has trapped countless believers, keeping them hostage to feelings of unworthiness and self-condemnation. So much of this has to do with our spiritual diet, the word we receive; the teachings we are exposed to. Children must grow up to become mature sons, and many sons will become fathers in the spirit.³⁶⁰ In fact, Paul admonishes us to grow up into Christ, the head. “... *no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ...*”³⁶¹ If ever there has been a word the church of the 21st century needs, it is this one!

It is tragically unfortunate, and yet unsurprising, that blatantly perverted doctrines regarding the *manifested sons of God* have appeared over the years. Satan desires to distract the true seeker from the real issue at stake here. One of these is “sonship”. Sonship simply speaks of those (male and female) who have matured and who understand the emphasis placed on the corporate. What is actually meant when we speak of the manifestation of the sons of God is the corporate manifestation of THE SON in the sons or company of mature believers.

Some pioneers in the spirit may even have become discouraged by what seems like a delay in the *parousia*, and they are not alone. The created world itself is waiting to be set free from its slavery to corruption! The lingering futility must be broken.

However, this release will not happen, before the sons of God are revealed. Paul describes the difficult times of pain throughout the world as birth pangs: *“It's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us.”*³⁶² Until the final breakthrough comes, the Holy Spirit is the only One who can turn our wordless sighs and aching groans into sensible prayers before the Father.

Is it possible for the believers to eliminate further delays? Let's look at some Scripture passages that might give us some insight.

Gazing intently

As the disciples were *gazing intently* into the skies as the resurrected Jesus departed into the cloud of witnesses,³⁶³ so also we must never lose focus on the apostolic vision of his return. The angels told those disciples who were looking longingly as Jesus disappeared into the cloud, that he was going to return *in just the same way*. This statement contains more than first meets the eye, as indicated in an earlier chapter. In the same way as the apostles gazed intently at the departing Jesus, apostles in this season have a function. Peter hints that it is this intense “looking for” the coming of the Lord that will “hasten” that day.³⁶⁴ The author of the Hebrews writes: *“Even so it is that Christ, having been offered to take upon Himself and bear as a burden the sins of many once and once for all, will appear a second time, not to carry any burden of sin nor to deal with sin, but to bring to full salvation those who are [eagerly, constantly, and patiently] waiting for and expecting Him.”*³⁶⁵

It is this heart focus that makes the believers strong when the spirit of the age in all its craftiness tries to wear them out. This heart-

attitude is encouraged in all the parables in which Jesus referred to his return. The believer's faith strains after the future. Jesus himself says that we are **blessed** when we hunger and thirst for righteousness, for we shall be satisfied. Therefore, a blessing is upon those who, even though they have been promised an abundance, seem to be rich only in hunger and thirst! While this may sound like a contradiction, it is within this, that hope must prove its power.

Is it possible then, that this delay in the *parousia* (in appearance only or in reality) serves a function? The answer is to be found in what God intended for the church on earth.

The victorious church

In Christ, God finally revealed his plan which had been hidden for ages – a victorious church! In this plan we find another part of the answer to help us understand why we do not yet see everything subject to Christ.

Instead of being held captive by a barren, senseless existence, awaiting rescue out of this earth as dispensationalism would have us believe, God's various expressions of power and energy never become stagnant. The dynamic activity of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer is always ready to empower those who will participate in the final execution of the victory accomplished by Jesus in his first coming.

Paul explains: “...to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known **through the church** to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord...”³⁶⁶

Whether the whole redeemed community will participate in the

above demonstration, is not clearly stated in Scripture,³⁶⁷ but **one** thing is clear: true sons, the victorious church, will demonstrate the finished works (accomplished by Jesus' first coming) to the principalities and powers in heavenly places! This demonstration is the reason for the war. The great lie will be exposed. The war is not about winning; it is to demonstrate the finished works accomplished by Christ in the atonement. The victory accomplished on the Cross was complete. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and also to make an open display of Satan himself. These sons that have come into glory will simply enforce that victory.³⁶⁸

The father-son relationship

This eschatological hope has been kept alive in the relationship between spiritual fathers and their spiritual sons throughout the ages. Continuity has been preserved by the impartation of the vision from one generation to another. Can we understand, therefore, why the enemy has battled this principle with all in his power? As usual, the enemy has polluted this truth with false spiritual fathers who abused their authority for their own gain. The sincere seeker however, will soon realise that Satan will only produce an Ishmael when he knows there is a true Isaac on his way. The importance of the father-son relationship as the required wineskin, in order for the Lord to do what he wants to do now, is being highlighted in this present apostolic season! Where this relationship is in place as in the early church, local churches will function as households or families. For too long now, institutionalism has robbed churches of that vital ingredient of *relationships*. And the acid test of a true spiritual father ministry is that he will be burdened to see Christ fully formed in his spiritual sons, as it was with the apostle Paul.³⁶⁹

Jesus asked whether he would find *the faith* at his return. This golden thread of faith will culminate in the answer incarnated in the final generation of believers when Christ returns. We are reminded that even though those before us did not receive what was promised, they

will not be disappointed. *“Their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.”*³⁷⁰

It is very unfortunate that so many Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians have limited the function and anointing of the Holy Spirit to “moving in the gifts”, often accompanied by a shallow interpretation. They endlessly seek his presence and neglect to cooperate with his person. Whilst it is important not to overlook the need that believers have to move in the gifts of the Spirit,³⁷¹ he, the Spirit, is completing a deeper work in those who allow him to come alongside them as the *paracletos*. His function involves the establishing of a godly character, making us partakers of the divine nature!

The primary function of the Holy Spirit was spelled out by Jesus himself shortly before his crucifixion. *“He shall glorify Me, for he shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.”*³⁷² Jesus also reminds us, that when this Spirit of truth comes, he will bear witness of Him (Jesus).³⁷³ When the Greeks came wanting to “see Jesus” his reply was this, *“Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and **reproduces itself** many times over*³⁷⁴ Surely, the deeper understanding of this Scripture, is that being worked out in the heart of every believer sowing to the Spirit, and the outcome is that the world will again “see Jesus”. The many-membered body of Christ **is** in the process of becoming a reality. Every eye **will** see him! The death and resurrection of Jesus paved the way for this.

Paul even gives us a glimpse of the resurrection body that awaits the saints, when he says, *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”*³⁷⁵ He further refers to Christ after his resurrection as

the *First Fruits of those who are asleep*.³⁷⁶ The implication is that others will follow, and this is made possible only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

A second coming of the Holy Spirit?

By now I trust that the reader is well aware of the underlying theme of this book, that is, not only to expose the deadly strategy of the enemy (behind the dispensational myth) but also to emphasise the ongoing and crucial role played by the Holy Spirit as we come to the conclusion of this age.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, and any true reading of Scripture will reflect this truth, that all of God is simultaneously engaged in the work of creation and redemption throughout all time. However, there is a sense in which the God who “fathered” his people throughout the Old Testament, was revealed by the Son in the New, and expressed in the church through the Holy Spirit since Pentecost. God who was present in the holy of holies, and was present in the person of the Son, in our day, is present in the indwelling Holy Spirit in the church. In a unique display of oneness in the acts of the Trinity, we never see anyone of them posturing for independence or recognition. Father would open the heavens and announce, “This is my Son, listen to him!” Jesus makes it clear, he never does or says anything without him seeing or hearing his Father doing or saying it. The Holy Spirit always testifies of Christ. This is the level of oneness, which Jesus prays to be manifested in his followers.³⁷⁷ When the world sees this level of oneness in the body of Christ, they will believe that Jesus was sent from God, and the gospel would be validated in their eyes.

We are now privileged to live in the age in which the Holy Spirit is bringing the finishing touches to the shaping of the temple of God. This temple, the believing community, will be a collective witness of the many-membered Christ in the earth.

I would strongly caution against any view that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was final and that there will be no other outpouring. Clearly the early apostles had several subsequent recorded outpourings or infillings of the Spirit, and we know that it is unwise to put a full stop behind the increase of God's government. The fact of our ever expanding universe is but one powerful testimony against such thinking. Any theology or frame of reference that limits God, needs adjustment.

When considering the work of the Holy Spirit, it may help to explore the significance of some key prophetic models. The Tabernacle of Moses also points to the qualifications needed for entering the third court.

The Tabernacle of Moses

A study of the Tabernacle of Moses as a type of God's unfolding plan for the church, from the first reformation by Martin Luther, highlights a very important principle. The outer court was open and accessible to all who brought their sacrifices to the altar of sacrifice daily. The inner court was only accessible to the priests who ministered there, taking care of the table of showbread, the golden lamp stand and the altar of incense. The third court, however, was only accessible to the high priest once a year.

