

# **HELP IN SOME HARD PLACES**

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Revised and enlarged, with a slight change in title, from the book  
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# INTRODUCTION

It is not the purpose of this book to treat all of the "hard places" in the Bible (this is why the word "some" has been added to the title). God's word is full of hard places, and He has meant it to be so. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2). Without the hard places one might well read it through and lay it aside. It is partly the puzzles that bring us back again and again; that force us to not merely read it, but to study it.

I have seen a man climb laboriously some fifty feet or so to the top of a Coconut tree, and toss the nuts to the ground. After all his efforts were expended there still remained more fruit on the tree than he had harvested. The ripe nuts rewarded his efforts, and the green ones brought him back again and again. So God intends to bring us back to His word again and again. His word is meant not only to teach us, once and for all, the truth, but to feed us, cleanse us, and delight us day by day as long as we live.

Some difficulties in Scripture we have selected because they have arisen time after time during nearly sixty years of ministry. Others have been chosen because they are somewhat representative of similar problem passages. Our answers are not intended to be exhaustive, but to be helpful. God grant they may indeed be so.

This new edition of the book has been edited and somewhat enlarged since it first appeared in 1984. May the Lord bless you as you search the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11), and as you proclaim the truth of God "not ... in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5).

--- William P. Heath

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# The DEATH of CHRIST and the BLOOD of CHRIST

The death of Christ and the blood of Christ are very closely linked in the Word of God. Faulty doctrine about the one will greatly affect the other. Both are central in God's redemptive program.

## 1A. The DEATH of Christ

- 1B. Many defective theologies turn attention from the physical death of our Lord, in one direction or another.
  - 1C. The modernist turns our eyes from Christ's death to His life and teachings as the basis for salvation.
  - 2C. The Catholic replaces His physical death with a sacramental death. To them He began dying when in the garden of Gethsemane, when drops like as of blood began seeping from His pores, and He suffers to this day, continuously dying as the "mass" is celebrated around the world.
  - 3C. Some place the emphasis on what Christ did during the three days following His death when He was in "hell."
  - 4C. Others take our eyes off of His physical death and focus them on the hours before His death when He supposedly "died spiritually" as He called out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"<sup>1</sup>
- 2B. No one is happier than Satan to have our eyes taken from the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ -- no matter where else we may look.

## 2A. The BLOOD of Christ

- 1B. Many also have turned away from what the Word of God has to say about the blood of Christ.
  - 1C. The legalist effectively sets the blood of Christ aside when he puts our works in place of Christ's death on the Cross for our salvation.
  - 2C. The modernist outright rejects, in determined unbelief, the whole doctrine of salvation from sin through the blood of Christ.
  - 3C. Those who teach it was Christ's suffering in Hades that saves us, can have no real place for the shedding of blood in their theology.
  - 4C. Those who teach it was a (bloodless) spiritual death that saves us can have very little need for the shedding of blood in their theology either.
- 2B. Why is there a tendency to spurn the teaching of the Word of God concerning the blood of Christ?
  - 1C. Aesthetic revulsion. It is repugnant (distasteful or obnoxious) to the flesh.
  - 2C. Intellectual rejection. It is a puzzle to the mind.
  - 3C. Satanic delusion. It is hated by Satan, for HE knows, whether we do or not, that we, like Tribulation saints, can overcome him "by the BLOOD of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11).
- 3B. Why does Scripture speak of the "blood" of Christ in many places instead of merely

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<sup>1</sup> This is the view taken by Mr. R. B. Thieme as expressed in his booklet, "The Blood of Christ."

the "death" of Christ?

- 1C. Because it is the right word -- or else the Holy Spirit made a mistake when He instructed Paul and the other writers of Scripture to use it over and over. There are at least thirty-nine references to the blood of Christ in the New Testament (See Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:14; etc.). The doctrine of verbal inspiration holds that the very words of Scripture were chosen by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13).
- 2C. To emphasize that His death was not a "natural" death, but a violent death brought about by others. See this thought in such verses as Matt. 23:30, 35; 27:6, 24, 25; Acts 5:28; etc.
- 3C. To relate His death back to the sacrificial types. His death was a sacrifice. Heb. 10:10.
- 4C. Because, in some way we may not clearly understand, Christ's blood -- not merely His death -- has some value to God which makes it "precious blood" (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:12 - 14; 1 Pet. 1:19; etc.).
- 5C. To clearly identify what kind of death is in view. "Death" can refer to physical death, spiritual death (as in Eph. 2:1, 5), positional death (as in Gal. 2:20), figurative death (as in Rom. 7:24; 8:10), or incarceration in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14). If the word "blood" were always replaced by the word "death" we might well wonder which death is in view. The mention of blood establishes that it is physical death

**OBSERVATIONS and COMMENTS** concerning the booklet, "The Blood of Christ" by R. B. Thieme.

On pages 11 and 12 Mr. Thieme states, "The Greek noun '*thanatos*' refers to His spiritual death. When it comes to His physical death, the Greek word is '*nekros*'. When the resurrection is mentioned it is often from *nekros*, not from *thanatos*." (Emphasis mine)

Is this true? Let us examine the Word of God and see. The following facts have been gleaned from Strong's Concordance, the Englishman's Greek Concordance, the Greek New Testament, and other such reference works.

While the word "*nekros*" is the word used for Christ's physical death, it is often used concerning the spiritual death of others. Observe Matthew 8:22 where those who are spiritually dead should bury their own physically dead (it is *nekros* in both cases). In Ephesians 2:1, 5 the unbeliever is dead (*nekros*) in trespasses and sins. Hebrews 6:1 and 9:14 refer to dead works -- are they physically dead? In Revelation 3:1 those addressed have "a name that [they] live and are dead [*nekros*]."

Why, then, does the New Testament use *nekros* when speaking of the resurrection of Christ (as it usually does)? The answer is simple. The word *nekros* means "dead" (an adjective) while the word *thanatos* means "death" (a noun). Neither in English or Greek are they the same word. Of course it would say that Christ was raised "from the dead," not "from the death."

What about the word "*thanatos*"? Does it always -- or even usually -- designate the SPIRITUAL death of Christ as Mr. Thieme declares? I discover no less than seventeen places where the word *thanatos* describes the PHYSICAL death of Christ. This is evident in each case, either from the sense of the passage or from the context. Among them are the following:

--- References to His being condemned to death, or thought worthy of death, by men. See for example Matthew 20:18; 26:66; Luke 23:15.

--- John 12:33. "This He said signifying what death He should die." The word here is *thanatos*, rather than *nekros*. What kind of death was He referring to? Verse 32 tells us plainly, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Physical death on the Cross is the topic under consideration in this verse. There is no need to be lifted up from the earth to die a spiritual death.

--- John 18:32. "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke signifying what death He should die." Here again it is *thanatos*, and, as the preceding verse shows conclusively, it is describing His physical death. Neither the Jews nor Pilate could accomplish a spiritual death for Christ.

--- Acts 2:24. "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Here the word *thanatos*, rather than *nekros*, is mentioned in connection with the resurrection (because the word required is "death," not "dead.").

--- 1 Cor. 11:26. How can breaking a loaf (which speaks of Christ's physical body) and drinking wine (representing His physical blood) "show forth" Christ's spiritual death?

--- Phil. 2:8. "And became obedient unto death [*thanatos*] even the death [*thanatos*] of the Cross."

--- Mr. Thieme declares, "In Col. 1:22 the word 'death' is in the singular -- one death. The Greek word '*thanatos*' refers to His spiritual death." But look at the preceding verse, Col. 1:21, and the first part of verse 22, "Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death [*thanatos*], to present you holy --." How can this be spiritual death?

--- Notice 1 Peter 3:18. "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit." "Put to death" is the verb form of *thanatos* -- *thanatao*! Here is only one death, described by the word *thanatao*, and it is death in the flesh! It is truly a physical death, and not just a spiritual death accomplished while He was still alive physically, for it is followed by a resurrection.

On pages 12 and 13 Mr. Thieme states very dogmatically, "When His spiritual death was complete, Jesus Christ shouted, 'Tetelestai!' Obviously He could not have spoken if He were physically dead! And certainly if He was still physically alive on the Cross after salvation was complete, **HIS PHYSICAL DEATH COULD HAVE NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO WITH THE PAYMENT FOR SIN!** ... Jesus Christ was the only One who died twice on a Roman cross, and **ONLY HIS UNIQUE SPIRITUAL DEATH PAID FOR THE SINS OF**

**MANKIND.**" (Emphasis mine)

Did Christ die twice, as is asserted very dogmatically here? I fail to find even one verse making this statement. However I do find several which say He died once (with the strong implication it was once only): "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Rom 6:10). "Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Heb 7:27). "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb 9:28). "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Pet 3:18). The above quotations are from the New King James Version.

He offers the following proofs for his assertion that Christ died twice on a Roman cross.

On page 12 he states that the only time *nekros* is used for spiritual death is when it is found in the plural, as the object of the preposition "*ek*." But *nekros* is usually found in the plural, and it always is plural when it is used as the object of *ek*. Three times the same expression found in Col. 2:12 (*ek nekron*) is used of Lazarus being raised from the dead (John 12:1, 9, 17). Did Lazarus die twice (before the resurrection of John eleven)? Did he die "spiritually" as Christ is supposed to have done on the Cross? How can exactly the same Greek phrase mean one thing in John 12 and something else, altogether different, in Colossians 2:12?

He claims that Colossians 2:12 should be translated, "God having raised Him from the death~~S~~," insisting that the use of the plural here indicates Christ died twice. However, in this suggested translation, he takes the liberty of replacing an adjective (dead) with a noun (death). It should be translated, "out from among the dead [ones]." as Wuest translates it. The adjective "dead" in Greek, as in English, can be used as a noun only by understanding it as meaning "dead ones." It cannot be replaced directly in either Greek or English with the noun "death."

He also uses Isaiah 53:9 to prove that Christ died twice. He translates it, "And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death~~S~~ [plural]." Just why the Hebrew would use a plural here I do not profess to know. Whatever it may mean, however, it surely cannot mean that He died spiritually and then died physically, resulting in two deaths. According to Mr. Thieme himself, Christ's "spiritual death" was concluded before He died physically. See where Joseph of Arimathea (the rich man in Isa. 53:9) came into the picture in Matthew 27:57 - 60. It was when evening came, and after Christ had already died (Matt. 27:50). The rich man did not even come into the picture until Christ's body needed a tomb. How, then, was He with the rich man in His spiritual death, which was, according the brother Thieme's view, already past before the rich man appeared?

If Colossians 2:12 and Isaiah 53:9 are the best proof he has, he really has no valid proof!

What about Christ's cry of victory from the Cross? Does the fact that He cried out, "It is finished!" before He died physically prove the physical death had "nothing whatsoever to do with the payment for sin"? If so, then John 17:4 can be made to prove that the Father never gave Christ the work of the Cross as a part of His work on earth. Before He even went to the

Cross He said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." It is true that the word here for "finished" is not the same as that used in John 19:30, and that it is in the aorist tense instead of the perfect tense, but that does not alter the point at issue. The difference between the perfect tense and the aorist, in Greek, is chiefly a matter of where the emphasis is placed. Both have to do with things completed in the past, but the aorist is viewing the thing accomplished, while the perfect is looking at the present result that follows the past action. In both verses Christ is viewing His work as being already accomplished, even though some of it still has not taken place in time. It is like Romans 8:30 where it says of the believers in the age of grace, "whom He justified He also glorified [aorist]." We are not yet glorified in experience, but it is so certain of fulfillment that in God's eyes it is already accomplished. Surely, if Christ is to say at all, to the ears of men, that His death has completed the work of salvation, He must say it just before He dies. He can hardly say it immediately afterward!

Another important incident at the Cross guards against the mistaken idea it was something previous to His physical death that provides man's salvation. In Matthew 27:51 it says, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were split." This is interpreted for us in Hebrews 10:19, 20. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." In the Hebrews passage our access to God is through the veil, symbolizing His flesh, not His spirit. Observe also that it is by the blood of Jesus we enter into His presence. These considerations alone would prove it is Christ's physical death and the shedding of His blood that purchased our salvation. But perceive when this veil, the rending of which provided the way into the presence of God for sinful men, was split from top to bottom. It happened immediately after He yielded up the spirit (died physically)! Read Matthew 27:50 and check it for yourself.<sup>2</sup> It is not a "spiritual death" that gives us access to God, but a physical death involving His giving up the spirit (Matt. 27:50), shedding blood (Heb. 10:19) and allowing His flesh to be rent by death (Heb. 10:20).

In addition to the above considerations there are many passages of Scripture that clearly teach it was the physical death of Christ that purchased our redemption.

--- The gospel of salvation in which we stand is that Christ died for our sins and rose again (1 Cor. 15:1 - 4). Was this death physical or spiritual? It has to be physical for at least two reasons. It must be physical because it is followed by resurrection. Where is there a resurrection from a spiritual death? Also it must be physical because "He was buried." Just how and where would you bury a spirit? That little phrase evidently was inserted for the very purpose of guarding against a misinterpretation making either the death or the resurrection a spiritual matter. That grave puts a limit on the imagination and guards against false doctrine in this critical area of truth.

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<sup>2</sup> Both Matthew and Mark clearly place this incident after His physical death had taken place. In Luke 23:45, 46 the order is reversed, with the rending of the veil in verse 45 followed by the cry commending His spirit to God in verse 46. In Luke, however, the rending of the veil is lumped together with the three hours of darkness of that afternoon, and the exact sequence of individual events is not in view. The verb is aorist in all three passages.



--- Hebrews 10:5 - 14. God prepared a body for Christ so He could do His (the Father's) will -- the doing of which would sanctify (set apart) every believer. The body was prepared so it could be offered as a sacrifice (vs. 10, 12). This one offering (the physical body of Christ as a sacrifice in physical death) sets believers apart from all unbelievers -- and perfects them forever. If this isn't salvation, what is? Where is there any room for a spiritual death in these verses?

--- As noted previously, Colossians 1:21, 22 indicate that it is physical death ("in the body of His flesh") which makes possible our reconciliation with God.

--- 1 Peter 4:1. "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." While this verse does not state specifically that this suffering in the flesh was what provided our salvation, it was suffering for us, and surely there is no hint that the only effective suffering on the Cross was spiritual in nature.

--- 1 Peter 2:24. "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree ... by whose stripes ye were healed." Surely Christ is portrayed as dying for our sins in this verse, and it is His body which is in view. In a spiritual death there would be no "stripes."

--- 1 Peter 3:18 has already been discussed.

**SIN -- its CONSEQUENCES and its PENALTY. There is a difference.**

God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." On the basis of this statement it is argued that what happened on the day of Adam's sin was the penalty for his sin. If so, it is this penalty Christ must pay. Since Adam did not die physically until many hundreds of years later, the penalty Christ must pay cannot be physical death -- but must be spiritual death. So runs his argument. (See page eleven of Mr. Thieme's book)

Just what did happen to Adam the very day he ate of the fruit?

--- He lost his desire for fellowship with God. Did God forsake him? No indeed! It was Adam who was hiding behind the tree, not God. It was not Adam crying out, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" but God calling, "Adam, where art thou?" God sought him out, pleaded with him, and made provision for him through the physical death of a substitute.

--- He began to die physically, leading to eventual physical death, and (apart from God's gracious intervention) eternal "death" in the Lake of Fire. According to Hyman Appleman (a Jewish evangelist who spoke Hebrew before he spoke English) the expression "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17 -- Hebrew) cannot be literally translated into English. It means, "You will be dying, and dying, and dying, and dying ..." -- and so on and on, in a sentence with no end! The moment Adam sinned he began dying physically, he became dead in trespasses and sins, he later died physically, and through eternity, if God did not undertake for him, would suffer the second death in the Lake of Fire.

--- He became the owner of a fallen nature.

--- He died spiritually. He became dead in trespasses and sins as in Ephesians 2:1, 5.

**None of these things happened to Christ on the Cross!**

Can "spiritual death" -- as suffered by Adam on the day of his fall -- be the penalty for sin?

--- If so, then Adam bore his own penalty before he died physically, for he "died spiritually" the very moment he sinned.

--- If so, then unbelievers today are already bearing their own penalty, for they were born spiritually dead.

--- If so, why is there a judgment (Rev. 20:12) after they have already suffered the penalty, and why is there a second death (Rev. 20:14)?

--- If so, then the only sin bringing punishment is Adam's sin, for other men are spiritually dead before they have committed even one sinful thought or deed.

We must recognize that sin has both consequences and punishment. They are not the same. If a man killed his wife he would face serious consequences. He would not have anyone to care for the house or the children, he would suffer a guilty conscience, his friends and even his family would hate him, and he would be arrested and put in prison awaiting trial. These would be the consequences, not the penalty. In the case of Adam, the evil in the race which sprang from him, the loss of fellowship with God, spiritual death, the fallen nature, and even physical death, are all the consequences of his sin, not its penalty. The "second death" (the Lake of Fire), and all that flows out of the judgment of Revelation twenty, is the penalty.

Now back to the man who killed his wife. If someone else is to take the penalty for him, this substitute does not suffer the consequences flowing from the deed itself. He must only pay the penalty set by the judge.

In the courts of men someone else would not be allowed to satisfy justice for the guilty husband. If he were, however, it would be up to the court to decide what must happen to the substitute. Either he would have to suffer the very punishment determined against the husband; or pay a penalty that, in the judgment of the court, was its equivalent. If the penalty for sin is an eternity in the Lake of Fire, did Christ literally carry out the sentence? No, for He did not go to the Lake of Fire at all. But, in the wisdom and sovereignty of God, He accounted the suffering of a few hours and the one physical death of Christ as sufficient payment.<sup>3</sup>

Why could not Christ literally and fully suffer the identical punishment we would endure if we were not redeemed? There are some truths about Christ that would make that impossible.

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<sup>3</sup> Physical death was a consequence of Adam's sin, but Christ did not sin -- so death is not a consequence of sin to Him. With Him, then, it can be accounted a penalty.

--- He is only one man, the God-man to be sure, but only one. If He were, fully and literally, to suffer as the guilty, then He could only take the place of one man. All the others would be left without a substitute.

--- In Christ God and man are joined in one Person. His deity and humanity cannot be separated. Just as He could not have sinned, as man, while His deity stepped aside, so He cannot be cast into the Lake of Fire without going there as God as well as man.

--- Messiah has a future full of glorious activity that has been foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. If He was cast into the Lake of Fire forever, as the lost will be, these prophecies would all go unfulfilled.

Therefore what Christ did must be the equivalent, in God's judgment, of the total penalty demanded of all fallen men of all time. As stated by Henry C. Thiessen, "Christ did not suffer the identical penalty, but He did suffer the equivalent penalty due the sinner, something a finite person could not do." (My emphasis) <sup>4</sup>

There are some considerations that make it possible for His suffering and death to be fully an equivalent to the penalty decreed against fallen men.

--- Christ is God, and thus His life has infinite value. The few hours of intense agony on the Cross and the one physical death, when multiplied by the infinite value of His life and Person, more than equal the suffering of multitudes in the Lake of Fire forever. Only thus could He declare that His work of redemption was "finished."

--- His death was a voluntary sacrifice, not a life taken from Him by a vengeful God. This adds greatly to the value of His death in God's eyes. Only Christ could, in an absolute sense, give His life. Any other man, in "giving his life," even though voluntarily, is really only giving up a few years of his life -- for he would die later anyway. Only Christ could choose between dying and not dying at all -- ever.

--- As the lost will suffer in the areas of the spirit, soul, and body, so Christ suffered spiritually, emotionally, and physically on the Cross. See the remarks following on Psalm 22.

--- What He did and suffered was pre-determined as the adequate answer to sin by the Judge Himself, before the first sin was committed. If Christ's death on the cross satisfies the Judge, who are we to complain?

## **PSALM 22.**

In the twenty second Psalm Christ is relating His own experience on the Cross. He describes three specific kinds of suffering He endured there.

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<sup>4</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, Henry C. Thiessen, 1983 edition, page 234.

--- Spiritual suffering (verses 1 - 5). Though the spiritual suffering of Christ is not called a "death" in the Scripture, it was no doubt, in His estimate, His greatest agony, for it is listed first in this Psalm. A glorious fellowship, unbroken from eternity, is interrupted. His cries for help during the day and in the night season (the three hours of darkness) are not answered, as were the prayers of David, Daniel, and many other Old Testament saints. Exactly what went on between Christ and the Father, during the three hours of darkness, we are not meant to know. If we had, God would not have "turned out the lights" during that time. Scripture hints at some possibilities however. Perhaps He tasted what the unbeliever will drink to the full when he is cast into "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). It may have been particularly during these hours that Isaiah 53:10 was fulfilled, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: ... Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin." However this spiritual suffering is not a separate death, nor was it this phase of His suffering alone that took care of our sin. Isaiah tells us He was stricken for our transgressions when "He was cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. 53:8).

--- Mental anguish (verses 6 - 8 and 13). Indifference, rejection, scorn, and ridicule from those He came to save were a source of acute pain to this sensitive, loving heart. Even among men, being unwanted and ignored can cause such suffering that one may be driven to take his own life in black despair.

--- Physical suffering (verses 14 - 21). His bodily pain was intense and prolonged. From the first slap in the face (Matt. 26:67) until the moment when He cried out, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" He knew pain as perhaps no other could know it.

The lost will suffer in these same three areas -- spirit, soul, and body -- for eternity. Yet the word "death" used but once in this Psalm, and that in connection with His physical suffering. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psa. 22:15).

How important it is for us to be guided by the Word of God in regard to the place Christ's blood and His physical death have in providing our redemption! The reasoning of even the most highly educated men must be scrutinized carefully to determine whether or not it conforms to Scripture.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1 - 4 -- NKJV).

How very carefully God has guarded this truth! It was the physical death and resurrection of Christ that provides salvation for sinful men.

# Are there DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT for the LOST?

## An outline study

- 1A. The first phase of the judicial process is to establish guilt. This takes place during one's life. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). There is no difference in guilt!
  - 1B. All sin is against God (Psa. 51:4), and hence of infinite importance.
  - 2B. "He that offends in one point is guilty of all" (James 2:10).
  - 3B. "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22b, 23).
  
- 2A. The second phase of the judicial process is to determine the extent and the seriousness of the offense. This takes place at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:12). This is only for those who have been judged guilty under phase one -- because they have not believed. (For the believer there is no judgment ahead -- John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). There is a difference in the extent and seriousness of men's sins.
  - 1B. Some sins are greater than others. "He who delivered me [Christ] up to you [Pilate] has the greater sin" (John 19:11).
  - 2B. Some sins deserve greater punishment than others. "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who trampled under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. 10:28, 29 -- NASB).
  
- 3A. The third phase of the judicial process is to set a penalty. This also takes place at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:13). There will be differences in the punishment of the lost.
  - 1B. Because God's judgments are righteous (Rev. 16:4 - 7).
  - 2B. Because God will judge them "according to their works" (1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12, 13).
    - 1C. The meaning of "according to their works" is seen in Revelation 18:4 - 8. What Babylon actually did to men is to be the basis for what men will do to her.
    - 2C. "According to their works" does not mean, "according to the good works they were trusting in, as has been suggested, (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 2:2, 8; 2 Tim. 4:14. See also Psa. 28:4; Jer. 25:14; etc.).
    - 3C. This principle must apply to judgment after death as well as to judgment in this life (as in Ezek. 7:8; 24:14; etc. See a concordance under "according"), for some are judged partly in this life, but others only in the next (Job 21:23, 25, 30 and Psa. 73:12 - 19). Therefore, if there were a basic difference in the two types of judgment, it would be unfair to one or the other.
  - 3B. Because of the principles underlying God's judgments.
    - 1C. Wrath is greater as more, and more, sins are committed (Rom. 2:5, 6).
    - 2C. Wrath is greater for those who had greater knowledge (Rom. 2:12).

3C. Punishment is greater for more serious sins (Heb. 10:29).

4A. What will the differences in penalty be?

1B. Not being incarcerated in different places. All unbelievers will go to Hades at death and into the Lake of Fire after their final hearing (Rev. 20:14, 15).

2B. Not the length of their imprisonment, for it will be forever for all unbelievers (2 Thess. 1:8, 9; Heb. 6:2).

3 B. Therefore the difference must be in the degree or intensity of the punishment. Just how this will be accomplished is not revealed.

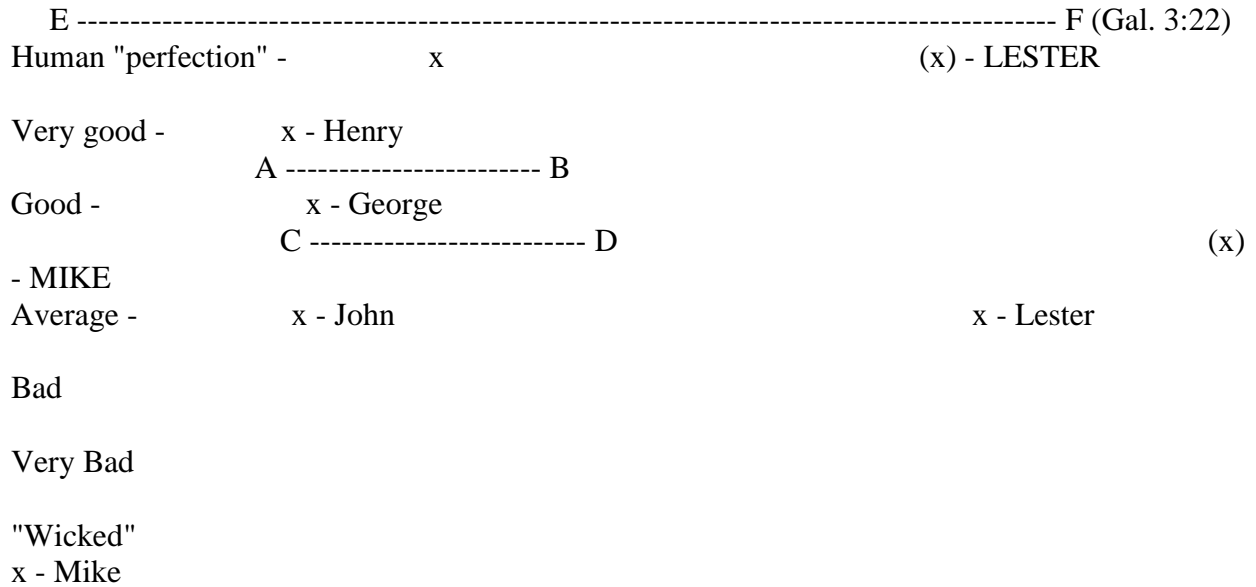
**CHART PRESENTATION.**

The perfect righteousness and glorious graciousness of God's ways with men can be seen more clearly if we portray them on a chart in the form of a graph. On the chart we will represent individuals with an "x". Their location vertically will indicate the character of their lives as established by their works, whether good or bad -- as indicated on the left margin. Fictitious names will be given to some of the men indicated so we can more easily follow the chart.

**Figure one.**

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Divine PERFECTION (Rom. 3:23).



If salvation depends on men's works (unless all are saved, which Satan would like to have us believe -- Gen. 3:4), then a line must be drawn somewhere horizontally (as A ----- B), to divide between the "good" and the "bad." ALL above the line so drawn would go to heaven. But no matter where the line would be drawn, there would be those who were almost exactly the same -- but who would be parted by the line, one going to heaven and the other to hell. George would say, "Henry is just a very little better than I am. Why should he go to heaven and I go to

hell?" If the line were drawn lower (as C ----- D), to let George into heaven, then John would have the same complaint as he looked at George.

Not only that, but Henry would then be saved by works. If God saved George at all He would have to save him by grace, for he does not have enough works (with the line at A \_\_\_\_\_ B) and it cannot be partly works and partly grace (Rom. 11:6). Henry would then say, "Why is George going to get there without works? I had to **WORK** to get to heaven! It isn't fair for him to get there without works -- just by believing." And he would be right!

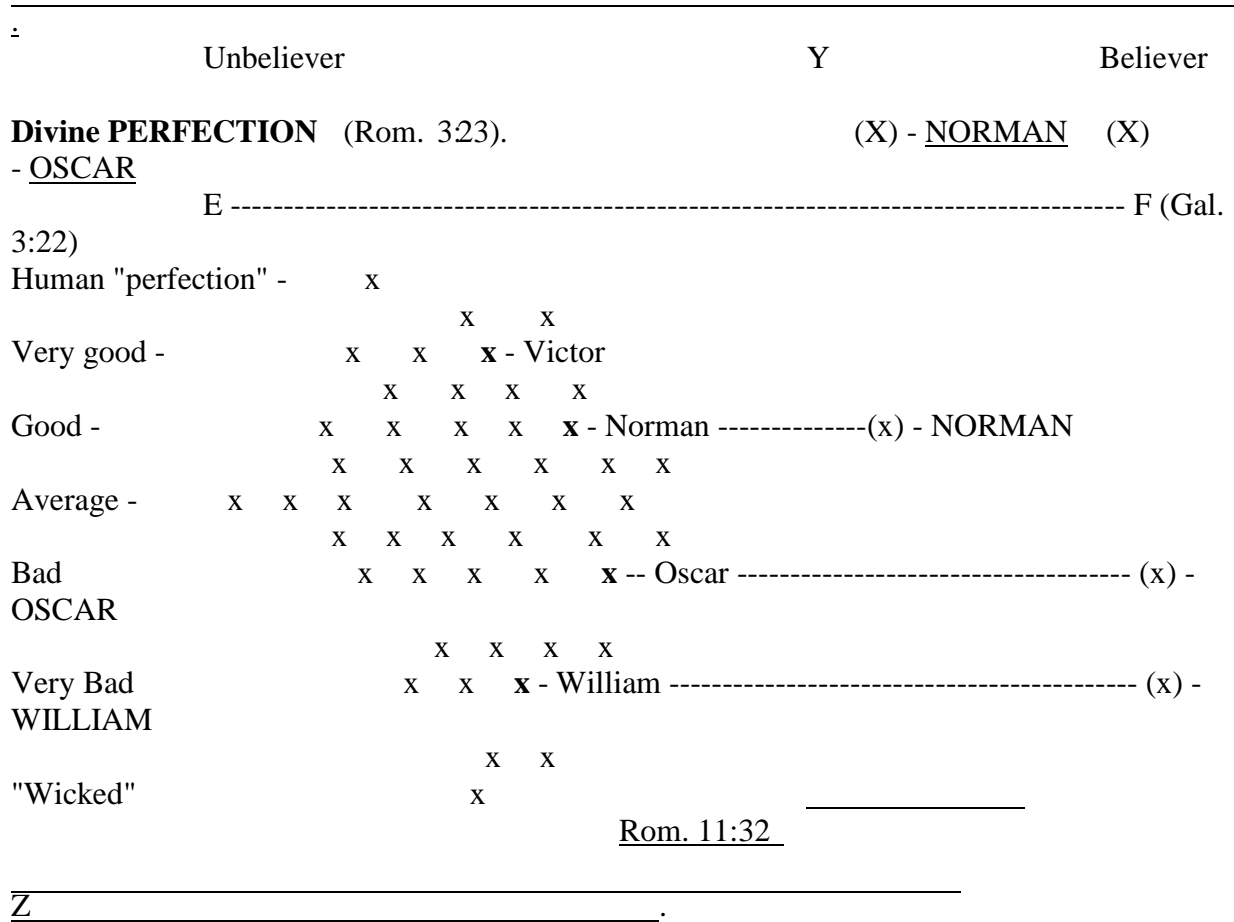
But God draws the line far above the best of man's goodness at E ----- F. This means that all are now on the same side of the line. There can no longer be any arguments about differences between people for "there is no difference, for all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23).

However, this leaves all men on the wrong side of the line, on their way to hell. Even if, as with LESTER or MIKE, some improve their lives and become "better men" -- full of good works -- they still fall short of God's standard and are lost.

Why did God set the line at this unattainable level? He did it purposely to "shut up" all men under sin so He could introduce an entirely new way to divide between men. "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Gal. 3:22 NASB).

God again "shuts up" (the same expression in the Greek) all men (classes them together), this time as unbelievers (Rom. 11:32a). The new line on the chart must be drawn vertically this time (as Y ----- Z in figure two).

**Figure two.**



This still leaves all men lost however, for Rom. 11:32a tells us, "For God hath concluded [shut up] all in unbelief." However the very purpose of grouping all men together in unbelief was "that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32b). Any man, good or bad (as Norman or Oscar), can move into the believing side of the picture in a moment of time (NORMAN or OSCAR). He still is below the line of required righteousness as far as his day by day life is concerned but, because of Christ's work on the Cross, his sins are now paid for. Also, he is given a new kind of righteousness -- the righteousness of God by faith --, which puts him above the line as God sees him (NORMAN or OSCAR). Even though he is still where he was before in the eyes of men, he is at the level of **Divine PERFECTION** before God.

The unbeliever (Victor) is lost even though he is "very good," and the believer (WILLIAM) is saved even though he is "very bad." Does it, then, make any difference how a man lives? To find an answer to this important question consider Figure Three.



**Figure three.**

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Unbeliever  <u>No reward</u> (Matt. 7:22, 23) (Rom. 8:1) --- But a difference in <u>punishment</u> <u>rewards</u> (2 Cor. 5:10)	Y	Believer  <u>No punishment</u> --- But a difference in
---	---	---

**Divine PERFECTION** (Rom. 3:23).

E ----- F (Gal. 3:22)

Human "perfection" -	x	(x) - PETER	(x) - RODGER
		x x	
(x) - <u>SAMUEL</u>			
Very good -	x x x		
(x) - TOM			
		x x x x	x - Roger
Good -	x x x x	x - Peter	
		x x x x x x	
Average -	x x x x x x x		
		x x x x x x	
Bad	x x x x	x - Samuel	----- x - SAMUEL
		x x x x	
x - Tom			
Very Bad	x x x		
		x x	
"Wicked"		x - Hitler	_____

Rom. 11:32

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Z

How a man lives does not save him, but it is important to both sinner and saint that he live as good a life as he can.

The unbeliever will not be rewarded for any "good works." The men mentioned in Matt. 7:22, 23 found this out. They listed their "good works" and discovered that God considered them all as "iniquity," because they were done in unbelief (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 14:23), and then

received judgment, not rewards.

However the intensity of the sinner's punishment does depend upon his works. The unsaved man (Peter) who has sincerely tried to be "good" (PETER) will not suffer like the wicked man (Hitler).

We should notice that during this life the unbeliever may receive temporal rewards for living a good life. Christ pointed out that the unbelieving Jewish leaders received a reward for their religious life and prayers -- the admiration and respect of others. But He also made it clear there would be no further reward for them later (Matt. 6:2, 5).

Chart number three teaches us clearly what our ministry among the unsaved should be. We should not merely try to get unbelievers to live a better life -- to move up on the chart (as with PETER). This will not save them. Moral improvement of the unsaved results in less punishment, true, but it also brings self-righteousness, a false sense of security and no salvation or reward from God. They will probably be better neighbors, but will still be lost. As a matter of fact, they may be even harder to reach for Christ. For instance "Peter," after he has become a "better man" (PETER), could be so pleased with his progress that he will not be able to see himself as a sinner needing a Savior. It is not that we, in any way, approve of their sinful lives, but we present a new life, not a challenge to improve the old one, as their only hope of being the men they ought to be.