Every piece of furniture in the tabernacle represents a truth that was restored to the maturing church. A detailed study of the Tabernacle of Moses, (known as "the grandfather clause of revelation") is beyond the scope of this book. What I would like to focus on, however, is the entrance into the third court. This was known as the Holy of Holies, and it helps us understand where the church is in this phase of the restoration.

Only ONE man, the high priest, was allowed to enter. What we also know from Hebrews, is that the altar of incense has moved from the

inner court to the Holy of Holies.³⁷⁸

What is this a type of? Simply this: that entrance into that final third court of God's presence, is only possible on grounds of redemption, embodied in the ONE corporate man! Oneness, as prayed for by Jesus in John 17:21, is a pre-requisite for entering in. And this will be facilitated by intercession and worship, which is what the altar of incense represents.

The Feast of Tabernacles

A brief look into the significance of the feast of Tabernacles, will highlight the important function of the Holy Spirit as we reach the grand entrance into the third court, the Holy of Holies.

Building blocks

Although our main focus here is the "third" feast, which is the Feast of Tabernacles, we will miss something very important if we do not briefly look at the build-up to this feast. In fact, these feasts are like building blocks; each one needs to be in place for the whole to make sense.

Any attempt to investigate the meaning of any of the types and shadows of the Old Testament without primary reference to Jesus Christ, would lead to inaccurate conclusions and applications.

As we look into the symbolism of these feasts instituted by the Lord for the Jews in the Old Testament, we will be amazed by their spiritual significance, and especially their relevance concerning the unfolding plan of God for the believer and the church today. Space does not allow us to dwell on the many details, fascinating as they may be. Many excellent books have been written giving the finer details of the feasts. There is a larger pattern which emerges, however, that will leave the hungry seeker in awe as they grasp the beauty of God's wisdom right from the beginning. Nothing God ever

institutes is without significance.

Passover

It was God Himself who instituted the Passover on the night of the Exodus of the nation of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12). Deliverance finally came for a nation who had been in slavery for over 400 years, and judgment on the oppressors, was an essential element. A lamb without blemish had to be killed for each household, and the blood had to be applied on the doorposts of each family's house. This ensured salvation for that household, as the Lord struck the first-born of every house where no blood was found on the doorpost. Judgment 'passed over' wherever the blood was faithfully applied to that particular doorpost!

It is not difficult to see a beautiful prophetic picture of the Lamb of God, who was crucified for our sin. Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. The same principle is found in Leviticus 23 when the Lord explained the laws of these festivals. On Passover, the priest had to wave a sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest before the Lord. This prophetic type was fulfilled at the resurrection when Christ became the first fruits, the first-born of many brethren who would participate in resurrection life later.

This feast corresponds to the outer court in the Tabernacle of Moses.

Pentecost

As for the second major feast of the Jews, the Feast of Pentecost, the priest had to wave **two** loaves of bread (as well as two lambs) before the Lord. Fulfilment of this Feast came on the day of Pentecost, as described in Acts 2. The number '2' in the Bible often symbolises Christ and the church. So the waving of the two loaves simply refers to Christ and His Body being waved before the Father on the day of Pentecost. We can therefore say, that the church was born on the day

of Pentecost.

This feast corresponds to the inner court of the Tabernacle of Moses.

Tabernacles

During the Feast of Tabernacles (or Feast of the Harvest) of the seventh month, the glorious presence of God became visible upon the tabernacle. All of Israel had to stay in booths facing the glory during those seven days. God was visiting his people in a special way.

When Jesus was born – which happened to be in the Feast of Tabernacles – he was given the name Emmanuel, which means “God with us”. God actually came to tabernacle with humankind in the person of Jesus. As Peterson translates, the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.³⁷⁹

At this stage it is very important that we take note of another critical principle. Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection were not only to reconcile humankind to God, but, as pioneer of our salvation, He also came to bring many sons to glory. Father put all things in subjection under Jesus’ feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.³⁸⁰

It is about Christ AND His body! As He is, so also are we in this world.³⁸¹ Therefore, Passover became our personal experience. Your deliverance and mine, from the dominion of sin, was sealed when we came under the Lordship of Jesus and became a new creation. In the same way, when we received the Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance, Pentecost also became our personal reality in our own spiritual growth.

Now what about the Feast of Tabernacles, which corresponds to the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Moses?

Is there any relevance for this feast for the church of the 21st century?

First of all, although some Christian believers still celebrate the Passover (usually coinciding with “Good Friday”) as well as Pentecost (in some places with ‘tarrying’ meetings) on the same dates as those on the Jewish calendar, we know that partaking of the experiences symbolised by these feasts, is not limited to the stipulated dates. One can enter into the reality of these feasts at any time.

Likewise, the Feast of Tabernacles has been an unfolding reality ever since Jesus was born more than 2000 years ago. Celebrating this feast on specific dates on our calendar only serves to remind us and to focus our hearts on the glorious final fulfilment ahead.

Of the many beautiful themes evident in the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the most important themes is that of the presence of the Lord. In the Old Testament the glorious presence of the Lord was visible, as it shone on the Holy of Holies, especially during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Imagine all the tribes moving out of their houses, making little booths of palm branches and sitting in them, facing the glory on the tabernacle. What an awesome sight it must have been! Heaven touching earth!

The eschatological relevance of this Third Feast, however, is found in the following principle. There is an experience awaiting the church which will only become a reality as we leave our individualistic pursuits behind and truly manifest the BODY. In the same way, that only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies of Moses’ temple once a year, so also will it be the ONE CORPORATE MAN³⁸² (the oneness Jesus referred to in His prayer in John 17:21) who will fully experience the final fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles. The glory awaits us in that day. And the glory of this latter house will be greater than the first!

The author of Hebrews warns, however, that as long as the former (the outer portion of) tabernacle remains a recognised institution and is still standing, the way into the third court (Holy of Holies) has not yet been thrown open.³⁸³ Apart from obsolete mentalities and practices that hold us back, much repentance is needed in the wider body of Christ for pursuing its own (often) divisive agendas. Although the veil was rent when Jesus died on the Cross and believers gained access through a new and living way,³⁸⁴ certain man-made structures and ambitions may still rob us of the fullness of God's indwelling presence. As the prophet Haggai puts it: *"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses while this house lies desolate? ...My house lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house."*³⁸⁵

When we celebrate this Feast, therefore, it is a prophetic event. It is more than an event; it is a declaration. While we are very aware of the historical aspects, we now lean into the final, corporate experience of His glorious presence filling the earth as the waters cover the sea. This means...COMPLETELY! By looking longingly for His coming, we hasten the day. We are coming out of our 'homes', all facing one way, namely, embracing the promise of the Lord with a travail in our hearts. And what will be the end result? *"The latter glory of this (end time) house shall be greater than the former...and in this house I shall give peace"*³⁸⁶

Another corporate baptism?

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was clearly a corporate baptism. The disciples in the upper room were together in one place when the Spirit came. Will there be another corporate baptism like the one in Acts 2?

While it is important to see that there is an ongoing work in the heart of every true believer, as we appropriate the Living Word with the

cry like a Mary, “Be it done unto me Lord, according to your Word!”, I do not exclude the possibility of another **corporate** baptism. This important function of the Holy Spirit has not yet been fully accomplished. We must, however, move on from all those experiences we have had in the second court – wonderful as they may have been. A greater glory awaits us as we press in to experience the fullness of Tabernacles! And this is where I place the “second”³⁸⁷ coming of the Holy Spirit. Whereas believers have received individual infillings of the Holy Spirit, this time it is going to be a corporate experience from which will emerge the “corporate man” that will enter the third “court”.

At the end of the Feast of Tabernacles recorded in John 7, Jesus cried out, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*³⁸⁸ After this feast, the Holy Spirit will flow from our innermost being! This may or may not include a specific event. The ongoing process, is that the Word is becoming flesh again in the lives of all those who embrace the Word and Spirit.

At this point we must take note of a serious warning from the mouth of Jesus himself. Whatever process brings this oneness about, it is not going to happen as a result of man’s organisational skills. We must make room for the Holy Spirit and facilitate what he wants to do. It is going to be **his** work. Wherever man has tried to organise unity, it has failed. Jesus cautions us: *"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."*³⁸⁹ Let us rather work alongside the prayer of Jesus for this oneness!

The spirit of the antichrist

The spirit of the antichrist is directly opposed to the Spirit of Christ at work in the believer.