We must not try to move them up on the chart, but over, as with "Samuel." Once he has moved over and come to Christ, just as he is (SAMUEL), then he can start moving up (SAMUEL). Then God will begin working in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:21). Then his works will not be dead works, as with "PETER," but the good works which God before ordained that he should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

Some believers, like "Tom," begin their Christian lives with evil habits that require a lot of attention. Others, like "Rodger," may already have high ideals. But they, too, must grow in grace after they are saved.

Surely the rewards are not for where one begins his Christian life on the chart, but where he arrives later. "Tom" begins with more temptations and problems than "Rodger," but he also has more opportunity for growth, and may have a more dramatic change in his life -- at least at first. There is more room for all of us to go up on the chart, by His grace and through His power, than any of us realize.

We have been speaking much about the "chart," but remember it is to the Word of God upon which the chart rests that we are to go for our doctrine and practice. If the chart helps us to visualize what the Word has to say, praise the Lord. If not, then forget the chart and go to the Word of God itself.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove

what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 15:58 -- NKJV).

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33 -- NKJV).

William P Heath, from the book "Help in Hard Places."

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# THE SALVATION of ALL ISRAEL

## SOME QUESTIONS:

-- *"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matt. 24:13). **Does this mean that if we fail to endure temptations until the end of our lives we will lose our salvation?**

-- *"And so all Israel shall be saved"* (Rom. 11:26). **Does this mean that every Jew who ever lived will some day be saved?**

-- *"And two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left"* (Matt. 24:40, 41). **Is this a description of what will happen at the Rapture of the church?**

The above questions, and many more, find an answer through an understanding of Ezekiel 20:33 - 44. This rich and enlightening portion of Ezekiel takes us from the time, during the Great Tribulation period, when great persecution breaks out against the Jews in the world, to the happy day at the close of that "time of Jacob's trouble" when all Israel shall be saved.

## ISRAEL REGATHERED.

When God made it possible for the Jews to return to Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, most of them were happy where they were. They saw no reason to make the long and hazardous trip to live in a devastated city. Only a small remnant took advantage of the opportunity.

In a future day, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, God will sound the trumpet that will usher in the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets, inviting Israel again to return to her land. In that day, too, many of them will be unwilling to respond -- even though exciting things will be happening there. A world dictator will have come on the scene and made a covenant with their leaders.<sup>1</sup> At long last their temple is being rebuilt in the very place where Solomon's temple once stood. All of the religious and military power of the Mohammedan world has been defied to make it possible. They are under the protection of a world empire, giving them freedom from fear of their enemies for the first time in more than two thousand years.

Yet, in spite of what appears to be a "new day" for Israel, many of them will be saying in their hearts, "We will be as the heathen [Gentiles], as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone" (Ezek. 20:32). But God will not allow them to lose their identity as Jews, and stay in their homes among the Gentiles. He declares, "**I WILL** rule over you" (Ezek. 20:33-b). He does not allow them to remain behind this time, as He did during the reign of Cyrus. "**I WILL** bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out" (Ezek. 20:34). He

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<sup>1</sup> This covenant is spoken of in Daniel 9:27, and is evidently the "covenant with death" described in Isa. 28:15, 18..

will not bring them directly into Palestine, however, as He did in Ezra and Nehemiah. He will gather them into the vast wilderness where Israel had wandered during the exodus, "And I shall bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face" (Ezek. 20:35).

The apostle John foresaw this time when he described Israel as a woman fleeing from the wrath of Satan. "And when the dragon [Satan] saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] who brought forth the man child [Christ]. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time [three and a half years], from the face of the serpent" (Rev. 12:14).

Evidently in the middle of the Tribulation, when the antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27; Isa. 28:18), there will be a great worldwide persecution of the Jews. God will use this wrath as a tool to force Israel to leave their homes among the nations. They will flee for their lives to the Sinai Peninsula, the only place of refuge open to them. This may become the greatest "air-lift" in history as they are given "two wings of a great eagle" to take them to safety.

### **GOD'S JUDGMENT ON REGATHERED ISRAEL**

In the wilderness they will be protected from Satan's wrath, expressed through antichrist's persecution, as Rev. 12:16 indicates. Satan will then turn his attention to the only Jews who will not be in this wilderness refuge (apparently the 144,000 Jews who are already saved and seeking to evangelize the world). He has a special hatred for them for they "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

While the Jews gathered in the wilderness will be protected from Satan, God Himself will enter into judgment with them, just as Israel of old was protected from Pharaoh, but judged by the Lord in the desert. "'As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,' declares the Lord God" (Ezek. 20:36).

The purpose of the judgment is clear. These Jews are all unsaved, but some have a love for the Old Testament and are seeking to worship the true God. Others have long ago turned their backs on both God and His Word. The latter group has been brought out of the lands where they have been scattered, but will not be brought into the land of Israel. They are the "rebels" mentioned in Ezek. 20:38. "And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

### **THE CONVERSION OF "ALL ISRAEL"**

Those who are not rebels will be chastened, but brought to know the Lord. "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the [New] Covenant" (Ezek. 20:37). Their conversion will come when they are brought into the land. "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezek. 20:42). At that time they will loathe themselves for all the evils they have committed (Ezek. 20:43).

More details are given about this conversion in Zech. 12:10. "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem [those brought into the land, upon the holy mount] the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him [loathing themselves] as one that is in bitterness for his first born." This is the day Paul has in mind when he writes, "All Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). These are the ones in view in Matthew 5:4, who are blessed because they mourn (over their sin of having rejected for so long the Savior) and are comforted (saved). This is the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement wherein all the people of Israel were to afflict their souls (Lev. 23:27, 29). These are the ones who have triumphantly endured and overcome the temptations and testings of the Tribulation. They are saved because they were not slain in the wilderness, as were the rebels, and thus are present and alive in that glorious day when salvation is poured out on Israel.

### **SOME ANSWERS:**

#### **Going back to our opening questions:**

-- **The expression "He that shall endure unto the end ... shall be saved"** (Matt. 24:13) is found only here, in Matt. 10:22, and in Mark 13:13. In each case the reference is to one nation (Israel) and one period of time (the Great Tribulation). It does not say that anyone else at any other time must endure to be saved. Also it does not say that even those who are in view in these verses have to endure in order to remain saved. The salvation comes at the end of the enduring. The "end" is not the end of one's life, but the end of the Tribulation, the "end of the age" the disciples asked about in Matt. 24:3.

Are these Jews, during that time, saved by works, -- by enduring? No, they are saved by grace. It is this spirit of "grace and supplications," not the spirit of "works and endurance" which is poured out on them. It is the work of Christ alone, called to mind by the nail pierced hands, that saves them. Let me illustrate how this can be.

Suppose two men in the Philippines (or some other such primitive mission field) start out to attend evangelistic services across a mountain. It is the rainy season. They slip and slide on the muddy trail and are drenched to the skin in the rain. Finally one man turns back. The other endures the hardships of the trail to the end. He arrives at the meetings. There he hears the gospel and is saved, while the one who turned back is still lost. Is he saved because he endured, or because Christ died for him and he believed? The enduring did not save him, but it did bring him to the place where he could be saved. So the enduring of the remnant does not save them, but it does bring them to the place and the day when Christ manifests Himself to His people. They will be saved much as Saul of Tarsus was on the road to Damascus, by the work of Christ and the grace of God.

-- **Paul's cry, "And so all Israel shall be saved"** (Rom. 11:26) refers to all of the Jews who are alive and in Jerusalem on the holy mount at the time when Christ appears to Israel. At His coming in glory He brings them to Himself. Zech. 13:8, 9 tells us that two parts in the land (the rebels) shall be cut off and die, but the third part (the remnant) shall be left. It goes on to speak of those who are still left (those who survive and are allowed to go into Jerusalem and see the

One they pierced. "And I will bring the third part through fire [as the three Hebrew children were brought through the fire in Daniel three], and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they [the one third still living at that time] shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, 'It is my people:' and they shall say, 'The Lord is my God.'" This is the "all Israel" of which Paul spoke.<sup>2</sup>

### -- What about the passage in Matt. 24:40, 41?

Perhaps the most important rule in biblical interpretation is "study the context!" Matt. 24:37 - 39 is the key to our understanding of the following two verses. "For the coming of the Son of Man [coming in glory, not the Rapture] will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (NASB).

Who is it that was "taken" in Noah's day? Was it Noah taken in salvation? No, it was the wicked "taken" in judgment. Noah was left. So also in verses 40 and 41. The ones taken were taken in judgment,<sup>3</sup> and the ones left are those destined for salvation. This fits with Ezekiel twenty. The rebels are taken (purged) in judgment first. Those surviving this judgment go on into the land of Israel where they come to know the Lord.

A study of the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24 - 30 and 36 - 43) gives us the same truth. The sower of the good seed is Christ, as in the previous parable of the sower. Here, however, the seed is not the "word of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:19) but the "children of the kingdom" (v. 38), not a message, but people. The field is the world, but the children of the kingdom are Jews, not Gentiles. The tares are people also, the children of the wicked one (compare John 8:44). These also are Jews rather than Gentiles. If the tares were Gentiles it would not require angelic wisdom to differentiate between them and the Jewish children of the kingdom. In that day, Jews will be scattered all over the world (the "field") but some are wheat and some are tares. The separation of the wheat from the tares comes at the end of the age, and takes place in the wilderness, where God has gathered them together. He is evidently using angels to help in this judgment. Notice that the tares (the rebels) are gathered out first. The wheat is left behind and shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

This is just the opposite of the Rapture. There the believers are taken to heaven and the

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<sup>2</sup> For further study on the meaning of Rom. 11:26 see the following Scriptures: Deut. 4:30; Isa. 4:3; 10:20; 28:18 (with context); 66:17 - 19; Jer. 31:2; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:13; Rev. 13:8.

<sup>3</sup> In Luke's account of this sermon there is a significant addition. His account reads: "I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left. And they answered and said to Him, "**Where [will they be taken], Lord?**" So He said to them, "**Wherever the body is, there the eagles [vultures -- NASB] will be gathered together.**" (Luke 7:34 - 37 -- NKJV). That is, they will be taken away to judgment!

unbelievers are the ones left behind.

The separation of the wicked and righteous Gentiles at the close of Israel's age is not in view either in Ezekiel twenty or in the parable of the tares. It is the subject of the parable of the dragnet (Matt. 13:47 - 50). There the "good" fish are not "children of the kingdom," but are taken from the seas (symbolic of the Gentile nations in many prophecies) and are of "every kind." In this judgment the good fish are "gathered ... into vessels" first (Matt. 13:48) and then the bad are thrown away. This is the judgment described in Matt. 25:31 - 46, where all "nations" (v. 32) are gathered before the Lord. The good are considered first (vs. 34 - 40) and then the bad (vs. 41 - 46).

The Age of Grace, and its concluding program, is not in view in any of the above Scriptures. See the chapters on the Rapture of the Church in this volume.



# IS SALVATION SAFE?

Much has been written on the subject of the "eternal security" of the believer, setting forth the passages that teach it, and answering the problem texts. It is not intended to duplicate that effort here. A good theology book will be helpful to review the Scriptures involved. Two other books are very valuable, if they are available: "Shall Never Perish," and "Disciplined By Grace" -- both by J. F. Strombeck. Moody Press, Chicago, Ill., publishes the former, in a regrettably condensed form.

A few of the main objections to the security of the believer are answered in the chapters of this book entitled, "The Salvation of All Israel," "The Book of Life," and "Hebrews Six and Ten."

Attention is here called to some principles making it certain that any sinner who has been justified by faith, born again by the Word and Spirit of God, and saved by grace, shall never be lost. The expanded outline presentation utilized requires that one study the material, not merely read it.

## 1A. The believer is secure:

### 1B. Because of the nature of grace.

1C. Salvation is by grace (Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24; 4:4, 16; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 2:11; 3:7).

2C. Grace excludes works (Rom. 4:4, 5; 11:6; Gal. 2:21; 5:4; Eph. 2:8, 9).  
Either works to gain salvation, or works to retain it after it has been experienced, are inconsistent with, and foreign to, grace.

3C. Grace produces works in the believer (2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:12).  
These works do not, and cannot, affect salvation one way or the other.  
They are totally the result of salvation.

### 2B. Because of the perfect righteousness God requires of us.

1C. **SELF**-righteousness cannot save (Rom. 3:20; Titus 3:5). It is not only imperfect and incomplete, it is also made up of dead works (Heb. 6:1; 9:14) that are works of darkness (Rom. 13:12). It is as filthy rags in the sight of God (Isa. 64:6). It is the kind of righteousness the scribes and Pharisees were striving for, and it left them religious, but lost (Matt. 5:20; Rom. 10:1 - 3). What the unbeliever may consider "wonderful works" are considered "iniquity" by God (Matt. 7:22, 23).

2C. Only **IMPUTED righteousness** will satisfy God. It is His own perfect righteousness given to us as a gift and put on our record ("imputed" to us) when we believe the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21, 22; 4:3 - 6, 11, 21, 22; 9:31; 10:3, 4, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

## NOTE.

Becoming righteous by faith does not mean that we now think and do the right things because we believe, but that the very righteousness of Christ Himself has become ours. It is only this imputed righteousness of God that makes us acceptable to God. If a believer is ever lost, it will have to be because God has found something wrong, or lacking, in His own

righteousness! As far as salvation is concerned, God is not looking at ME, He is looking at **HIS SON**. He is satisfied with what He sees -- and I am "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

- 3C. ENGENERED righteousness** is that day by day conduct in the life of the believer which results from God working in him (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 2:20; 5:16, 22 - 25; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 9:14; 13:20, 21). God is pleased with our engendered righteousness because it is His own work in us. It is this righteousness that brings satisfaction to our hearts now, and rewards in heaven.

## CONCLUSION

The one who thinks his good works saves him is putting self-righteousness in the place of imputed righteousness. He is lost and on his way to hell. More self-righteousness will not help -- he needs a different kind of righteousness, God's own righteousness as a gift.

The true believer who thinks that how we live day by day is what keeps us saved, is also substituting self righteousness for imputed righteousness. He will not lose his salvation, for God does not make the same mistake he does in this matter. However he loses his assurance and much of his joy.

The true believer who tries to please God by his own righteousness, is substituting self righteousness for engendered righteousness. For all his striving and sacrifice he is not pleasing to God. True service comes not by trying, but by trusting; not by making the flesh behave itself, but by accounting it dead; not by working in the flesh, but by walking in the Spirit. As God produces righteousness in the yielded believer he will have a strong desire to live for the Lord and it may involve a great deal of effort put forth, and suffering experienced. However, it will be accomplished only as Christ works in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). By His power, and under His guidance, He causes us to walk in the very good works He before appointed as our task (Eph. 2:10).

- 3B.** Because of the scope of salvation. The salvation, which we have now, is more than just the forgiveness of sins. It includes provisions by God, and relationships to God, which cannot be reversed. A few are listed here, but many others will be found if one searches the Scriptures for them.

**1C.** There is a new divine birth (John 3:7; Titus 3:5 ["regeneration"]; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). The birth process cannot be reversed. A child cannot be "unborn."

**2C.** We have, now, eternal life (John 3:36; 5:24; etc.). If we could ever "lose" this life it would cease to be life, and thus would not have been eternal to begin with. "Ten year life" would last ten years, "fifty year life" would continue for fifty years -- eternal life must go on forever!

**3C.** We have been given the righteousness of God. If, in addition to this, our own righteousness is also necessary to obtain, or retain, our salvation, it must be because God's is not enough! That is surely not the case! If, after having God's righteousness, we were cast away it would have to be because God found sin in Himself. What an impossibly blasphemous thought!

**4C.** For us today, we have been baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit's work

and are "bone of His bone," a living part of His Body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Eph. 5:30). If we lose our salvation the Body of Christ becomes a cripple.

- 5C.** We, today, are already in heaven. We are seated there, in Christ, at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20; 2:6). Before a believer can be lost someone must take him out of Christ, remove him from beside the throne of God, and cast him out of heaven!
- 4B.** Because of the very character of God. The four attributes listed below are almost universally recognized as being essential to the Biblical idea of God. God must be totally consistent with His attributes, for they describe who and what He is.
- 1C. Omniscience.** God knows everything. He knows the end from the beginning (Psa. 139:1 - 6; Isa. 46:10). Therefore when He saves us, and gives us our joy and assurance, He already knows how we will live our lives in every detail. If he knows that a man will finally be lost and spend eternity in hell, why would He "save" him for only a time? Why would He allow him to rejoice in the love and grace of God and look forward to heaven -- if He knew all along He would not be able to complete the work of salvation in him? Why would He even start it?

If one who is saved, and with joy has been filled,  
Can ever, forever, be lost;  
Then God is the "fool" who started to build  
Before He had counted the cost!  
(Luke 14:28 - 30)

Paul was convinced that God would complete what He began in a believer's life (Phil. 1:6).

- 2C. Omnipotence.** If anything can come into the believer's life that would cause him to lose his salvation, it surely would not be good. Yet God has promised to work all things together for the good of the believer (Rom. 8:28). He even lists all possible things that might be thought to separate the child of God from the love of Christ, and assures us they will not be able to do so (Rom. 8:35 - 39). It is then a matter of whether or not God is able to fulfill His promises. If He cannot work every thing together for good, and keep the believer forever, then He is not omnipotent. If He cannot keep the wayward saint, as He has promised, how can we be sure He can save us in the first place? His omnipotence demands the security of the true believer.
- 3C. Righteousness.** When Christ died He not only bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24) but also was made to "be sin" for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus both the sins and the sin nature which produced them have been paid for at the Cross. God's righteousness demanded that sin be paid for, and it was paid for by Christ. It is important to realize that Christ died for all our sins, not only those committed before we were saved. Our sins as believers, still in our future, have been paid for also. They were all future sins when He paid for them. Now the righteousness of

God prevents Him from demanding that any believer pay for his own sins. God will not, yea cannot, demand payment for our sins twice -- once from His Son and then again from us! If He did so He would not be righteous! The righteousness of God demands security for every true believer.

- 4C. Immutability.** Salvation is a gift. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that [salvation] not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). If God is unchangeable, how can He give us a gift and then take it away from us? The true believer is told that he has been chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). He was predestinated, on the basis of God's foreknowledge, to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). If God knew all about us -- both the good and the bad -- ahead of time, and then predestined us to be like His Son, how could He change His mind and send us to hell? "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance [a change of mind]" (Rom. 11:29). The immutability of God demands the security of the true believer.

#### **NOTE.**

Those who believe that a true believer can go to hell have unscriptural ideas about the nature of salvation and a false concept of who God is and what He is like. It is not the philosophy of men that assures us of eternal life, but the plan of God. It is not the character of man upon which security is based, but the character of God.

- 2A.** Security is for the Old Testament saints also. Personal salvation is not the topic of much of the Old Testament. It is there, but is largely hidden under God's concern for Israel as a nation. Many passages that are applied to spiritual salvation have in view rescue from the enemy. Verses on "life" and "death" are usually speaking of physical life and death. Nevertheless, whether they were aware of it or not, the Old Testament believers were secure:
- 1B.** Because their salvation, like ours, was based on justification by faith. The book of Hebrews documents this.
- 1C.** The key to their acceptance with God was their faith (Hebrews eleven).
- 2C.** The Old Testament believers are referred to as the "spirits of just [justified] men" (Heb. 12:23).
- 2B.** Because the principle of justification by faith is common to all dispensations.
- 1C.** Before the Law -- Abraham was justified by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1 - 4).
- 2C.** Under the Law -- David was justified by faith (Rom. 4:5 - 8).
- 3C.** Now we who are "not under Law," are justified by faith (Rom. 3:26 and many other passages).
- 3B.** Because most of the principles already given apply equally to both Old and New Testaments.
- 4B.** Because of the statements of Scripture.
- 1C.** Psa. 37:23, 24, 28, 39, 40; 97:10; 145:20; Prov. 2:8.
- 2C.** John 3:36; 5:24; 10:27 - 30. Remember, the "Old Testament [Old Covenant]" was entered into at Sinai and is discontinued **no earlier** than the Cross. These verses were given as contemporary truth before the

Cross. The saints at that time were "Old Testament" saints -- and they were secure.

- 5B.** It must be realized that there is a difference between **security** and **assurance**. The Old Testament saint was as secure as we are -- but probably did not know it, at least not as fully as we do.
- 1C.** He did not have as much revelation as we do upon which to rest his assurance.
- 2C.** He did not have some of the reasons for security that we have in this age of Grace. He was secure, but not a member of Christ's Body, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, nor seated in the heavenlies.

### **CONCLUSION.**

Our security is not an excuse for careless living. To be aware of the infinite perfection of the salvation purchased at such a cost should make us supremely grateful to the Lord and anxious to serve Him forever. Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2 -- NKJV).

# THE BOOK OF LIFE

*"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life" (Rev. 3:5).*

Does this verse teach that believers who do not live a victorious "overcoming" life will have their names blotted out of the book of life, and thus be lost? Quite the contrary, it teaches that the true believer shall not have his name blotted out of this book. He is secure! Specifically, the "overcomer" in this verse is one, during the Tribulation period, who has surmounted tremendous Satan inspired opposition and persecution to become a true believer.

But are there not other verses relating to the blotting of names out of a book? Yes there are, but many of them do not have the same book in view!

## THE KEY VERSE

The solution to the matter is found in Psalm 69:28. This passage refers prophetically to the future leaders of Israel, who are identified in Romans 11:9, 10 (quoting from Psa. 69:22, 23) as those rejecting the Savior, even after His resurrection. Of these Israelites, hardened in unbelief, Christ, speaking through David, cries out, *"Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into Thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous"* (Psa. 69:27, 28). Two books, not just one, are in view in this verse: A book from which the names of the wicked may be blotted out and another where their names will not even be entered.

The first, called the "book of the living" includes the names of those who were never saved -- the very murderers of God's Son. The "life" mentioned in the title of this book couldn't be eternal life, for the names of wicked men are found there. It must refer to physical life, a record of all those, both the wicked and the righteous, who will live physically on the earth. This is the book referred to in Psalm 139:16. This verse reads, *"Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them"* (NASB).

Whether the names were entered at conception, upon their births, or back in eternity as God foresaw they would some day be born, is not revealed -- and is not of any importance to our topic. Names can be blotted out of this book. Whenever any man dies his name is blotted out of it, whether he be saved or lost. Christ is here praying (through David) that a physical judgment be brought against these men, resulting in their deaths. His prayer was answered in 70 ad. when the Romans came against Jerusalem, burned it to the ground, and slew all the leaders of Israel and their equally guilty followers. (The believers could have, should have, and -- reportedly -- did escape from Jerusalem before it fell, by following the instructions given by Christ in Luke 21:20 - 22).

But there is another book referred to in Psalm 69:28. It is a book containing only the names of the righteous. It is evident, from the references to it, that names are written into it only

when they become justified by faith and are thus, in their standing, totally "righteous." Christ prays that the evil men described in Psalm 69:18 - 27 will not have their names entered into this book.

### **THE BOOK OF THE (PHYSICALLY) LIVING.**

When the Israelites made a golden calf to worship, while Moses was on the mount to receive the Law, God was very angry. He told Moses, "*Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than them*" (Deut. 9:14). Moses interceded for Israel and delivered them from physical extinction. A bit later he was concerned that God might even yet slay them. He prayed, "*Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin --; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.*" He was saying, in effect, "If You slay Israel, slay me also." God replied, "*Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*" (Ex. 32:32, 33). It is clear that this book has to do with physical life, since physical death was the threat. Ex. 32:33 links the book mentioned here back to the doom hanging over Israel, so the execution of the threat would have been a blotting of their names out of the book. The matter of eternal life is not in view in these verses.

In Deut. 29:20 Moses announces a judgment upon the ungodly and rebellious in Israel. "*The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses in this book [the book of Deuteronomy] shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.*" Here it is an unbeliever whose name was never "written with the righteous" whose name is blotted out from under heaven. It quite evidently refers to the book (even though the word "book" is not used) of the physically alive, and to physical death as a judgment.

Isaiah speaks about the time when the judgments of the Great Tribulation will be past and "*the Branch of the Lord [Christ] will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for those of Israel who have escaped.*" (Isa. 4:2 -- See Ezek. 20:33 - 44 for details about this judgment and the fate of those who are "purged" and those who are spared). In that day Israelites who have escaped the judgments, and are still physically alive, will see Christ, recognize Him by the nail prints in His hands (Zech. 12:10), and will be saved (Rom. 11:26). Of that day he writes, "*And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem [after the judgments are over], shall be called holy [be justified], even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem*" (Isa. 4:3). In other words, those of Israel whose names are still in the book of the living at that time will all be saved, and thus have their names entered into the Book of (spiritual) Life.

A large part of Psalm 109 refers to Judas Iscariot (Psa. 109:6 - 20 -- compare verse eight with Acts 1:20). Christ is speaking through the Psalmist. He says, "*Let his [Judas'] posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their names be blotted out*" (Psa. 109:13). The descendants of Judas were not believers, their names were not written in the book of spiritual life. It is the book of the physically alive from which their names were to be blotted in judgment -- by physical death.

Revelation 22:19 appears to be warning that those who "*take away from this book* [the

book of Revelation]" will be slain and not live to enjoy the blessings foretold for those living through the Millennium and in the New Jerusalem. Instead, they will be "purged out" from the nation as "rebels" (Ezek. 20:38 and context). Even if the "Book of Life" mentioned in Rev. 20:19 is the book of spiritual life, there is no evidence their names have already been entered into it. Rather, these rebels would be denied the life and blessings that could have been theirs if their names had been entered into it in that day when all Israel was saved (Rom. 11:26). There is a strong possibility also that the words "Book of Life" in this verse should read "Tree of Life" as in the NASB, NIV, and other translations -- and in the Greek text in my possession. In either case it is not taking away something they already possess, but denying them something they could have obtained.

### THE BOOK OF (SPIRITUAL) LIFE

Daniel 12:1 may be a companion verse to Isaiah 4:3. It may be declaring that every Jew still alive at the close of the Tribulation will be delivered from his sins. However, it seems more in keeping with the text and context to recognize here God's faithfulness in sparing the lives of the believing remnant during the Tribulation (as typified by the Hebrew children preserved through the fire in Daniel chapter three). The verse reads, in part, "*- and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*" Jeremiah 30:7 bears testimony to this same time, "*Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.*"

The book of (spiritual) life is not just "kingdom truth," for Paul, in one of the Prison Epistles, speaks of it. The man who appears to have been the pastor of the church in Philippi is urged to help two women who are causing trouble in the church, and to remember that "*their names are in the book of life*" (Phil. 4:3). He is surely not merely indicating they are still physically alive. He is reminding the pastor that, in spite of the trouble they are causing in the church, they are saved. Compare Luke 10:20.

The rest of the references to the book of spiritual life are found in the book of Revelation. They are Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15 and 21:27. (See the previous discussion concerning the "Book of life" [KJV] in Rev. 22:19.)

Those whose names are not written in the book called "the Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 21:27) shall wonder, evidently in admiration, after the Beast (17:8) and will worship him (13:8). They shall not enter into the New Jerusalem (21:27) <sup>1</sup> but will be cast into the Lake of Fire (20:15).

In Rev. 3:5 Christ is not saying, "Some believers' names will be blotted out of the Book of Life, but yours will not -- because you are spiritual." He is saying, in effect, "Your names may well be blotted out of the book of the living. You may die, and walk with me in white raiment -- but your names will not be blotted out of the other book, the book of the spiritually

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. 21:27 does not teach that everyone whose name is in the Book of Life will be in the New Jerusalem, but only that everyone in the New Jerusalem will have his name in that book.



alive. You are true believers in a day when so much is evil and counterfeit -- you are 'overcomers.'"

The Book of (spiritual) Life is consulted at the Great White Throne Judgment where only unbelievers are to be tried. Evidently its purpose is to prove to them that they are not real believers, for their names are not listed there and, as a result, they are cast into the Lake of Fire. See Rev. 20:12, 15.

### OTHER BOOKS

Just as Psalm 69:28 differentiates between the book of physical life and the book of eternal life, Revelation 20:12 reveals a difference between the book (singular) of spiritual life and the "books" (plural) containing the records of individual men's deeds. It is the information in the Lamb's Book of Life that determines where men spend eternity. The fact that their names are not written in the book of the redeemed is proof that they are lost, and they are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15). But the severity of their sentence will be according to their works, as revealed in the "books."

What is written in the "books" referred to in Revelation 20:12 is evidently a record of each man's works. There is nothing there to commend him. They are dead works (Heb. 9:14), works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19) and the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). Even his "wonderful works" are seen by God as "iniquity" (Matt. 7:22, 23). His "righteousnesses" are but "filthy rags" before God (Isa. 64:6). Yet this record, written in the "books," could have been blotted out if they had believed God and been justified by faith!

It is true, Christ prays in Psalm 109:14 that the sin of the mother of Judas not be blotted out. Also, Jeremiah asks that the sin of those who have persecuted him not be blotted out of God's sight (Jer. 18:23). Nehemiah likewise prays concerning the enemies of Israel, "Cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee --" (Neh. 4:5).

However, in gracious and wonderful contrast, God cries out to Israel, "*I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. ... I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*" (Isa. 43:25; 44:22). David, after his tragic sin with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, prayed, "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. ... Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities*" (Psa. 51:1, 9).

Peter tells us what happened to those sins that were once written deeply on our record. Christ has borne them in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). Paul goes even deeper, to the very nature producing them. He reveals that Christ was made to be sin for us. The result also is more glorious. Not only are the sins taken away and the record of them blotted out, we have a positive righteousness. We are made to be the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This imputed righteousness is the only righteousness acceptable to God for men of any dispensation. When Christ spoke of righteousness in the "Sermon on the Mount," He warned those listening, "*Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 5:20 - NASB). That it was not merely more of the

The unbeliever, if he does not come to Christ before he dies, faces a terrible future. His name will be blotted out of the Book of (physical) Life -- for every unbeliever, without exception, will die physically. His name is not in the Lamb's Book of Life, so he is lost! He will face every sinful thought and deed of his entire life at the Great White Throne. His sins will all be revealed there in the "books" to condemn him.

How glorious is the lot of the true believer! He may have his name blotted out of the book of the living -- but perhaps not. He may not die physically -- ever (John 11:26 for the believing Jews alive at the coming in glory and 1 Thess. 4:17 and 1 Cor. 15:51 for the Body saints at the Rapture). His name is in the book of (spiritual) life and will not be blotted out! He will never stand before the Great White Throne to be judged, for his sins have already been judged at Calvary (John 5:24 for the kingdom saints and Rom. 8:1 for the Body saints).

The kingdom believer will be raised from the dead when Christ comes in glory, a thousand years before the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:4 - 6). Then Christ will "*give reward unto His servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear [His] name, small and great* -" (Rev. 11:18). The believers of this age of grace will appear, even earlier, at a "judgment" which is not for punishment of evil works, but for rewards of those whose works were done "by faith." (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6) These "by faith" works are a result of God working in him (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13 -- compare Heb. 13:21) -- the only works still appearing on their records.

Even if our names are blotted out of the Book of (physical) Life we have a wonderful comfort (1 Thess. 4:13 - 18). The "books" hold no terrors for us for He has wiped the pages clean. Best of all, our names will never be blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life -- we have His promise!

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same righteousness exhibited by the Pharisees, but a different kind of righteousness, is evident. He continues, "*But seek ye first His kingdom and HIS righteousness* --" (Matt. 6:33 - NASB). This interpretation is fortified by Rom. 10:3, 4 - NASB, "*For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of GOD. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*" While this truth is amplified and clarified by Paul, it is the basis for justification of believers even in those ages before Paul came on the scene. See Gen. 15:6; Rom. 3:20.

## HEBREWS SIX AND TEN

It is amazing how often these passages come up when the eternal security of the believer is mentioned. The assumption is that those described in Heb. 6:4, 5 and Heb. 10:26 - 29 are believers who lose their salvation. **If** this is true, we could also lose our salvation.

It is Seldom noticed, however, that -- **If** these passages teach a believer can lose his salvation -- they also teach, very clearly and emphatically, that when salvation is lost it is lost forever! In chapter six it is stated, "it is impossible" for those who "fall away" to be "renewed again unto repentance." Likewise chapter ten states, "If we sin willfully ... there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." This surely would deny the testimony of any believer who claims to have once lost his salvation; for if he ever lost it, he is still lost and can never be saved again. It would also make the ministry of those who preach to "backsliders" (who, supposedly, have lost their salvation) a useless and even wicked effort. If the backsliders could never be saved again, it would be a cruel mockery to urge them to return to Christ. Clearly, according to this interpretation of these passages, such a return would be "impossible."

What do these chapters really teach?

### HEBREWS CHAPTER SIX

#### --- A quick answer:

The key to this chapter is verse nine. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." This verse teaches there are things better than those listed in verses four and five. While those items do not "accompany salvation" these "better" things do! The writer is here saying very definitely and clearly that verses four and five do not describe a saved person.

#### --- A detailed answer:

What can be better than those things set forth in verses four and five?

To be "once for all enlightened" (Amplified Bible) is to know fully the message from the Lord. But to know a truth and to believe it are not the same. It is not said here that they believed. Salvation is not through knowledge, but through faith. A man may sit through a series of meetings, where the gospel is faithfully preached, and go away thoroughly "evangelized" -- but still **lost**. Faith is better, for it accompanies salvation!

What is better than to taste of the heavenly gift? Obviously it would be better to receive that gift. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God" (John 1:12). To receive the gift accompanies salvation.

But were not these people described as being made "partakers of the Holy Ghost [Holy

Spirit]"]?

In the 1917 edition of the Scofield Bible the margin suggests this verse be translated, "and were **going along with** the Holy Ghost." This thought is illustrated where the same Greek word is used in Luke 5:7 and translated "partners." There, when the disciples in one boat caught so many fish their net broke, they "beckoned unto their partners" (those who had **gone along with** them in their fishing venture) who were in the other boat. Applying this meaning of the word to Heb. 6:4, the verse appears to be saying that these "backsliders" have been under the convicting power of the Spirit, may even have made a profession of faith and urged others to do the same -- all without true faith themselves. What could be better? It would be better if they had been **born** of the Spirit (John 3:5), **indwelt** by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), **sealed** by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), and **baptized** by the Spirit into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) -- for these things accompany salvation. <sup>1</sup>

Likewise it is better to **believe** the word of God than to merely **taste** it. How many, even today, enjoy a Bible study or good gospel preaching, but have not really believed the Word of God. Ezekiel was warned against such people in his ministry. "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear [and evidently enjoy] thy words, but they do them not" (Ezek. 33:32). It is not the one who merely **hears** (tastes) the Word, but the one who **believes**, who has everlasting life.

But have they not tasted (here is that word again!) the "powers of the world to come"? Yes indeed. Similarly the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea tasted of the fruit of the land brought back by the spies, but they never entered the land. They never ate of the milk and honey, or the corn and wine (Num. 13:23, 27; Deut. 33:28). When they turned back (or "fell away") they found it was impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Their subsequent attempt to enter the land met with defeat, and they died in the wilderness (Num. 14:39 - 45). The "world to come," in Heb. 6:5, should be translated "**age** to come."