In chapter 2 of this book I pointed out that this polarisation of a corporate manifestation of the antichrist on the one hand, and Christ coming forth corporately in his body on the other, will be accelerated in the days ahead of us. This is a principle: the “dragon” is always positioned right there where the “woman” is ready to give birth to the “man-child”.³⁹⁰

Paul links the “man of sin” or the “man of lawlessness” to the antichrist. He describes his activity in terms of being both *against* and *in the place of* Christ. This man of lawlessness takes his seat in the temple of God. This confirms that he will function where the Holy Spirit is active in those who, as a unit, are being shaped into the temple of God. “*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.*”³⁹¹ This passage indicates without doubt how seriously God views the process of the Holy Spirit in us, his temple!

Another vision seen by John while “in the Spirit” on the Isle of Patmos, is the picture of the “beast”.³⁹² This wicked eschatological figure, according to many scholars, is also linked to a manifestation of the antichrist, seeking to be worshipped.

The dreaded cryptogram 666 and its interpretation has gripped the imagination of countless people throughout the ages, attracting much speculation. In chapter two of this book I suggested an interpretation that removed the concept of a single individual linked to the number 666. However, there is strong support for the possibility that there was a man at the time of the writing of the letter that fitted the

picture of this “beast”. John’s reference to “many antichrists”³⁹³ may have been his warning against both individual apostates as well as a system of apostasy.³⁹⁴

Gentry, whose view echoes that of a number of scholars about the early dating of the book of Revelation, identified Nero, who reigned during AD 54-68, as Mr 666.³⁹⁵ Apart from his depraved character, the Hebrew spelling of his name, according to a mathematical system where every letter of the alphabet also has a numerical value (known as gematria) adds up to precisely 666.³⁹⁶ According to this literal interpretation it would make sense therefore, that this is the man of lawlessness who would take his place in the temple which was only destroyed later in AD 70. Whether this Nero is a type of one who is yet to be made manifest, is perhaps only a remote possibility. I would rather agree with the view that the spirit of the antichrist, which has been active throughout the church age, will strongly manifest in the corporate man of sin before the great Day of Judgment, which is still to come at the end of this age.

The good news, is that this manifestation of the antichrist in the world, will be finally destroyed by the brightness of the coming forth of Christ in his many-membered body! In our last chapter we will discuss the final thrust to see Him fill all in all.

TOWARDS THE FULL STATURE

The final thrust

Having dealt with the futurist mindset, which leaves us in a meaningless vacuum, we now recognise that we have largely failed to take advantage of what has been done for us by Christ, who “... *has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them we may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*”³⁹⁷ Grasping the reality of who we are in Christ, has made us realise how we have, at times, begged for that which we have already inherited as co-heirs with him!

Leaders are now being raised up by God with a ‘finishing’ anointing to take his people into the land of promise. Although there have been pioneering apostolic leaders in numbers of cities and countries during the last few decades, younger apostolic and prophetic leaders are now being added. A fresh corporate thrust is gaining new momentum in the world, as the apostolic and prophetic leaders find and complement each other. The hearts of the fathers are being joined to the hearts of the sons in true covenant relationships. This time they will avoid the curse on the land.³⁹⁸ No longer will it be the “man of the hour with power” or Hollywood style individuals building a name for themselves as those who built the tower of Babel. The seals are being taken off the book and practical kingdom realities are being brought to earth. They have a revelation of the King of kings!

The goal of our instruction

Sooner or later God’s people must come to the solemn realisation

that the Spirit of God is on earth today as the representative and Vicar of Christ himself. In addition he must have his due Lordship in the midst of his people. How does he do this? He raises up leaders from among the people. But their leadership is only valid by virtue of the anointing they bear. It is not based on the strength of their natural leadership skills. God's power is made perfect in man's weakness. He does not require the strong, dynamic personality, but rather requires one who, like Jacob of old has been robbed of his natural strength by the touch of the hand of the Lord. This kind of leader now arises from his confrontation with the Lord a different person, bearing a new name "Israel" (which means "power with God"), and bearing within his own body the indelible mark of his confrontation with the Lord. This leader's walk now carries that characteristic faltering step because of the "sinew that shrank", the constant reminder of his human weakness and frailty.³⁹⁹ Moses had a similar experience. His natural strength, abilities and zeal landed him in the backside of the desert for forty years. Only after a confrontation with the Lord, which was Moses' commissioning, was he enabled to lead God's people out of bondage.

An administration suitable

What is presently needed on earth more than any other time, is an administration suitable to partner with the Holy Spirit in order to present every man complete in Christ.⁴⁰⁰ Leaders who persist in designing programmes and methods to keep believers happy in the outer courts of Christianity, catering for the consumerist mentality, will find themselves disqualified in this season. A fresh sense of purpose is required and that purpose is clear – to bring the Body to its full stature. For several decades from the fifties onward, evangelistic ministries have laboured in many nations to bring multitudes into a salvation experience, or perhaps more specifically, "to make a decision for Jesus." While there is nothing wrong with that in itself, and evangelism must continue, the rest of the believer's journey needs much more attention. Paul admonishes us to "...grow

up in all aspects into Him, who is the Head, even Christ.” For too long immature believers have been “*tossed here and there by waves; carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...*”⁴⁰¹ The believing community today is bigger than any other period in history, and yet at the same time it has the smallest impact on the surrounding communities than ever before. There is little measurable influence. Evangelised Africa, for example, is worse off today in every arena of disease, crime, justice, economics and the family than it was before Christianity came to the continent.⁴⁰²

A proper spiritual vehicle is needed – a new wineskin!

Instead of reaching for ministry titles and positions, what is needed is to actually see authentic ministries doing what Paul clearly describes in Ephesians 4. Although we have referred to this Scripture in earlier chapters, let us look at it again – this time in the Amplified version: These ministries – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers – are given for the purpose of “*...the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), [That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.*”⁴⁰³

Many have enjoyed the winds of revival and refreshing over the years. God is continually gracious and there continue to be seasons of visitation at different times in different places. Seasons, however, are by definition not enduring, nor are they worldwide. Responses to them often divide Christians. These seasons reflect God’s sovereign goodness; they come in spite of us, not because of us. The church is

a bag with holes, not able to contain the blessings of God. What we desperately need, is that which brings a lasting expression of kingdom life in Christian communities to impact their surrounding cultures and eventually “kingdomise” the earth. Ministries must establish apostolic communities, which will be the salt of the earth and light of the world.

Only in the corporate Christ, the revealing of the sons, is there the right environment for a sustained end time outpouring of the Spirit. Obed-edom experienced a revival for a brief season, not because of a relational alignment, but because he happened to live near a bump in the road where the oxen stumbled and the ark almost fell off the cart. The ark was not supposed to be on the cart in the first place! While this “new cart” worked for the Philistines it did not last, because the ark was to be carried upon the shoulders of the priests of the Lord in Israel. In a similar way, Western marketing methods and success definitions may work for a while for churches influenced by the spirit of this age, but a different thrust is found in those communities that have tasted of the powers of the age to come. Everyone in Obed-edom’s house was blessed! However, the ark was not at its final resting place, resulting in a season of blessing soon being over.⁴⁰⁴ The ark of God is again being placed in the restored tabernacle of David in our time, but this time we do not want to see a seasonal blessing only. It should be the everlasting tabernacle.⁴⁰⁵ John saw it: *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.”*⁴⁰⁶ The Holy Spirit, who is the very presence and Spirit of Christ, is busy taking up his habitation in this new tabernacle of the end time; the hearts of his people. We find a prophetic picture of this taking place in the midst of the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7: *“But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.*

*The Jews then were astonished, saying, 'How has this man become learned, having never been educated?' So Jesus answered them and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.'*⁴⁰⁷ From this new temple, built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, the expression of the Father's heart will flow into the world. On the last day, the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles of the end time, the voice of the corporate Christ will sound forth on earth: *"If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink! He who believes in me, as the Scripture said, 'from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'*"⁴⁰⁸

In many churches the members and leaders have lost their forward thrust and the people have a hunger to migrate into the next dimension in God, but faulty foundations will have to be replaced to facilitate the move. In the Corinthian church we see how Paul and his fellow apostles dealt with wrong mindsets: *"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."*⁴⁰⁹ True apostles will bring adjustment to the internal structures of believers' minds. They will also do so in local churches where they are in relationship and where they are invited to do so. To fully address this process, will require more than can be included here.

Aliens in the land of promise?

What a contradiction in a single expression: aliens in the Land of Promise! Is this where the church has been for two thousand years – *aliens* in the land of *promise*? The early apostles expected to see the return of Christ in their own life time. Were they necessarily wrong? Should we simply regard the fact that they believed that they lived in the age of the fulfilment of the divine promises, as apocalyptic ecstasy? The apocalyptic view has always been a strong Christian tradition, and understandably so. It sparks an eschatological hope, an

eager expectation and longing to see the God of history suddenly step into the world and set up his kingdom. The time was always seen to be near: soon His kingdom will come! Throughout the history of ancient Israel, this hope has been often disappointed. Ultimate divine victory was not to happen in their lifetime. Did this frustration destroy their hope? No, this disappointment simply served to intensify their yearning. Right up to the ascension of the Christ, following many teachings on the kingdom, even his disciples asked Him, “Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”⁴¹⁰ I agree with Peterson who says, “The reason many of us do not ardently believe in the Gospel is that we have never given it a rigorous testing, thrown hard questions at it, faced it with our most prickly doubts.”⁴¹¹ It is important however, that we do not make the same mistake the Israelites made. They clearly failed to make the paradigm shift; they could not see, that it was never meant to be a political kingdom. And the kingdom of God does not come with signs to be observed.⁴¹² The kingdom of God is neither political nor institutional; it is relational.

It struck me very forcibly years ago, when I realised that so many of the men and women of faith were actually referred to as strangers in the land of promise; strangers and exiles on earth, while welcoming the promises only from a distance. They died without having received what was promised. Of course they pleased God by their relentless faith; without faith it is impossible to please God. But then it also struck me that they will only be made perfect by that generation who is found in the faith at the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus himself asked the question, “*When the Son of Man comes, will He find the faith on the earth?*”⁴¹³

We must understand that every generation is in a sense an “end time” generation, as far as *they* are concerned. That is their only chance to contribute towards the perfecting of those who died in the faith before them. Then there will be that last generation just before the Second Coming whom Paul prayed for: “*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul*

and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴¹⁴ They will cross the finishing line not just for themselves, but for every preceding generation who died in the faith. Like a relay race, the whole team shares the victory when the last runner crosses the finishing line as the winner.

Is it true that the nation of Israel *had* to journey forty years before entering the land of promise, or was it possible for them to have crossed over in a few weeks? Certainly the distance alone did not require a forty-year journey. Was Jude giving us an answer to this question? "*The Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.*"⁴¹⁵ Similarly, the redeemed community is now more than 2000 years down the road from the great atonement of Christ when he paid the full price, having granted to us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness.⁴¹⁶ Was this intended to be the case, or could the church corporately have crossed over into her land of promise long ago?

A living word

Clearly what is needed now more than ever before is for a living word to be proclaimed in the earth that would mobilise God's people into action. In the centuries that followed Christ's ascension, the early church became largely immobilised by lethargy. Could this be due to the loss of the apostolic vision of the imminent return of Christ? Faith comes by hearing a living word. The philosophies and academic teachings of men, however eloquent, will not build faith in the hearts of people.

After exposing the unbelief and disobedience of the Israelites of old, failing to unite that which they heard with faith, the writer of Hebrews states, "*Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul*

and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."⁴¹⁷ The responsibility upon true end time ministries today is to move away from sermonising to ministering a proceeding living word. Jesus says, "*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*"⁴¹⁸ The letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive. The words Jesus spoke, were spirit and life. An apostolic word with its rich impartation is then accessed by the hearing with faith.⁴¹⁹ True transformation comes by the renewing of the mind.⁴²⁰ Effective impartation requires a certain level of reception of divine truth for transformation to take place. Ultimately we will be judged by how much we have been changed into the image of Christ, and not simply by how much new information, no matter how excellent the teaching, we have heard. The moment believers hear a proceeding living word by faith, conception takes place, and a process is released within them. Remember the words of Mary: Be it done unto me according to Thy word! This is the process that is being repeated today: believers are impregnated by the promise, and the Christ is conceived in their hearts.⁴²¹ It is by these promises that we become partakers of the divine nature.⁴²² Although this encounter may be followed by a wilderness experience and believers may be challenged by the devil, the end result is guaranteed if we do not withdraw.⁴²³ This is what puts true Christianity apart from other religions.

The apostle James uses a term from nature to explain what happens when impartation takes place in the heart of the believer. When the word comes, we must "... *receive with meekness the **engrafted** word which is able to save our souls... be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*"⁴²⁴ To graft a branch into an already grown tree, first a wound has to be cut into the tree with a sharp knife and then one takes a small fresh willing branch and puts it inside the wounded place of the mature tree. This little branch is then carefully shut inside the carved splice and wrapped tightly with a cloth. Within a day or two the cloth would be completely soaked by sap requiring it to be replaced, as one would a bandage on a sore. The explanation is that the tree weeps because of the wound, and

unless it weeps, there would not be enough sap to support the life of the new little branch.

There is a cost to spiritual impartation. Hanby reminds us that, “we forget that for Adam to have a wife, he must first be wounded and something taken from him, before he has an Eve. We fail to remember that for Christ to have a church, he must first be wounded, with blood and water pouring from His side into the thirsty ground, and his life laid down in death, before he will ever have a Bride. We need to understand that for impartation to occur, something has to be wounded for something else to be grafted into it. There must be travail before birth, loss before gain, and death before resurrection. God wants to cut through the bark of our soul. He needs to saw a gash through the weathered timber of self protection that we cover ourselves with. He has to pierce through our phoney facade of self-righteousness into the tender, weeping part of us. There is a place in all of our lives where impartation would happen. Where our soul bleeds and where our heart seeps is where God will carve a gorge through which self will escape and the Spirit of God gain entrance. The Lord does not cut a wound in our lives to bring us pain, but He knows that it is only through the broken-open places in our being that He can instil His power and plant His purpose in us.”⁴²⁵

Until

The word “until” occurs in so many Scriptures. It is essentially a signal that the object of the statement is conditional. Does this perhaps imply a greater responsibility on the side of the believer than we are often ready to admit? Let’s look at a few such Scripture passages:

*“...for I say to you, I shall never again eat it **until** it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”⁴²⁶*

“...and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom

heaven must receive **until** the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”⁴²⁷

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together **until** now.”⁴²⁸

“For He must reign **until** He has put all His enemies under His feet.”⁴²⁹

“My children, with whom I am again in labour **until** Christ is formed in you...”⁴³⁰

“...**until** we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”⁴³¹

“...waiting from that time onward **UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.**”⁴³²

“Therefore be patient, brethren, **until** the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.”⁴³³

All of the above mentioned verses must be seen in the context of where God’s work started. With the first coming of Jesus more than 2000 years ago, he was the word made flesh. But he had a great purpose in mind; his first coming was only the beginning of the process that would ultimately prevail. This was (and still is) **to fill all things!** Isaiah puts this big picture in perspective: “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And

furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."⁴³⁴

With the death of Jesus on the Cross and his subsequent resurrection, a "tsunami wave" was released from the heavens, which has not fully crested on earth yet. The Word will not return void, however, but will fully accomplish that for which it was sent! Living epistles must reflect the gospel on earth. The "it is finished" must come to light. The strongest expression of "past tense" is found in the phrase "**once for all**". When Jesus uttered the words "it is finished" on the Cross, all heaven heard it. But the ears of humankind had not taken it in fully. The implications of the finished works have yet to be appropriated by so many. Through the atonement, humankind was provisionally put back where God designed them to be. "*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*"⁴³⁵ The full impact of this truth of God, restoring all things spoken of by the prophets of old is yet to be realised fully.

The body of Christ must become the fullness of Him who fills all in all.⁴³⁶ The key to the way in which His word will not return void is found in the high priestly prayer of Jesus himself: "*...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*"⁴³⁷ This interpenetration of God and man will not only validate the gospel so that the world will actually believe that Jesus is in fact the Sent One, but will also be that body through whom he will fill the earth! The next glorious phase of the kingdom of God on earth cannot fully come until this mystical oneness has been accomplished, and the

chosen ones of the Lord are joined to him with the same nature and unity that exists between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We can be assured that Jesus did not stop praying the prayer prayed with his disciples; he is still praying for this oneness to take place. And this time we are guaranteed of a positive outcome. The New Covenant will not fail; Jesus himself is the guarantor!⁴³⁸

Jesus sheds further light on this incredible multiplication process. When the Greeks asked to see him, this was how he answered them: *"Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over."*⁴³⁹ The many sons that will walk the earth, will be an exact representation of Him! This was God's original intention when he created Adam and Eve. Jesus not only destroyed the works of the devil, but he dealt with the sin problem once for all, cancelled the certificate of debt against humankind and conquered even death itself. He finally paved the way for this many-membered body of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, to manifest him to the world! Just before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples that it was expedient for them that he was going away, for if he stayed on in the person of Jesus, the Holy Spirit (Paraclete) would not come. *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."*⁴⁴⁰

The kingdom of God

Although several comments about the kingdom of God have been made throughout the book, a few concluding remarks are in order. In fact, the topic of the kingdom of God deserves a whole book in itself. Though much has been written about it already, our understanding of this vast unfolding reality is still growing.