For these Jews referred to in Hebrews, the age to come was the millennial kingdom. They had tasted of the powers which will be characteristic of that kingdom. Not only had they seen the miracles wrought by the apostles, but also many of them may have actually experienced healing at their hands, or at the hands of Christ earlier. They may have eaten of the loaves and fish miraculously multiplied by Christ. They have enjoyed a sample of the coming kingdom, but they could never enter that kingdom without being born again (John 3:3).

By coming to the very brink of salvation, and then turning back, they would be knowingly and willfully rejecting Christ -- the very sin that was committed by the nation when they crucified Him. They would be crucifying Him afresh in their hearts.

This interpretation is further strengthened by Heb. 6:7, 8. Both fields described there receive the same rain from heaven, but one brings forth herbs and the other one only weeds. What is the difference? One field, being prepared by the farmer, **received** the **good seed** -- the

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<sup>1</sup> All believers are born of the Spirit, and the Spirit indwells all believers after Pentecost. The sealing and baptizing into the Body of Christ are characteristic of this Age of Grace.

other did not. The second field is not one that produced herbs, and later **reverted back** to weeds, but one which **produced weeds in the first place**, even though it had been watered from heaven.

## HEBREWS CHAPTER TEN

### --- A quick answer:

**THE KEY** to this chapter is found in verses 38 and 39. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.' But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." This drawing back is the willful sin referred to in verse 26. It is not a case of those who draw back **after** believing, but **in contrast** to it. There are two groups -- those who draw back (called "adversaries" in v. 27) and those who believe.

### --- A detailed answer:

Let us consider the context of this passage. In verses one to eighteen of chapter ten the writer expounds the theme that Christ's death is a once for all sacrifice -- in contrast to the repeated offerings under the Law. His point is -- if the sacrifices under the Old Covenant really solved the sin problem, they would not need to be offered over and over (v. 1, 2). Christ's one sacrifice not only sanctified the believer (set him apart forever from the unbeliever -- v. 10), but also **perfected** him forever (v. 14). In light of this, "there is no more offering for sin" (v. 18); that is, when one receives Christ there is no need for any **additional** sacrifice, for He finished the work and sat down (v. 12).

The rest of the chapter looks at the Jew who, though he knows the truth about Christ as set forth in the first part of the chapter, draws back to Judaism and the temple sacrifices. Verse 26 **seems** to say the same thing as verse 18, but the context indicates an important difference. In verse 18 the one who **accepts** the sacrifice has no need for **additional** sacrifices, while in verse 26 the one who **rejects** the sacrifice of Christ has no **other** (or alternate) sacrifice to which he can turn. He cannot go back to the animal sacrifices if he rejects their fulfillment in Christ. Verse 18 points out that Christ is a **sufficient** offering; verse 26 that He is the **only** offering God will accept today.

Now let us study the passage itself more closely. What seems to indicate that those described here may be true believers?

First of all, the writer says, "If **we** sin willfully" -- and the writer was a believer. But the writer was also a **Jew**, and writing to Jews. He is not saying, "If we **believers** sin willfully," but "If we **Jews** sin willfully." The reference to the Law of Moses in 10:28 substantiates this.

Then, again, these people had received knowledge of the truth. This is so. But, as noted before in chapter six, knowledge is not faith. It is his knowledge of the truth that makes

his sin willful -- he sins knowingly.

Also, it is said that he was sanctified by the blood of the covenant (v. 29). Remember that "sanctified" basically means "set apart." With this in mind, even if the pronoun "he" refers to the man who sinned willfully, it does not mean he had come to personal faith in Christ. The blood of the Old Covenant had set Israel apart as a nation, even though many individuals in Israel never became a part of the true Israel by personal faith. So the blood of the New Covenant (Christ's own blood) is the basis for the future salvation of "all Israel" (Rom. 11:26) -- even though many individual Jews of Paul's day never became a part of the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). Every Jew is set apart to the salvation spoken of in the New Covenant, but each must experience a new birth before he can realize it personally and enjoy it. Can one be spoken of as "sanctified" even though he is not saved? Yes. See 1 Cor. 7:14. "For the **unbelieving** husband **is sanctified** by the wife, and the **unbelieving** wife **is sanctified** by the husband."

However, there is a real possibility "**he** was sanctified" in verse 29 refers to **Christ**. It is His blood that forever sets Him apart from all other leaders. To turn one's back on Moses is not as serious as spurning Christ -- for Moses did not shed his blood for our sins. Christ did. The man in view here is counting the very blood which sets Christ Himself apart from all religious leaders, as "an unholy thing" and "has insulted the Spirit of Grace" (NASB).

Verse 30 is also said to indicate this man is a believer. "For we know Him that saith, 'The Lord shall judge **His people**.'" Does this not show that this man -- one of "His people" -- is a true believer? The entire nation of Israel (including the unbelieving Jews) is referred to in many places as "His people," so this does not prove the man was saved.

Moreover, when the Old Testament wording of the prophecy quoted here is examined, it sheds a lot of light on the verse. The quotation is from Deut. 32:35, 36. In Deut. 32:35 unbelievers are in view and vengeance is to be meted out to them. "Vengeance is mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them." But in verse 36, where "His people" are in view, it says (both quotations from the NASB), "For the Lord will **vindicate** His people and will **have compassion** on His servants." So in Heb. 10:30 there is a contrast drawn (as there is also in verses 38, 39) between the one who draws back and receives vengeance, and the true believer who will be vindicated (avenged or defended). It is not "**His people**" who "fall into the hands of the living God" (v. 31), but the "**adversaries**" (v. 27).

## SUMMARY

Both of these passages in Hebrews are looking back to the sin of Israel as a nation when they willfully rejected the risen Christ in early Acts. They had come to a second "Kadesh Barnea" and, like their forefathers, turned back in rebellious unbelief. Like their ancestors, they had seen God's power at work and had tasted of the fruit of the land. But when that generation of Jews who were contemporary with Christ turned back they found there would be no "second chance" for them (compare Num. 14:39 - 45). As a nation they had committed the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:31, 32). Rejecting the testimony to the risen and ascended Christ given by the Spirit filled apostles, they had sinned against the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrews six and ten individual Jews, who have come a long way in profession, are urged to **possess** the thing they have been **professing**. They are warned that if they stop short of true saving faith they will make the same mistake personally that their leaders have made nationally. If they turn back, they cannot return to the godly Judaism of the remnant before Calvary, for that remnant has gone on to faith in Christ. They can only turn back to join the apostate leaders who rejected Christ and stoned Stephen -- and they will share their fate!

No one today fits the situation of those referred to in Hebrews six and ten. No one today is facing such a dispensational change as took place then. No one today has experienced the powers of the millennial age, or is tempted to go back to the temple worship and animal sacrifices once given by God (which will no longer avail because God has replaced them all with the one sacrifice of His Son). So, too, no one today has committed the unpardonable sin -- so that he cannot be renewed to repentance, facing only a fearful looking for of fiery indignation.

However the passages do have a vital message for us. Today, as then, a man may go far in his profession without being a true believer. He may deceive others, and even himself, by his conformity to what is expected of a believer, without ever possessing eternal life. Peter recognized this. This is why he urged those to whom he wrote to make their calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10). Paul also tells the believers in Corinth, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know ye not yourselves how Jesus Christ is in you unless you are discredited?" (2 Cor. 13:5 -- NASB). The **Lord** knows if we are His or not, but it behooves us to depart from iniquity so that **others** will know it also (2 Tim. 2:19).

# UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION

## What is "UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION"?

**Universal Reconciliation** (or "Universalism") is the teaching that everyone who ever lived will eventually be saved. This view takes many forms, but usually is based on the following rather clever, but false, arguments:

-- If God is love, surely He will not allow any of His creatures to suffer punishment forever.

-- If Christ died for everyone, then everyone must eventually be saved.

-- If those in hell believe, surely they, too, will be saved.

-- The Greek words translated "forever" and "eternal" do not really mean "forever" in the sense of the English word, but only "age-long" or "for the ages." Based on this translation, when the end, or the climax, of the ages is reached the punishment of the lost will come to an end and they will be welcomed into the presence of God, their penalty finally paid.

There are many other arguments advanced, but this will suffice to give us an idea of what Universalism is all about. We will first look at some general considerations and then take up the texts used to support this unscriptural view.

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

What would be the value of the Universalist doctrine?

-- While professing a concern for the lost, it actually results in failure to win the **few**, in a vain hope that there is ultimate safety for **all**. As an illustration, suppose two men are on the same sinking ship. One is trying to get as many of the passengers as possible into the lifeboat. The other one argues, "You cannot get everyone into the life boat, therefore there must be some other mysterious, but not advertised, way that they will **all** be saved -- so there is really no great danger after all." Which man is truly concerned for the endangered passengers?

-- While it professes to give an exalted view of God, in reality it debases Him -- for it exalts His **LOVE** above His **HOLINESS**. Love is not the most basic attribute of God. The angels around the throne do not chant, "Love, love, love" -- but "Holy, holy, holy." Love not based firmly on holiness ceases to be true love.

God protected Noah from this kind of "love." He knew that when Noah's friends saw the waters rising they would want to come aboard the ark -- and that Noah's compassion (not being based on pure holiness, as was God's) would cause him to open the door to them. The result would be the over-loading and sinking of the boat -- or the continuing corruption of the post-flood earth. This would defeat the very purpose of the flood and make another judgment necessary. So **GOD** shut the door (and did not open it when those outside finally believed Noah's message about a coming flood -- because they had seen it). In **TRUE** love for Noah and his family He shut the door to all others, abandoning them to their judgment.

While it professes to exalt grace, in reality it sets it aside. While grace is made possible



(on God's part) by the death of Christ, its application depends on faith (on man's part). We are told (concerning justification and its attendant blessings) "-- it is of faith, that it might be by grace" (Rom. 4:16). Thus faith is not a **WORK**. Instead it is the only thing God could require of man which would **NOT** be a work, making God's response to that faith a **GRACIOUS** provision for believing man. Any spiritual benefit that comes to man apart from faith, then, cannot be coming on the basis of grace. (God's rewarding of the saints, for their works as believers, is gracious, for the whole system of rewards rests upon that basic faith which made them saints, and the walk by faith that produces the works).

It will not do to say that after "*eons*" of judgment men **WILL** finally believe, for faith is the evidence of things **NOT SEEN** (Heb. 11:1). Every unbeliever will become a "believer" five minutes after he dies, but this is **SIGHT**, not **FAITH**. By providing salvation for men apart from faith (faith expressed during this life, at a time when faith is called for and true faith possible) Universalism is not super grace, but a most insidious and repulsive legalism. It is repulsive because if God can save without faith eventually, He would be an ogre not to do it **NOW**.

### THE MEANING OF THE WORDS INVOLVED

While it makes a great show of super scholarship, the Universalist movement ignores the most basic consideration in human language. The true meaning of words is based solely on how they are **USED**, even though their derivation is interesting and sometimes helpful. The meaning of the Greek words for eternal, everlasting, etc. must be determined by how they are **USED** in **SCRIPTURE**.

The Greek word "*aion*" is often used of a limited time -- an age. However it is also used to describe: How long the Creator is blessed (Rom. 1:25); -- the duration of Christ's resurrection life (Heb. 7:24); -- the period of time when Christ is "the same" (Heb. 13:8); -- the duration of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23); -- the length of Christ's reign over Israel (going on to say it "has **NO END**" -- Luke 1:33); -- the time during which the believer shall not thirst (John 4:14), see death (John 8:51, 52) or perish (John 10:28); -- and the time during which Christ is blessed (Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 11:31).

With this usage in view, if God did not mean a literal "forever" in the following instances He would seem to be most misleading and cruel in His choice of words:

-- The duration of the darkness reserved for the false prophets is said to be forever (2 Pet. 2:17).

-- The duration of time when there is no forgiveness to those who commit the sin against the Holy Spirit is said to be eternal (Mark 3:29).

An even stronger construction translated "forever and forever" is used to describe the time that glory is ascribed to God (Gal. 1:5; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21); ---- the length of God's life (Rev. 15:7); -- the duration of Christ's resurrection life (Rev. 4:9, 10; 5:14); -- the extent, in time, of Christ's glory and dominion (1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Rev. 1:6; 5:13; 11:15); -- and the duration of the reign of Christ's servants after the millennial reign is already past (Rev. 22:5).

The Greek word "*aionios*" -- regardless of its derivation -- conveys the idea of eternal, as we understand the **ENGLISH word "eternal."** In every scriptural instance known to the author it could be, and should be, translated "eternal." This meaning of the word would probably never have been questioned if it had not been used to describe the eternal judgment of the lost -- a doctrine repugnant to the natural man. Forty times it is used to describe the life we have in Christ. It describes God (Rom. 16:26); -- the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14); -- the New Covenant (Heb. 13:20); -- the gospel (evidently referring to the heart of all good news, the death and resurrection of Christ -- Rev. 14:6); -- salvation (Heb. 5:9); -- the glory awaiting the believer (2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10); -- the Kingdom (not the millennial kingdom here -- 2 Pet. 1:11); -- and our redemption (Heb. 9:12).

But it also describes the fire awaiting the lost (Matt. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7); -- their destruction (2 Thess. 1:9); -- their punishment (Matt. 25:46); -- their judgment (Heb. 6:2); -- and their damnation (Mark 3:29).

If this word describes a period of time -- however long -- which eventually terminates, then **AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE LOST CEASE TO BE PUNISHED, THE BELIEVER'S LIFE, REDEMPTION, SALVATION, INHERITANCE, etc., WILL END!** Not only that, but so will the very existence of God and His Kingdom!

If God did not mean, in the fullest sense, "eternal" when warning the lost of their fate, then He stands convicted of failing utterly to tell them what He meant -- in a place where it would be most vital for Him to be crystal clear! Where would be His "love" if He needlessly led them to expect an end that He did not have in view?

### **IS RECONCILIATION "UNIVERSAL"?**

It is imperative that Second Corinthians chapter five be clearly understood.

Consider 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 18, 19. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again ... And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Failure to understand these verses has led to two false positions. The problems arising from the "all" in verse 14 and the "world" in verse 19 have led to either "Limited Atonement" (the view that Christ did not die for all men, but only for those chosen to be saved -- the elect) or "Universal Reconciliation." The expression "were all dead" (or "all died" -- NASB) in verse 14 does not refer to the death mentioned in Gal. 2:20 (as suggested in the Scofield notes). If it did, it would seem reasonable that all for whom Christ died on Calvary must share in the benefits, and be looked upon as themselves having died in the sense of Gal. 2:20.

Interpreting the passage in this way, the limited Atonement man says, "The 'all' for whom Christ died must be the elect -- otherwise everyone would be saved." The Universal Reconciliation adherent would reply, "Everyone must be saved -- otherwise Christ didn't die for all."

Actually the "all died" in verse 14 refers to the death of Rom. 5:12. Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN**, for that all have sinned." When we sinned -- not **LIKE Adam**, but **IN Adam** -- we died the death referred to in Eph. 2:1, 5 ("dead in trespasses and sins") and 1 Cor. 15:22 ("In Adam all die").

Paul's argument in verses 14 and 15 may be put this way, "***The fact that Christ died for ALL [not just for the elect] proves that ALL died in Adam, all need His provision. But His death, though for all, is only effective for 'they which live' [verse 15]. Christ died for all [universal provision] that they which live [Limited acquisition] should ... live ... unto Him.***" The universal **provision** -- the love of Christ for **all** -- constrains us to be concerned for all. The limited **acquisition** -- the need for faith -- constrains us to preach to them, to "persuade men" (verse. 11).

In verses 18, 19 there are two aspects of reconciliation. One of them is universal in its scope (but should not be referred to as "universal reconciliation" as it would be totally misunderstood in light of the way that term is presently used). When Christ died for all (v. 14) He reconciled the world to God. This aspect of reconciliation does not save anyone -- but it does make the whole world savable! If it saved men, then why should we cry out to them, "Be ye reconciled to God!" (Verse 10) when they are already reconciled? A failure to see the difference between these two concepts (reconciliation as wrought by Christ and reconciliation as implemented by believing the "word of reconciliation") leads to error. The Limited Atonement teacher will say, "It must refer to the world of the elect in verse 19, or we have "universal reconciliation." The Universal Reconciliation advocate would reply, "Everyone must be saved or God has failed to reconcile the world to Himself." Both are in serious error. The Limited Atonement believer casts a shadow over the love of God, while the other sets aside His holiness. Both have to wrest Scripture to sustain their false views.<sup>1</sup>

## **WILL GOD FAIL TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE?**

The charge is made that if any man for whom Christ died does not share in His salvation, then Christ has failed, to some degree, in His work of redemption.

No one can be considered a failure until it is determined what he intended to do. God never intended to save all men, but only to save those who would believe. It is not His will<sup>2</sup> that any should perish (which proves that God did not arbitrarily predestinate some men to be

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<sup>1</sup> Limited Atonement is actually a kind of universalism. Like Universal Reconciliation it teaches that all who are loved by God and for whom Christ died will be saved. The difference between the two teachings is merely the definition of the "world" that God loved and for which Christ died.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion of this verse later.

lost), but it is also not His will that salvation should be forced upon anyone or that all men should automatically be destined to go to heaven. If everyone would be saved because everyone truly believed, none would do more rejoicing than God Himself! But God knew that not all would believe and He has made clear what the prospect of the confirmed unbeliever is. Where did God promise him anything but judgment? (See Heb. 10:10:26, 27 and "no hope" in Eph. 2:12 and 1 Thess. 4:13)

The outstanding offering in the sacrificial system was not the sin-offering nor the trespass-offering (typifying Christ's death as it provided for men), but the burnt-offering. It portrayed Christ's death as the offering up of His perfect and loving obedience to the Father. If not even one sinner had believed the gospel, Christ's death would not have been in vain -- for it was supremely to do His Father's will that He came and died (Heb. 10:7 - 9). His death not only saves those who believe, but vindicates God in the case of those who do not. This requires unlimited atonement, but shuts out universal reconciliation.

That the death of Christ does have this double effect is in view in 2 Cor. 2:14 - 17 (NASB). When His redemption is proclaimed and "manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place" some choose life and live forever. Others choose death and perish eternally. In both God is glorified "for we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." Christ's death has saved the former and rendered the latter forever without excuse.

It has been said, "It is better to light a lamp than to curse the darkness." It is also better to reach everyone we can with the gospel than to try to explain away the results of rejecting it -- or of not having heard it.

If we really have a concern for those who face eternal punishment, then let us turn from this false hope for their eventual salvation apart from saving faith, and seek to bring them to the Savior!

## **SOME OF THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE UNIVERSALISTS**

The following passages of Scripture are supposed by some to speak "boldly, clearly, and in striking harmony" in favor of universal reconciliation. Let us look at them carefully to see whether or not this is a valid claim.

-- **Rev. 5:13.** "And every creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

This verse does not say that every creature will be saved, but only that they acknowledge that the Lamb deserves "blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and forever." This verse must look forward to the end situation, for at the time indicated in the context (see the following chapter of Revelation) there are hosts of men on earth who are not yet willing to admit this. The final result as foreseen in vision is that even the enemies of Christ will have to recognize His place in His universe -- though it does not indicate that such recognition will bring them salvation.

There are several other verses that are related to this one. Col. 1:20 is a case in point. "And having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself -- by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (Whatever the interpretation of this verse, it is most significant that the expression "under the earth" found in Rev. 5:13 is omitted) This reconciliation is of all things. The word is neuter gender. Even if one considers fallen man as included in the "all things" it would be presenting the fact that the responsibility of God in reconciliation has been fully met (as in 2 Cor. 5:19). That this aspect of reconciliation does not meet the responsibility of man to be reconciled is evident in the following verses (as is also true in 2 Cor. 5:19). He goes on to say, in effect, "You who were alienated and hostile in mind, He has reconciled -- **IF** indeed your faith is real and not spurious [as would be indicated by turning from the hope of the gospel -- Col. 1: 23]."

John 6:39, 40 makes a similar comparison between things and people. In verse 39 it is things (neuter) and the promise is universal. "And this is the Father's will ... that of all that He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." In verse 40 it is people and limited to those who believe. "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone who seeth the Son and believeth on Him, I will raise him up at the last day."

-- **2 Cor. 5:19.** "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." That this reconciliation of the world does not mean that everyone will be saved is obvious from the context.

There are two aspects of reconciliation noted here. In verse 19 it is God who is doing the reconciling. In verse 20 it is man who is called upon to reconcile himself. Notice it is always man reconciled to God, never God reconciled to man. The enmity between God and man is all man's fault, and the change must come in man's position and condition before he can enjoy the peace with God that means salvation. The Cross took away all obstacles to this peace except man's unbelief: man himself must remove this one. God is satisfied with what Christ did at Calvary, making salvation possible. When man also is satisfied with that work, salvation becomes actual and personal.

If the Cross alone completed the full reconciliation in the sense that man is saved, then why the urgent call, in the same passage (v. 20) for man to be reconciled? Verse 21 fits with the above, for Christ became sin for us (His part in reconciliation) that we might (pending our part -- to believe) become the righteousness of God in Him.

The context goes on to speak of salvation. It indicates that the believer (the co-laborer in 2 Cor. 6:1) will have received the grace of God (the message entrusted to him -- the "word of reconciliation") in vain (i.e. God's purpose in entrusting it to him, the salvation of others, will be frustrated) if he does not effectively minister it to others. He is warned that the matter is urgent from the point of time, for **NOW** (not at the end of the ages) is the acceptable time, **NOW** is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1, 2).

-- **Phil. 2:10, 11.** "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

These verses do not say, or even imply, that every person shall be saved. It is not universal salvation, but universal subjugation that is in view. It is not reconciliation, but

capitulation on man's part. The bowing of the knee and confession of the tongue is not, "to the salvation of the soul" but "to the glory of God the Father." God is glorified not only by the salvation of those who voluntarily bow the knee and confess with the tongue, while the day of salvation is still here, but also in the enforced submission of those who go into eternity without having trusted Christ. That God is glorified in both the salvation of the saved and the perdition of the lost is shown in 2 Cor. 2:15, 16 as has been noted before. To Paul the grave responsibility of a ministry that could either bring salvation or additional condemnation (depending on the response to it) was too great. He was not "adequate for these things." But he did not seek to dodge the responsibility by "corrupting" the Word of God. He did not try to soften the message by promising ultimate salvation to the unbelievers. Instead He left the responsibility for results with the God who gave the message (2 Cor. 3:5), and preached the message faithfully depending on His adequacy.

-- **Rom. 14:11.** "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

Both in this context, and in Isa. 45:23, from which it is quoted, a general truth is used to back up a more specific one. The general truth is that all men will appear before God -- not the gods of the heathen (the emphasis in Isa. 45:23) -- and that they will appear there in judgment for their own works (the emphasis in Romans). If all are to be judged by God for their own works, then whatever of judgment is left (after John 5:24 and Rom. 8:1 are applied) will be a matter of each man answering for himself, not for his neighbor. To make Rom. 14:11 teach that all men are saved would be to place all men at the Judgment Seat of Christ -- far from the thought of this or any other passage. The expression "every tongue shall give praise to God" (Rom. 14:11 NASB) does not necessitate the salvation of the individual. The lost will have to praise God that He went to such lengths to save them, though they will spend eternity blaming themselves for their blindness and unbelief. They will praise Him for His perfect justice, for no lost soul will suffer, in intensity, one whit beyond what he richly deserves.

Also notice Psa. 145:14 - 21 (NASB). Here it plainly says (vs. 14 - 16), "The Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. Thou dost open Thy hand, and dost satisfy the desire of every living thing." In verse 21 it continues, "-- all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever." But does this teach that all will be saved? God carefully guards against this uncalled for conclusion by adding clearly, "**BUT ALL THE WICKED HE WILL DESTROY.**" The loving care described in verses 14 - 16 and 21 is only for His own, as is shown in verses 17, 18, 20-a. The Lord is "near to those who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. The Lord keeps all who love Him --." There is no universal reconciliation here!

-- **1Tim. 2:3, 4.** "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

The word "will" in verse 4 does not reflect the purpose of God, but the longing of His heart, His desire. See its use in Luke 8:20; 10:24; 13:34; Gal. 4:20; etc. But is God limited and not able to do what His heart desires? While man cannot limit God, He is self-limited. There are things God cannot do. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2); He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13); He cannot break His word (Num. 23:19; Jer. 4:28); He cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13); nor can He, obviously, act in violation of His holiness. He is also bound by principles that are the

very laws of existence itself, and have stood for eternity -- flowing out of His eternal nature as God. He must act consistently with His nature. "God does not always do what He pleases, but He always does what is right." <sup>3</sup>

That God longs for all men to be saved is clear in this verse and many others. But how does this longing manifest itself? By exercising His sovereignty ruthlessly to bring it to pass? No indeed! His longing manifests itself in His work at Calvary to make it possible (John 3:16 and many other passages) and in His longsuffering patience. "-- Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you" (Isa. 30:18). God "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Both of these verses indicate that God must wait upon man for his repentance (a waiting accomplished in this life, not in eternity) and that, failing this repentance, He will not be able to be gracious, but must allow them to perish.

He shows His compassion in 1 Tim. 2 by requesting prayer for all men. Why are they to pray for them (that they might be saved) if they will all be saved anyway? God's purpose (unalterable and sure of accomplishment) is that all who believe will be saved! He has given His word to this effect. For Him to save the rest of mankind without the faith (faith can only be valid during this life -- before it becomes sight -- Heb. 11:1) would be to make the necessity of faith for salvation, now, meaningless. Beyond this, moreover, He has given His word that "He that believeth not" shall be condemned (Mark 16:16); shall perish (John 3:16); shall not see life (John 3:36); and shall be thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:15; 21:8). He is bound by His own word!

-- **1 Tim. 4:9 - 11.** "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach."

Even if the statement had closed with "-- who is the Savior of all men" it would only indicate that He is able to save any who will place their faith in Him. As far as the validity of His work is concerned He stands as the Savior of all men. For those who refuse Him there is no other Savior to turn to. This same thought is found in 1 John 4:14, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." To take this to mean universal reconciliation is to ignore the rest of First John, where warning after warning is given against a false sense of security on the part of those who do not really know Him as Savior. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12) is no idle threat! See also John 3:36.

But the statement goes on to say, "-- specially to those that believe." Christ was set forth to be the Savior of all men, but He **IS** Savior in a special way to those who believe, for they receive and enjoy the salvation that others have failed to lay hold on. "The Savior of all men" answers Limited Atonement. "Specially of those that believe" answers Universal Reconciliation.

-- **1 John 2:2.** "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Vincent says (according to Kenneth Wuest) *"The sins of' (A.V.) should be omitted; as in the revised, 'for the whole world.' Compare 1 John 4:14; John 4:42; 12:32. 'The propitiation is as wide as the sin' (Bengal). If men do not experience its benefits, the fault is*

<sup>3</sup> "Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans" by C. S. Stam, page 51.

*not in its efficacy."*

The word "propitiation" here is the noun form of the verb used in Luke 18:13 -- translated there "be merciful." The word refers to the Mercy Seat in the temple where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled. (See the note at Rom. 3:25 in the Scofield Reference Bible) Christ came to make propitiation (Heb. 2:17) and was Himself that propitiation (1 John 2:2), that offering for sin whose blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. When the two men (both Jews) came into the temple (Luke 18:10 - 14) there was a Mercy Seat sprinkled with blood available to both. The one prayed, in effect, "When you look on me remember the Mercy Seat [be propitiated]." The other ignored the propitiation, which was available to him as a Jew. Only the one depending on the sprinkled blood went forth justified. John's point in 1 John 2:2 is that today Christ is both that Mercy Seat and the sacrifice whose blood is upon it. Those trusting in Him as the propitiation have been justified, and now know Him also as the advocate when subsequent failures occur. As the Mercy Seat (the propitiation) He is now available not just to the Jews (as in Luke 18) but to the whole world. Those in the world not turning to this wondrous provision go away just as lost as the Pharisee in Luke.

1 Tim. 2:6 has the same thought. "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Christ's death was potentially for all. If all had believed it would have been effective for all. (Being provided with a ransom does not necessarily result in salvation, as is shown in 2 Pet. 2:1 where false teachers who will be judged, and are surely not saved, are said to deny the Lord that **BOUGHT** them) God has already paid the ransom for all men, it is His desire that they be saved, and He asks us to join with Him in making that salvation an accomplished reality in their lives. His death made their salvation possible: our witnessing and intercession make it available: but they will still miss the salvation unless they believe to make it personal.

-- **John 1:29.** "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

There are three great revelations in this verse. First, Christ is to be the great anti-type of the Old Testament sacrifices -- the Lamb of God. Second, sins are to be taken away, not merely covered. Last of all, this offering is to be available to the whole world, not only to Israel.

It is clear that not everyone individually is to experience the personal taking away of sins. This is evident when, for example, the Lamb Himself says to some unbelieving men, "-- unless you believe that I Am ... you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Much later, in a book that majors in judgment, Christ is referred to at least 26 times as "the Lamb." Why the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16) if everyone's sins were effectively taken away by His death on the Cross?

-- **Dan. 9:24.** "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy."

This verse very specifically has to do with the nation of Israel and Jerusalem, not with all men. The time delineated takes us to the end of the Tribulation period where the transgression of Israel against her God will be finished, for they will enter into the New Covenant. It will be an end of sins, for God will write His laws on their hearts (Jer. 31:33). Atonement will be made for iniquity, for it is the fulfillment of the "Day of Atonement" -- a day when all Israel shall be



saved (Rom. 11:26, 27).<sup>4</sup> Everlasting righteousness shall be the possession of every believing Jew -- the righteousness they were ignorant of in Rom. 10:3, and that is the end of the Law to everyone **WHO BELIEVES (not EVERYONE, period! -- Rom. 10:4).**

-- **John 12:32.** "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The emphasis in this verse is that Christ will die on the Cross-, as the next verse tells us plainly. It is true that all men will be drawn to Him. Some will be drawn by the gospel to put their trust in Him. The rest will be drawn by the power of God bringing them to stand before Him for **JUDGMENT**. No one can escape having a confrontation with Christ.

-- **1 John 3:8.** "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy [render powerless] the works of the devil."

This is not given to assure everyone that they will eventually be saved, but to warn against claiming salvation while revealing by the life that they are of Satan. What warped thinking could lead one to think that if Satan's works are to be destroyed, the consistent and persistent unbeliever (Satan's masterpiece) will be saved? It is a grim warning to the false professor, not a ray of hope. The writer of Hebrews says, " -- that through death He [Christ] might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil" (Heb. 2:14). This does not indicate that the Devil ceases to exist any more than the Law of Moses ceases to exist when it is rendered obsolete by grace (2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 13, 14 -- the same Greek word). Nor does he mean that death ceases to exist -- but that Satan is rendered impotent in a realm where he once had power. It will be **GOD, not SATAN**, who casts men into the second death!

-- **2 Tim. 1:10.** "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

It is not said that death in every form ceases to exist. "Abolished" is the same Greek word which is translated "destroy" in 1 John 3:8 and Heb. 2:14. Death loses its power over those who have been called with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9) and have been granted grace because of the gospel (v. 10). Those who have not believed the gospel are not covered in this verse.

-- **Phil. 3:21.** "Who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

No doubt all things will be subdued to Christ, but this involves voluntary subjection of the saved and enforced subjugation of the lost. However this verse does not have in view universal salvation, nor even universal enjoyment of a body like the body of His glory. It declares His power to bring about the resurrection unto life for those who believe, against whatever difficulties might be encountered, or whatever forces might be lined up to oppose it.

-- **Rev. 1:18.** "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of Hades and of death."

Having the keys to a place may mean a door opened or one closed and locked -- at the will of the one carrying the keys (see Rev. 3:7). What Christ does when He empties out death

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<sup>4</sup> The term "all Israel" here does not mean every Jew who ever lived. This is sure from Ezek. 20:34 - 44 and Zech. 13:8, 9.

(the grave) and hell (Hades), as far as the unbeliever goes, is to cast them into the Lake of Fire, which is the second **DEATH** (Rev. 20:14). This is after the close of the Millennium and the second resurrection. What evidence is there that there is hope after this final act? Where is there the promise of a third resurrection -- from the second death? The expression in Rev. 21:4, "there shall be no more death" must refer to physical and spiritual death, not the second death. The second death has just begun on the part of the lost, and is again referred to as still existing in verse eight of the same chapter. That there is still the Lake of Fire after all that is said in Rev. 21:1 - 7 leaves no possible hope for those who have been cast into it!

-- **Rom. 5:18, 21.** "Therefore, as by the offense of one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. ... That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord."

The parallel in this passage has to do with two men who stand as federal heads of their respective creations. All men are under the curse because they are related to Adam by birth. So those (and only those) who are related to Christ by birth are partakers of the benefits listed in this passage. Hence the stern edict, even to the religious, "Ye must be born again!" The "all men" in each case (v. 18) are the "all men" who are related to the federal head in question. Verse 17 indicates clearly that the "all men" who receive the "justification of life" are they "who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness."

-- **Rom. 8:21.** "Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In this passage we have a clear distinction made between man on the one hand and the creation (apart from men) on the other. Man came under the curse by his own choice, in Adam, but the creation was different. It was put under the curse not by its own choice, but by God's direction. As it automatically came under the curse, so it will automatically share in the adoption of sons and the glory to be revealed in them. The "whole creation" in verse 22 may or may not encompass lost men (lost men are probably not even in the picture here) but the creation in verses 20, 21 does not involve man at all. Man did come under the futility of the curse by his own choice (Adam's choice here was our choice, for we were in him -- Rom. 5:12).

-- **1 Cor. 15:22.** "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

If this verse refers to physical life only, as a result of physical resurrection, it would not teach universal salvation, but only that there is a physical resurrection even for the unsaved ("In Christ" then would have to be understood as the equivalent of "by Christ"). This is not to be denied. As a matter of fact the Bible clearly teaches that all men will be raised from the dead. But there are **TWO** resurrections, not just two in number but two in **KIND**. There is a physical resurrection for the unbeliever, but it is a resurrection unto condemnation (John 5:29) and the second death (Rev. 20:12 - 15) -- not unto **LIFE!**

However it seems this verse has in view the resurrection of life (John 5:29) for it specifically says, "In Christ shall all be made alive." This would be a confusing way to refer to a resurrection that resulted in the second death. That this is the case is indicated when the resurrection Paul has in view is described in verses 35 - 49 of First Corinthians fifteen. How can a body that is "imperishable" -- a "spiritual" body that has been raised in glory and power

(vs. 42 - 44) be cast into the Lake of Fire, the second death? This resurrection unto life is for those who are "in Christ." The expression here has in view being in Christ by the new birth, not being in the Body of Christ by the Spirit's baptism. Of course, in this Age of Grace, anyone who is in Christ by the new birth is also in the Body, and Paul often uses the expression "in Christ" to cover both concepts. But, as used here, it has a wider scope (as it does in Rom. 16:7). It most certainly does not take in the whole human race!

-- **Col. 1:16.** "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers -- all things were created by Him and for Him."

This verse merely states that Christ is not only the originator, but the focal point and purpose of creation. The subject is not the salvation of men, but the preeminence of Christ. Rev. 4:11 says, "-- Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed and were created" (NASB). Is this truth the basis for telling us that all will be saved? No. On the contrary, it is the background and justification for the judgments that are poured out in the succeeding chapters! The book whose opening is described in chapter 5 of Revelation is filled with the judgments of chapter 6 and at least part of chapter 8.