Humankind has only taken one aspect of the original mandate seriously, i.e., to multiply! It failed to rule.⁴⁴¹ When Jesus came more than 2000 years ago, he came to restore that which was lost, which includes the mandate to rule. Something went amiss in the preaching of the gospel over the years, as converts were asked to confess Jesus as their Saviour. Paul teaches that salvation comes as follows: "...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as **Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved..."⁴⁴²

Essentially the kingdom of God is about the government of God. Another way of describing it, is as the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In practical terms as far as the church is concerned, this government should manifest as our mandate to rule, when believers submit to the Lordship of Jesus in their lives. This first happens **in** us.⁴⁴³ James puts it this way: "*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*"⁴⁴⁴ The commissioning to go and make disciples of the nations⁴⁴⁵ will not happen in any other way. Whilst one is always thankful for everyone who is born into the kingdom as a result of evangelistic crusades, the present picture of turmoil, lawlessness and darkness in the nations emphasises the need for another dimension of ministry. That missing dimension is the call to subdue everything to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As indicated earlier, Jesus is now seated in the heavens until his enemies have been made the footstool. Jesus came with one focus: "*I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.*"⁴⁴⁶ He also commanded us to do the same. "*This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*"⁴⁴⁷

Again, let us not forget the powerful role of the Holy Spirit in establishing God's rule! The word *obedience* expresses a kingdom relationship. It is the state of heart of those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord, which nobody can do without the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴⁸ When the disciples asked Jesus just before his ascension whether he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel there and then, his answer pointed to

the Holy Spirit. *"It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."*⁴⁴⁹ Paul confirms that the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth will not be as it was in the days of the Davidic rule in the Old Testament with all its festivities. *'...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.'*⁴⁵⁰

As indicated in earlier chapters, those who walk under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, have been delivered from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of God's dear Son. The problem for so many new believers, has been that no sooner were they born again, and they found themselves trapped in church doctrine! The subject of a local church is of interest only to those who have been already translated into the kingdom. Has the absence of accurately proclaiming the gospel of salvation as the gospel of the *kingdom*, been responsible for the divisions amongst the people of God? For believers to walk in their governmental mandate, they have to come into that kingdom relationship – an allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The only effective way to disciple nations will be when apostolic ministry teams (corporately) can bring down those elemental spirits (*stoicheia*⁴⁵¹) holding the nations captive and dispelling the darkness with the light of truth. The words, *"go and make disciples of all nations"* are preceded by Jesus saying, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go **therefore**..."* It is therefore only as we are submitted fully to him who has been given ALL authority that we can go IN HIS NAME, and this is always based on a RELATIONSHIP. It is not some magic mechanical formula we use. Jesus warns: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU*

*WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.*⁷⁴⁵²

It is this church, the victorious eschatological community, that will demonstrate the finished works of Jesus to the principalities and powers in heavenly places! The tension will have been broken and the “not yet” will have been overtaken by the “already”. The sons of the evil one will have been removed out of God’s kingdom and the sons of the kingdom will shine forth in the kingdom of their heavenly Father.⁴⁵³ Then a loud voice will be heard, like the sound of many waters! The voice of the Lord will be heard on earth through many vessels filled with his Spirit. The musicians of Babylon will no longer be heard in the land, but rather the new sound of the song of Moses and the Lamb through the redeemed!⁴⁵⁴

My prayer is not only that the body of Christ will make more than ample room for the Holy Spirit to complete this awesome corporate end time temple on earth, but will also actively partner with him to expedite this majestic task! He is, after all, the One who comes alongside those who respond in faith to become a part of the bride of Christ.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”⁷⁴⁵⁵

“Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”⁷⁴⁵⁶

What will follow after this? Let us leave that in our Heavenly Father’s hands. When Christ has delivered up the kingdom to the God and Father, this one and only God will be all in all.⁴⁵⁷ If there are any further assignments, He will make that known to his own.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, T.D. & Gathercole, S. Heaven on Earth Paternoster, Carlisle, Cumbria, UK. 2004

Boettner, Loraine. The Millennium The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, USA. 1958

Bright, John. The Kingdom of God Abingdon Press, Nashville, USA. 1953

Chilton, David. The Days of Vengeance Dominion Press, Texas, USA. 1987

Cobble, James F Jnr. The Church and the Powers Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, USA. 1988

Conner, Kevin J. & Malmin, Ken. Interpreting the Scriptures Bible Press, Portland Oregon, USA. 1983

Cope, Landa. An Introduction to The Old Testament Template The Template Institute Press, Burtigny, Switzerland. 2006

Fletcher, George B. The Millennium Bible Truth Depot, Swengle, Pennsylvania, USA. 1947

Hagee, John. Jerusalem Countdown Frontline, Florida, USA. 2006

Hamilton, Floyd E. The Basis for Millennial Faith Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 1942

Hughes, Philip E. The True Image Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 1989

Hunt, Stephen (Editor). Christian Millenarianism Hurst & Company, London, UK. 2001

Katterjohn, Arthur. The Tribulation People Creation House, Illinois, USA. 1975

- König, Adrio. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology* Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 1989
- Kouri, George E & Hogue, Richard. *The Sign of the Kingdom* Apostolic Ministries International, USA 1998
- Ladd, George E. *The Presence of the Future* Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 1974
- Mauro, Philip. *Things Which Soon Must Come to Pass* Reiner Publications, Pennsylvania, USA. 1925
- Lindsey, Hal. *Planet Earth – The Final Chapter* Western Front Ltd., Beverly Hills, California, USA. 1998
- Pawson, David. *When Jesus Returns* Hodder & Stoughton, London, UK. 1995
- MacPherson, Dave. *The Incredible Cover-up* Logos International, Plainfield, New Jersey, USA. 1975
- Mauro, Philip. *Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pennsylvania, USA.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *Theology of Hope* SCM Press, London, UK. 1967
- Rabkin, Yakov M. *A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* Zed Books Ltd., London, UK. 2006
- Riddlebarger, Kim. *A Case for Amillennialism* Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 2003
- Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Israel of God* P&R Publishing, New Jersey, USA. 2000.
- Rossing, Barbara. *The Rapture Exposed* Westview Press, Colorado, USA. 2004
- Sproul, R.C. *The Last Days According to Jesus* Baker Books, Grand

The Church That Is Left Behind

Rapids, Michigan, USA. 1998

Toffler, Alvin. Power Shift Bantam Books, London, UK. 1990

Tozer, Aiden W. Tozer on the Holy Spirit Pennsylvania, USA. 2000

Varner, Kelley The Time of the Messiah Destiny Image Publishers, Pennsylvania, USA. 1996

Warnock, George, H. From Tent to Temple Canada. 1984

¹ Even though I did not know it at the time, this study is usually defined as “eschatology”. In fact, I only began to understand its actual meaning much later in life, as I will explain in this book.

² In Riddlebarger, Kim. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p.43-44

³ This was a prophetic conference held in Kansas City in the early eighties where ministries like Mike Bickle, Paul Cain, Francis Frangipane and John Wimber presided.

⁴ Riss, Richard M. *Latter Rain* (Honeycomb Visual Productions Ltd, Canada. 1987) p.82

⁵ MacPherson, Dave. *The Incredible Cover-up* (Logos International, USA. 1975) p.151

⁶ Rossing, Barbara. *The Rapture Exposed* (Westview Press, USA 2004) p.22,23

⁷ Although there are other variations on this theme, dispensationalism is essentially pre-millennial and pre-tribulational.

⁸ Sizer, S. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, UK. 2004) p. 250

⁹ Cf Riddlebarger, K. *A Case For Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003)p.21 & Pawson David, *When Jesus Returns* (Hodder & Stoughton, UK. 1995)pp.98-102.

¹⁰ The Official Newsletter of the **Left Behind® Series** from Tyndale House Publishers *Thursday, September 21, 2006*

¹¹ This is merely the latest in a long line of previous such failed count downs.

¹² Rossing, Barbara *The Rapture Exposed* (Westview Press, Colorado, USA. 1989) p.15

¹³ 2 Pet 1:20,21

¹⁴ 1 John 1:1-4

¹⁵ Gal 1:12; Ephes 3:1-10

¹⁶ Heb 1:1,2

¹⁷ Heb 9:26

¹⁸ 1 Pet 1:20

¹⁹ Cf Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* (SCM Press, UK 1967) p.17

²⁰ 2 Cor.10:5,6 (Msg).

²¹ Luke 24:27 (Emphasis added)

²² There are prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament that will also have a fulfilment on another level as the Word becomes flesh again in the corporate Messiah.

²³ In the past 50 years a huge industry has sprung up around Christian prophecy, fuelled especially by Israel’s statehood in 1948 (Rossing)

²⁴ An apocalyptic writer makes use of symbols and numbers to depict in word

pictures the great conflict between forces of evil and righteousness. The course of world history is usually cast against the backdrop of an evil age that is passing away, and God who intervenes to establish his kingdom in all of its fullness.