-- **Eph. 4:10; 1:23.** "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." Then back to 1:23, "Which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

These verses that speak of Christ filling all things and filling all in all have to do with His omnipresence and total authority, but do not tell us anything at all about the salvation of a single soul.

-- **1 Cor. 15:28.** "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Here the topic is the subjugation of all things to Christ, and His voluntary subjection to the Father (once His special work of putting down the rebellion in the universe is complete). It does not indicate necessarily whether the "all things" are subject to Him voluntarily, as a response to His grace, or involuntarily, as a demonstration of His power. When everything in a country is in subjection to the government it includes both the law abiding citizens and the inmates of its prisons. Notice all His ENEMIES under His feet (v. 25)! How does anyone get salvation out of that?

## CONCLUSION

One dear brother who argues eloquently for the ultimate salvation of all men, jumping from misinterpreted verse to misinterpreted verse, speaks of this teaching as the "**GREATER HOPE.**"

It is interesting that no verse of Scripture uses this expression. It speaks of a "better hope" in Heb. 7:19, but this is the redemptive work of Christ under the New Covenant in contrast to the Law. We who believe today have a "blessed hope," the expectation of Christ's coming in the Rapture. But those who are still just Gentiles in the flesh, who have not been made nigh by the blood of Christ and are without God in the world, have "**NO HOPE**" (Eph. 2:11 - 13). I Thess. 4:13, 14 makes a contrast between "we [who] believe that Jesus died and rose again" and

"others who have **NO HOPE.**"

In closing it would be well to take a close look at 2 Thess. 2:10 - 12. Here are men, during the great Tribulation, who are perishing because they "received not a love of the truth, that they might be saved." Does God then, in some way, bring them to faith later? No! Instead, God Himself sends them (by allowing the Man of Sin to hold sway) strong delusion that they should believe -- yes, **BELIEVE** -- **THE LIE!** Not that they might be saved eventually, but "that they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." The nature of that judgment is made clear earlier in this epistle (2 Thess. 1:7 - 9). Christ "shall be revealed 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. And these will pay the penalty of **eternal** destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (NASB).

God does not gloat over the eternal punishment of the lost -- nor should we. But He makes it clear that there **IS eternal punishment** for the **unbeliever**, and does everything in His power (consistent with His holiness and His word) to bring them to Himself in faith. What He said concerning the threat of physical death hanging over the heads of the men of Jerusalem just before it was destroyed (Ezek. 33:11) He can say of the eternal condition of the lost. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn from your evil ways; for **why will ye die?**

## LAW AND GRACE

**LAW** (In the sense it is put in contrast with grace)

1A. What is Law?

1B. Not merely principles of right and wrong.

1C. There were principles of right and wrong known during the period from Adam to Moses (man's conscience, Rom.2:14, 15; the prohibition against murder, Gen. 9:6; other revelations of God's will -- "commandments ... statutes ... laws," Gen. 26:5) -- but, according to Rom. 5:13, there was "NO LAW"! There are principles of right and wrong today -- but, according to Rom. 6:14, we are "NOT UNDER LAW"!

2C. There are items under the Law which are not moral issues in themselves -- thus not known to a conscience which has not been specifically instructed in the item under consideration. The ceremonial part of the Law was not written because it was intrinsically (in itself) right or moral, but because it became right (for those under its authority) when it was written. The Sabbath commandment is ceremonial law, not moral law, an arbitrary command -- right only because God, in His sovereignty, decreed it.

2B. Not just man's responsibility before God to do the right thing. Man always was, is, and always will be responsible to obey God. "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).

3B. Not merely that God judges sin, (Adam was, while in the garden of Eden, under Law -- he had only one commandment, and he broke it, suffering the penalty).<sup>1</sup> but, during the time from Adam to Moses, there was "NO LAW" (Rom. 5:13) -- yet sin was punished by God. God punished Cain (but not according to the Law of Moses), sent the judgment of the flood, confused the tongues at Babel, chastened the brothers of Joseph, sent plagues against Egypt, and destroyed the Egyptian army during that time.

4B. **Law is a covenant between God and Israel based on legal principles, with written laws specified by God, and penalties decided by God, but often to be carried out by men.**

2A. What are the limitations of Law?

1B. It could not justify man (Rom. 3:20, 28); it was only able to condemn him (2 Cor. 3:9 -- notice that the Law here was not the ceremonial law, but the law "written and engraven on stones" -- the Ten Commandments).

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<sup>1</sup>The "Ten Commandments" would have been meaningless to Adam. With his face to face fellowship with God there would be no need for an idol and no temptation to worship other gods; he had no parents to honor and no neighbors to lie about, kill, or steal from; there were no other women with whom to commit adultery; and, with the full and abundant provision God had made for him in the Garden of Eden, nothing to covet. Actually, the one law he had was related to the tenth commandment given later -- there was set before him something he could covet.

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- 2B. It could not produce righteousness in man (Gal. 2:21). It is the Spirit, not the Law, which is the ministration of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:9).
- 1C. Law did not cause righteousness, but sin, to abound! (Rom. 5:20).
- 2C. Law does not make man righteous, but makes his sin exceeding sinful! (Rom. 7:13).
- 3C. The dominion of sin is broken by freedom from the Law (Rom. 6:14).
- 4C. The Law is not the strength of righteousness, but of sin! (1 Cor. 15:56).
- 5C. "The Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which [by the better hope] we draw near to God" (Heb. 7:19).
- 3B. It could not bring life (Gal. 3:21). "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." "The Letter [the Law] killeth," it is "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones [the ten commandments]" (2 Cor. 3:6, 7).
- 4B. The Law was faulty. The "fault" of the Law was that it was conditioned upon the obedience of Israel. The real fault was with the men to whom it was given.
- Notice "finding fault with them" in Heb. 8:8. Read the whole passage, Heb. 3:7 - 13. Compare Rom. 7:12 - 14, "-- the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good ... the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." and
- 5B. The Law was temporary. See Gal. 3:19, "It [the Law] was added until the Seed should come." The "Seed" is Christ (Gal. 3:16). Compare Gal. 3:24, 25, "The Law was our schoolmaster ... but after faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster." See Rom. 6:14, "Ye are not under Law." In 2 Cor. 3:11, 13, 14 we are told that the Law (specifically the Ten Commandments) was "done away ... abolished ... done away in Christ." this does not do away with the moral principles involved in the nine moral commandments -- but means we are not being dealt with on a legal basis concerning those principles.
- 3A. WHY was the Law given?
- 1B. To restrain man's wickedness until Christ should come to introduce "grace and truth" (John 1:17). See 1 Tim. 1:7 - 11, "The Law was not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and disobedient" (1 Tim. 1:9).
- 2B. To let men see the awfulness and seriousness of sin by giving it the added character of transgression (the breaking of a law). Rom. 4:15 tells us, "Because the Law worketh wrath [not salvation or righteousness]; for where no law is, there is no transgression." Gal. 3:19 says, "It [the Law] was added because of [for the sake of] transgressions." See the Scofield note on this verse. Rom. 7:13 says, "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."
- 3B. To stop man's mouth -- put an end to his boasting of his ability to do the will of God in his own strength. When the Law was proposed to Israel (Ex. 19:8) they said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." They didn't realize they were dead in sin (Eph. 2:1) or that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed, can be ... they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7, 8). The Law was given so they would learn these truths experimentally, be willing to cast themselves on the mercy of God, and be saved without works (Eph. 2:8, 9).

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Israel was under the Law for 1,500 years or so and during all that time not one of them was able to keep it! (Rom. 3:10 - 19). "Now we know that whatsoever things the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law [Israel], that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world [Jew and Gentile alike] may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). If not one Jew, over a period of hundreds of years, could keep the Law -- in spite of all the ways God tried to help them -- the it is certain we Gentiles cannot do it either! Israel's experience under the Law became an object lesson to Gentiles who were not under Law -- bringing them in guilty before God.

### 4A. TO WHOM was the Law given?

1B. Not to the Gentiles -- "Gentiles who have not the Law" (Rom. 2:14).

2B. To Israel -- "Israelites; to whom pertaineth ... the giving of the Law" (Rom. 9:4).

3B. The giving of the Law involved national promises which could not apply to Gentiles. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ... ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). Those to whom the Law was given could not be a treasure above all people unless there were people, who did not receive it, for them to be above. They could not be a kingdom of priests unless there were other kingdoms to whom they would minister as priests. They are not to be holy nations (plural) -- but a holy nation (singular).

4B. The foreigners (Gentiles) spoken of in Isa. 56:6 are not the believers of today (where there is neither Greek nor Jew -- Col. 3:11), but converts to Judaism. They do not have a covenant of their own (for the Gentiles "have not the Law"), but have to take hold of Israel's covenant. They have to become Jews by religion. They go to Zion, enter the temple, offer animal sacrifices, and keep Israel's sabbath (Isa. 56:6, 7). They are proselytes to Israel, not converts to Christianity. If the Gentiles were given the Law, they would not have had to lay hold of Israel's covenant!

5B. The Gentiles were "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

### 5A. Some reasons why I, as a believer, am not under Law today.

1B. Paul specifically says so! Rom. 6:14.

2B. The Law was not made for the righteous man (1 Tim. 1:9), and I have been made righteous by faith (Rom. 5:1).

3B. "The Law hath dominion [authority] over a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. 7:1) -- but I have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20) and am on the resurrection side of the grave, beyond the authority of the Law. I am "dead to the Law" (Rom. 7:4).

4B. The Law was a "school master" (Gal. 3:24). This is speaking of the Jew who was under the Law. If the Jew, who was under the Law, is no longer under it when faith has come, how much more the Gentile who was not under the Law in the first place -- and faith has come to me.

5B. "Gentiles ... have not the Law" (Rom. 2:14) -- and I am a Gentile.

6A. What about the SABBATH?

1B. When was the Sabbath given?

- 1C. "Thou camest down upon Mount Sinai .. and madest known unto them Thy holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:13, 14).
- 2C. The Sabbath looks back to the day of rest after God had restored the ruined earth ("Gap theory"), or created it in six days ("recent creation") theory-- but it was not given to men to keep until Israel came out of Egypt (Deut. 5:15).
- 3C. The Sabbath was mentioned in connection with the giving of the manna in Exodus 16:23 - 29, which was before the Law was formally given in Exodus 20. However there were no other instructions until it had been incorporated into the Law. Neh. 9:13, 14 still stands as the time when the Law was made known -- in God's view of the matter! The word "sabbath" (or "sabbaths") is not used even once in Genesis or in the first 15 chapters of Exodus! After Gen. 2:2, 3 (where the day which was "sanctified" as the day God rested -- not as the seventh day from then on) the word "seventh" is not used once in Genesis concerning a day. It is not until Exodus 12:15, 16 that it is so used.
- 4C. In Exodus 12:15, 16 it is not speaking of a weekly "sabbath" but of a special "convocation" in connection with the Passover feast. If the seventh day there is the Sabbath, so is the first day -- for both were holy convocations. Exodus 13:6 does not have the weekly Sabbath in view either, but speaks of a special feast which was to be held after they arrived in the promised land (see verse 5).
- 5C. The weekly Sabbath was based on the Lord resting after the six days of restoration / creation. This does not indicate that it has been in effect from that day to this. One phase of the relationship between Christ and the church of today is based on Gen. 2:24 (See Eph. 5:31, 32). Does this prove that the Body of Christ has been in existence since Genesis chapter two? Of course not!
- 2B. Why was the Sabbath given? (See Deut. 5:15-b)
- 1C. It was "a sign between [God] and the children of Israel forever" (Ex. 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12, 20).
- 2C. It was intended as a blessing to Israel (Mk. 2:27).
- 1D. A weekly Sabbath gave their bodies rest.
- 2D. The seventh year Sabbath gave the land rest. To let the land lie fallow every few years is good agriculture to this day. <sup>2</sup>
- 3D. The seven sevens of years (the Jubile) kept the land in the hands of small land owners. This kind of law would have been a blessing in other countries as well if it had been given to them and if they would have followed it. It would have made the present land reform laws in those countries largely unnecessary (Lev.

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<sup>2</sup>This law was mandatory, and taken seriously by God. The 70 years captivity experienced by Israel later was, partly at least, so the land could catch up on the rest they had not given it (2 Chron. 36: 20, 21).



Law and Grace

25:8 - 24;

27:17 - 24).

3C. It was a "shadow of things to come" (Col. 2:16-b, 17).

work

1D. The weekly Sabbath pictures the spiritual rest provided by God's in Christ (Heb. 4:9, 10).

and

2D. The seventh year Sabbath may picture how the creation also will benefit from the work of Christ in redemption. See Rom. 8:21 the context.

course,  
Eph.

3D. The Jubile appears to foreshadow the Millennium.

4D. The special Sabbaths (feasts or "set seasons") serve as a "dispensational chart" of the prophetic program (omitting, of this age of grace which was at that time not made known -- 5:3).

See

1E. The Passover (including Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits. "Explore the Book" by J. Sidlow Baxter, vol. 1, pages 137 - 140 for further information) -- the first month. of the death and resurrection of Christ.

This speaks  
(Lev. 23:4 - 14).

2E. Pentecost -- fifty days after the Firstfruits. It points to the coming of the Holy Spirit to the believers in the kingdom church (Lev. 23:15 - 22).

unrevealed

*interruption of Israel's program.*

*been an unspecified period of time between the death of*

*Christ and the regathering of Israel even if the age of grace had not been*

*inserted. Its insertion has greatly lengthened this time.*

*----- An interval of three and a half months. The day of grace, here, was later inserted at this point as an There would have*

the

3E. Trumpets -- the first day of the seventh month. Speaks of future regathering of Israel. (Lev. 23:24, 25).

4E. The Day of Atonement -- tenth day of the seventh month. It typifies the coming salvation of all Israel at the close of the tribulation period. (Lev. 23:27 - 32).

5E. Tabernacles -- the fifteenth day of the seventh month. It foreshadows the coming millennial kingdom. (Lev. 23:34 - 43; Zech. 14:16 - 19).

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3B. To whom was the Sabbath given? To Israel only!

all  
than a  
man gave a

1C. See Exodus 31:13, 17 and Ezekiel 20:12, 20. If the Sabbath was given to men, it could not be a sign between God and Israel -- any more wedding ring could be a sign between a man and woman if the ring to all the women!

2C. Paul took advantage of the Sabbath gatherings of the Jews to preach the gospel to them. If he had gone to the synagogue on the first day of the week, he would have had no congregation. He only mentions the Sabbath once in his epistles. In Col.2:16, 17 he tells us not to let anyone

## Law and Grace

- judge us in (only a "anti-type") is respect to a Sabbath -- for it is only a shadow of things to come ("type"), while the "body" from which the shadow falls (the Christ).
- 3C. When the Gentiles' relationship to Israel's Law was decided in Acts 15 there was no instruction for them to keep the Sabbath!
- 4C. The word "sabbath" is not used in the New Testament after the close of the book of Acts except in Col. 2:16, 17. (Compare 5B, 4C below)
- 5C. The Sabbath is mentioned in Matt. 24:20 where, referring to a time during the Great Tribulation (still in the future), it says, "But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." Evidently those addressed will be observing the weekly Sabbath at that time. This is not surprising, for they were Israelites -- and the Sabbath was given to them forever (Ex. 31:17). Possibly, in that future day, saved Gentiles, being proselytes, may be keeping the Sabbath also (Isa. 56:6). Does this prove Gentiles today are to keep it? Surely not.
- 4B. How was the Sabbath to be observed?
- 1C. It was basically a day of rest, rather than a day of worship. It is called, over and over, the "Sabbath of rest" (Ex. 31:15; Lev. 23:3 for instance).
- 2C. The Sabbaths involving worship were special Sabbaths -- set seasons, or days. See Lev. 23:24, 25 for example. See also John 19:31 where the Sabbath mentioned was a "high day," very possibly falling on a Thursday.
- 3C. They were not only to refrain from working themselves, but were not to allow any of their servants to work either, even if they were Gentiles. Deuteronomy 5:14 states, "Thou shalt not do any work, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger [Gentile] who is within thy gates: that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." Today that would mean one who kept the Sabbath would have to turn off the electricity (so the men employed by the electric company wouldn't be working -- for him -- on the Sabbath); turn off the water (so, as far as he is responsible, the men in the water company could rest also); etc. To say that these men are not "within [their] gates" is no excuse, for their services are being utilized within the house.
- 5B. Should believers keep the seventh day Sabbath today?
- 1C. There is no instruction in Paul's epistles (nor even, specifically, in the "General Epistles") to do so.
- 2C. The Law does not put us under obligation to keep the Sabbath -- for we are not under Law (Rom. 6:14).
- 3C. In a context where our relationship to the Law is under consideration, Paul warns us against becoming keepers of days -- as a legalistic responsibility (Gal. 4:9 - 11 -- NASB). The Sabbath commandment was "weak" because man was unable, in the flesh, to keep it, and it was "worthless," for those not under the law, because keeping it could neither save nor perfect them (Gal. 3:2, 3).
- 4C. If a believer voluntarily chooses to set aside Saturday (or any other day) to

## Law and Grace

worship the Lord he must be fully persuaded in his own mind, but he is not to impose that decision on other believers! (Rom.14:5, 6 and the context).

5C. Our observance of the first day of the week does not look back to the finished creation, as did Israel's Sabbath, but to the finished work of redemption, which culminated in the resurrection of Christ early on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1). Thus there is abundant reason for setting aside this day for the Lord but, unlike the Sabbath for Israel, there is no command to do so.

6C. "Let no one act as your judge in regard to food, or drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day -- things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col. 2:16, 17 -- NASB).

### THE LAW OF MOSES -- a summary.

#### The Law was:

1. Proposed to Israel by God (Ex. 19:3 - 6). They had been ministered to in grace up to this point, "carried on eagle's wings" (Ex. 19:4).
2. Agreed to by Israel (Ex. 19:8).
3. Its content revealed to Israel by God (Ex. 20:1 -- 23:33; specially 20:1 - 17).
4. Accepted by Israel (Ex. 24:3).
5. Confirmed by the blood of the covenant (Heb. 9:16 - 22 with Ex. 24:8).
6. The heart of it, the "Ten Commandments," delivered to Israel -- written in stone by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18).
7. Broken by Israel -- after it was given verbally, but before they had it in written form (Ex. 32:7, 8), symbolized by the destruction of the first stone tablets (Ex. 32:19).
8. Applied to the law breakers. It was shown to be the "ministration of death" (Ex.32:27, 28 with 2 Cor. 3:6, 7, 9).
9. KEPT! -- by Christ only (in His incarnation) as pictured by the second tables of stone. They were kept in an ark of wood (Deut. 10:1 - 3, 5) -- speaking of the fact that as man He kept the Law. The Law, evidently still in the wooden box ("I ... put the tables in the ark which I had made: and there they be" -- Deut. 10:5), was kept in the Ark of the Covenant -- made of Gold (gold speaks preeminently of His deity). See Ex. 34:1 - 4; Heb. 9:4; 4:15-b.
10. Satisfied by Christ's death (the blood of the New Covenant -- Heb. 9:15 - 22).

#### The Law is:

1. Vindicated ("established" -- Rom. 3:21 - 31) by the faith principle.
2. Abolished for this age of grace (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:13, 14).
3. Fulfilled (its righteousness) in us (not by us) as we walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:4).
4. Brought back, contrary to the will of God, by false teachers. (Gal. 1:6 - 9; 2:21 -- 3:5, 10, 11; 4:1 - 5). This is illustrated by Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:20 and the prodigal's brother in Luke 15:25 - 32.

**The Law will:**

1. Vanish away for Israel as a nation when they enter into their New Covenant, in that future day when all Israel will be saved (Heb. 8:13; Rom. 11:26, 27).
2. Be included as part of the basis for judgment at the Great White Throne for those unbelievers who were under the Law during their lifetime (Rom. 2:12).

**GRACE (in the sense that it is contrasted with Law)**

1A. What is Grace?

1B. It is not lawlessness! To teach "- continue in sin that grace may abound" is not grace, but antinomianism, as Paul tells us in Rom. 3:8. To such teaching Paul, the Apostle of grace, says, "God forbid!" (or, as Philips translates it, "What a ghastly thought!"). See also Rom. 6:1, 2, 15.

2B. It is not simply unrestrained love. God loved the world (Jno. 3:16) and Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:14) but grace does not save all men. Universalism is not taught in Scripture. Just as it would be DISgrace for believers to presume on grace by continuing in sin, so it would be DISASTER if God used grace to fill heaven with the very ones who are causing all the trouble down here -- without demanding first their conversion. If a man found a place of shelter where he would be safe from criminals roaming the streets, his love would cause him to put his family there also. If his "love" was so unrestrained that he also would open the door to the "poor criminals" and let them in, it would mean disaster for the very ones who really should be the recipients of his love in the first place. The undeserved compassion for the known criminal by all too many of our courts is an illustration of this error.

3B. It is not merely an easy way of salvation. Though salvation is free to us, and does not require any works of us, we must remember that it did cost God His Son and it did cost Christ His very life. It has cost many of God's people their lives too -- to bring the message of salvation to us. It is not even "easy" for the one who is saved, for it is easier for the proud heart of man to work and sacrifice than to admit total inability to please God, and to be willing, in faith, to rest completely on the work of Another!

4B. Grace is not a way of escaping the responsibility to live a godly life. It is, rather, God's way of producing it! "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we shoul live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11, 12).

5B. Grace is not merely "undeserved favor." It is that -- but it is much more than that. We not only don't deserve God's favor, we positively do deserve His wrath.

6B. **Grace is God finding, in Himself alone, the righteous basis for doing what His love longs to do concerning sinful man.**

Since the basis for grace is in Himself, and not at all in man, He is not under any obligation to men. Therefore He is free to administer it as He will and to whom He will Grace is sovereign. He has elected (by His sovereign choice -- and very wisely) to dispense grace to those who believe Him -- those who

## Law and Grace

exercise faith. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace" (Rom. 4:16).  
Faith is the only thing God could require of men which would not be a work  
on their part. That faith is not a work is clear from Rom. 4:5.

2A. What did God do, in grace, to make it possible for Him to save men?

1B. He became a man like us, apart from sin (Heb. 2:9, 14 - 18). Christ could never have identified Himself with angels as He did with man. With us the entire race is descended from one man. Even Eve, though not "born," is identified with Adam as the source of her existence through the "rib" taken from Adam's side. So when Adam sinned it affected the whole race (Rom. 5:12). Likewise when Christ, the "second Adam" wrought salvation for us it was available to the whole race. This could not be true of angels, for angels are not part of a race -- each angel is a separate creation. They could not be represented by an "Adam" as to their redemption (compare 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:19 and context). It specifically tells us that Christ "took not on Him the nature of angels" (Heb. 2:16).

2B. He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), fulfilling the typology in the Sin Offering. This relates to what we are -- sinners. Compare Heb. 9:26 where Christ put away sin (singular) by the sacrifice of Himself.

3B. He bore our sins in His body on the Cross (1 Pet. 2:24), fulfilling the typology in the Trespass Offering. This relates to what we do -- we commit sins. Compare Heb. 9:28 where Christ bore our sins (plural) in His offering at Calvary.

4B. He died for our sins and rose again (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

5B. He thus has a righteous basis for the outflow of His love and mercy toward sinners.

1C. The Law has been recognized and honored (Rom. 3:31), for we have been judged guilty (Rom. 3:19) and the penalty for sin under the Law has been carried out, to God's complete satisfaction, -- on our heavenly Substitute (1 Cor. 15:3).

2C. The Law, thus honored and satisfied, is put away (2 Cor. 3:11). It is interesting that, in a context which places Law and grace over against one another as contrasting systems of God's ways with men, it states three times that the Law is "made void." In 2 Cor. 3:11, 13, 14 the expression "done away" (vs. 11, 14) and "is abolished" (v. 13) are the same Greek word rendered "make void" in Rom. 3:31. While the Law as a system has been set aside today, and God is not relating to us on the basis of Law, it is nevertheless retained as a historical testimony to man's utter guilt (Rom. 3:19) and God's complete righteousness in having met its every demand at Calvary. For the believer, the Law has written across it boldly, in letters of blood, "PAID IN FULL!"

3C. God's holiness has been satisfied (Heb. 1:3; 9:26-b; 10:9, 10).

4C. God's righteousness has been provided for the one who believes (Acts 13:39; Rom. 10:3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:21).

3A. What can grace DO?

## Law and Grace

- 1B. It can save sinful men (Rom. 4:4, 5; Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 2:11).
- 1C. Justification by faith (a gracious principle) saved men before the Law was given (Rom. 4:1, 2; Gen. 15:6).
- 2C. Justification by faith (a gracious principle) saved men even during the very dispensation of Law -- grace in a dispensation (Rom. 4:6 - 8).
- 3C. That man is saved by grace is characteristic of this age of grace, and much more clearly revealed than ever before -- the dispensation of grace (Eph. 3:2). The very existence of this dispensation rests on a most gracious decision on God's part -- to extend salvation to all who would believe, at a time when all mankind fully deserved His wrath. This is illustrated in the book of Numbers. There the chastening imposed on the sinning Israelites meant 38 more years in the wilderness for them -- but for the Canaanites it meant a gracious postponement of their impending and deserved judgment. It is even more wonderful than that for us today. Because of Israel's sin their program, with its national conversion and millennial kingdom, has been postponed for over 1,900 years already. But this has meant much more than a postponement of judgment for the Gentiles; God is actually working among them and inviting them (and believing Jews as well) to full forgiveness and a glorious future in Heaven with Him! What wonderful grace! See Num. 14:22, 23, 32 - 34; Rom 11:11, 15.
- 2B. It can keep those who are saved (Rom. 5:9, 10; 8:38, 39).
- 3B. It can teach believing men to serve God (Titus 2:11, 12), give them the ability to serve Him (2 Cor. 9:8), and even determine with what works they shall serve (Eph. 2:10).

### 4A. What is better under grace?

- 1B. There is a better sacrifice. The Law provided animal sacrifices which could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4), but grace provides the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:17, 29).
- 2B. There is a better righteousness -- not merely more complete, but a different kind of righteousness. "By faith righteousness," is imputed to the believing sinner (Matt. 5:20; 6:33; Rom. 10:3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:21).
- 3B. There are better (and higher) standards of right living. Notice the following comparisons:

LAW	GRACE
1. No Gods before Me.	1. Have fellowship with Me (1 John 1:3).
2. No idols (images of God). believer	2. Christ <u>is</u> the image of God (Col. 1:15). As the
the glory of the	looks into the mirror (the Word) and sees
image by the work of	Lord, he is transformed into the same
	the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18) so that men see

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Christ in him.

follow after

3. Do not take God's name in vain.  
(1 Cor.

4. Remember the Sabbath.  
work

4:13).

5. Honor father and mother.  
father

departed from

6. Do not commit murder.  
with all

tender hearted,

Christ's sake,

"Holding forth the

are (spiritually)

7. No adultery.  
the love

husbands" (Titus

8. Do not steal.  
him labor,

good, that he may

4:28).

9. Do not lie.  
your

of edifying, that

Others will not "see God" (in us) unless we

holiness (Heb. 12:14).

3. We are to take God's name to lost men around the  
world (Acts 4:12) -- and it will not be in vain!

15:58).

4. Rest in the finished work of Christ (Heb. 4:10) and

for Him in the strength of that rest (Phil.

5. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is  
right" (Eph. 6:1). Follow and honor your spiritual

(1 Cor. 4:14 - 16) -- unless he (or she) has

the word of God in life or doctrine.

6. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor,  
and evil speaking, be put away from you,

malice; and be ye kind to one another,

forgiving one another, even as God, for

hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31, 32).

Word of life" (Phil. 2:16) to those who

already dead! (Eph. 2:5).

7. "Love your wife" (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33 -- agapao,

of devotion). Wives should "love their

2:4 -- phileo, the love of emotion).

8. "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather, let

working with his hands the thing that is

have to give to him that needeth" (Eph.

9. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of

mouth, but that which is good to the use

it may minister grace unto the hearers"

## Law and Grace

(Eph.4:29. See

also Eph. 4:25; 5:4).

10. Do not covet.  
12:31-a) --

10. "But covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Cor.

that we may do something for our neighbor instead of  
longing to take something from him!

The Law gives the negative aspects of righteousness in most cases, a minimum requirement. Grace either assumes or repeats the negative, but adds a positive standard of right and wrong which was not a part of the Ten Commandments -- and must not be read into them.

The tenth commandment stands apart from the others in that, unlike the first nine, it is not, in itself, observable by others. It has to do with the heart and mind. While without coveting the neighbor's wife there would not be any adultery (cp. Matt. 5:27, 28) and without coveting the neighbor's property there would be no theft, one might well refrain from both adultery and theft while repeatedly and strongly coveting both wife and belongings in his heart. One could possibly come close to keeping the other nine commandments, and appear righteous in conduct, yet be totally unable to keep this one.

See Paul as an example. Even as Saul of Tarsus he was "blameless" (though not "sinless") concerning the righteousness of the Law (Phil. 3:6). Yet this tenth commandment stopped him in his tracks when later, as a believer, he sought to live by the Law (Rom. 7:7 - 14). "The commandment" in verses 8 - 11 of Romans seven is not a reference to the Law as a whole, but to the tenth commandment specifically. Though dealing with the heart, it was not a source of justification, but of condemnation; not producing selflessness, but stirring up "covetousness of every kind" (v. 8 - NASB); not giving life, but tending toward death (vs. 9 - 11).

While it is true that even the Old Testament clearly teaches two principles which are all encompassing and totally positive -- that man is to love the Lord with all his heart, soul and mind (Deut. 6:5) and his neighbor as himself (Lev. 19:18) -- it is also true that there was no penalty for failing to abide by these high standards. No one was ever stoned to death upon being accused of not loving God or his neighbor. The Law of Moses found its source in these commandments (Matt. 22:36 - 40), but the standards set by grace, and implemented by the Holy Spirit working in us, come much closer to fulfilling them than did the Decalogue.

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4B. There are better incentives for righteous living -- not fear of judgment, but:  
Gratitude for forgiveness and love for the One who has forgiven us (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Concern for others (2 Cor. 5:11-a; Rom. 9:2, 3).

A wholesome desire for the rewards Christ offers to us by His grace (2 Cor. 5:9, 10). The Law offered no rewards for compliance -- just penalties for transgressions. The incentive offered in Ex. 19:5, 6 was for the nation as a

whole, not for individuals.

5B. There is better power for living: not man's own will power, but the power of the Holy Spirit, and God "working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

8:4; Gal. 5:16;

We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. See Rom  
Phil. 2:13; 4:13; Heb. 13:20, 21.



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**LAW REQUIRES WORKS --- but GRACE WORKS! Praise the Lord!**

-- W. P. Heath, from his book "Help in Hard Places," somewhat revised and amplified.

# **Did the Body of Christ begin at ACTS 28?**

## **INTRODUCTION**

While we are in disagreement with those holding the doctrine commonly referred to as the "Acts 28 view," we hold no animosity against them. They are fellow members of the Body of Christ and respected students of the Word of God. On many issues we are in agreement with them. While some areas of possible disagreement are of minor importance, one's view on this teaching does have far reaching implications in important areas of doctrine and practice. The proposition addressed in this paper is whether or not a vital and important dispensational change took place upon Paul's arrival in Rome, or shortly thereafter. .

It is not denied that there are problems in the understanding of Paul's total ministry. Its relation to the ministry of the twelve, the harmony between his early and later epistles, and the exact content of his final message and program, have challenged Bible students for generations. It is not intended that this article should solve all of these problems. The question is whether or not the Acts 28 view is a scripturally admissible and defensible basis for arriving at such answers.

Our prayer is that, in spite of strong convictions on both sides, there may be more light than heat developed by the discussion.

## **PAUL'S ARRIVAL IN ROME.**

According to the "Acts 28 people" a great dispensational change took place when Paul arrived in Rome and made his declaration, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (Acts 28:28). According to them this change included the following details:

- The very beginning of the "Dispensation of the Grace of God" (Eph. 3:2), the "Fellowship of the Mystery" (Eph. 3:9), took place at this time.
- Paul's "kingdom ministry," as they refer to it, was concluded and a new ministry, based on the revelation of the Mystery, began.
- A new message and program were initiated.
- The "Joint-Body," a different Body than that in Romans and First Corinthians, began.
- A new "hope" (not including the "Rapture of the church" which we think of as our "blessed hope") was initiated. This new hope is said to be a "heavenly hope" rather than an earthly one.
- The epistles written before the end of the book of Acts are now no longer applicable directly to us, being, as they teach, related to the "kingdom program" that Paul, together with the other apostles, was preaching. Only the epistles written after Paul's arrival in Rome are

specifically to and about us. The earlier ones are to be handled much as we would an Old Testament passage or the Gospel records. That is, they are for us but not to us.

-- The Lord's Table is no longer for us, being, they say, a kingdom ordinance.

-- We now have no relationship whatsoever to Abraham, the Old Covenant, the New Covenant, etc.

There are many details not listed here which will appear in the following pages, but this should suffice to make us aware of just how far reaching the dispensational change is that we are told took place at Acts 28:28.

## THE DISPENSATIONAL BOUNDARY

If such a radical change actually took place when Paul reached Rome we have every right to expect he will plainly tell us so in the letters he wrote from there. Of course he would not refer to "Acts 28," or even to the book of Acts, for that book was not written until at least two years after Paul arrived at Rome (Acts 28:30). There are, however, references to his imprisonment, his chain, his arrival in Rome, etc., in Acts and the Prison Epistles. Let us look at these passages and see if Paul links this event with a great dispensational change.

-- **In Acts 28:20** Paul, having just arrived in Rome, tells the Jews there, "-- for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." The chain he speaks of was one he had already been wearing for over two years (Acts 24:27), ever since he had been taken as a prisoner in Jerusalem (Acts 21:33). What did he mean when he spoke of the "hope of Israel"? Let us look at the circumstances of his imprisonment to find the answer. Shortly after he was put in chains he was given the opportunity to make a formal speech to the council convened in Jerusalem (Acts 23:1 -- "council" is "Sanhedrin" in NASB margin). He told them, "-- of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6). Resurrection is a hope of all believers of all ages, but it was specifically mentioned as the "hope of Israel" here. Speaking in Rome later he makes the same claim, "-- for the hope of Israel [resurrection] I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20). He was saying, in effect, "Why are you angry with me for preaching the risen Christ? The resurrection of the dead is one of your own major teachings in Israel."

-- **In Acts 28:30, 31** reference is made to the two years immediately following the commencement of his Roman imprisonment, during which most scholars believe he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. His ministry, during this time, is summarized for us by Luke. He makes no reference to a new revelation, a new program, a new dispensation or a new hope. Instead the words are, "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." There was no need for Paul to veil his teaching, or for Luke to keep it hidden, for he was able to teach with full confidence. No one was trying to censor (or censure) his ministry. Is the whole point of the book of Acts, for US, the change in dispensation, message, and program which the events of the book have been leading up to? Is the pronouncement of Acts 28:28 the great crisis and turning point of the book? Then why, **WHY**, are two whole years of ministry -- ministry so

important that (according to them) it changed everything for the believers -- described in words that give **NO HINT** of such a change? Luke had direct personal knowledge of that ministry, the Acts 28 brethren do not! His words leave ample room for Paul continuing and amplifying what he had taught before (how very much the teachings in Ephesians and Colossians "concern the Lord Jesus Christ"! ). However they give not even a hint of a disruption of his former program or the adoption of a completely new and different viewpoint in his teaching.