²⁵Cf Barbara, Rossing. *The Rapture Exposed* (Westview Press, USA 2004) p.89

²⁶Rossing Ibid p.90

²⁷In Hunt, Stephen. *Christian Millenarianism* (Hurst & Company, UK 2001) p170

²⁸Is 66:2b

²⁹Jonah 3:1-8

³⁰Acts 15:28

³¹Jas 2:13

³²Prov 23:23

³³John 16:7-15 (NASV)

³⁴2 Thess 2:8-11

³⁵2 Thess 2:12-16

³⁶2 Tim 3:8

³⁷1 Tim 6:1-5

³⁸Rom 1:24-28

³⁹Rev 13:16-18

⁴⁰Toffler, A. *Power Shift* (Bantam Books, USA 1990) p. 68

⁴¹www.evenmore.co.uk

⁴²United States Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved on 2006-10-28

⁴³Already in 1999 concerns have been raised about the threat to personal privacy when, for example, governments can force people to have human implants. The Associated Press also revealed in September 2007 that microchip implants have induced cancer in laboratory animals and dogs. (www.tldm.org/News4)

⁴⁴2 Thess 2:4

⁴⁵Gen 11:1-9

⁴⁶1 John 3:4

⁴⁷Rev 14:1

⁴⁸Rom 12:2; 2 Tim 1:7

⁴⁹1 Cor 2:16

⁵⁰Conner, K. & Malmin, K. *Interpreting the Scriptures* (Bible Press, Portland, USA) p.129

⁵¹Matt 25:31-33

⁵²Rev 22:11 (Msg)

⁵³αληθεια aletheia

⁵⁴John 17:7

⁵⁵John 7:17 (Emphasis added)

⁵⁶Heb 5:12 (Emphasis added)

⁵⁷ Cf 2 Pet 1:12 (KJV)

⁵⁸ John 8:32-33

⁵⁹ John 8:36-47

⁶⁰ Ephes 4:12,13

⁶¹ 2 Pet 1:4

⁶² John 17: 6, 14-18

⁶³ Matt 13:24-30

⁶⁴ Matt 13:37,38

⁶⁵ 2 Cor 11:14,15

⁶⁶ Is 55:11

⁶⁷ Matt 13:40-43

⁶⁸ Gnostic dualism basically separates between that which is “secular” and what is “sacred”. Jesus, who is spiritual, therefore, would never have come into this “un-spiritual” world, according to them.

⁶⁹ 1 John 4:1-6

⁷⁰ 2 John 7 (Emphasis added)

⁷¹ Amos 9:13

⁷² Is 9:6

⁷³ Ezekiel 37:9 (NASV)

⁷⁴ Rossing, B. *The Rapture Exposed* (Westview Press, USA 2004) p.73

⁷⁵ Rabkin Yakov, M. *A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* (Fernwood Publishing, Canada. 2006) p.206

⁷⁶ New York Times 2001. In Rabkin Y.M. Ibid p.206-207

⁷⁷ Interpreting the Scriptures

⁷⁸ Sizer, S. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, USA. 2004) p. 256

⁷⁹ Ibid in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, USA 2004) p. 258

⁸⁰ Ibid pp.258-260

⁸¹ *The Jerusalem Post* in The Weekly Newsletter of Christianity Today International *Tuesday, September 19, 2006*

⁸² Leftbehind Newsletter, April 24th, 2008 (Tyndale House Publishers, Illinois, USA. 2008)

⁸³ Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA 2003) p.153. Dispensationalists believe that the prophetic scriptures should be interpreted literally.

⁸⁴ Mauro, P. *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Reiner Publications, USA. undated) p.17, 74

⁸⁵ Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA 2003) p.152

⁸⁶ Sizer, S. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster Books, USA 2004) p.251

⁸⁷ Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA 2004) p.153

⁸⁸ 1 Pet 1:10-11 (NASV)

⁸⁹ Matt 12:6 (NASV)

⁹⁰ Barth, K. in *Millenarianism* (Hurst & Company, London 2001) p.2

⁹¹ Matt 24:1,2

⁹² John 2:19-21

⁹³ Although the rending of the veil at the death of Jesus signalled the end of the Old Covenant, the year AD 70 visibly sealed the end of that age.

⁹⁴ Matt 23:37-38

⁹⁵ Ephes 2:21

⁹⁶ Isaiah 66:7,8 (NASV)

⁹⁷ Rom 8:29; Heb 2:10

⁹⁸ 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16 (NASV)

⁹⁹ Heb 9:1-3

¹⁰⁰ Heb 8:13

¹⁰¹ Sizer, S. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, USA 2004) p.265

¹⁰² Heb 9:26

¹⁰³ Heb 10:1-4

¹⁰⁴ Gal 4:25-26

¹⁰⁵ Heb 12:22-24

¹⁰⁶ John 4:23

¹⁰⁷ 1 Kings 8:1-11

¹⁰⁸ 2 Chron 7:12

¹⁰⁹ Hag 2:9

¹¹⁰ Matt 1:23

¹¹¹ 1 Pet 2:5. It is unfortunate, that, in calling it the “Church Age”, the reality of the kingdom of God, that came in Jesus, was diminished, if not eclipsed. We will return to this in a later chapter.

¹¹² Num 14:21

¹¹³ Ephes 2:20,21

¹¹⁴ Peterson, D. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, UK 2004) p.165

¹¹⁵ 1 Cor 3:11

¹¹⁶ Matt 16:13-18

¹¹⁷ 1 Cor 3:10

¹¹⁸ Col 1:16-18 (NASV Emphasis added)

¹¹⁹ Walker, P. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, USA 2004) p.4

¹²⁰ Walker, P. in *Heaven on Earth* (Paternoster, USA 2004) p.8,9

¹²¹ 1 Cor 3:16

¹²² John 3:16 (Msg)

¹²³ 1 Pet 2:5,9

¹²⁴ Replacement theology states that the Church completely and permanently replaced ethnic Israel in the working out of God's plan and as being the recipient of Old Testament promises addressed to Israel.

- ¹²⁵ Hopkins, I. *Fulfilment not Replacement* (Bible College of Wales Notes, 2006.)
¹²⁶ Ibid
¹²⁷ Cf Matt 1:17. More about this in chapter 8 of this book.
¹²⁸ 2 Cor 1:20
¹²⁹ 1 John 2:23
¹³⁰ Matt 12:8; Col 2:16-17
¹³¹ 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15
¹³² Rom 8:28-29
¹³³ Hebr 11:17-19
¹³⁴ Gal 3:16
¹³⁵ Eph 2:13-15
¹³⁶ Gal 3:28-29
¹³⁷ Rom 4:16-17 (Msg)
¹³⁸ Heb 11:39-40
¹³⁹ Hopkins, I. *One People* (Bible College of Wales, 2006)
¹⁴⁰ John 1:11-13
¹⁴¹ Matt 21:12-13
¹⁴² Matt 23:37-39
¹⁴³ Matt 22:2-10
¹⁴⁴ Rom 11:39
¹⁴⁵ 1 Pet 2:9
¹⁴⁶ Rom 11:1-2
¹⁴⁷ Rom 11:12
¹⁴⁸ John 15:5
¹⁴⁹ John 14:2
¹⁵⁰ John 10:14
¹⁵¹ 1 Pet 2:5
¹⁵² Gal. 4:25-26
¹⁵³ Gal. 6:15-16
¹⁵⁴ Rom 4:16
¹⁵⁵ Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Israel of God* (P&R Publishing, USA. 2000)pp. 188-189
¹⁵⁶ Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Israel of God* (P&R Publishing, USA. 2000) p. 194
¹⁵⁷ Ibid p.195
¹⁵⁸ 1 Cor 3:17
¹⁵⁹ This holy nation constitutes the twelve tribes – not in the natural Old Testament identity, but reflecting each tribe in their spiritual meaning.
¹⁶⁰ Ephes 3:10
¹⁶¹ 1 Thess 4:17
¹⁶² 1 Cor 15:51
¹⁶³ Matt 25:31-46