-- **In Eph. 3:1** he says, "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,--" and, after a parenthetical section, continues in verses 13 and 14, "Therefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ --."

First of all, there is no suggestion that the imprisonment referred to began when he arrived in Rome. He had been a prisoner for over two years before he ever saw Rome (Acts 24:27). If we look back to the day he was first put in chains we see clearly why he could say, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles --."

Paul had been ministering for many years among the pagan nations of the Roman Empire. When he was in Jerusalem he was accused of bringing Greeks (Gentiles, not Greek speaking Jews) into the Temple. After being rescued from the angry mob he was placed in protective custody by the Roman soldiers. Given liberty to speak to the assembled Jews, he spoke in Hebrew and received their full attention. All went well, even when he told of his conversion to Christ (Acts 22:6 - 16), even when he told of Christ's prophecy that Israel would not receive his testimony (Acts 22:18). It appeared the problem might be peacefully resolved, and Paul set at liberty, until he said one word. That word was "**GENTILES**" (Acts 22:21, 22). When he related Christ's commission to him, "I will send thee for hence unto the Gentiles," they suddenly exploded into violent action. This made it necessary for Paul to continue in his chains, chains he still wore as he wrote Ephesians. He was wearing these chains, then, not because of a change of program and message at Rome, but because of a commission given him at his conversion (Acts 26:13 - 17). This commission was re-emphasized later as he prayed in the Temple, and it was carried out during his Acts ministry -- a commission to preach to the Gentiles.

But wasn't this imprisonment linked to the revelation of the mystery in Ephesians 3:1 - 9? Yes indeed. This very mystery had been the basis for his previous Gentile ministry. He does not say that the mystery was hidden during Acts. As a matter of fact, he reminds them that he had previously written about it -- though briefly (since the full treatment of the subject awaited the writing of the Ephesian and Colossian letters). To what does he refer when he says, "I wrote afore in few words" (Eph. 3:3)? Does he refer to an earlier part of this Ephesian letter? No, for if this was his thought why would he say, "If indeed you have heard ... as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,--" (Eph. 3:2 - 4)? Did he think they had started reading in the middle of this letter? Was there a previous letter to the Ephesians, now lost? This is a possibility of course, but very unlikely. He does not say, "I wrote to you in brief" -- but merely that it had been put into writing. He probably was referring to such passages as Romans 16:25, 26 and 1 Cor. 2:7, 8. The specifics as to what the mystery was, are given in Eph. 3:6: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same Body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." The fact that we are fellow-heirs is taught in Rom. 8:17 (the same Greek word as is found in Eph. 3:6). The truth that the Body is to be a "Joint Body" composed of both Jews and Gentiles is

taught very clearly in 1 Cor. 12:12, 13 and Gal. 3:28. Being "fellow partakers of the promise in Christ" is carefully noted in Eph. 3:6 as coming through the gospel, not through a new message and program!

There is not one whisper in Eph. 3:1 and context that the program under consideration began in the middle of Paul's four or more years imprisonment -- when he arrived in Rome!

-- **In Eph. 4:1** Paul again refers to himself as a prisoner of the Lord. As such he urges believers in Ephesus to "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." He does not indicate in any way that the calling dated from his arrival in Rome. Instead he links it to the preservation of the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3), with its "one Body" (Eph. 4:4) -- a truth given over and over in the Pre-prison Epistles (as we shall note more fully elsewhere).

-- **The mention of his chains in Eph. 6:19, 20** is very significant. "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds ['chains' -- NASB]; that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak."

He is not here asking for prayer that he may initiate a new message -- but that he may speak boldly the message he has preached before. He was an ambassador back in 2 Cor. 5:20 but he became an ambassador in chains in Jerusalem. If he was put in chains for the message spoken of here he had to have preached it before he was put in chains. They did not put him in prison for what he would preacher later, but for what he had already been proclaiming. I can almost hear someone say, "But he spoke of himself as the prisoner of the Lord, and the Lord had him in prison so he could receive the mystery and make it known." This is not taught, anywhere, by Paul. Also, if the Lord put Paul into prison so he could receive the mystery and make it known, why did the Lord earlier try to save him from this prison experience by warning him against going to Jerusalem? See Acts 20:22, 23; 21:11, 12. When he spoke of himself as the "prisoner of the Lord" he did not mean that the Lord had put him there, but that, even in prison, he was still the Lord's man.

A parallel passage reads, "withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds ['chains']: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Col. 4:4). Here also it is for preaching "the Word ... the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:3 NASB) that he has been put in prison. Now he asks prayer that this very prison may be a pulpit from which he may preach his message as he "ought to speak."

-- **The Philippian church** was very close to Paul. He had established it back in Acts sixteen and had been in touch with it from then on as they sent, over and over, to meet his needs (Phil. 4:16). He notes with gratitude that they are partakers of grace with him, both in his imprisonment and in -- in **WHAT?** In getting out the new message revealed to him in his cell? No, rather, in the confirmation and defense of the gospel! (Phil. 1:7). Far from heralding a new message, they were continuing in and defending the old one!

-- **The Philippian church** has heard he is in prison and are concerned for his welfare. In assuring them that all is well, how natural it would be -- yea how necessary it would be -- to tell them, "I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances [being in prison] have made it possible for me to receive a new revelation and institute a new program" -- **IF**, indeed, this were the case! Instead he assures them his bonds are for the greater progress of the gospel -- the

message he preached before, not the introduction of a new message (Phil. 1:12). Even those who are evidently hoping to take over the leadership of the church in Paul's absence are preaching the right message -- though from the wrong motive (Phil. 1:16, 18 [or 1:17, 18 in NASB]).

If Paul was preaching a new message and program how could these ambitious brethren better replace Paul's leadership than by accusing him of departing from the truth in his old age? They could have cried out, "We are preaching the message Paul used to preach, he has gone off on some new doctrine. If you want to stay with the truth, stick with us." This they did not do. There had evidently been no such change in Paul's message upon which they could base such a charge.

-- **In Philemon** (a Prison Epistle -- written at the same time as Ephesians and Colossians) he simply refers to himself as a prisoner in verses 1, 9, 10. In verse 13 he says, "Whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel" (NKJV).

-- **As late as Second Timothy** he refers to another (his last) imprisonment and pleads with Timothy, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8 NASB). This message, his gospel, is that for which he is suffering imprisonment as a criminal (2 Tim. 2:8, 9 NASB).

Why didn't Paul get all excited about his Roman imprisonment being the occasion for a radical dispensational change -- as the Acts 28 people do? Is it because they put a significance on this period in his ministry that Paul did not? How else can it be explained?

## INDICATIONS OF CONTINUITY BETWEEN PAUL'S EARLY AND LATER MINISTRY

As one reads through Paul's epistles he is greeted with a variety of topics and a rich experience in progressive revelation. But he is not conscious, at least in a casual reading, of disharmony between the early and later epistles. As a matter of fact, the arrangement of the books in our Bible, with the two groups interspersed with one another, forms a beautiful structure of truth for this age. This is noted well in a lengthy note on page 1660 of the Companion Bible.

The Acts 28 group make a great distinction in message and program between the epistles written before Acts 28 and those penned later. We need to see if the sense of continuity is merely an illusion of first impression, or whether a closer look will, with certainty, link these two groups together as one progressive revelation. We will examine briefly a few of the indications of the unbroken continuity we believe exists here.

-- **In Acts 23:11** the Lord stood at the side of His discouraged Apostle and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Here is one of the appearances promised to Paul at his conversion (Acts 26:16). Instead of instructing Paul that there would soon be an interruption of his ministry, with a new revelation, he is assured of a continuity of that ministry, specifically mentioning his coming ministry in Rome.

-- **In Acts 26:16, 17** we have a record of what Christ said to Saul of Tarsus at the time of his conversion in Acts nine (though not recorded there). "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people [Israel], and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee." In 1 Tim. 2:6, 7 Paul explains that he was appointed preacher, apostle and teacher of the Gentiles, bearing testimony that Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all." Thus at Paul's conversion he received the commission, to minister to Gentiles, that he still considers valid in First Timothy. There is no indication of a change in ministry. It may be objected that First Timothy may have been written before Acts 28. The evidence for two Roman imprisonments for Paul, with First Timothy penned sometime between them, seems to be valid and conclusive to this writer. This objection is weak indeed.

It may be further objected that in Acts 26:16<sup>1</sup> there is a reference to "those things in which I will appear unto thee" and that this is a promise of a new (and different) revelation that was made later in Rome. We have the record of several such appearances (Acts 18:9, 10; 22:17 - 21; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:9), and other supernatural contacts with God (Acts 27:23, 24; 2 Cor. 12:4), before Acts 28. The only event that might be an appearance of Christ to Paul after his arrival in Rome is recorded in 2 Tim. 4:17. "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear --." This probably was not an actual appearance of Christ, but rather a case where men forsook him (v. 16) but the Lord did not. In any case, there is no reference to a revelation of truth at this time. The Lord is not spoken of as delivering a message. He is only represented as strengthening Paul in his defense before Caesar and the Roman court -- so as to make his words not only an effective defense, but also an effective presentation of the gospel he proclaimed.

-- **In Romans 1:3, 4** Paul speaks of Christ as "- the seed of David according to the flesh" and goes on to speak of His resurrection. In 2 Tim. 2:8 these two thoughts are still a part of his gospel, "- Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."

-- **Romans 16:25, 26**, when compared with Eph. 3:2 - 5, bridges over the gap between the early and later ministry of Paul -- for the mystery he speaks of in Ephesians had been preached already when he wrote Romans. "-- The mystery which was kept secret for long ages past ... has been made known to all nations -" (Rom. 16:25, 26 NASB). These verses receive more attention elsewhere in this paper.

-- **In Romans 1:15** Paul looked forward to this ministry in Rome as an opportunity to preach the gospel he had been preaching elsewhere. There is no hint of a change in ministry -- just ministering in a new location.

-- **Paul refers to his basic message** as "my gospel" in Romans 2:16. In 2 Timothy 2:8 he uses the same expression.

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<sup>1</sup>This statement of Christ is recorded in Acts 26, but it was uttered at Paul's conversion (which is related in Acts 9) -- when his whole ministry was still ahead of him.

-- **In 1 Corinthians 3:16** Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (See also 1 Cor. 3:17 and 2 Cor. 6:16). In Ephesians 2:21, 22 we are told, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple [the same Greek word] in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The objection that the Temple in 1 Cor. 3:16 is the body of the individual believer is not valid. True, in 1 Cor. 6:19 it **is** telling the individual that his physical body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, but in the reference quoted above it says, "ye [plural] are the Temple [singular]."

It may be objected that immediately following the statement in 2 Cor. 6:16, " - ye are the temple of the living God" it continues, "- as God hath said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and they shall be my people.'"

"The Temple here is in fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture," it would be stated, "so this could not be a part of the Mystery Program." This objection, too, is invalid. The quotation given in verses 16 - 18 is in support of the principle of separation which Paul has been teaching in verses 14, 15 and the first part of verse 16 -- not in support of his statement about the Temple. The quote from Lev. 26:11 should read, "I will dwell **among** them" -- (in the kingdom situation), not "**in**" them as it is now. The Greek word in 2 Cor. 6:16 is "**en**" which is usually translated "in" -- but the Old Testament passage quoted says, "And I will set my Tabernacle [dwell] **among** you ... and I will walk **among** you --" (Lev. 26:11, 12). The Greek word "**en**" is translated "**among**" in such verses as Luke 10:3; Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:10 and 1 Cor. 3:18. (Try to substitute "in" for "among" in these passages to see that the word really can mean "**among**").

-- **The same expectation** set before the believer in First Thessalonians is before them also in Philipians. The Thessalonian saints were waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10) and in Phil. 3:20 we are told, "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Savior --." The word is different, but the expectant attitude is the same -- and both passages direct our eyes to the same place (heaven) to wait for the same Savior.

-- **Paul speaks** of the "hope which is laid up for you in heaven" in Col. 1:5. What is set before us here is truly a heavenly hope. But, far from being a hope springing out of a new revelation received in Rome, Paul reminds them that they have already heard about this hope in the gospel. In verse six he makes it exceedingly clear that this hope is not something new. The gospel through which they heard of this hope had already been preached in all the world and had already been bringing forth fruit throughout the world. Hearing this pre-prison message is not linked here to a "kingdom program," but to knowing "the grace of God in truth." Again, the message and hope find no change at Acts 28.

-- In Col. 1:22 Paul tells us **the believer** is to be presented "holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight." Does this depend upon them seeing a dispensational change at Acts 28, and becoming obedient to a new message and adopting a new hope? On the contrary, it depends on them continuing in the message which Paul had already preached "to every creature which is under heaven" and not being moved away from the hope of the gospel (a heavenly hope -- Col. 1:5) which they had already embraced (Col. 1:23). Acts 28 could hardly be more pointedly ignored than it is in this verse. It is more than ignored, it is ruled out as a place where significant changes have taken place in Paul's message. The word is not "if ye change" but "If ye continue."



-- **The Greek prefix "sun,"** which changes "Body" to "joint-Body" in Eph. 3:6, is one evidence of the continuity and unity of Paul's entire ministry. We will list a number of words using this prefix and show how they are used to describe believers both before and after Acts 28. The English prefix "joint" is seldom used in the translations, but the Greek prefix "sun" is there in every case.

- \* "Joint-heirs" is found in both Rom. 8:17 and Eph. 3:6.
- \* "Joint-crucified" is found in Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20, and Col. 2:20 ("died with [sun] Christ").
- \* "Joint-buried" finds its place in Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12.
- \* "Joint-workers" occurs often, both before and after Acts 28. See 1 Cor. 3:9; Rom. 16:3, 9, 21; 2 Cor. 1:24; 8:23; 1 Thess. 3:2 -- and -- Phil. 2:25; 4:3; Col. 4:11 and Philemon 24.

-- **Who can deny** that the purpose of God for the believer in Rom. 8:29, "- to be conformed to the image of His Son," is fulfilled when "- the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ ... shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body --" (Phil. 3:20, 21)? "Be conformed to," in Rom. 8:29, is the same Greek word (*summorphos*) translated "fashioned like unto" in Phil. 3:21.

-- **Rom. 8:28 - 30** takes the believer from God's foreknowledge right on to his glorification without a break. If there was to be an interruption of His program, at Acts 28, of the magnitude envisioned by the Acts 28 teachers, it is surely not indicated here. True, Paul at this time might not have known of a future change of program, but God would know, and this passage is based on His foreknowledge, not Paul's.

-- **How can we understand** Phil. 4:1 without glancing at 1 Thess. 2:19, 20? Paul's converts (converted before Acts 28 in both cases) are referred to as his "joy and crown" both before and after Acts 28. Now if some of those converts in Thessalonica died before his Roman imprisonment (and some did, as 1 Thess. 4:13 indicates) are they to be present at the same coming that involves Paul? If the Rapture is not Paul's hope after Acts 28 then he will not be a part of it -- but the believers who died previous to that time will. How, then, can they be his joy and crown "at His coming [the Rapture]"? Further, if (as we are told) the hope of these believers who died before the end of Acts is the Millennial Kingdom, and Paul's hope is to be "in the heavenlies," Paul will be separated from them even after the Lord's coming. Has he lost his crown? No, these two passages also indicate that the program is not interrupted and exchanged for a new one at the close of Acts.

-- **When Paul,** just before his death, gave Timothy his final instructions, he told him, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Timothy was with Paul when he wrote Philippians and Colossians (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1) but Paul, referring back to the preceding years in Acts when Timothy was his companion in missionary work, urges him to teach what he heard then. In those days Paul was free to speak to multitudes; there were "many witnesses" to what Timothy heard him say. It is not reasonable that the expression "among many witnesses" would refer only to what he heard under very limited circumstances, in Paul's hired house in

Rome, and not also -- even primarily -- to what he had heard earlier.

The things he is to commit to others are further described in 2 Tim. 3:10 - 14 (NASB). "But you followed my teaching --" Paul says, and then gives a description of his missionary work during which this teaching took place. He notes that the opposition is growing even greater (v. 13) but urges Timothy to continue in the things he has learned and become convinced of -- the things he followed in verse 10. Since Paul is urging Timothy to continue in the teaching he heard and had had a part in before Paul was in prison in Rome, where is there room for a great dispensational change at Acts 28 which would have given Timothy a new message replacing the old one?

-- **There are other indications** of this continuity and unity of Paul's ministry but space forbids further examples. Why not look for them yourself? Let us see not only the seeming differences as we read Paul's letters! Let us also note carefully the connections. These connections tie his letters into one harmonious and remarkably complete revelation concerning this age of grace and the **ONE** Body. Let us see even the differences as the progressive revelation of the one mystery program!

## THE BODY OF CHRIST.

It is essential to the acts 28 position that the "Body of Christ" in Romans and First Corinthians was not the same "Body of Christ" as that found in Ephesians and Colossians. As we compare what is said in the early letters with what is said in the Prison Epistles, it surely should be very clear (since Paul was an outstanding teacher and not given to muddying or vague and ambiguous writing) that the two are different -- **IF**, indeed, they **are** distinct and separate.

-- **In the early epistles** we are told "Now ye [believers] are the Body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). The same thought is found in Eph. 1:22, 23 and Col. 1:18, 24 where it speaks of "the church [composed of believers] which is His Body."

-- **In the early letters** it speaks of "one Body" (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17 and 12:13). Also the thought is expressed in Gal. 3:28, even though the word "Body" is not used. In the prison letters it speaks of the one Body (Eph. 4:4 and Col. 3:15). The thought is in Eph. 2:14, 15, though the word "Body" is missing. (In light of the context, and the parallel passage in Col. 1:22, the "one body" <sup>2</sup> in Eph. 2:16 appears to be Christ's fleshly body).

-- **The Body of Christ** is illustrated by the human body, both in the pre-prison documents (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 14 - 26) and in Ephesians (Eph. 5:28, 29).

-- **Individual believers** are said to be members of the Body of Christ, both in the former epistles (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:14, 27) and the latter ones (Eph. 3:6; 5:30).

-- **Both Jew and Gentile** are said to compose this one Body according to 1 Cor. 12:13 and Gal. 3:28. This is also taught in Eph. 2:16 and 3:6

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<sup>2</sup>In this paper the word "body" will consistently be capitalized when it is referring to the mystical Body of Christ to distinguish it from references to the physical body.

-- **While it is specifically stated** in the Prison Epistles that Christ is the Head of the Body (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19), it is clearly intimated also in 1 Cor. 11:3. When it states that "the head of every man is Christ" the context indicates believing men are in view. It is understandable that the head-ship of Christ should appear more clearly in Ephesians and Colossians since the very theme of these two books is the relationship of the Body to its Head (with the Body emphasized in Ephesians and the Head given the prominence in Colossians).

-- **The Body in Ephesians** is something new. Eph. 2:15 speaks of it as "one new man." However it is not "new" with regard to a previous Body, but with reference to the former division and enmity between Jew and Gentile, a division already healed in Rom. 10:12 and Gal. 3:28. There is something new in Corinthians also -- a new creation, even all things new (2 Cor. 5:17).

-- **The Body is called "The Christ"** (the definite article is present in the Greek) in 1 Cor. 12:12. In Ephesians Christ is called the "Savior of the Body" (Eph. 5:23). Of the two expressions the one in Corinthians gives us the more exalted view of the Body.

-- **With so many things in common**, if the Body after Acts 28 is not the same Body as the one before, we will need a verse specifically telling us so. There is no such verse. Nowhere does Paul speak of a "different Body," a "New Body," or even "Another [previous] Body."

## TWO BODIES

What are the arguments advanced to indicate two Bodies instead of one? (One at a time, of course, but a total of two nonetheless).

-- **The claim is made** that the Body after Acts 28 is a "Joint-Body" -- that before it was just a "Body." If "Body" refers to one entity and "Joint-Body" to a different one, then the Acts 28 group cannot claim the book of Colossians, nor even all of Ephesians, as their Scriptures (directly to them). In Colossians it always uses the word "Body," not "Joint-Body," and even in Ephesians the former word is used several times while the latter is used only once (Eph. 3:6). Their theory divides not merely between the Pre-prison Epistles and the Prison Epistles -- it divides between Eph. 3:6 and all the rest of Paul's writings, including the remainder of Ephesians!

-- **Ephesians speaks** of the Body of Christ as the one new man (Eph. 2:15), while the earlier Body (so they say) is called a chaste virgin -- a female (2 Cor. 11:2). Therefore they can't be the same Body, they conclude.

Notice carefully the wording of 2 Cor. 11:1, 2: "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly; and, indeed, bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." It doesn't say here that the Body of Christ is a chaste virgin. The word "Body" is not used. It is speaking of the relationship of individual believers in Corinth to Christ. Also, he is using a

"foolish" illustration of a principle he wishes to apply.

Actually it would be easier to teach that the Body of Christ is female from Ephesians five than from this verse. It says in Eph. 5:25, 26, "- Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her --" (NASB). In the Greek "it" (KJV) is a feminine pronoun. I grant that these two verses do not prove the Body is female, but neither does 2 Cor. 11:2! When considering gender, it is well to remember that, in Greek, the word "body" is neuter and the word "church" is feminine -- as is the word "head."

-- **In First Corinthians twelve** the head of the Body includes believers (the argument goes -- see verses 16, 17, 21), while the Head of the Body in Ephesians and Colossians is Christ.

In 1 Cor. 12:14 - 26 Paul is not speaking of the Body of Christ, but of the human body as an illustration of the Body of Christ. The application to the mystical Body is made in verse 27. Believers are members of the mystical Body as teachers, evangelists, etc. -- not as eyes, ears or feet.

Also Eph. 5:23 tells us that "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church -." Now in what sense is the husband the head of the wife? Has her head been removed and her decapitated husband's head sewed to her neck? Are her eyes and ears not hers, but her husband's? Is everything above the neck "husband" and all below "wife"? Of course not! This headship involves the husband taking the place of leadership and loving responsibility in the relationship. So it is with the church. Paul says so.

In Corinthians Christ does have a Headship over believing men that, similar to the relationship of Christ to the church in Ephesians five, is parallel to the headship of the husbands (1 Cor. 11:3).

The necessary indications that the Body after Acts 28 is a different Body than the one previously spoken of are completely missing from the writings of Paul.

### **WHO IS IN THE "JOINT-BODY"?**

The Acts 28 group place a great deal of emphasis on the expression "Joint-Body." This word in Eph. 3:6 is made to characterize the "Body" of the Prison Epistles as over against the "Body" in Romans and Corinthians. The Greek prefix "*sun*" used here means "together." Yet their doctrine leads to the conclusion that this prefix is empty of all real significance in their practice.

If the Acts 28 theory is valid, then at Acts 28 all of those in the Acts Body were taken into the Joint-Body (in some undefined way), for those addressed as being in the Joint-Body were saved previous to Acts 28. At the time of their salvation they had been "- all baptized into one Body" by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). If only those understanding and accepting the new revelation (said to have been given to Paul in Rome) were taken into the new Body, then the others must have continued in the former Body (they were surely not disembodied were they?). This would result in two distinct and separate Bodies of Christ at the same time that Paul stated so clearly and dogmatically, "There is one Body." Whether weighed against human nature or the somewhat parallel situations found in Scripture, it is wholly beyond the realm of possibility that every Acts believer would immediately understand and embrace Paul's "new teaching."

The same situation exists today, and for the same reason. Every believer must be a member of the Joint-Body. The alternatives are ridiculous.

Since (according to the Acts 28 teachers) the Prison Epistles are written only to the members of the Joint-Body, any believer not a member of that Body could not claim those epistles as written to him. If he is a member of the Body spoken of in Romans and Corinthians then, even today, there are two Bodies, not just one.

If he is not a member of that earlier Body either, then (since the Pre-prison Epistles are addressed to the original Body of Christ), he cannot even claim the earlier epistles as to him. He would be a disemBodied believer with NO Pauline Scripture addressed to him! Surely even Acts 28 teachers would have to agree that all true believers today are in the Joint-Body.

But, if all believers are in the Joint-Body, are they really "together" as the word used in Eph. 3:6 indicates? I contend that the Acts 28 teachers, in effect, dis-joint the Joint-Body. The teaching of at least a few of them is that some, being merely saved, will end up in the kingdom program on earth. According to them others, holding the mid-Acts view, will be in the New Jerusalem; but the elite, super spiritual, intellectual believers who have arrived at the Acts 28 view will be "in the heavenlies." This divides the doctrine of the members of the Body -- with three different hopes involved. It also will separate them physically, in resurrection, dividing them in three ways for eternity. The joint-Body, according to their teaching will be dis-jointed forever.

What about the Twelve Apostles? Are they in the Joint-Body? Of course those who may have died (as James did -- Acts 12:2) before the close of Acts are not in view in this particular argument. Whether The Twelve are in the Body of Christ or not is a live issue among mid-Acts teachers, but it must surely be a settled matter with the Acts 28 group. After all, if Paul was taken into the Joint-Body what would exclude Peter or John? Was Paul an apostle? So were they. Were they kingdom apostles? So was he -- according to their doctrine. Was Paul a member of the earlier Body? Surely they were also if Paul was preaching the same message they were preaching and carrying on the same program -- as the Acts 28 people assert was the case. Can they really say that in the Joint-Body all distinctions disappear, if any true believer was excluded for any reason?

But if Peter and John were taken into the Joint-Body what kind of ministry did they have after Acts 28? If these teachers insist that Paul was fully identified with the preaching and practice of the twelve before Acts 28, what would prevent them from being fully identified with him in his preaching and practice after Acts 28? After all, they would be members of a Joint-Body where there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Since Israel's blindness and setting aside would now be total (so they say) rather than partial, as it was before, surely the ministry of Peter and John would be to the Joint-Body. There would be no other Jewish believers to write to. How could they write to Jewish believers if there was totally no difference? How could they write to Israel when Israel had been totally set aside? This line of reasoning puts the Acts 28 group in the position (if they are consistent) of telling us that half of Paul's letters are not to us, while at least one of Peter's letters and all of the writings of John (being written after Acts 28) are directed to the Body of Christ -- the Joint-Body!

But they do not teach that Peter's and John's writings are to us. Why not? Is it because they are unwilling to face the logical consequences of their doctrine? Or is it because they have been so busy repudiating the pre-Acts 28 ministry of Paul that they have not realized they are, at the same time, coming under the post-Acts ministries of these other writers?

A careful investigation of just who is in the Joint-Body, on the basis of their views, indicates their position relative to the beginning of the Body of Christ is untenable. It is, as brother Vernon Anderson puts it, "The impossible Acts 28 position."

### **THE HEAVENLIES -- A SUPER HOPE?**

At least some of the Acts 28 people (far from humble) teach that "the heavenlies" (not merely "heaven") is the place where will be. They say that we poor mid-Acts people will have to be content with the New Jerusalem, and the babes in Christ who are merely saved will end up in the Millennial Kingdom on earth. This is not taught by Paul! <sup>3</sup> This Greek word translated "heavenly places," "heaven," "celestial," "heavenly," and "high" in the King James Version is said to refer to a "super heaven." It is the Greek word "*epouranios*." Let us briefly review the passages using this Greek word:

When Christ talked to Nicodemus about the new birth He was speaking of "heavenly" things (John 3:12). The Jewish believers addressed in Hebrews were partakers of a "heavenly" calling (Heb. 3:1) and were looking forward, as did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Heb. 11:8 - 10, 13 - 16), to a "heavenly" city (Heb. 11:16), the "heavenly" Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).

Paul assures the believers in Corinth that there is such a thing as a "heavenly" ("celestial" in the KJV) body (1 Cor. 15:40). He adds that since they are a "heavenly" people they will bear the image of the "heavenly" Savior -- and have a body like His resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:48, 49 -- and compare Phil. 3:21).

How is this word used in the Prison Epistles? Does it there clearly teach that the "heavenlies" is the eternal abode of only Acts 28 people? If this is true, surely Paul will make it plain!

**Philippians.** Those who are in "heaven" (the heavenlies) will bow before Christ and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10 -- NASB). It does not say who these individuals are.

**Colossians.** This word does not occur even once in this book.

**Ephesians.** Five times Paul refers to "the heavenlies" in this prison epistle (though not

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<sup>3</sup>I sincerely hope this is not taught by all of those who hold the Acts 28 view in other respects. It was taught, however, by at least one national pastor in the Philippines where the author met with this teaching.

translated that way in the KJV). Surely here he will tell us plainly that this is the hope of the Acts 28 people. Let us investigate:

It must be discouraging to them to notice that there is wickedness in "the heavenlies" -- the super heavenlies! This wickedness is due to the presence there of "principalities . . . powers . . . the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12).

Paul informs us that we (the church -- not just those who follow the Acts 28 doctrine) are a testimony to these principalities and powers, teaching them the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). Does this verse prove that believers will be in "the heavenlies" in the future life? No, for that testimony is being borne now, not after we arrive in heaven.

We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in "the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:3). Are these blessings something believers did not have until Acts 28, and that they have now only if they follow that doctrine? Looking at the context, we observe that these blessings include being chosen (1: 4), predestinated (1:5), accepted (1:6), redeemed (1:7), forgiven (1:7), made heirs (1:11), and sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13, 14). Were these made ours only after the close of the book of Acts? Are they only for the Acts 28 people now? No, for all these concepts can be found, either stated or implied, in the Pre-prison Epistles.

Of course Christ has been seated, ever since His ascension, in "the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:20) -- but what about us?

The remaining passage using the Greek word *epouranios* (Eph. 2:6) must be the one to prove the whole theory about the super heavens as taught by the twenty-eighters -- for the others surely did not do so! Notice it does not say that anyone will be "in the heavenlies" in the future and through eternity! What it does say is that we believers are seated there NOW in Christ. Just who is so seated, and when did this first become a truth for us? Look first at the verse itself. The ones who are "joint-seated" (*sunkathizo*) are those who are "joint-raised from the dead" (*sunegiro*). While it is true that neither of these Greek words are found in the Pre-prison Epistles, the truths they represent are found there. That the believer was joint-crucified and joint-buried is taught in Romans 6:6; Gal. 2:20 and Rom. 6:4. That the believer was raised with Christ is clearly indicated when Rom. 6:4 - 11 is studied carefully. This co-resurrection is a necessary corollary of the co-crucifixion and co-burial. Otherwise the believers addressed in Romans were left in Christ's grave until Paul arrived in Rome! It is this same identification with Christ that makes possible our standing -- both as being dead on the one hand and being risen on the other. Having been identified with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, did the early believers have to stand around in heaven (positionally) until, finally, Paul specifically mentioned their being seated?

The context for the preceding verse (Eph. 2:5) tells us when these Ephesians were seated. It was not "when you came into the knowledge of the mystery" or "when the new Body was formed" or even "when you were only kingdom saints" -- but it was "**WHEN YOU WERE DEAD IN SINS.**" Back during the history covered in the book of Acts, before Paul was imprisoned, when they were **LOST**, a wonderful change came to them upon simply believing. They suddenly were quickened (made alive), raised from the dead, and seated in the heavenlies

in Christ -- all because "by grace you **HAVE BEEN SAVED**" (Eph. 2:5 NASB). It was **not**, note it well, because of anything that happened at Acts 28 or afterward!

I do not say that the believers today will not be in the heavenlies in the future, for I believe they will, but there is no verse in the Prison Epistles that says so! The only one that speaks of our being in the heavenlies at all presents this as the standing of all members of the Body of Christ -- even before the close of the book of Acts.

But isn't our "citizenship" (Phil. 3:20 NASB) in heaven? Of course. But here (as in many other pertinent passages) it is not the "super heavens" (*epouranios*) but just "heaven" (*ouranos*) which is in view. Not until we avoid this artificial distinction between these two Greek words can we have scriptural grounds for expecting to be in heaven for eternity.

It is clear that the word *epouranios* does not at all carry the meaning in Scripture given it by the Acts 28 men -- nor is it represented as a special place for those holding their position.

## THE BOOK OF ACTS.

A close scrutiny of the entire book of Acts is far beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>4</sup> We will content ourselves with a look at some of the more important portions relating to our theme.

Few serious dispensationalists would fail to see in the first part of this book an express offer of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 3:19 - 21) and a flagrant rejection of that offer (Acts chapter seven). It is not so clearly discerned that the response was final, and that there is no further such offer recorded in Acts or in any of Paul's epistles.

God looked upon the stoning of Stephen as Israel's final answer to His offer of the kingdom. This is indicated by the following considerations:

-- **The offer of the kingdom had been specifically made before Acts seven.** "Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that so may come times of refreshing from the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you --" (Acts 3:19, 20). Obviously the millennial kingdom -- complete with its King -- was being offered here.

-- **This offer reached the ears of the Sanhedrin.** Understandably the offer was not made formally before them, though they were the ruling body in Israel whose decision was essential for any issue touching the nation as a whole. Would the Sanhedrin have invited, or even allowed, the apostles to present God's offer to them? Certainly not! Therefore it was made in public, but at a place (the Temple) and at a time (the hour of prayer) when the nation's leadership would most certainly hear it, or hear about it. Obviously, in addressing his remarks

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<sup>4</sup>For such a study the reader is referred to an exhaustive and enlightening treatment of the book of Acts written by Cornelius R. Stam and published in four volumes, "Acts Dispensationally Considered."



to those who had "denied the Holy One and the Just, and ... killed the Prince of Life --" (Acts 3:14, 15) Peter was speaking to the Sanhedrin. The murder of Christ was their decision, not merely that of those individual Jews who had been swept along by the mob at the crucifixion.

Later, in chapters four and five, the apostles were twice actually brought before the Sanhedrin. These leaders were not interested in hearing the offer of the kingdom in more detail. They were set on shutting the mouths of those making the offer. They were accused by the apostles of responsibility for Christ's death and were told that, as builders (supposedly working toward Israel's kingdom), they had rejected the cornerstone for the building (Acts 4:11).

-- **The rejection was unmistakable and final.** Stephen was convinced they had already made up their mind, and closed his address with a stinging accusation, "Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost . . . ye have been now the betrayers and murderers [of Christ]!" (Acts 7:51 - 53). As if to confirm Stephen's assessment of their attitude they gnashed on him with their teeth, shouted, stopped their ears, rushed upon him and cast him out of the city -- where they murdered him in cold blood before witnesses. Remembering that this was the concerted and unanimous action of the highest ruling body in Israel, how could the nation, as a nation, more emphatically and finally have rejected the offer made to them by God?

-- **God's response indicates He accepted their decision as final.** In Paul's first epistle he speaks of this. "[Israel] -- killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost" (1 Thess. 2:15, 16 NASB).

In Romans Paul refers to Israel as already judicially blinded (Rom. 11:7 - 10, 25). It was not (in verse 25) that Israel was partly blind, but that part of Israel was totally blind (v. 7). He states also that Israel had already fallen (Rom. 11:12) and had been cast away (Rom. 11:15).

-- **Only three years after Paul's conversion** (Gal. 1:18) Christ appeared to him while he was in the Temple in Jerusalem and said to him, "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me . . . Go! For I will send you away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:18, 21 NASB). Here Christ recognized that the decision of Israel's leaders in Jerusalem, made earlier, was final.

-- **Even at Paul's conversion,** Christ indicated the nation's choice had already been made. He said to Paul, "-- for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness . . . delivering you from the [Jewish] people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you" (Acts 26:16, 17 NASB). Since his ministry (bringing riches to the Gentiles) was based on the fall and casting away of Israel, the die had, evidently, already been cast at this time.

The following considerations indicate the kingdom was not offered to Israel after the stoning of Stephen in Acts seven:

-- **There is no verse** from Acts eight through the end of the book where such an offer is specifically made.

-- **The offer had to be made** to the leaders of Israel, the Sanhedrin, the only ones with the authority to make a decision for the nation. This religious and legislative body is not once mentioned after Acts seven until it is convened (Acts 22:30; 23:1 -- "council" is "Sanhedrin") to hear Paul's defense. Aside from this one occasion, and references to it, this ruling body is never mentioned again. What was said in this brief but stormy confrontation is a matter of record, and there was no reference to the kingdom. The message delivered the previous day also contained no such offer. Instead, there was a report of how the Lord had recognized Israel's stubborn unbelief and had sent Paul to the Gentiles as a result of it (Acts 22:18 - 21). If God had intended this meeting with the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem to be the occasion for another offer to the nation, why did He so persistently warn Paul against going there (Acts 20:22 - 24; 21:10 - 13)?

-- **If Paul was offering the kingdom** in his missionary efforts, he was offering it to Gentiles as well as to Jews, for the same message he preached to the one he preached to the other (Acts 13:42; 20:21).

-- **When Paul turned from the Jews** to the Gentiles he said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Consider carefully, it was not the kingdom he was preaching, nor was it the kingdom of which they had judged themselves unworthy. Also, in the following two verses (13:47, 48) not the kingdom but salvation and eternal life were the issues.

-- **The "hope of Israel"** Paul mentions in Acts was not the kingdom, but resurrection (Acts 26:6 - 8).

-- **When Paul preached** that Jesus was the Christ ("Messiah" -- Acts 17:3; 18:5) he was not offering the kingdom, but identifying who Jesus was. If this sounds "Jewish," let one reflect that Paul referred to our Lord as "Christ" ("Messiah") forty six times in Ephesians, thirty seven times in Philippians, and twenty six times in Colossians -- all in these "Prison Epistles."

-- **If the references to the kingdom of God** in Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25 and 28:23 indicate he was offering the kingdom to Israel, then he continued to offer it to Israel for two full years after he arrived in Rome (Acts 28:30, 31) and was also offering it in Colossians (4:11)!

-- **Paul describes the ministry** which he received of the Lord Jesus (that he expected to continue in Jerusalem, and until his course was finished) not as an offering of the kingdom to Israel, but as a testifying to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

-- **Paul's burden for Israel** during his Acts ministry was not to see them established in their kingdom. Instead, he wept over them because they were not saved (Rom. 9:1 - 3; 10:1; 11:14; etc.). The gospel that was "to the Jew first" was not spoken of as the power of God unto acceptance of the kingdom, but the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). He sought out the Jews first, but this does not indicate he had a different message for them. The same epistle stipulating "to the Jew first" as far as the order of hearing it is concerned (Rom. 1:16) tells us "there is no difference" as concerns the message to them (Rom. 3:22; 10:12).

-- **If Acts 28:28 marks the time** when there would be no more offer of that kingdom to Israel, then Paul never offered that kingdom. Acts 28:28 says, "Let it be known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles --." When had it been sent to them? At Acts 18:6? No, earlier than that. At Acts 13:46? No, still earlier. It was when Paul was converted in Acts nine that Christ said to him, "- delivering you from the Jewish people and the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you" (Acts 26:17 NASB). Is it objected that in this verse he is being sent to both "the Jewish people and the Gentiles"? It appears that the deliverance is from the Jews and the commission is to the Gentiles -- but if not, then hear Christ speaking to Paul just three years later. "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21). Subsequently Paul turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46) and went to them (Acts 18:6) but he had already, shortly after his conversion, been sent to the Gentiles with his gospel.

Then what was Paul doing in Acts as far as Israel was concerned? More importantly, what was God doing through him?

In early Acts God was offering the kingdom to Israel as a nation. This offer could only be made at the capital city, Jerusalem; and only be acted on by their constituted leaders, the Sanhedrin. The offer was rejected by that body and Israel, as a nation, was set aside.

In the remainder of Acts God is manifesting His faithfulness to individual Jews, as such, who were scattered all over the Roman Empire. They had had no voice in the decision reached by their leaders. God could not recognize their place of privilege as Jews by offering them the kingdom, for that decision had to be made at headquarters -- and had already been finalized. But He could give them the first opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation and be saved by God's grace. This He did through Paul's ministry. In city after city the Jews heard first. Some believed, but when the majority, like their leaders, rejected the message it was taken to the local Gentiles.

Did anything special happen when Paul arrived in Rome? By that time the ground had been covered geographically. The individual Jews from Jerusalem, capital of Judaism, to Rome, capital of Gentiledom, had had their opportunity to hear the gospel. God had shown Himself faithful to them. He had gone the second mile. From then on there was no further requirement to seek out Jews first to hear the salvation message.

The scattered Jews had a right to expect the signs promised in the Old Testament as long as God was speaking to them as Jews -- even though the message was strictly a personal salvation offer. The signs continued. Special terminology having meaning for them, but more or less meaningless to Gentiles, was retained. But once the ground had been covered geographically from Jerusalem to Rome these adaptations could be deleted and the message and program, which had already been instituted, could enter into its full and normal course for this age. The same message of salvation continues to go to any Jew who will listen, but not on the basis that he is a Jew. He is now to be approached as just another sinner in need of a Savior. (A study of the Class Notes on First Corinthians, available from W. P. Heath, could be of help in better understanding the transition period.)

**THE TESTIMONY OF ROMANS -- Israel's Blinding and Setting Aside.**

The extreme dispensationalist claims that the blinding and setting aside of Israel before Acts 28 was partial, but after the end of Acts they were completely blinded and totally set aside -- ushering in the "mystery program" which had its beginning there.

It might be helpful to ask them several questions:

-- **Where**, in the Prison Epistles, does it say that this asserted change at Acts 28 came because of the complete setting aside of Israel?

The word "Israel" is found only in Phil. 3:5 and Eph. 2:12. In the former, Paul merely tells us he is an Israelite by birth; in the latter he states that before the "one new man" we Gentiles were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.

The word "Jew" is used only once in these letters. Col. 3:11 reveals that when we have put on the new man there is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all. None of these touch on the setting aside of Israel. Where, then, is their verse?

-- **Where**, in the Prison Epistles, does it say that a total blindness has come to Israel? Both the noun and verb "blind" are completely missing from these letters, as is the verb "blinded." The word "blindness" which is used in Rom. 11:25 is found only once in the Prison Epistles, in Eph. 4:18. But there nothing is said about the blindness of Israel. Instead it has to do with the blindness of Gentiles! "Walk not as other Gentiles walk ... being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17, 18). Where is their verse?

-- **Where**, even in the Pre-prison Epistles, does it teach that a total blindness will come on Israel? The very point of Romans chapters nine to eleven is that both the blindness (Rom. 11:25) and the setting aside (Rom. 9:27, 29; 11:1 - 5) are partial and temporary. Notice it well that following the fall and casting away of Israel there is to come their fulness and the receiving of them as alive from the dead (Rom. 11:1, 12, 15). There is no mention here of a harder fall and a more complete setting aside still ahead of them. Where is their verse?

-- **In Paul's earliest letter** he states, "But wrath has come upon them [the Jews] to the utmost" (1 Thess. 2:16 -- NASB). **Where**, in the Prison Epistles, does it say there was a greater wrath in store for them, which befell them after Paul arrived in Rome? The word used here for "wrath" is found six times in the Prison Epistles. The Gentiles addressed in Ephesians two (see 2:11) were "children of wrath" before their salvation (2:3). The "wrath of God [cometh] upon the children of disobedience" according to Eph. 5:6. (The present tense ["cometh"] rules out a reference to Israel's having been put under God's wrath at Acts 28. Col. 3:6 is an exact parallel reference here). Eph. 4:31 and Col. 3:8 are speaking about men's wrath, as is the remaining passage in 1 Tim. 2:8. Where, then, is their verse?

It is obvious that they must go outside the Prison Epistles for the thought that the dispensation of grace was introduced upon the fall of Israel. It is equally clear that outside the Prison Epistles this setting aside was partial and temporary, and had already taken place before Paul wrote his first epistle!

It is to be expected that they have a verse -- or perhaps several of them -- upon which they depend for this teaching. But in our search we do not find a single one teaching a complete blinding and total setting aside for Israel as a nation which took place at Acts 28.

### **THE TESTIMONY OF ROMANS -- The Olive Tree**

It is important to see that the Olive Tree in Rom. 11:17 - 24 relates to God's testimony in the world. The only other significant reference to the olive tree in the New Testament is Rev. 11:4. Here the "two olive trees" are called also "two candlesticks." In Zech. 4:2, 3, 11 - 14 we discover why these men have the double designation of "olive trees" and "candlesticks." The candlesticks are not holding candles, as we know them, but lamps that are fed by the "golden oil" flowing from the olive trees through the "golden pipes." That the idea portrayed is testimony is crystal clear, for in Rev. 11:3 these two men are called "witnesses."

God has had a testimony in the world ever since He cast the Gentiles aside in Genesis eleven. At first it was Abraham and his descendents. Later, when Israel became a nation, they were God's witnesses. They are described as "a kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), "ministers of our God" (Isa. 61:6), "My servant" (Isa. 44:1) and "My witnesses" (Isa. 44:8). "'- You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'that I am God'" (Isa. 43:12 -- NKJV).

But, in Jeremiah's day, Israel had been taken into captivity and even Judah had lost its testimony. "-- Your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal" (Jer. 11:13 NASB). In light of this Jeremiah continues, "The Lord called your name 'A Green Olive Tree, Beautiful in Form.' With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled a fire on it, and its branches are worthless" (Jer. 11:16). The Revised Standard Version and the Amplified Bible translate the last phrase, "its branches will be consumed." At that time many in Judah were destroyed and the rest taken into captivity -- but a limited testimony still went out through Israel as Ezekiel and Daniel lived and wrote for God among the Gentiles.

After Israel crucified her Messiah, and further spurned Him even after His resurrection, it was time for an even greater fire to be kindled on the "Green Olive Tree" (See 1 Thess. 2:15, 16). Instead, God pushed the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) into the distant future, removed the nation, as such, from its place of testimony (the breaking off of the branches) and began a new unprophesied program. The responsibility of being God's witnesses in the world passed largely to Gentiles (the grafting in of the wild olive branches). The ministry for this age of grace was entrusted to one who was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" -- but a Roman citizen and apostle to the Gentiles (Phil. 3:5; Acts 22:27, 28; Rom. 11:13). He passed the torch of testimony on (2 Tim. 2:2) to one young man who was half Jew and half Gentile, and (in Titus) to another who was a Gentile. From that time on the ministry was more and more a Gentile undertaking. An occasional son of Abraham joined in the testimony as an evidence that the setting aside of Israel is not total.

Does it offend the sensibilities of some to think of themselves as grafted into this place of testimony among the (Jewish) natural branches? Then should they not also recoil from Eph. 2:19 where, as the context discloses, the saints among whom we are "fellow-citizens" are Jewish

saints?

What is God's present witness in the world (His Olive Tree)? Was there a time, later than the writing of Romans, when all of the natural branches were broken off? In Paul's language, when he ponders this suggestion (Rom. 11:1), "God forbid!" Has the tree itself been cut down? That would, in the symbolism of this chapter, leave God without a witness. No, today, and in the day Paul penned Romans, the wild olive branches are still grafted in among the few remaining natural ones.

What is the future of the Olive Tree? The day will come when Christendom will have so lost her testimony that the believing remnant -- both Jews and Gentiles -- will be taken to glory, the remaining unprofitable wild olive branches cut off, and the natural branches grafted back in. Israel will be given the responsibility as God's witness in the world once again.

As soon as the Rapture occurs the responsibility for testimony in the world is placed back upon Israel. Those Gentiles who had a real ministry have been taken to heaven and God starts over "from scratch" with 144,000 Israelites. These witnesses are not some sect of Christianity, but Jews -- very carefully related to their respective tribes (Rev. 7:4 - 8). Twice in the messages to the seven churches (tribulation churches, in the primary meaning of the passage) there is reference to those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Why would they claim to be Jews if not in order to minister to these churches? To be sure, many Gentiles will be won to Christ during this time and have a personal testimony, but one looks in vain for a Gentile ministry in the book of Revelation. The wild branches have been broken off and the natural branches have been grafted back in.

When, at the return of Christ, all Israel shall have been saved, they will finally be what God from the first intended them to be -- His servants, His ministers, His witnesses and a kingdom of priests. Then it will come to pass that "-- ten men . . . out of all languages of the nations . . . shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

The Olive Tree is an answer to more than one false teaching.

It is the answer to those who teach that Israel has been totally abandoned by God, for some natural branches remain and others will later be grafted in again.

It poses a real problem for those who teach that the church will go through the Tribulation. In effect, the post tribulationists must say that the 144,000 saved Jews will be grafted into the church of this age. If their theory is correct, the natural branches of Romans eleven should be grafted in among the wild olive branches so they could serve together during the Tribulation. But Paul indicates the wild olive branches will be broken off first and then the natural branches will be grafted back into their own Olive Tree.

It is particularly devastating to the Acts 28 theory. They deny that today we are the branches grafted into the Olive Tree, but have no answer as to how the removal took place. Believers in the time that Romans was penned were in the Olive Tree, as the text in Romans

eleven verifies. This includes the believers to whom Paul later wrote in Ephesians. But how did these believers get out of the Olive Tree? It tells us that "because of UNBELIEF" the natural branches were broken off and that the branches from the wild olive tree would remain only if they "continue in His goodness." Did the new message and program said to have begun at Acts 28 cause these believers to fail to continue in His goodness -- to be "cut off" because of unbelief? No other explanation for severance of this relationship is found, either here or in the Prison Epistles. The abiding of the wild olive branches in the Olive Tree was to continue until such time as God was ready to graft in the natural branches again. This is further emphasized when it tells us that the partial blindness is to continue until the full number of Gentiles is brought in -- and be followed, not by an even more completely Gentile program, but by the salvation of all Israel! (Rom. 11:25, 26).

It should not have to be pointed out that the relationship to the Olive Tree does not have to do with the salvation of individuals, but with the responsibility for testimony of national Israel on the one hand and professing Christianity on the other. The natural branches which were broken off were not believing Jews who had had a lapse of faith, but the totally lost, unbelieving nation over which Paul weeps in Rom. 9:1 - 3 and 10:1. The wild olive branches to be cut off in the future will not be true believers who have fallen into sin or unbelief (for even these weak ones will be caught away to heaven). They will be the totally lost and unbelieving professing church which will be left behind at the Rapture to be swallowed up by the One World Church of the Tribulation.

### **THE TESTIMONY OF ROMANS -- The Doxologies.**

It is little wonder that Paul bursts into a double doxology in Romans: one at the close of the parenthetical section (Romans chapters nine through eleven) and another at the close of the book.

In Rom. 11:33 - 36 Paul looks back upon God's dispensational strategy. *Had Israel crucified their Messiah?* -- God makes that crucifixion a basis for offering them, in good faith, forgiveness and their kingdom! *Have they rejected the offered kingdom?* -- God makes it the occasion for offering salvation to all sinners, Jew or Gentile, under a newly revealed program among Gentiles! *Has Israel been set aside nationally?* -- Salvation is still available to them personally and the very turning to Gentiles will provoke some Jews to jealousy and cause many of them to turn at last to the Savior! *Will even the Gentiles fail to appreciate this amazing grace and turn away in apostasy?* -- God will make it the occasion to work again among His own people! *Will the Gentiles be cut off from ministry during the Tribulation?* -- The Jewish evangelists will bring multitudes of Gentiles to the Cross during this period. Every time Satan thinks he has won a victory, God turns it into a demonstration of His wisdom and an outpouring of His grace!

God had made Israel's casting away to be riches to the Gentiles. The cutting off of the Gentiles will trigger the receiving of the favored nation back as from the dead. Their reinstatement will be much more riches for Gentiles. (See Pages 60 - 64 in "A City of Two Tales" by W. P. Heath, published by Grace Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

How unsearchable indeed are His judgments and his ways past finding out!

Let us not leave Romans 11:33 until we point out that the same word translated "past finding out" is used in Eph. 3:8 where it speaks of the "unsearchable" riches of Christ. If, in Ephesians, this word means that the riches of Christ are unsearchable because they cannot be traced through the Old Testament Scriptures, then the wisdom of God in His dispensational tactics (revealed in Romans chapters nine through eleven) also cannot be traced through the Old Testament. Both alike, in Romans and in Ephesians, are on "mystery" ground.

But does it not say specifically in Ephesians that the mystery spoken of in that book was "not made known unto the sons of men," and, in the same chapter, that it was "hid in God" (Eph. 3:5, 9)? This is true. But it also says in Rom. 16:25 that the mystery known in that book was "kept secret since the world began," and only now "made manifest" by prophetic writings -- evidently Paul's own writings (v. 26 -- Greek).

Romans 16:25, 26, as it stands, is a total and final blow to the Acts 28 view. Hence every effort has to be made, and has been made, by them to twist, distort, destroy or otherwise render ineffectual this glorious passage of Holy Writ.

Since some manuscripts do not have these verses it would seem easy to just disregard them and throw them away. This is not as easy as it sounds. It is not merely these two verses that have been omitted in some manuscripts -- but the entire fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Romans. It is far easier to account for these two chapters, with their largely personal matters, being left off when making hand written copies of the heavy doctrinal portion, than to imagine such a lengthy passage being added as a "scribal error" of some kind. But even in some copies deleting chapters fifteen and sixteen, these verses are found at the end of chapter fourteen. In some (as though a scribe thought to close his copy with chapter fourteen and then changed his mind) they are found twice, both at the close of chapter fourteen and the end of chapter sixteen!

Not only that. There is a link between these verses and the opening of Romans which ties them in as a fitting and necessary conclusion to the book. In Rom. 1:11 Paul longs to see the believers in Rome that he might have a ministry among them, to the end that they might be "established." Then in Rom. 16:25 he tells us what it is that will "stablish" them (the same Greek word). It is Paul's gospel and the "preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery" which will accomplish this. In Rom. 1:5 Paul tells us he has received "grace and apostleship to bring about obedience of faith among the Gentiles" (NASB). Then, in Rom. 16:26, the mystery (in light of which Paul could preach the gospel) "has been made known to all the nations, leading to the obedience of faith" (NASB).

Even E. W. Bullinger (who had a problem with these verses) agrees that they belong to Romans and that the epistle would be incomplete without them. His method of handling this passage is clever, but totally without scriptural proof. He suggests that Paul wrote the epistle without these verses and then -- after he arrived in Rome and had received the mystery -- added them to the letter they had received earlier. There is not even a hint of such a course of action in the Word, and so tampering with a document without stating that a change has been made borders on pious fraud. Also there are other indications this did not take place.



Paul's letters were widely copied and circulated even during his life time. He himself encouraged this in Col. 4:16, "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Peter, writing only about three years after Paul arrived in Rome, not only had a knowledge of all of Paul's epistles but assumed that those to whom he was writing did also. "As also in all of his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). Since the believers in Rome had had this epistle for over two years before Paul arrived, it is reasonably certain there were copies of it widely scattered by the time Paul could have added anything to its contents. Such an addition would give the readers the false impression (false if he really did this) that the mystery was known and preached two years earlier than it was. Paul might not have foreseen the confusion this would cause in later years when various copies of the letter were compared, but surely the God who inspired him would not make such a serious blunder.

But even if they were added after Paul reached Rome these verses still are solid evidence that the mystery was known and preached before Acts 28.

Paul states clearly that the mystery which had been "kept secret for long ages past ... now is manifested, and ... has been made known to all nations --" (Rom. 16:25, 26 NASB). He is not saying, "It has been made available to all nations," but "it has been made known." He is not saying "It is being made known now that I am in Rome" but it "has been made known." Not merely had it already been made known when Paul penned these lines -- it had been made known to all nations. In days when there was no printing press, no telephone, no Fax machine, no fast transportation and no radio or television it would take time -- lots of time -- to make any message known to all nations. He can only be referring to his Acts ministry. It had taken him years of diligent work and hard travel to make his message known in other areas so that he could be free to go to Rome (Rom. 15:20 - 24). As a prisoner in Rome, totally unable to travel, he could not possibly, in such a short time, have a ministry that would justify his statement, "It has been made known to all nations."

But another answer is forthcoming from these brethren. They point out that in Eph. 1:4 it says we were chosen in Him "before the foundation of the world." Therefore, they reason, since the mystery of Rom. 16:25 was only kept secret "since the world began" and not "before the world began" it cannot be the same mystery which is put before us in Ephesians three. This can hardly be considered seriously when one realizes that in Eph. 3:5 it also does not say the mystery was hidden before the foundation of the world. It only says that "in other ages" it was not made known. It is unfair to compare Romans 16:25 with Eph. 1:3 on the basis of a reference to when the world began, for the word "world" is not found in the Greek of Rom. 16:25 any more than it is in Eph. 3:5! The NASB correctly translates it, "-- which has been kept secret for long ages past." Rom. 16:25 and Eph. 3:5 tell the same story -- that this truth, known to God for "long ages past," had never been revealed to others until it was made known through Paul and his writings!

This passage (Rom. 16:25, 26) stands! These verses alone, if believed and given the

weight they deserve, should close all discussion about the age of grace (with its gospel of grace, its mystery program and its one Body) beginning at Acts 28. It simply cannot be so. There must be other, more carefully thought out, solutions to the problems posed in Paul's epistles.

## CONCLUSION.

A doctor may be able to cure someone of local infection if he takes the easy way out and just amputates the affected part. But there is a better way, a way which does not leave one a cripple. To brush off the problems observed in the Pre-prison Epistles by amputation (just cutting them off from us dispensationally) leaves us with a mutilated message from our Apostle, and we will be spiritual cripples from the loss. To turn away from truth after truth with the remark, "That is Jewish" will eventually rob us of the Savior who, according to the very last letter Paul wrote, is a "descendent of David" (2 Tim. 2:8 NASB). **He too, is "Jewish"!**

I plead with our sincere and able brethren to turn from this fallacy and use their scholarship to solve the problems, not merely to cut ourselves off from them. There are solutions to them all -- soul satisfying, Christ honoring, Scripturally sound answers. The Acts 28 view does not bring answers -- it just throws away the problems.

--- William P Heath, from the book "Help in Hard Places." (Revised 9/98)

<My Documents\books\help\Acts-28> on Microsoft Word

## **MIRACULOUS GIFTS and THEIR PLACE IN THE CHURCH TODAY**

Has God removed the "sign gifts" from the church of this age? Are the professed gifts of our charismatic brethren but fleshly, and possibly satanic, counterfeits?

We have no desire to misrepresent the teaching of the Word of God or to misjudge those who, in all good conscience, believe that the miraculous gifts are as much for today as they were for the period covered by the book of Acts. To face this problem honestly we must study the Word of God. Experience should be explained in light of "Thus saith the Lord." It must not be allowed to replace it, or to be the basis for its interpretation. But we must also study the Scriptures dispensationally, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

### **DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIONS**

That God deals differently with men under different circumstances is shown by the following contrasts (listed by Charles Baker in "A Dispensational Synopsis").

- "Don't take a purse" --- "Take a purse" (Luke 22:35, 36).
- "Eat only herbs" --- "Eat every living thing that moveth" (Gen. 9:3).
- "Every male circumcised" --- "If ye be circumcised Christ will profit you nothing" (Gen. 17:10 & Gal. 5:2).
- "Go ye therefore ... baptizing" --- "Christ sent me not to baptize" (Matt. 28:19 & 1 Cor. 1:17).
- "Go not to the Gentiles" --- "Preach to every creature" (Matt. 10:5 & Mark 16:15).
- "Heal the sick" --- "Use a little wine [as a medication] for thy stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities" (Matt. 10:8 & 1 Tim. 5:23).

We must observe these distinctions and follow the instructions for our own age. What is the "truth of God" for one age can be the "doctrine of demons" for another. Contrast Lev. 11:4 - 8 (for a past age) and Isa. 66:17 (for the coming Tribulation) with 1 Tim. 4:1, 3 - 5 (the program for today).

How can we be sure we are following the right orders for this Age of Grace? The general rule is, "Listen to Paul," for he is the Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13). To him was committed the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. 3:2) and the revelation which is for this age (Eph. 3:3; Col. 1:25, 26).

### **KEY SCRIPTURES**

In Paul's epistles we find several important passages on this matter:

- The historical occasion and the gracious purpose for this Age of Grace are found chiefly in Romans chapters nine through eleven, with the book of Acts as background.
- The doctrinal significance of this change of dispensation is given in Rom. 16:25, 26 and in Ephesians chapters three and four.
- Many practical effects of the change in dispensation are set forth in First Corinthians.

In First Corinthians God lets us know which parts of the program in force during the "transition period" (the latter part of the book of Acts) will continue and which will be dropped. This book indicates, for instance, that water baptism is to be deleted, but that the Lord's Table is

to continue "until He come." It is in this intensely dispensational book that three chapters are given over to a discussion of the sign gifts. The center chapter of the three teaches that these gifts were temporary and are to be replaced with something "more excellent."

First Corinthians twelve through fourteen is the key passage on the miraculous gifts. Though some of the gifts listed in this section are "sign" gifts and some are "revelatory" (See "Tongues and the Sign Gifts" by Vernon A. Schutz) -- most are openly supernatural in character. The issue must eventually be decided largely on the basis of these chapters. We must clearly see the message set forth here. It is suggested that the following outline, interspersed with explanatory comments, be **studied**, not merely **read**.

### OUTLINE STUDY OF FIRST CORINTHIANS TWELVE THROUGH FOURTEEN.

- 1A.** (1 Cor. 12:1 - 3) Introduction to these three chapters.
- 1B.** 12:1-a. The subject of the chapters is stated. It is the "spiritual gifts" or "spirituals" -- matters in which the Holy Spirit is manifesting His leadership.
- 2B.** 12:1-b. The basis for the study is knowledge (the opposite of "ignorance"), not experience or feelings.
- 3B.** 12:2, 3. A necessary distinction to be noted.
- 1C.** 12:2. It is possible to be led by spirits other than the **Holy Spirit**. The Corinthians were totally under such "spiritual" leadership when they were unsaved idol worshippers.
- 2C.** 12:3. Both the leadership of the Holy Spirit and of the other spirits can be experienced by believers (see 1 John 4:1).

### COMMENT -----

The way to recognize the leadership of the **Holy Spirit** is by the subjection to **Christ** as **Lord**, which He produces in the believer.

Saying, "Jesus is Lord" is more than merely pronouncing the words. This is clear from several passages.

-- Men who "say" (present tense) and "will say" (future), "**LORD, LORD,**" -- and who do what they consider "**wonderful works**" are told by Christ at the judgment, "**I never knew you**" (Matt. 7:21 - 23).

-- The foolish virgins, who took no oil in their lamps, cry out, "**LORD, LORD,** open to us," and receive the answer, "**I know you not**" (Matt. 25:11, 12).

-- **Satan himself**, speaking through Peter, says, "Be it far from Thee, **LORD**" (Matt. 16:22, 23).

The meaning of saying, "Jesus is Lord" is indicated in Luke 6:46. "Why call ye me 'Lord, Lord' and do not the things which I say?" Linking this with 1 Cor. 14:37, the Holy Spirit's leadership today can be recognized by accepting the writings of Paul as the Word of God, and basing our actions on the truths given to us in these chapters in First Corinthians.

- 2A.** 12:4 - 11. The **diversity** of **gifts** given to believers. Here is **diversity** without **division** --the answer to **denominationalism**.

- 1B.** 12:4 - 6. In spite of the difference in "gifts," "administrations," and "operations" it is the triune God who is the unifying **source** of the program. (Here the three

Persons of the Trinity are listed in the order -- Spirit, Son, and Father. In 2 Cor. 13:14 it is -- Son, Father, and Spirit, and in Matt. 28:19 it is "Father, Son and Holy Spirit").

- 2B.** 12:7. The underlying **purpose** unifies the program. The gifts are given "to profit withal" or "for the common good" -- NASB (New American Standard Bible).
  - 3B.** 12:8 - 10. The gifts **TO** men listed (cp. 4A, 2B below).
  - 4B.** 12:11. That which determines which gift is given to a believer is the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit.
- 3A.** 12:12 - 26. The **unity** of the Body of Christ **in spite of differing gifts**. Here is **unity** without **union** -- the answer to **ecumenicalism**.
- 1B.** 12:12 - 14. Unity of the Body **accomplished**, through the baptism by the Holy Spirit.
  - 2B.** 12:15 - 26. Unity of the Body **illustrated** by comparison to the human body.
- 4A.** 12:27 - 30. **Diversity** of gifted **men** set in the Body.

**COMMENT** -----

The gifts are listed in the order of importance, "First ... secondarily, ... thirdly." So listed, tongues is last (least important). Also there are two orders of importance indicated by the expression, "-- after that --." The second group of gifts (miracles, healings, helps, governments, tongues) seems to be in a different category of importance, significantly less important than the first three. Both healing and tongues are in this latter group.

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- 1B.** 12:27. The unity in diversity -- one Body many members.
  - 2B.** 12:28. The list of gifted **MEN**.
  - 3B.** 12:29, 30. No gift possessed by everyone. They are distributed among the believers.
- 5A.** 12:31 -- 14:25. The **priority** of gifts.
- 1B.** 12:31 -- 14:1-a. Their priority in light of the temporary nature of the whole miraculous gift program. There is a "more excellent way" than this total program.
  - 1C.** 12:31. The best gifts are to be preferred (while the program is still in force), and there is something better than all of these gifts put together.
  - 2C.** 13:1 - 13. Love is more excellent than the miraculous gift program: --
    - 1D.** 13:1 - 3. Because the miraculous gifts are of **NO** value without **love**, even while they are still in the church.

**COMMENT** -----

The items in these three verses are listed in order of increasing importance. Paul is building up his case by saying, in effect, "The **least** of the gifts is of no value without love -- without love, even the **best** of them is of no value!"

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- 1E.** 13:1. Tongues without love is just "noise pollution."

- 2E.** 13:2. The more important gifts are also of no value without love.
- 3E.** 13:3. Even the **outward indication** of love is of no value without **LOVE!**
- 2D.** 13:4 - 7. The miraculous gifts do not, and cannot, produce the traits of godly Christian living that love produces.

**COMMENT** -----

It is noteworthy that the Corinthians were practicing all of the gifts (1 Cor. 1:7) yet failed completely to fit the description of Christian character outlined in these verses. In First and Second Corinthians Paul had to scold them for failure in these very matters. In spite of all these gifts, they were **NOT** spiritual, but **CARNAL** (1 Cor. 3:1). If we learn from this chapter **only** that the miraculous gifts have been removed, we have missed the most important lesson of the chapter. If we do not have and enjoy the gift of **LOVE**, then even the knowledge we have about the gifts being withdrawn will be of no real value!

- 3D.** 13:8 - 13. The miraculous gifts are to be **removed** from the church by God, but **love** is to **remain**.
- 1E.** 13:8. The miraculous gift program **will cease** (be discontinued).

**COMMENT** -----

The three gifts mentioned here are representative of the **whole program**. Tongues are mentioned because this gift is the least of the gifts; prophecy because it is the greatest of them; knowledge, perhaps, because it is the one which would seem most likely to continue. Both tongues and (the supernatural gift of) knowledge were a problem in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 8:1, 7, 10 and many other verses in chapter fourteen concerning tongues). To see that the whole miraculous gift program is represented here, see what **remains** when this eighth verse is fulfilled. "Faith, hope, and love, these three [meaning **only** these three] remain:" not "faith, hope, love, **healing, tongues, etc.**"

- 2E.** 13:9, 10. **When** the program is to cease.

**COMMENT** -----

The miraculous gift program was an incomplete revelation, and will be done away when the complete revelation comes. "That which is perfect" does not refer to **Christ** coming, for the Greek word for "that" is neuter gender ("that **thing**"), not masculine. It is not **us being caught away** at the Rapture, for it is not us going to that which is perfect, but that which is perfect coming to us. It is not really speaking about that which is **perfect** in contrast to what is "**imperfect**," but that which is perfect (**complete**) in contrast to what is "**in part**." (See "Treasures from the Greek New Testament" -- Kenneth S. Wuest, pages 117, 118).

The word translated "men" (in contrast to "children") in 1 Cor. 14:20 is the same word translated "perfect" in 13:10. The subject is revelation (which comes by prophecy and results in knowledge -- 13:9). Therefore "that which is perfect" is a complete, mature revelation which would come to the church to replace the partial revelation through the miraculous gift program.

- 3E.** 13:11, 12. **Why** the program is to cease.
- 1F.** 13:11. Because it is only intended to meet the temporary needs of the Body of Christ during its changing childhood (the transition period).
- 2F.** 13:12. Because it is insufficient to meet the needs of the "adult" church (The church from the end of Acts to the Rapture).
- 4E.** 13:13. **What remains** after the miraculous gifts are withdrawn.

**COMMENT** -----

The "now" in verse thirteen refers to the time mentioned in verse eight. The verse could be paraphrased, "And **now** [after the temporary program is removed] there will remain faith, hope, and love -- these three [**only**]: but the greatest of these [three] is love."

Three periods are in view in First Corinthians thirteen. There is a time when the miraculous gifts are in the church and so also are Faith, Hope, and Love. There is a second period when the miraculous gifts have been done away and only Faith, Hope, and Love remain. At the Rapture, however, Faith becomes sight (Heb. 11:1), Hope becomes realization (Rom. 8:24), and only Love remains (1 Cor. 13:8). Love is the greatest of the three (since **duration in time** is the characteristic in view in this section). The removal of the miraculous gifts cannot come at the Rapture, or there would never be a time when Faith, Hope and Love would be **present** with the miraculous gifts **missing**. They must disappear previous to the Rapture. The first time period above is from the beginning of the Body of Christ until its maturity at the completion of the Pauline revelation: the second is from then until the Rapture: the third extends from the Rapture on into eternity. "Love **never** faileth!"

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- 3C.** 14:1-a. Follow after love. That is, it is best not to get one's heart set on a program that is to be removed, but rather on that which will remain.
- 2B.** 14:1-b - 25. Priority in light of the comparative value of the miraculous gifts (while the program is still in operation). Prophecy is better than tongues:
- 1C.** 14:1-b - 5. Because tongues minister to self, prophecy ministers to the church.
- 2C.** 14:6 - 12. Because tongues do not accomplish a purpose in the church, prophecy edifies the church.
- 3C.** 14:13 - 19. Because tongues require an interpreter, prophecy does not.
- 4C.** 14:20. Because tongues are linked to immaturity and childishness.
- 5C.** 14:21 - 25. Because tongues are a sign to condemn **Israel** and may cause the unbelieving Gentiles to stumble. By contrast, prophecy may lead either or both to the Lord.
- 6A.** 14:26 - 40. Rules for the exercise of the gifts (while they are still active).
- 1B.** 14:26 - 28. Rules for those who speak in tongues.
- 2B.** 14:29 - 33. Rules for those who prophesy.
- 2B.** 14:34, 35. Women's place in the program.
- 4B.** 14:36 - 40. Paul's place in the program.