-
- ¹⁶⁴ Fortune, D. *Gates of Praise – Walls of Salvation* (Unpublished article, 2006)
- ¹⁶⁵ J.N. Darby was rather a popular theologian who was taken up by an already existing Brethren movement whose origins can be traced back to puritanical brotherhood associated with “the Speedwell” at the time the “Mayflower” took the pilgrim fathers to America in 1600’s.
- ¹⁶⁶ 2 Cor 12:2
- ¹⁶⁷ Rev 4:1,2
- ¹⁶⁸ 1 Thess 4:13-17
- ¹⁶⁹ 1 Cor 15:52
- ¹⁷⁰ 2 Thess 1:7-10
- ¹⁷¹ Jones in Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, Michigan, USA, 2003) p.143
- ¹⁷² Acts 1:11
- ¹⁷³ Joh 12:24 (Msg)
- ¹⁷⁴ Matt 24:37-41
- ¹⁷⁵ Rossing, B. *The Rapture Exposed* (Westview Press, USA, 2004) p.178
- ¹⁷⁶ Matt 13:24-30
- ¹⁷⁷ Matt 13:49-50
- ¹⁷⁸ Matt 13: 47,48
- ¹⁷⁹ Matt 6:10 (Emphasis mine)
- ¹⁸⁰ Matt 5:13-15
- ¹⁸¹ Matt 16:18
- ¹⁸² Ephes 5:27(Emphasis mine).
- ¹⁸³ Acts 3:19-21
- ¹⁸⁴ Heb 10:13
- ¹⁸⁵ 2 Pet 3:7
- ¹⁸⁶ Hughes, P. *The True Image* (Eerdmans, USA, 1989) p.412
- ¹⁸⁷ 2 Cor 5:17
- ¹⁸⁸ Is 4:4
- ¹⁸⁹ Ps 24:1; 1 Cor 10:26
- ¹⁹⁰ Heb 2:8,9
- ¹⁹¹ Rev 11:15
- ¹⁹² Rom 8:19-22
- ¹⁹³ Mal 4:6
- ¹⁹⁴ Matt 25:41
- ¹⁹⁵ Matt 21:43; 1Pet 2:9
- ¹⁹⁶ Isaiah 9:7
- ¹⁹⁷ Ephes 4:12-13
- ¹⁹⁸ Ephes 1:13,14
- ¹⁹⁹ *Introduction to Thessalonians*, Message Translation.
- ²⁰⁰ 1 John 3:3

- ²⁰¹ Heb 9:28 (Ampl)
²⁰² 2 Pet 3:12 (Ampl)
²⁰³ Heb 10:37
²⁰⁴ Heb 6:4,5
²⁰⁵ Luke 18:8
²⁰⁶ Heb 10:38,39
²⁰⁷ Rev 10:6
²⁰⁸ Eccles 2:11
²⁰⁹ Ephes 1:10
²¹⁰ Schutz, P. in Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* (SCM Press Ltd, UK, 1967) p. 227
²¹¹ Hoekema in Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker books, USA, 2003) p.65
²¹² Mark 10:29-30 (Emphasis mine)
²¹³ Luke 16:8
²¹⁴ Ladd, G. E. *The Presence of the Future* (Eerdmans, USA, 1974) p.116
²¹⁵ Matt 13:38
²¹⁶ Luke 20:34-36 (Emphasis mine)
²¹⁷ See Gal 1:4; Rom 12:2; I Cor 1:20; 2:6-8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Ephes 1:21; 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17; Titus 2:12.
²¹⁸ Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p. 91
²¹⁹ Heb 2:8,9
²²⁰ Mark 1:15
²²¹ Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20
²²² Matt 11:2-19
²²³ Luke 10:17-20
²²⁴ Luke 17:20-21
²²⁵ Ladd, G. E. *The Presence of the Future* (Eerdmans, USA. 1974) p.237
²²⁶ Matt 21:43
²²⁷ Cf Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p.102-103
²²⁸ Matt 13: 19-23; John 3:3-6
²²⁹ Phil 2:12
²³⁰ Rom 14:17
²³¹ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* (SCM Press LTD, UK. 1967) p.223
²³² Rev 11:15
²³³ Matt 23:38
²³⁴ Kouri, E.G. & Hogue, R. *The Sign of the Kingdom* (AMI, USA. 1998) p.27
²³⁵ Luke 1:17; Matt 17:11,12
²³⁶ Matt 23:36
²³⁷ Rossing, B. *The Rapture Exposed* (Westview Press, USA. 2004) p.50-51

-
- ²³⁸ Lindsey, H. *Planet Earth – The Final Chapter* (Western Front, USA. 1998) p.98
- ²³⁹ Ibid p.98
- ²⁴⁰ Matt 16:27-28
- ²⁴¹ Matt 24:14
- ²⁴² Kouri, E. G. & Hogue, R. *The Sign of the Kingdom* (AMI, USA, 1998) p.104
- ²⁴³ Matt 24:30
- ²⁴⁴ Sproul, R. C. *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Baker Books, USA. 1998) p.42
- ²⁴⁵ Kouri, G. E. & Hogue, R. *The Sign of the Kingdom* (AMI, USA. 1998) p.140
- ²⁴⁶ Matt 24:21
- ²⁴⁷ Strongs 3173
- ²⁴⁸ Luke 16:16; Acts 14:22; John 16:33
- ²⁴⁹ Matt 13:24-30; Matt 25:31-46
- ²⁵⁰ 2 Thess 2:1-3
- ²⁵¹ Matt 28:19-20
- ²⁵² Acts 1:6-8
- ²⁵³ In Sproul, R.C. *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Baker Books, USA. 1998) p.108
- ²⁵⁴ Heb 10:37
- ²⁵⁵ Matt 24:33; Mark 13:28-32; Luke 21:29-33
- ²⁵⁶ Mark 13:34-36; Luke 12:35-38
- ²⁵⁷ Luke 12:40; Matt 24:42-44; Cf 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15
- ²⁵⁸ Matt 25:13
- ²⁵⁹ Rom 13:12
- ²⁶⁰ 1 Cor 7:29
- ²⁶¹ James 5:8-9
- ²⁶² Rev 1:1,3; 3:11; 22:7,12,20
- ²⁶³ König, A. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology* (Eerdmans, USA, 1989) p.194-5 Cf. Isa 13:6; Ezek 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:14.
- ²⁶⁴ Matt 24:48
- ²⁶⁵ Matt 25:5
- ²⁶⁶ Luke 19:12
- ²⁶⁷ Matt 25:19
- ²⁶⁸ Luke 20:9
- ²⁶⁹ König, A. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology* (Eerdmans, USA. 1998) p.198
- ²⁷⁰ Acts 1:6-8 (Emphasis added)
- ²⁷¹ Rom 14:17 (Emphasis added)
- ²⁷² Rom 10:9
- ²⁷³ 1 Cor 12:3
- ²⁷⁴ Matt 28:20

- ²⁷⁵ John 14.
²⁷⁶ John 14:16
²⁷⁷ König, A. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology* (Eerdmans, USA. 1989) p.138
²⁷⁸ Rom 8:9; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11
²⁷⁹ Acts 1:1,8; 10:38
²⁸⁰ 1 John 4:17b
²⁸¹ Ephes 3:16,17
²⁸² Ephes 1:13,14 (Emphasis added)
²⁸³ 2 Cor 1:22 (Msg)
²⁸⁴ Hunt, Stephen. *Christian Millenarianism* (Hurst & Company, UK 2001) p.1
²⁸⁵ Ibid. p.6
²⁸⁶ Ibid. p.2
²⁸⁷ Chilton, David. *The Days of Vengeance* (Dominion Press, USA. 1987) p.3,4
²⁸⁸ Quoted in Sproul, R.C. *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Baker Books, USA 1998) p.185
²⁸⁹ Quoted in Chilton, David. *The Days of Vengeance* (Dominion Press, USA. 1987) p.3
²⁹⁰ Mauro, Philip. *Things Which Soon Must Come to Pass* (Reiner Publications, Pennsylvania, USA. 1925) p.8
²⁹¹ Fletcher, G.B. *The Millennium* (Bible Truth Depot. USA. 1947) p.66
²⁹² Ibid p.65
²⁹³ Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p.225
²⁹⁴ Boettner, L. *The Millennium* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, USA. 1957) p.64
²⁹⁵ In Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p. 210
²⁹⁶ Rev 1:18
²⁹⁷ Ibid p.209
²⁹⁸ Rev 20:2,3
²⁹⁹ Gen 3:15 (Emphasis added)
³⁰⁰ 1 Jn 3:8 (Emphasis added)
³⁰¹ Matt 12:29 (Emphasis added)
³⁰² Col 2:15 (Emphasis added)
³⁰³ Jn 16:11 (Emphasis added)
³⁰⁴ Rom 16:20
³⁰⁵ Cf Luke 4:3-13
³⁰⁶ Gen 3:1
³⁰⁷ John 8:36
³⁰⁸ 1 Pet 3:13
³⁰⁹ 1 John 5:18 (Ampl)
³¹⁰ Jude 3

³¹¹ Jas 4:7

³¹² Heb 10:13

³¹³ John 19:30

³¹⁴ This terminology is not to take away from the unfolding reality of the kingdom of God, as will be pointed out in the last chapter of this book.