- 1C. 14:36. The Corinthians are **NOT** the authority. The Word of God did not originate **with** them, nor was it preached only **to** them.
- 2C. 14:37. **Paul** is the authority.

**COMMENT** -----

True spirituality is shown by those who agree that Paul **IS** the authority. The one who makes Christ truly Lord (see 12:3) will obey His messenger. This refers not only to the rules for using the gifts (14:26 - 35), but also to his teaching that the program is to be done away (13:8 - 13)! One who ignores Paul's teaching in chapter thirteen and tries to carry on a program which **God Himself** has removed from the church is not really spiritual, not **really** calling Christ "Lord"!

- 3C. 14:38 - 40. Closing instructions.
  - 1D. 14:38. Concerning the one who ignores Paul's authority -- he is to be ignored.

**COMMENT** -----

"If any one does not recognize this [the truth of verse 37] he is not to be recognized" -- NASB. The thought is that no one is recognized to have a ministry in the church who does not follow Paul's instructions regarding such ministry.

- 2D. 14:39. The **best** gifts are to be **desired**, while the gift of **tongues** is to be **tolerated** (not forbidden) as long as the program remains in the church.
- 3D. 14:40. Orderliness is to characterize the church ministry (both before and after the miraculous gifts are removed).

**FINAL COMMENT** -----

Many have turned to the miraculous gift program thinking to find in it something **REAL** and **satisfying**. If they had seen the gift of **LOVE** in the church, they would have found **TRUE reality** and that which **abundantly satisfies**. Let us not be content merely to proclaim that the miraculous gifts are gone. Let us also **demonstrate** that which is "more excellent" -- **LOVE** -- and let them find satisfaction and spirituality through our churches and us!

**SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS**

**1. Doesn't 1 Cor. 13:12 indicate that the time when the gifts will be removed is when the Rapture takes place?**

--- **Answer:**

**No.** (See **5A, 1B, 2C, 3D, and 2E** in the outline of First Corinthians twelve through fourteen).

1 Cor. 13:12 is a contrast between the incomplete knowledge of the truths of God made possible by the miraculous gift program, and the fulness of knowledge which would come with the completion of Paul's epistles.

"- Through a glass darkly - " is translated "- in a mirror, in an enigma [riddle or puzzle]"



by the Scofield margin. The "mirror" has to do with the **eye**, the "enigma" with the **ear**. Compare 1 Cor. 2:9, "-**Eye** hath not seen, nor **ear** heard ... the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." The "things" in this verse have to do with the "mystery" as 1 Cor. 2:7 indicates. The eye and ear received but an incomplete revelation of these "things" through the miracle gift program. However "God hath revealed them unto us -" (1 Cor 2:10). How? By the Rapture? No, but "by His Spirit." Then they were spoken (or, more permanently, "written") "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but [words] which the Holy Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). The complete, permanent revelation in view here comes not through seeing Christ with our eyes, but through **words** given by His Spirit.

The expression "face to face" is a figure of speech with which Paul must have been very familiar. According to Ezek. 20:35, 36, when Israel was in the wilderness God pleaded with them "face to face" -- and He will do so again during the Tribulation. But Israel never literally saw God's face during their wanderings, and in the Tribulation Israel will not see His face at the time He "purges out the rebels" (Ezek. 20:38). It is later, in the land, that they will literally look on Him whom they have pierced and will be saved (Zech. 12:10). In Ex. 33:11 it says, "The Lord spake unto Moses **face to face**" -- yet, in the same chapter, it says, "**My face shall not be seen,**" and Moses saw only His "back parts" (v. 23).

A similar figure of speech is used in Num. 12:8. "With him [Moses] will I speak **mouth to mouth ... not in dark speeches** [enigmas or riddles]."

These expressions have to do with directness (as in His judgments in the wilderness), friendly frankness (as in Ex. 33:11), and completeness and clarity (as in Num. 12:8). Clearly, this is the way the expression is used in 1 Cor. 13:12 also. It is a contrast between the incomplete and indirect revelation available through the miracle gift program and the complete and direct revelation that will be theirs through Paul's completed written ministry.

## **2. Is there a verse stating that the gift of healing has been removed from the church?**

--- **ANSWER:**

**No.** (See **5A, 1B, 2C, 3D, and 1E** of the outline). There is also no verse saying that God is a Trinity, yet we believe this is clearly taught in the Word of God.

The evidences that the gift of healing has been removed from the church include, briefly, the following:

-- The Whole miraculous gift program is looked at as a unit in First Corinthians. In 1 Cor. 13:8 three gifts are specifically spoken of as being removed but, after the removal, the gifts remaining are only Faith, Hope, and Love. Healing must have been removed also or it, too, would remain.

-- The gift of healing is never mentioned in the epistles written after Paul arrived in Rome.

-- Paul, who had the gift of healing before (Acts 19:12), did not use such a gift after his arrival in Rome. Instead, he prescribed simple medication for Timothy who was **often sick** (1 Tim. 5:23), and left a spiritual helper behind him, **sick** (2 Tim. 4:20). When a beloved helper did recover from a **sickness "nigh unto death,"** he attributed it to God having mercy rather than to God's power exercised through a healer (Phil. 2:26 - 30).

## **3. How can the healings that take place today be explained if they are not brought about by God?**

--- **ANSWER:**

An article appeared some time ago in a Manila (Philippines) newspaper telling of healings by a thirteen-year-old Catholic boy. He required people to wear a rosary and recite novenas. Then he rubbed them with coconut oil or blew on the affected part and **healed** them. The same article says, "long before the coming of the Spaniards [when the Philippines was completely heathen] faith healing had already been a practice."

In a news leaflet, "The Church around the World," for Dec. 1974, this item appeared. "Some **medical doctors** in South Africa are proposing that **witch doctors** [heathen] should work as paramedics [helpers to the doctors] among the blacks, over whom they exert tremendous control. These doctors claim that witch doctor rituals cure some psychosomatic symptoms."

Now we ask, "How can **these** healings be explained if they are not brought about by God?" The article about the thirteen-year-old healer went on to say, "The central factor in this kind of healing is the faith and confidence of the patient, according to a Priest. There are diseases that are psychosomatic [mental only] and therefore may be subject to faith healing. The cure, then, is not necessarily and directly attributable to God. But, there are organic diseases, and only medical science (or a miracle from God) can remedy these."

Let us look at various types of "healings."

-- God sometimes genuinely undertakes in answer to prayer. A healer is not involved. Any believer can pray for himself or for others. The healing comes only as God sees fit to grant it, and is on the same basis as any other answered prayer. We believe in divine healing, but not (for the normal course of this Age of Grace) in Divine healers.

Some healings result from convincing a hypochondriac that he is not sick. In this case a "healing" can be a "face saving" device if the patient is tired (even subconsciously) of playing sick. Many medical doctors say that a large part of their patients (at least in the more affluent countries) are not really sick, they just think they are. A hypochondriac is one who has a depression of mind, usually centered on imaginary ailments (which may manifest real "symptoms").

-- Defective mental attitudes can produce real sickness. When the mental attitude is changed, by whatever means, the sickness goes.

-- The body has a great ability to heal itself. Many people who go to doctors (or healers) would get well just as quickly if they stayed home and rested. Once a doctor or healer has been consulted, however, he gets credit for what the body has done for itself.

-- Sincere testimonials to healing may be false -- due to a mistaken idea of what faith is. The idea that if you **say** you are healed ("by faith") you **are**, or **will be**, healed leads many people to testify of healings that have not happened. They are only saying so in hopes that it will be so. The basis for their testimony is pious wishful thinking rather than actual experience. This view may arise from a false interpretation of Mark 11:24, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." An illustration of this kind of faith genuinely at work is given in Luke 17:14, 15. "He said unto them [the ten lepers], 'Go shew yourselves unto the priests.' And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he **saw** that he **was healed**, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God." The **testimony** to healing in these verses came **after** the healing was a **reality**. I know of a girl who testified that she had been healed of Tuberculosis, and died the next week -- of Tuberculosis! How sad. Tragically, many will recall her testimony to healing, but forget or ignore her death the following week.

-- "Healings" may be deliberate frauds. Many healings are just an act which people are

paid to go through to try to convince folks they have been healed. They only pretend to be sick or crippled and then leave the meeting "well" or "healed" -- because they were never sick or crippled in the first place. I know personally of at least two "healings" in Southern California where the "healer" paid someone to pretend to be injured or crippled so they could be "healed" in the meetings.

-- We must not rule out possible satanic intrusions. We cannot doubt that Satan has at least some limited power to heal. Cornelius Stam writes, "But now let us see how this [the working of Satan during the Tribulation] affects us today. In the very same passage about antichrist and his 'power and signs and lying wonders,' [2 Thess. 2:9] the apostle warns that 'the mystery of iniquity **doth already work**' (2 Thess. 2:7). What does this tell us about the multiplied miraculous manifestations we are seeing all about us as the days grow darker; **tongues, healing, prophecies, ESP, witchcraft, Spiritism, etc.**, not to mention false doctrine? Obviously it tells us that these are not of God, but of Satan. A wondrous manifestation is, to some, the end of all argument. 'So and so must be of God or he couldn't work these miracles' (they say). But ... the Bible tells us differently. Satan has power, he can work wonders, but he does so to deceive and draw people away from the truth of God's glorious purpose and grace."

Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis writes, "- counterfeit manifestations in 'miraculous gifts,' prophecy, **tongues, healings, visions** and supernatural experiences of every kind possible to the **satanic powers**, may be given to the **believer**, with abundant 'texts' and 'proofs' to confirm their 'divine origin.'" She adds, "The safe path for believers at the close of the age is one of tenacious faith in the **written Word** as the sword of the Spirit, to cut the way through all the interferences and tactics of the forces of darkness, to the end." (From "War on the Saints" by Jessie Pen-Lewis. Emphasis mine)

Thus it appears that most "healings" are not really miraculous at all. Those that are miraculous -- **and linked with a "healer"** -- are very possibly part of Satan's counterfeit "sign gift" program along with tongues, visions, etc. When God sees fit to grant a truly "miraculous" healing, it will come as a result of prayer alone, and that not of a "healer" (as such) but of a simple believer petitioning his Lord. Such healings are not a part of the **program** for today, but **exceptions** granted by His gracious response to prayer -- **when it is His will.**

**4. Even if the gifts listed in First Corinthians twelve have been removed: -- Couldn't God grant miraculous gifts to someone, as an exception, if He wished?**

--- ANSWER:

No, for if God makes exceptions, and does not tell us what those exceptions are, then **any** man with **any** gift could claim that his gift, too, is an exception. We would have **no scriptural authority** to reject **any** of them. When God told us in His Word that the miracle gift program was to cease, He limited Himself to do what He had said. He expects us to believe and follow His Word. Therefore He must follow it Himself so that we **can** believe it. Heb. 6:3, "And this will we do **if God permit**" is not referring to God permitting (as an exception) something that is contrary to His Word and program, as the context indicates.

**5 Couldn't God revive the gifts to meet the growing unbelief in the "last days"?**

--- ANSWER:

No, for the book which was specifically written for our guidance during those last days (Second Timothy) does not once mention any miraculous gifts. God's only answer to the growing unbelief is to "preach the Word." In a book that predicts, so fully and accurately, the

evils of the last days it would be unthinkable that God's answer to these evils would not also be fully and accurately revealed there.

#### **6. Couldn't God give miraculous gifts that are not even mentioned in the Bible?**

--- ANSWER:

No, for He lists the **non**-miraculous gifts that are for us today to replace the miraculous gift program (Rom. 12:6 - 8 & Eph. 4:11). If these are carefully listed, how much more important it would be to list any supernatural gifts. If He gives miraculous gifts not mentioned in the Bible, then the Bible is not a complete revelation. It would leave us with no Scriptural guidance as to what the gifts were, what they were for, how they should be used, or how to recognize the counterfeits of them. No man is foolish enough to sign a check and leave it up to the one who receives it to fill in the amount. God is not a fool. He does not give us a "blank check" for gifts and leave it up to us to fill in the blanks with the kind of gifts we want -- or think we already have.

#### **7. Couldn't God do the healing in answer to prayer?**

--- ANSWER:

**YES!** However, when God works in answer to prayer it will be when we **JUST PRAY**. We must also remember that prayer for healing should not ignore the natural means at our disposal. God expects us to use the resources such as doctors, medicines, rest, good diet, sensible exercise, etc. While others may pray with us, and for us, there will be no circumstances which will link the answer to a **particular man** and his **professed supernatural powers**, but only to **God** and **His mercy**. We are to pray for physical healing just as we pray for our other needs. The basis for an answer is God's will: the means to accomplish the answer will, almost always, be the working of things together for our good rather than what we would call a true "miracle." He can, and does from time to time, work a true miracle to heal in answer to prayer, but it is the exception, not the rule, in this Age of Grace.

#### **8. Isn't the list of gifts in Eph. 4:11 an incomplete list?**

--- ANSWER:

This verse is a complete list of gifted **MEN** given to the **CHURCH**. There is a list of gifts given to **INDIVIDUALS** in Rom. 12:6 - 8, and these two passages together give us the complete list of non miraculous gifts given to replace the miraculous gift program. The lists of **miraculous** gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8 - 10 and 1 Cor. 12:28 are to be in effect until the completion of the Pauline Scriptures (1 Cor. 13:8 - 13 with Col. 1:25, 26). These two lists of **NON miraculous** gifts are to last until the completion of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

The word "some" in Eph. 4:11 does not mean that these are just "**some**" of the **gifts** -- that there are others not listed. Rather the thought is that **some churches** would be given one gifted man and some another. One church might be given several gifted men -- as God saw the need.

**9. Since the Greek word "dunamis" appears as "miracles" in 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 29, doesn't the use of this same word in Eph. 1:19 (translated "power") indicate that miraculous gifts are still present in the church?**

--- ANSWER:

No. The word "*dunamis*" means "power," "strength," or "ability" -- according to

Thayer's Greek Lexicon. It can also mean "a manifestation or instance of power" as in Acts 8:10 (concerning Simon the sorcerer who was known as "The great power of God"), Rom. 1:16 (concerning the gospel as a manifestation of the power of God), etc. The word is translated "power," "ability," "virtue," "strength," "might," "violence," "miracle," and "abundance." Since it can be translated so many ways, we **must** depend on the context to determine its meaning in any particular verse.

Paul speaks of this same power working in him in Col. 1:11. "Strengthened with **all might** (*dunamis*) --." What did this *dunamis*, **all dunamis**, produce in him? Miraculous gifts? No, but something **much** better, something consistent with the program for today "--unto **all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.**"

Thus, the context of Eph. 1:19, and the cross references, indicate miraculous gifts are not in view. It is **resurrection** that is in view: His, a physical resurrection to live forever in heaven; ours, in **this** passage, a spiritual resurrection to a heavenly kind of life down here. (Of course other passages teach that we, if we die, will also have a physical resurrection)

#### **10. Doesn't the meaning of the words "Holy Spirit" (without articles in the Greek) indicate that miraculous gifts are still in the church?**

**--- ANSWER;**

No. According to the Companion Bible (Appendix 101-14) "'Holy Spirit' ... (without articles) occurs 52 times in the New testament and is always wrongly rendered 'the Holy Spirit' (with the definite Article and capital letters). ... *Pneuma hagion* (without articles) is never used of the Giver (the Holy Spirit), but only and always of His gift. What this gift is may be seen by comparing Acts 1:4, 5 with Luke 24:49, where 'the promise of the Father' is called (in the former passage) '*pneuma hagion*,' and in the latter is called 'power from on high.' This 'power from on high' includes whatever *gifts* the Holy Spirit may bestow 'according to His own will.' What particular gift is meant is sometimes stated, that is 'faith,' 'power,' etc."

The Companion Bible has a lot of good information in it, but it must be used with great care, for some of Dr. Bullinger's conclusions, we believe, are in error. If the notes in this Bible were followed completely, one would believe in soul sleep, the Body of Christ beginning at Acts 28:28, no Lord's Table for today, the Rapture **not** our hope, Paul's early epistles **not** for us, and two Bodies of Christ instead of one. In this part of the Appendix, quoted above, we see one of his errors. Since the only verses in the prison epistles having to do with this note in the Companion Bible cannot refer to miraculous gifts (even if Dr. Bullinger's note were true, which it is not), we will not take the space here to refute it. See the article in the January 1979 issue of "The Berean Searchlight" by C. R. Stam entitled "The Holy Spirit: does He Indwell the Believer?" for a study of this matter.

#### **11. Can a man preach the gospel, emphasize the blood of Christ for salvation, have conversions, and still be deceived by Satan in part of his ministry?**

**--- ANSWER:**

Yes. In First Corinthians twelve one of the gifts mentioned is the "discerning of spirits" (v. 10). This gift was the ability to tell whether another gift being exercised was really of the Holy Spirit or a counterfeit gift produced by some other spirit. This discernment was needed because Satan was busy trying to counterfeit the true gifts by his own power. The imitation gifts were so similar to the real ones that it required the gift of discernment of spirits to be able to tell them apart. If these false gifts (produced by satanic forces) were only found with the unsaved,

the teachers of false doctrine, or those with no effective testimony for the Lord, then it would have been easy to spot them. However, the true and active believers could be deceived into receiving these imitation gifts, necessitating the gift of discerning of spirits. Today this gift is not needed. After God has told us that **His** miraculous gifts have been withdrawn, **any** such "gift" **has to be from another spirit** and can be rejected on the basis of the written word of God.

There is the possibility of Satan working through a man who (even though he is an unbeliever) is preaching the truth, as in the case of Judas. Judas evidently taught and preached the truth just like the other apostles, and just as effectively too. If not, he would have been suspected immediately as being the one Christ was speaking about when He said, "One of you shall betray me." But they didn't suspect him. Not one of them did.

Even true believers can have this experience, as Peter found out. Peter, the very leader of the apostles, was so deceived by Satan that when he spoke out against the crucifixion and resurrection, Christ did not answer him, but answered Satan who was using his mind, heart, and voice on this occasion (Matt. 16:21 - 23).

The whole charismatic movement is full of sincere men who proclaim the gospel, preach the blood of Christ for salvation, have true conversions and, in some cases, put some of us to shame with their dedication. However they are involved in a program which, in some respects, is contrary to the Word of God for this age, but which appears to have supernatural power behind it. Surely God is not giving **His** power to that part of a program which is contrary to His Word! He blesses and uses His Word in much of their ministry **in spite of** any fleshly or satanic delusion that may have ensnared them in the area of the "gifts." These brothers in Christ stand in need of our love and prayers and -- as much as they will receive it -- our patient teaching of the Word of God dispensationally considered.

## 12. Can Christ and Satan both live in the same person?

--- ANSWER:

Of course not! We are not saying that Satan is living in our charismatic brethren. A believer may, in ignorance, allow Satan to use him in some ways, but God will not allow Satan to indwell him. Satan could not "**enter into**" Peter as he did with unsaved Judas, but Satan could, and **did, use** him on at least one occasion.

## CONCLUSION

What should our relationship be with those who believe the miraculous gifts are still in the church?

We should recognize them as fellow members of the Body of Christ, if they are truly trusting Christ as their Savior. Salvation (fortunately for all of us) is not based on faultless doctrine, but on faith. As fellow members of the Body of Christ we should love them, pray for them, and have as much fellowship as we can with them. But we must not compromise or deny the truths of the Word of God we have been privileged to understand.

We should, as the Lord gives us opportunity, seek to lead them into the knowledge of the mystery. This should be done in keeping with Paul's directions in 2 Tim. 2:24, 25. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

We should continue to preach and teach the Word of God rightly divided. Paul urges us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). We must not be so concerned with not offending our

charismatic brothers that we fail to speak the truth: but also we must not be so determined to make the truth clear to them, that we hit them over the head with it. This **balance** between speaking the **truth** and speaking **in love** can only be brought about under the direction and in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. May we, by the grace of God, attain to this balance in our ministries!

# A BLESSED HOPE or a DEFERRED HOPE?

## INTRODUCTION

The world today faces a hopeless future -- even as they, themselves, assess the situation. An exponential rise in population requires ever more and more land, water, and natural resources. The struggles for these necessities often break out into wars, which dramatically reduce the meager resources even further, or contaminate them beyond use. The only satisfying answer to over-population, depleted or ruined resources, and the wars, which so greatly magnify the problem, is the return of Christ to reign over the earth.<sup>1</sup> This solution is, of course, derided and rejected by the unbelieving world.

While we know Christ's coming is the world's only hope, the blessedness of it is dimmed by the agonizing seven years that must precede it. They will be years of trouble without precedent in all of history. It will be a time when, if God did not intervene to cut it short, life on earth would cease to exist (Jer. 30:7; Mk. 13:19, 20; Rev. chapters 1 - through 19).

Will the church go through this time of terrible tribulation?

Yes and no! It depends on which "church" is in view.

All those who are born of God, trusting in the work of Christ at Calvary, and in that alone, for their salvation -- those who have been justified by faith and saved by God's grace -- constitute God's true church, the "Church which is His [Christ's] Body." The church the world sees is Christendom, with all of its churches and cathedrals, its denominations and cults. True believers are more and more but a dwindling remnant in the churches of Christendom and stand distinct from it in God's eyes.

Before the Tribulation begins the Lord will call HIS church to meet Him in the air, a glorious event known as the Rapture. Sadly, at this time, many congregations will hardly know anything has happened. While the Body of Christ will have been taken home, not having been appointed to the wrath soon to be poured out (1 Thess. 5:9), the merely professing church will continue on its humanistic religious way into the Tribulation. The Body of Christ, every member of it, will miss the Tribulation. Their hope is a blessed hope indeed!

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<sup>1</sup>At the return of Christ to earth (among many other things):

-- Earth's population will be decimated by righteous judgments (Rev. 6:9, 10; 17:9; 19:17, 18, 21), and the multiplying of woman's conception (Gen. 3:16) will presumably be rescinded, greatly reducing the birthrate in the millennial earth.

-- Deserts will become productive, with an abundance of water (Isa. 35:1, 2, 4 - 7).

-- The economy will be largely agricultural, with a fair division of more abundant land (Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10).

-- Crime will be suppressed (Rev. 2:27; 19:15).

-- There will be a satisfactory solution to the Arab/Israeli problem (Isa. 19:21 - 25).

-- Wars will cease (Isa. 2:4; Psa. 46:9; Hosea 2:18).



Tragically, just as it seems this "blessed hope" is nearing realization, and we ought to be eagerly anticipating it, we are being robbed of the joy that should be ours. Because believers have been waiting so long for the catching away to heaven, we tend to neglect or even forget this vital truth. Also, as the evidences multiply for the proximity of the Rapture, some teachers have yielded to the temptation to set dates for its accomplishment. When the dates prove to have been unfounded, the very event itself is discredited.

Perhaps the most serious cloud over the blessed hope, however, is the teaching, gaining more acceptance almost daily, that the Rapture will not take place until the Tribulation, or at least the first half of it (the mid-Tribulation view) has run its course. If this were true, the next event in eschatology would not be the Rapture, but the beginning of the Tribulation. Instead of waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10) we would be looking for the appearance of the Antichrist on the world's scene.

Is our joyous expectation, which we have treasured for so long, to be thus postponed three and a half to seven years? Let us go to the Scriptures to see if these things be so.

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12 NASB)

Even though the Rapture may not come for a long time, it *could* come *today*. This has been, and still is, the blessed hope of millions of spiritual, Bible believing Christians. What a tragedy that, just as we are approaching the day when we will be caught up, many are being told, "It cannot happen for at least three and a half, or even as much as seven, years." The blessed hope then becomes the deferred hope, the postponed hope!

Some today are teaching very emphatically that the members of the Body of Christ, who are alive when the time popularly known as the "Tribulation" begins, will continue on earth during that seven year period. Most of these people, too, are spiritual, Bible believing Christians who sincerely see themselves as standing for the truth on this issue. Some of them, indeed, used to be Pre-Tribulationists, and have changed their views. The proofs for their position seem to be logical, Scriptural, and convincing. Can it be they are right and we are mistaken on this matter?

#### The Views Defined.

Both the Pre-Tribulationist and the Post-Tribulationist hold that Christ will come again at the close of a seven year period prophesied in the Old Testament (Dan. 9:27) and described in the book of Revelation. <sup>2</sup> Both maintain that this coming is to pour out vengeance on a world

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<sup>2</sup>In addition to the Pre-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation views, there are two other major views as to the time of the Rapture. The Mid-Tribulationist sees it as happening in the middle of the Tribulation, three and a half years before Christ comes in glory. Another view, called the "Pre-wrath Rapture" view, has surfaced in the past few years and is promoted by Marvin Rosenthal in his book "The Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church." This interpretation places the Rapture after the midpoint of the period and at least five months before the coming in glory. It takes place, according to brother Rosenthal, immediately before the beginning of the trumpet

which has joined with Satan against God, to bring Gentile world dominion to an end, bring about the salvation of all Israel, and usher in a political, theocratic, world-wide kingdom lasting a thousand years.

The Pre-Tribulationist believes that before the seven year period even begins Christ will appear in the air, raise the dead of the age of grace, change the living saints, catch them all away to be with Him, and take them home to heaven. The prophesied coming of Christ in glory will follow seven years later.

The Post-Tribulationist teaches that members of the Body of Christ living in the last days will continue on earth through the Tribulation. As Christ descends from heaven, on His way to pour out His judgments, He will raise all dead believers of all ages, change the living believers, and catch them up to meet Him in the air. They will then immediately accompany Christ back to earth and share in establishing and governing His millennial kingdom.

### **Is the Difference Important?**

We believe the view adopted on this issue has serious implications:

-- It will affect our attitude toward His coming. If we understand He *could* come at any moment, there can be a constant joyous expectancy, which surely will not be present if we believe His coming for us is at least seven years in the future. Instead of waiting for God's Son from heaven, we would be looking for evidence that the Tribulation has begun. Instead of looking for Christ, we would be looking for Antichrist.

-- It affects other things we believe. If the Body of Christ is on earth all the way through Revelation chapter eighteen, then many distinctions are necessarily broken down. The distinctiveness of Paul's message and ministry is blurred, and the difference between the millennial kingdom and the kingdom of God (as Paul uses the term) is destroyed. Both the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the grace of God are seen as being preached by Paul in Acts, and by Body members during the Tribulation. The distinction between the Body church and the kingdom church vanishes. The hope of the believer today is seen as being revealed in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the book of Revelation. The very concept of the age of grace as an unprophesied interruption of the kingdom program is lost.

-- To teach that the Body of Christ is destined to go through the Tribulation reads the church of this age into many non-Pauline passages. It also seeks to make the Pauline verses so long used for the "Pre-Trib" view, teach Post-Tribulationism.

Clearly -- no matter who is right and who is wrong -- the issue is an important one.

### **How Can Spiritual Christians See the Same Verses so Differently?**

Those particularly addressed in this paper are pre-millennial and dispensational; they hold to

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judgments -- in which the wrath of God is poured out, directly from heaven on a rebellious earth. Many of the arguments against the post-tribulation view hold good for these two also.

the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture; and are "fundamental" in their understanding of basic Bible doctrine. Yet even among these who have so much in common there is great variation of opinion regarding the Rapture. Why?

### **The mind as an interpreter.**

Man's mind is so constructed that it seeks to interpret what is fed into it, whether visual information or ideas. It will go from one possibility to another until there are enough facts to suggest one interpretation over all others.

Gaze steadily at the figure below for a few seconds.

First it seems very clear that "A" is nearer to you than "B." Then, as you continue to look at it, a reversal takes place. It now seems equally clear that "B" is nearer than "A." How can we be sure which is the true interpretation of the picture?

It may occur to us that a right side up stairway is more likely to be portrayed than an upside down one, for this would make the steps serve a useful purpose. Thus logic would influence our understanding of what is being portrayed.

So a consideration of the purpose a verse or passage serves -- when considered in relation to both context and related Scripture -- can logically influence our understanding of it.

Also if more details are added to the picture, and a background supplied, the picture has a tendency to stabilize.

Similarly, attention to details will stabilize our understanding of Scripture. Observing (often superficial) similarities between verses from different contexts is important, but also we must carefully consider the differences. The background, too, is important. The passages on the Rapture can become an upside down illusion if we try to attach the stairway to the wrong house -- to Israel's program instead of to the program for the age of grace.

### **Methods of Bible Study.**

At least one knowledgeable and godly proponent of the "Post-Trib" position spends considerable time explaining how the difference in interpretation of the verses on the Lord's coming takes place. He claims we use **DE**ductive reasoning while he depends on **IN**ductive reasoning.<sup>3</sup> He cites Robert Traina on this point:

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<sup>3</sup>Leaflet "Pre or Post" by Henry T. Hudson, pages 1, 2.

"There are two main approaches open to the Bible student. One is deduction, which begins with the generalizations and moves for their support to the particulars. By its very nature deduction tends to be subjective and prejudicial. It produces those who dictate to the Scriptures rather than those who listen to the Scriptures. In view of the objective character of Scriptural literature, such an approach is not suited to the Bible and is therefore unmethodical. On the other hand, its opposite, induction, is objective and impartial; for it demands that one first examine the particulars of the Scriptures and that one's conclusions be based on those particulars. Such an approach is sound because, being objective, it corresponds to the objective nature of the Scriptures. It produces hearers rather than speakers, and the nature of the Scriptures requires hearers. Methodical Bible study, then, is inductive Bible study, because in this instance induction is methodical."<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Hudson says, "If they [the Pre-Tribulationists] dare to make a simple straightforward induction, they will discover that Scripture does not even contain one passage to support their theory ... It is therefore apparent that the theory could only come through the deductive method."<sup>5</sup>

Quite clearly he is saying we decide what we are going to believe and then go to the Bible to find proof texts, reading into them what we want them to teach.

Let us make some observations about these two methods of study:

-- It is very difficult, if not impossible, to be completely inductive. As soon as you have enough verses to give you a theory, the theory influences you in the selection and interpretation of the other verses -- and reasoning becomes deductive. On the very next page of the book quoted above, Mr. Traina makes the following observation:

"... There is *no such thing as pure induction*. When one talks about an inductive approach, one means an approach that is relatively inductive ... Because there is no pure induction, there is no absolute objectivity. Gamaliel Bradford wisely observed, 'There are simply those who think they are impartial and those who *know* they are *not*.' However an approach which stresses induction *insofar as is possible is more likely* to produce impartial and accurate interpreters than any other approach." (Emphasis mine)<sup>6</sup>

-- Once a position has been reached "inductively" (whether valid or not) further investigation becomes largely deductive, though it may not be recognized that this shift has taken place.

-- Neither method is fool proof. Neither one is exempt from bias or misinterpretation of facts. The inductive method may even foster an overconfidence in results, due to confidence in the *method*, which fails to admit the possibility of error, and does not properly evaluate the evidence obtained "deductively."

-- If we try to make our Bible study purely inductive we must ignore all of the written and oral ministry of Bible teachers who have gone before us, lest we base our study on their

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<sup>4</sup>"Methodical Bible Study" by Robert A. Traina, page 7.

<sup>5</sup>Op. cit. Henry T. Hudson, page 2.

<sup>6</sup>Op cit. Robert Traina, page 8.

conclusions. Instead of rejoicing in justification by faith alone, as that truth emerges from Luther's study, we will have to duplicate his long and heroic investigation for ourselves so we can come to that truth inductively. Should we, perhaps, even refrain from making our own conclusions known to others lest we influence them toward deductive thinking?

Whether inductive or deductive, the final truth must rest on the validity of the verses, not the merits of the method.

Brother Hudson makes it clear that he holds us guilty of totally deductive reasoning in regard to the Rapture. He even knows where we obtained the idea upon which we base our deductions. "Where then did the Pre-Trib doctrine originate? ... It was first taught by a young Scottish girl named Margaret McDonald in the spring of 1830. What is more, it sprang from a personal revelation in the midst of a 'charismatic neo-Pentecostal' revival." Later he adds, "It [the idea of a Pre-Trib Rapture] was then picked up by the heretical Irvingites and by John Nelson Darby."<sup>7</sup>

The source for this accusation was probably one of the books written by Dave MacPherson. Concerning MacPherson's remarks in "The Incredible Cover-up." John F. Walvoord says, "... the allegation of MacPherson and many others that Darby derived his views either from Irving or MacDonald is not supported by any factual evidence." He offers proof that neither Edward Irving nor Margaret MacDonald held a Pre-Trib Rapture view and notes: "Obviously, if they were not Pre-Tribulationists how could Darby get his views from them? Even if they were Pre-Tribulationists, there is no proof linking the two, except that they both lived about the same time."<sup>8</sup> Darby is the one usually credited with founding the group known as the "Plymouth Brethren."

Mr. Hudson continues, "No doubt the greatest single cause for the widespread popularity of the theory is its presentation in the *Scofield Reference Bible*" (Emphasis his).<sup>9</sup> The Scofield notes are largely a condensation of a generation of Bible study by the scholars emerging from the "brethren" movement. It has been called -- perhaps in derision -- The Plymouth Brethren Bible."

Anyone well acquainted with the ministry of John Darby will find it difficult to believe he followed the revelations coming out of a charismatic meeting. He stood head and shoulders above his peers as a man of the Book. In a day when traditions of men ruled supreme in much of the religious world, he went in singleness of heart to "thus saith the Lord." As the founder of a movement which emphasizes (perhaps over emphasizes) the place of the men over the women in the assembly and in teaching, it would be against some of his strongest principles to allow a Pentecostal woman to guide him in his theology. To imagine his brethren would follow him in any such move as this, and still stand fearlessly -- as they do to this day -- on the word of God alone, is also very difficult to believe. His views concerning the spiritual gifts would strongly

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<sup>7</sup>Leaflet, "Does Holy Scripture teach that Christ will return before the Great Tribulation?" by Henry T. Hudson.

<sup>8</sup>"The Rapture Question (revised and enlarged)" by John F. Walvoord. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979, page 154.

<sup>9</sup>Op. cit. Henry T. Hudson, page 19.

prejudice him against teaching something he received from the exercise of the gift of prophecy long after, as he believed, God had withdrawn the gift from the church.

To attribute the Pre-Trib Rapture to a source other than Paul's writings is to beg the question. The issue is not how the doctrine was handled in church history, but whether or not it is found in Scripture.

### **Inductive or Deductive? -- An illustration.**

Suppose Albert is introduced to John and begins to see him from time to time, without further opportunity to actually speak to him. He is soon faced with a problem. Sometimes John waves to him and sometimes he ignores him. Also sometimes he will be gracious and mannerly and at other times ungracious and rude. On one occasion he will seem very happy and on another he will appear quite nasty in disposition. He doesn't really know anything about John, so he is thinking inductively as he seeks to find an answer to the problem. He soon becomes convinced he is either a split personality or an exceedingly moody and unstable person.