³¹⁵ In Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p.213

³¹⁶ Rev 12:11

³¹⁷ Matt 25:41

³¹⁸ Rom 5:17 (Emphasis mine); See also Rom 5:21 & 2 Tim 2:12

³¹⁹ Col 1:13; Heb 10:25

³²⁰ Hamilton, Floyd E. *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (Eerdmans, USA. 1942) p.136

³²¹ Ephes 2:6

³²² Cf Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p.214

³²³ Refer to chapter 2 in this book.

³²⁴ Riddlebarger, K. *A Case for Amillennialism* (Baker Books, USA. 2003) p.215-216

³²⁵ Cf Ibid p.216

³²⁶ In Ibid p.216

³²⁷ Ibid p.217.

³²⁸ John 11:25-26

³²⁹ Ephes 2:1-2

³³⁰ Ephes 2:5-6

³³¹ Rev 20:5

³³² Rev 1:1,3

³³³ Katterjohn, Arthur. *The Tribulation People* (Creation House, USA. 1975) p.76

³³⁴ Matt 13:30

³³⁵ Cf. Gen 15:16 & 2 Cor 10:6

³³⁶ Rom 8:19-23

³³⁷ 1 Cor 10:26

³³⁸ Cf Rev 11:15

³³⁹ Rev 12:10

³⁴⁰ Varner, K. *The Time of the Messiah* (Destiny Image Publishers, USA 1996) p.72

³⁴¹ Is 9:6 (Emphasis added)

³⁴² 1 Cor 12:12

³⁴³ Heb 11:40

³⁴⁴ Acts 3:21

³⁴⁵ Jas 3:11

- ³⁴⁶ Is 55:11
³⁴⁷ Tozer, *Tozer on the Holy Spirit* (Christian Publications Inc. USA. 2000)
p. June 20
³⁴⁸ 2 Cor 5:16
³⁴⁹ Ephes 3:1-5
³⁵⁰ Peterson, E. *Introduction to Thessalonians* Message Bible.
³⁵¹ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* (SCM Press, UK. 1967) p.85
³⁵² 2 Cor 1:20 (Msg)
³⁵³ Gal 3:14
³⁵⁴ Heb 4:12
³⁵⁵ Rom 4:18
³⁵⁶ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* (SCM Press, UK. 1967) p.18
³⁵⁷ Luke 1:38.
³⁵⁸ Moltmann, J. Ibid. p.123
³⁵⁹ Heb 5:12,13
³⁶⁰ 1 John 2:12-14
³⁶¹ Ephes 4:14,15
³⁶² Rom 8:23-25 (Msg)
³⁶³ Acts 1:10; Heb 12:1; Matt 17:1-5
³⁶⁴ 2 Pet 3:12
³⁶⁵ Heb 9:28 (Amp)
³⁶⁶ Ephes 3:9-11(Emphasis added)
³⁶⁷ Scriptures like Heb 2:10, Rom 8:14,19 & Rev 12:5 may indicate that not all
born-again believers have reached full spiritual maturity at this stage.
³⁶⁸ Rom 16:20
³⁶⁹ Gal 4:19
³⁷⁰ Heb 11:40 (Msg)
³⁷¹ 1 Cor 12.
³⁷² John 16:14
³⁷³ John 15:26-27, Acts 1:8
³⁷⁴ John 12:21, 24 (Msg. Emphasis added)
³⁷⁵ Rom 8:11
³⁷⁶ 1 Cor 15:18
³⁷⁷ John 17:21
³⁷⁸ Heb 9:4
³⁷⁹ John 1:14
³⁸⁰ Ephes 1:22-23
³⁸¹ 1 John 4:17b
³⁸² It is unlikely that 100% of the redeemed community will be part of this level of
oneness at a specific time. However, God has in the past worked through the
“remnant” or representative principle. A group will break into this oneness,

deputising on behalf of the many. God himself will decide at what stage he will grant the access into the Holy of Holies.

³⁸³ Heb 9:8 (Ampl)

³⁸⁴ Heb 10:19-20

³⁸⁵ Hag 1:4,9

³⁸⁶ Hag 2:9

³⁸⁷ In this context, I call it a “second” outpouring for the following reason: The “first” visitation of the Holy Spirit was when He overshadowed Mary when she conceived Jesus. The “second” outpouring was on the day of Pentecost, which I call a *corporate* outpouring. The “first” was giving birth to Jesus; the “second” to the corporate man.

³⁸⁸ John 7:37-39

³⁸⁹ Matt 12:30-32

³⁹⁰ Rev 12:3-5

³⁹¹ 2 Thess 2:3-4; 1 Cor 3:16-17

³⁹² Rev 13

³⁹³ 1 John 2:18

³⁹⁴ Chilton in Sproul, R.C. *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Baker Books, USA 1998)p.177

³⁹⁵ Sproul, R.C. Ibid. pp. 145-149

³⁹⁶ The interesting observation that Revelation 13:18 reads 616 and not 666, is explained by the fact that it was the Latin spelling of Nero’s name that added up to 616. Cf Sproul R.C. Ibid. p.188

³⁹⁷ 2 Pet 1:4

³⁹⁸ Mal 4:6

³⁹⁹ Warnock, G. *From Tent to Temple* (Canada, 1984) p. 45

⁴⁰⁰ Col 1:28

⁴⁰¹ Ephes 4:14,15

⁴⁰² Kinoti in Cope, L. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Temple* (The Temple Institute Press, Switzerland, 2006) p.21,22

⁴⁰³ Ephes 4:11-13(Ampl)

⁴⁰⁴ 1 Chron 13:7-14

⁴⁰⁵ Acts 15:16,17

⁴⁰⁶ Rev 21:1-3

⁴⁰⁷ John 7:14-16

⁴⁰⁸ John 7:37

⁴⁰⁹ 2 Cor 10:5-6

⁴¹⁰ Acts 1:6, Cf Bright, John. *The Kingdom of God* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, USA 1953) p.p. 163-170

⁴¹¹ Peterson, Eugene H. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (InterVarsity Press, Illinois, USA, 1980) p.70.

- ⁴¹² Lk 17:20-21
⁴¹³ Heb 11:39-40; Lk 18:8
⁴¹⁴ 1 Thess 5:23
⁴¹⁵ Jude 1:5.
⁴¹⁶ 2 Pet 1:3
⁴¹⁷ Heb 4:11-12
⁴¹⁸ Matt 4:4
⁴¹⁹ Jn 6:63; Rom 10:15-17
⁴²⁰ Rom 12:2; Gal 3:2,5
⁴²¹ Gal 4:19; 1 Pet 1:23
⁴²² 2 Pet 1:4
⁴²³ Lk 4:1-13; Heb 10:35-39
⁴²⁴ Jas 1:21-22 (KJV)
⁴²⁵ Hanby, M. *The Cost of Spiritual Impartation* (Article, USA. 2003)
⁴²⁶ Lk 22:16
⁴²⁷ Acts 3:20-21
⁴²⁸ Rom 8:19-22
⁴²⁹ 1 Cor 15:25
⁴³⁰ Gal 4:19
⁴³¹ Ephes 4:13
⁴³² Heb 10:13
⁴³³ Jas 5:7
⁴³⁴ Is 55:10-11
⁴³⁵ Rom 5:18
⁴³⁶ Ephes 1:23
⁴³⁷ John 17:21-23
⁴³⁸ Heb 7:22
⁴³⁹ John 12:24 (Msg)
⁴⁴⁰ John 16:13-14
⁴⁴¹ Gen 1:28
⁴⁴² Rom 10:9
⁴⁴³ Lk 17:21
⁴⁴⁴ Jas 4:7
⁴⁴⁵ Matt 28:19
⁴⁴⁶ Lk 4:43
⁴⁴⁷ Matt 24:14
⁴⁴⁸ 1 Cor 12:3
⁴⁴⁹ Acts 1:7-8
⁴⁵⁰ Rom 14:17
⁴⁵¹ Scholars translate *stoicheia* in various ways including “elemental principles” (NAS), “basic principles” (NIV), “rudiments” (KJV), and “elemental spirits”

(RSV,NEB). This word is used only four times by Paul, i.e., Gal 4:3,9; Col 2:8,20). These powers have the ability to regulate human existence and enslave nations. Cf Cobble, James (Jr). *The Church and the Powers* (Hendrickson Publishers, USA. 1988) p.14-15

⁴⁵² Matt 7:21-23

⁴⁵³ Matt 13:36-43

⁴⁵⁴ Rev 18:21-22; Rev 15:3

⁴⁵⁵ Ephes 5:31-32 (Emphasis mine)

⁴⁵⁶ Rev 19:10

⁴⁵⁷ 1 Cor 15:24-28