With this conclusion in the back of his mind he notices other things which back up his judgment. He does not realize he has shifted to deductive thinking to reinforce the position he arrived at inductively. When he speaks to his friend Henry about it, Henry replies, "I think there are two men, not just one." With this in mind he goes over the incidents that have been related to him and demonstrates that there must be twins.

"Such nonsense!" Replies Albert. "That can't be true. First of all, no one said anything about even a brother, let alone twins. Secondly, you are thinking deductively, working from the idea of twins back to the evidence. You have decided what you want to believe and then you are looking for something to prove it."

"Once you got the idea that a split personality was involved you, too, began thinking deductively -- with your conclusion coloring your interpretation of all you saw" responds Henry. "The main difference between us is that you have been focussing on the things which are alike, assuming so many similarities prove identity, while I am carefully considering the differences."

As they are talking, two men, as alike as two peas in a pod, approach them.

"Albert, I want you to meet my twin brother, James. He says he has seen you but has not been introduced" says John.

Henry is smiling broadly at Albert.

Without the introduction of the twin by his brother the argument could have continued "hot and heavy" between the two men.

As Bible students in the past read ALL of the passages about the coming of the Lord, there were many problems. A listing of the seeming discrepancies and inconsistencies led to a search for possible solutions.

Some concluded Paul was merely adding details to what the others had written, leaving out things others included because they did not need to be repeated. The problem passages were deemed complementary or supplementary views of the same thing.

Some noticed there seemed often to be a difference between Paul on the one hand and all of the other writers of scripture on the other. The other writers were mostly in agreement among themselves. That is, as they considered the total ministry of Paul, they noticed he appeared to be off by himself in many areas of doctrine. So much so that some ignored Paul -- or even doubted that he was an inspired writer - speaking derisively of "Paul's religion."

Paul himself suggests that the distinctions should be carefully considered, not ignored nor explained away. "We are to test the things, and having found them to differ, must not join them together, but rightly divide them (Note on Phil. 1:10 in the Companion Bible. Compare 2 Tim. 2:15).

As they began to see that Paul had been given the responsibility to introduce a new dispensation (Eph. 3:2), with a new Apostle (Rom. 11:13), a new message (Acts 20:24; Rom. 16:25), and a new program, they became convinced there was also a new hope which, like the other "new" things, had not been revealed before. Up to now they had been thinking inductively, working from the problems back to a solution. This is as truly inductive, negative though it may be, as working from positive statements to a formulation of doctrine.

Working now deductively, from the idea of a new and different hope, they found the problems beginning to disappear. In their place was a new appreciation for the unity in complexity of the word of God, and a clear recognition of the distinctiveness of the age of grace.

Was it a wise decision to look into the possibility that there were two appearances of Christ before the millennial kingdom, not just one? There were reasons to *expect* such a solution:

-- The use of the word "mystery" in 1 Cor. 15:51 and the contrast between 1 Thessalonians four, which Paul needed to teach, and 1 Thessalonians five, which they already "knew perfectly," suggests the Rapture is a new revelation.

-- The introduction of a new spiritual entity -- the "Body of Christ," and a new "dispensation of the grace of God," would raise some questions. How will the new dispensation end? What will become of those in the Body when it does? Would it not be strange to have the very existence of this age, its beginning, its message, and its program a secret, yet have its termination a prophesied event?

-- With the eschatology of the rest of the word of God tied in so tightly with Israel -- AS SUCH -- but including Gentiles -- AS SUCH -- would one expect these non Pauline passages to be speaking, at the same time, of a Body where there was NO DIFFERENCE between Jew and Gentile?

Surely we have a right to expect there are indeed "twins."

## The Blessed Hope -- DISPENSATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Many Years ago I sat spellbound enjoying a message delivered by Lewis Sperry Chafer to a group of pastors in the Los Angeles area. He told of a time when a friend of his wrote and asked, "Am I not right in saying 'The church is the blossom of which Israel was the bud'?" "I had the sad task," brother Chafer remarked, "of telling a dear brother in the Lord, 'No, you are not right.'"

In the message following this introduction, brother Chafer emphasized the distinctiveness of this age of grace. "Speaking of the church as a parenthesis is a good beginning," he went on, "but this simile is not strong enough. A parenthesis is related to the sentence in which it is found, while the church is an *interruption* of God's program for Israel, *not directly related to it.*"

He had looked for a word to better express this, and finally found it. "Intercalation" was his word. Before the calendar was adjusted by inserting an extra day every four years, the solar year and calendar year would lose their synchronism. Every four years the calendar year would lag behind the actual seasons one more day. Scientists from various countries would assemble to rectify the situation. After determining how many days should be inserted, they would declare an intercalation. For example their adjusted calendar might show January first, January second, and then ten undesignated days (the intercalation) -- followed by January third and so on. January second and January third would have been pushed apart and ten days inserted. This well illustrates what God did in the middle of the book of Acts. He interrupted the program of Israel, pushed the remaining part of it off into the future, and interposed this age of grace.

In Clarence Larkin's book of dispensational charts he pictures the Old Testament prophet gazing into the future, seeing the Cross (the crucifixion) on one mountain, and the Crown (the coming of Christ in glory) on a more distant one, with an unseen valley (representing the church age) between them. <sup>1</sup>

I find a better illustration (though not a type or prophetic symbol) of this in Zechariah 14:4. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." The Cross and the Crown belong on the same mountain. They would have been only a relatively few years apart if Israel had responded in faith to the offer made by Peter in Acts 3:19 - 21. If they, as a nation, had repented of their rejection and crucifixion of Christ, God would have sent Him back and they would have had their kingdom. The offer was valid, but the response was a resounding "NO!" As a formal decision of their leaders, they emphatically rejected the offer, and stoned Stephen as a crowning act of rebellious unbelief. Now the "mountain" is split in two. The half bearing the Crown has been moved off into the indefinite future and a new valley has been formed. It was not *seen* before because *it was not there* before. In matchless grace, judgment has been postponed and God has inserted

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<sup>1</sup>"The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World" by Clarence Larkin, published by the Clarence Larkin est., Philadelphia, PA, copyright 1918, 43rd printing, page 5-A.



this age -- with its new apostle, new program and *new hope*. Refer back to the chapter on the Distinctiveness of the age of grace.

That this age of grace is separate and distinct from God's program for Israel is well documented in Scripture. For one thing, we are clearly told that much of Paul's message was not revealed until it was made known to *him*:

-- "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which is preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11, 12 -- NASB).

-- After Paul had stated, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), he added, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect [mature]: yet not the wisdom of this world ... but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Cor. 2:6, 7).

-- "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25, 26). Verse 26 would be a contradiction of verse 25 if "the scriptures of the prophets" were a reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. Kenneth Wuest translates verse 26, "But has now been made known through *prophetic writings* according to the mandate of the eternal God, having been made known with a view to the obedience to the faith among all nations." To recognize that the "prophetic writings" are Paul's own writings (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13) resolves the seeming conflict between the verses and fits with other passages on the subject.

-- "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given *me* to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery ... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:2, 3, 5). On this passage, Charles L. Feinberg comments, "It is not a matter of whether the mystery was somewhat revealed in the Old Testament, only to be revealed fully in the New Testament in the words of Paul, but that it was not revealed or known at all in the Old Testament, necessitating a new and clear revelation in the New Testament. ... The words 'as it has now been revealed' [Eph. 3:5] cannot be twisted into making the statement relative, because one is not dependent upon Ephesians 3 alone for the definition of the mystery. Consider Romans 16:25, 26 where there are no qualifying words, and to which Paul has reference when he says in Eph. 3:3 'as I wrote before in a few words.' ... That which was hidden in God, in His mind, in His plan, in His counsels, needed not a searching out but an initial receiving or disclosure -- and that was precisely and clearly presented by Paul." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>"Millennialism -- the Two Major Views" by Charles L. Feinberg, Th.D., Ph.D., published by Moody Press, Chicago, third and enlarged edition, paperback, 1982, pages 234, 235.

-- In Eph. 3:3, Paul received truths directly from God. The Spirit revealed them to the other apostles and prophets, (Eph. 3:5) but not by direct disclosure. With no Old Testament passages teaching these things, it was necessary for the Spirit to *confirm* that *what they heard through Paul* was indeed the truth of God. Peter acknowledged this by inference in Second Peter 3:15, 16. There he recognized Paul's epistles as Scripture, but admitted his difficulty in understanding some of the things he wrote about. If these truths had been revealed by God directly to Peter as well as to Paul, he should have had no such difficulty.

-- "I am made a minister [of Christ's Body, the church], according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil [complete -- πληρῶσαι] the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:25 - 27). Paul did indeed complete that portion of the word of God dealing with the mystery. When he laid down his pen the revelation specifically concerning the Body of Christ was complete. Failure to recognize this has led to reading the Body of Christ, and its program, into other New Testament passages. Even though the book of Revelation (for instance) was written many years after Paul's writings had been completed and circulated widely among the believers, it contains no reference to the Body of Christ or the body of truth specifically given for the age of grace.

-- Also Paul's apostleship was distinct from that of the twelve apostles of the circumcision. Their apostleship was linked with the twelve tribes of Israel, for in the kingdom they are to sit on twelve thrones judging those tribes (Matt. 19:28). The suggestion that Paul, rather than Matthias (Acts 1: 15 - 26), was *God's* choice to take the place of Judas is not once suggested in Scripture. He specifically tells us that he was "the minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*" (Rom. 15:16). In First Corinthians he relates, "He [Christ] was seen of Cephus, then of the *twelve ... after that*, He was seen James; then of *ALL* the apostles, and *last of all* He was seen of *me also*, as one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:5, 7, 8). Instead of including himself among the twelve apostles he lists himself separately. Significantly, when his apostleship was being viciously attacked he spent three chapters defending it (Second Corinthians eleven to thirteen). Here, of all places, he should have stated his case for being God's choice to succeed Judas -- if it were true. But he never even hinted that he was, or should be, one of the twelve.

While much of Paul's written ministry falls under the category of "progressive revelation," this cannot be the explanation for a very substantial part of it. With progressive revelation old truths are expanded, or new truths made known, which will stand from then on. For instance, Paul, to a degree not before revealed, makes it extremely clear that no man ever has been, or ever will be, justified by the works of the law (Rom. 3:20). This will be true and applicable during the Tribulation and the Kingdom just as it was before the law (Abraham, Rom. 4:1 - 5) and under the law (David, Rom. 4:6 - 8). This is progressive revelation. On the other hand, when Paul tells us we are "not under law" he is not merely introducing a truth that can be claimed by all believers from now on. It evidently was not recognized as truth for the Jewish saints at Jerusalem, for they were all zealous for the law (Acts 21:20). In a day still future those who have "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name ... sing the *song of Moses* the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"

(Rev. 15:2, 3) Concerning the Hebrews (as a nation evidently) it is not said that the Old Covenant has vanished away, but that it is waxing old and *nigh unto* vanishing away (Heb. 8:13). Israel as a nation will not be out from under the Old Covenant until the New Covenant becomes a full reality -- and part of the New Covenant is the conversion of all Israel, an event still future (Jer. 31:24; Rom. 11:26).

Paul taught us that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). Yet during the future Tribulation (Isa. 66:15, 16) Jews will be judged for "eating swine's flesh ... and the mouse" (Isa. 66:17).

Paul taught that today there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, but during the Tribulation 144,000 witnesses will be sent forth who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). They will all be Jews -- specifically proved to be so by their descent from the twelve Patriarchs (Rev. 7:4 - 8). The oneness of Jew and Gentile in one Body is not merely "progressive revelation" but, specifically, new revelation assigned to a beginning and just as definite a conclusion.

This distinctiveness is clouded if the age of grace is conceived of as beginning at Pentecost, existing during the time of Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer of Acts 3:19 - 21. It is *lost* if this age is thought to continue through the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) resulting from that rejection. Both Post and Mid-Tribulationism logically necessitate a Pentecostal (or earlier) beginning for the church of this age, and demand a Tribulation destiny for it.

Robert H. Gundry, who definitely is not a Pre-Tribulationist, states, "An absolute silence in the OT about the present age, a total disconnection of the Church from the divine program for Israel, and a clean break between dispensations would favor Pre-Tribulationism: the Church would not likely be related to the seventieth week of Daniel, or Tribulation, a period of time clearly having to do with Israel."

He continues, however, to make the above condition so absolute that Paul's epistles would almost have to be in a separate Bible to fulfill them. "But a partial revelation of the present age in the OT, a connection (not necessarily identification) between Israel and the Church, and a dispensational change involving a transitional period open the door to the presence of the Church during the tribulation."<sup>3</sup>

In seeking to establish links between Israel and the Church he quotes from Peter's message on the day of Pentecost. He points out that Acts 2:16 does not say, "This is *like* what was spoken" (in Joel), but "This *IS* what was spoken." Then he goes on to declare, "If then the main event on the very birthday of the Church was prophesied in an OT passage within an Israelitish context, it should not seem strange that the Church bears a relationship also to end-time events similarly prophesied in the OT, even though they are Israelitish in cast. In fact, since the beginning of the Church age bears a marked relationship to OT predictions concerning Israel, we are not hindered dispensationally from presuming that the same will be so at the end of

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<sup>3</sup>"The Church and the Tribulation" by Robert H. Gundry, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976 edition, page 12.

the Church age." <sup>4</sup>

These objections are largely nullified if we recognize the first eight chapters (at least) of Acts as part of Israel's program before the church of this age had its "birthday." A mid-Acts beginning for the Body of Christ also fits with the distinctive character of Paul's apostleship as "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles" (Rom. 15:16).

As to any "connections" between Israel and the church, there are *some* we would gladly agree to. The same word translated "church" (ἐκκλησία) in Paul's epistles is used of gatherings of Jewish believers in early Acts. However it is used also of the Jewish believers who fellowshipped with the risen Christ *before Pentecost* (Heb. 2:12 when taken with Psa. 22:22, 23 surely has the post-resurrection ministry of Christ in view). We have the same Savior and God; the same redemption provides salvation; and the same Bible is *for* (but not all of it *to*) us all. These and similar items surely do not blur the clear distinctions between the two programs.

Also Paul makes frequent use of the OT Scriptures to relate us to principles that are not dispensationally limited and to assure us that even truths peculiar to this age are not in *contradiction* to previous revelation. Paul teaches us that we are "not under law." With this in mind, it is enlightening to notice that, while Paul calls attention to the promise accompanying the fifth commandment (Eph. 6:2, 3), he does not call upon the children to obey their parents because it was *commanded*, but because it is *right* (Eph. 6:1).

The beginning of the Body of Christ awaited the unbelief and setting aside of Israel (Rom. 11:12, 15). In light of Peter's offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts 3:19 - 21, this had not yet taken place at Pentecost. At the other end of this parenthetical age, the Rapture of that Body clears the way for the events of the prophesied Tribulation to begin (2 Thess. 2:3, 6, 7). These "connections," however, actually serve to emphasize the clear-cut distinction between the program for Israel and that for the Body church.

As to the presence of a transitional period, it must be conceived of as beginning with Paul and the revelations given to him (Col. 1:25, 26). The first eight chapters of Acts record progression within the kingdom program, not the introduction of a new one. See the discussion of the transition in a later chapter.

Though the distinction between Israel and the Body church is not as absolute as the impossible requirement set forth by this author, his principle stands. The more clearly we see the differences between these two programs the more convinced we become that the Rapture must come before the Tribulation. Almost the total body of proofs for Mid-Trib, "pre-wrath," and Post-Tribulationism come from non-Pauline Scripture, or Pauline Scripture misinterpreted to fit with the non-Pauline passages. But once see that Paul, alone, teaches the Rapture of the church -- as a part of the revelation granted to him (1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52) -- and their arguments collapse.

While the following chapter is somewhat redundant, the distinctiveness of this age of grace is so vital that it deserves the emphasis of repetition. There it is set forth in expanded

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid, page 15.

outline form that it might be fully understood and appreciated.

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# THE BLESSED HOPE

## The Distinctiveness of this Age of Grace

### Did the Body of Christ begin at Pentecost?

**What arguments are proposed that it did? -- " # " (And replies to those indications -- " \*\* ")**

# Christ said "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

\*\* But, according to Psalm 22:22, Christ was ministering to the church (εκλησια in the Septuagint and in Heb. 2:12) during His post resurrection ministry -- and this was before Pentecost.

# The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost.

\*\* On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon them and they were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4, 17, 18). This filling was to prepare the believers to witness effectively to the nation at this critical time -- a time when the kingdom was promised to them if, as a nation, they would repent and receive Christ as their Messiah and King (Acts 3:19 - 21). They had already received the Holy Spirit at John 20:22 -- after His resurrection, but before Pentecost. The reception of the Spirit awaited His glorification, "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" -- John 7:39. Christ's glorification, spoken of here, refers to His resurrection in a body of glory (Phil. 3:21) three days after His death, not to His public, visible, ascension in Acts one.

# Acts 2:47 (KJV) relates that "the Lord added to the church daily," so there must have been a church to which they were added.

\*\* Other translations put it, "the Lord was adding to their number daily." But, even accepting the KJV translation, the use of the word "church" here (and in Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26 and 12:1, 5) does not prove that the church which is His Body is in view. See the use of the word εκλησια in Acts 7:38; 19:29, 32, 41.

# The baptism of the Spirit prophesied by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jno. 1:33) places believers into the Body (1 Cor. 12:13) and that baptism took place at Pentecost.

\*\* The Pentecostal baptism was accomplished by Christ as the baptizer while that of 1 Cor. 12:13 was accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The former resulted in the Spirit coming upon the believers, the latter in believers being placed into the Body of Christ. They are not the same.

# The church must have been in existence before Paul was saved in Acts nine for, as an unbeliever, he persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6).

\*\* The title "church of God" may be applied to any congregation gathered to worship God in any dispensation. See Acts 7:38 where God's "church" was a congregation of Jews back in the days of Moses. Nowhere does it say that Paul persecuted those in the Body of Christ. Since the dispensation whose assembly (εκλησια) is called the Body of Christ began with Paul, and was entrusted to him for us, he was saved, and discontinued his persecution of believers,

before the church of this age began.

# Gal. 1:2 (NASB) tells us that after his conversion he preached the faith which once he tried to destroy. Therefore his message was the same the twelve had received and preached from Pentecost on. Thus he had no new message or program.

\*\* "The faith" in this verse does not refer to Paul's entire message or program but to the fact that Christ is the Messiah and has been raised from the dead -- truths common to both the kingdom church and the Body church. See Acts 23:6; 24:1, 15, 21; 26:6 - 8, 20 - 23.

# Paul speaks of those who were "in Christ" before him (Rom. 16:7). Therefore the Body of Christ must have been in existence before Acts nine.

\*\* **IF "in Christ"** is the equivalent of "in the **BODY of Christ**" -- the Body must have begun before Paul's salvation. However these terms do not refer to the same thing.

As to salvation there are only two places to be: in Christ or in Adam (Rom. 5:12 - 21; 1 Cor. 15:22). The term "in Christ" sets the saved of all ages and dispensations apart from the lost. It is brought about by a **spiritual birth**, as being "in Adam" is by a physical birth (1 Cor. 15:22). It relates men to the federal headship of Christ (Rom. 5:19 and context).

As to position a division is made between believers who are members of Christ's mystical Body and believers who are related to God's prophetic program. Being in the Body of Christ is accomplished by the **Spirit's baptism** (1 Cor. 12:13). It relates to the spiritual headship of Christ (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18).

No one can be in the Body unless they are in Christ, but not all who are in Christ are members of His Body. In this Age of Grace only, everyone who is in Christ by the new birth is also in the Body by the baptism of the Spirit. Paul may, therefore (and does at times), use the two terms interchangeably when he has only Body members in view.

# Paul was God's choice to take the place of Judas. The decision to put Matthias in his place was made before they received the Holy Spirit and thus is an instance where the flesh was going ahead of God. Peter was acting in the flesh in Acts 1:15 - 23.

\*\* As shown before, the apostles already had received the Spirit before they made this choice. See the section on the apostleship of Paul.

# Several of the twelve apostles (Matthew, James, Peter and John) mentioned the church in Scriptures they wrote. (See Matt. 16:18; 18:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:13; 3 John 6, 9, 10; Rev. 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22; 22:16) Therefore the "church" didn't have to do with Paul alone.

\*\* It can be shown that most, and probably all, of these references refer to the prophetic Jewish church, not to the Body of Christ.

### **Indications that the Body of Christ did NOT begin at Pentecost!**

-- Pentecost was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Acts 2:16). Those truths specifically associated with the church of this age were not made known until they were revealed to Paul (Eph. 3:2, 3).

-- At Pentecost the only Gentiles involved were proselytes to Judaism (Acts 2:10). The

Body of Christ sets aside the distinction between Jew and Gentile and deals with **sinners** (Rom. 11:32).

-- The message from Pentecost to Acts ten was addressed to Jews only. While Peter went to one Gentile family -- to open the door, in the eyes of the Jewish believers, to Paul's Gentile ministry (Acts 15:7 - 12) -- the first one sent openly and specifically to Gentiles was Paul.

-- The message until Acts seven was not only an offer to Jews individually of salvation but also, very strongly, even primarily, an offer to Israel **as a nation** that if they would repent and turn to Christ He would return to them and they would have their promised kingdom (Acts 3:19 - 21). The message of this age of grace is that as individual sinners believe they will be seated in the heavenlies now and caught up to meet Christ in the air at the unspecified future time chosen by God. God could not be offering the kingdom to Israel if He had already instituted a program based on the setting aside of Israel (Rom. 11:11, 12, 15).

-- The age of grace was introduced as a result of the transgression (Rom. 11:11) and rejection (Rom. 11:15) of Christ by Israel. They had not committed the ultimate transgression until they had formally, officially, and emphatically rejected the offer of Acts 3:19 - 21 by stoning Stephen in Acts seven. Only then did wrath come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thess. 2:16).<sup>1</sup> It is at Acts 7:58 that Saul is introduced, and by Acts nine (only a comparatively short time later) he is converted and given his commission (Acts 9:15; 26:16, 17).

-- The prophecy from Joel quoted by Peter was partially fulfilled on Pentecost but continues on into the events of the Tribulation.. This program was broken into, interrupted -- for the Pentecostal manifestations did not continue and the future manifestations have not yet begun. The same logic which leaves the Body of Christ out of Pentecost also leaves it out of the Tribulation. They stand or fall together. **If** Pentecost is the beginning of this age (which it is not) then the Tribulation is its logical destination and conclusion.

## The apostleship of Paul

### The decision to number Matthias with the twelve was God's will.

-- The decision was made by men who had already received the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).  
 -- It was preceded by prayer on the part of the believers (Acts 1:14).  
 -- It was based upon Scripture (Acts 1:16, 20 - 26; Psa. 69:25; 109:8).  
 -- At least two, and probably only two, fulfilled the requirements to be numbered with the twelve (Acts 1:21, 22).

-- It was necessary that all twelve tribes be represented on this important occasion -- the fulfillment of the feast of Pentecost. See how God emphasizes the full number of tribes in other significant passages of Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup>1 Thess. 2:15, 16-a is a blanket description of the hostility of Israel from Old Testament days through the Cross and up to the present. But Paul says, in 1 Thess. 2:16-b, "but wrath **has come** [NASB] on them to the uttermost." This refers to the time when God said, in effect, "This does it!" (At Acts seven). Acts seven was a spiritual Kadesh Barnea for Israel.



\* The tribes are listed in various ways, according to the situation in view, but always there are twelve of them -- except for the short time between the death of Judas and the choice of Matthias.

\* In 1 Kings eighteen Elijah is ministering to only ten of the tribes, yet he uses twelve stones, and pours twelve pitchers of water over the sacrifice, to represent the twelve tribes (1 Kings 18:31, 33, 34 -- specially verse 31).

\* Notice, in Judges 21:2, 3, the importance of all twelve tribes being represented.

\* In the book of Revelation the number twelve is emphasized by the 12 x 12,000 witnesses in Rev. 7:4 - 8; 14:1 and by the twelve stars in the woman's crown in Rev. 12:1. It is notable that the number twelve, and multiples of twelve, is stamped all over the description of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:12 - 21. There are also twelve manners of fruit mentioned in Rev. 22:2.

-- There was never a rebuke or even a correction of the apostles' "mistake" -- if Matthias was the wrong man. The feast was fulfilled with majestic miracles accompanying it, surely signifying that the Lord was satisfied and pleased with it.

-- The fact that they drew lots is not a valid objection. See where the drawing of lots was used previously in Scripture (Lev. 16:8; Josh. 14:2; 1 Sam. 14:41, 42; Neh. 10:34; 11:1; Prov. 16:33). Even the fact that they chose the two men as candidates is not a valid objection, for it is very likely there were only two men who, without being at the time apostles, had accompanied Christ during His total ministry. Acts 1:21, 22 seems to indicate this.

-- The fact that Matthias is never mentioned again is not a valid objection either, for several of the twelve are not mentioned again after Acts one. This does not invalidate their apostleship.

### **Was Paul God's choice to take the place of Judas?**

No, for Scripture indicates strongly that Paul's apostleship was neither a replacement for Judas nor an additional apostle in the same program. He was an apostle with equal **authority**, but in a different **program**.

--Paul didn't fulfill the requirements for being one of the twelve. These are listed by Christ in John 15:27 and by Peter in Acts 1:21, 22; 10:41. They were chosen specifically, as those who had known Him intimately from the beginning of His ministry, to be witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:22). Paul didn't qualify to be one of the twelve, but he could be an apostle in a different program, for he had **worked** the **works** of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12).

-- Paul never claimed to be one of the twelve. Even when he was defending his apostleship at length (2 Cor. chapters 10 - 12) he gave no hint that he should be the replacement for Judas or that he should be numbered with the twelve.

-- He lists himself separately from "the twelve" in First Corinthians fifteen. In 1 Cor. 15:4, 5 Paul informs us that after Christ was buried, and rose again the third day, he was seen of Cephas, **then of the twelve**. Then, he continues in verse eight, "**Last of all** he was seen of **me** also, as of one born out of due time." When he referred to "the twelve" it was not merely a "technical term" applied to a group which numbered only eleven at the time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See Luke 24:33, "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them." If Matthias was one of "them that were with them" then Paul could look back on this occasion, after Matthias had become an apostle, and say, as he did in 1 Cor. 15:5, "the twelve" were there. To illustrate this -- we can

-- The twelve are to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel -- but Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16), not to one of the tribes of Israel. Under his ministry even the distinction between Jew and Gentile is set aside -- how much more the distinction between tribes!

-- Paul's message differed from that of the twelve. See the section concerning the distinctiveness of the age of grace.

-- Paul was, indeed, an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12) -- not a false apostle (2 Cor. 11:13), and not inferior to the twelve (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). He was made an apostle by the will of God (1 Cor. 1:1) and chosen as an apostle by the risen Christ (Gal. 1:1). But his apostleship did not raise the number of circumcision apostles to thirteen -- for there will be only twelve thrones for them. He was an apostle because there was a new program requiring not twelve Apostles (for twelve tribes), but one Apostle (for one Body)

### **Is the Body of Christ found in the book of Revelation?**

We have seen the contrast between the kingdom program and that for the Body of Christ at the beginning of this age of grace (in Acts), but just as clearly we must see this contrast after its close (the book of Revelation). During the coming Tribulation:

-- A different program will be followed.

\* There will again be a distinction between Jew and Gentile. Compare Rev. 2:9; 3:9; 7:4 - 8; and 12:13 - 17 with Rom. 3:22; 10:12; Gal. 3:28 and Eph. 2:14.

\* Men will again be judged for eating unclean meats. Compare Isa. 66:17 (the context indicates this verse has the Tribulation in view) with 1 Tim. 4:3 - 5.

\* Believers will be subject to the law of the Sabbath. Compare Matt. 24:20 with Gal. 4:9 - 11; and Col. 2:16, 16.

\* There will again be signs, wonders and miracles as an integral part of the ministry. Compare Acts 2:18 - 20; and Rev. 11:5, 6, 11, 12 with 1 Cor. 13.

-- A different message will be proclaimed. The "gospel of the kingdom" will again be preached, not only to Israel, as took place during the gospel period and the early chapters of Acts, but to Gentiles as well (Matt. 24:14). The "gospel of the kingdom" is not "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" as Paul did (Acts 28:31) but the announcement that the millennial kingdom is near, and soon to be established (Matt. 4:17; 10:6, 7; Mark 1:14, 15).

-- There will be no recognition of the Body of Christ. This term is never used outside of Paul's epistles. In Revelation there is no reference back to Paul's epistles. This indicates that he will have no authority over either the message preached or the program followed during the

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point to an old picture of a small boy and say, "That's my father" -- even though at the time the picture was taken he was much too young to have a son. The twelve, in 1 Cor. 15:5, could not have included either Judas, who was dead by this time, or Paul, who was still a staunch and zealous unbeliever. It had to be Matthias who was the twelfth apostle. It was necessary that the one taking the place of Judas be present at this time (Acts 1:22; 13:31). "The twelve" is not just "a collective term" -- as is suggested in the Scofield note at Mark 16:14.

Tribulation. Contrast the emphasis on his authority in Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:2 - 4; Col. 1:25, 26; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:3; 3:14; etc. To see the total absence of Pauline theology or authority during the Tribulation, try reading Paul's epistles straight through, followed by a one sitting reading of Revelation.

Paul emphasizes that this age of grace is not according to prophecy. In contrast the book of Revelation is almost totally a rearrangement and amplification of Old Testament prophecies, specially those in Daniel and Ezekiel.

The introduction of this age of grace by Paul raises some important questions. What will become of the Body? Its beginning, its message, its program, even its very existence were a secret revealed to and through Paul. Could its departure, then, be part of a prophesied event needing no new revelation? In the rest of Scripture eschatology is tied tightly to Israel as such, and occasionally including Gentiles as such. Could these non-Pauline passages be speaking, at the same time, of a Body where there is no difference between Jew and Gentile?

(Taken from the author's Bible Study # 72 -- < My Documents\Bible Studies\distinct > on Microsoft Word )

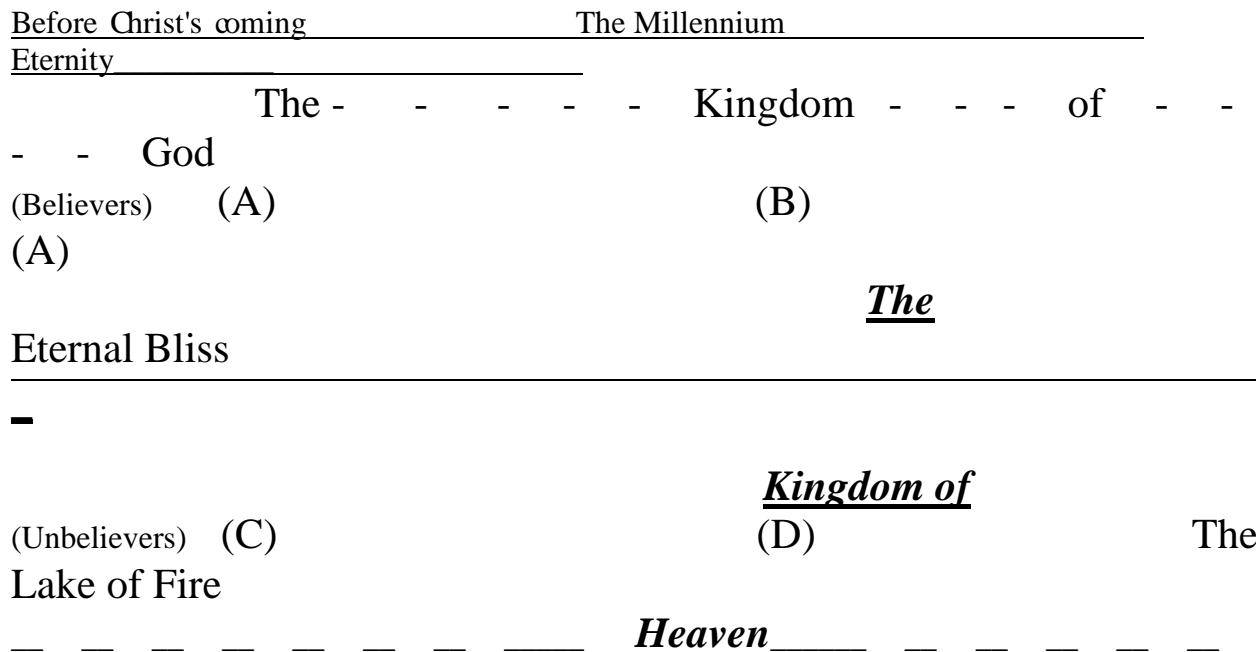
## The Blessed Hope -- Some Terms to be Defined

Two people can read the same verse and get different ideas from it for, often, the words do not mean the same thing to the one as they do to the other. The story is told of one pastor who had emphasized water baptism to the point that, whatever his text, he usually ended up preaching on water baptism. It was said of him, "Whenever he sees 'baptism' he thinks 'water' and every time he sees 'water' he thinks 'baptism'."

It seems that some Mid, "Pre-wrath," or Post-Tribulationists have come to the place where every time they see "kingdom" they think "Millennium," and every time they see "tribulation" they think "Great Tribulation." They also want to tie down the expression "the Day of the Lord" to a brief period at the very close of "the time of Jacob's trouble" when God Himself is pouring out judgments direct from heaven. Does Scripture justify these definitions of the terms?

### The Kingdom of God

It seems clear that the "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" are related, but not identical. The kingdom of God denotes His governmental relationship to believers of all ages. It is spiritual in connotation. The kingdom of heaven, however, is political in character. It has to do with His reign over all men, saved and unsaved, who are on earth during a specific one thousand years of earth's history. These two overlap when believers who are on earth during that thousand years are in view. Believers alive on earth during that time will be in both kingdoms.



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At "(A)" both Jewish saints and members of the Body of Christ are in the kingdom of God because they are saved, but not in the kingdom of the heavens, which is limited to the 1,000 years of the Millennium. At "(B)" they are in both kingdoms. As for the unbelievers (both Jew and Gentile) they are in neither kingdom, neither at "(C)" nor in eternity. At "(D)" they are in the kingdom of the heavens (because they are alive during the Millennium) but not in the kingdom of God (because they are not saved).

Passages relating primarily to believers in the Millennium may (and often do) use either expression.<sup>1</sup> After all, one witness may tell about an accident on First Street and another a collision on Main Street, and both be describing accurately, to the same event -- IF it happened at the intersection of First and Main.

Clearly the concept "the kingdom of God" is not limited to a political kingdom on earth in the future. Weigh the following considerations:

-- God is called the "King Eternal" in 1 Timothy 1:17. If His kingdom comes into existence only after the return of Christ, He has been a King without a kingdom all this time.

-- We have a citizenship. This necessitates a kingdom of which we are citizens. It is not a citizenship in the millennial kingdom, for our citizenship is specifically said to be "in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). "Kingdom saints" are citizens of this spiritual kingdom, even before there is a millennial kingdom in existence, for we are "fellow citizens with the [evidently Jewish] saints" (Eph. 2:19), and later they, in resurrection, will also be citizens of the millennial kingdom (Matt. 8:11).

-- Paul was preaching the kingdom of God during the time he was writing Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. The absence of references to the millennial kingdom in these epistles indicates the words in Acts 28:31 refer to a completely different concept -- one which is in harmony with his written ministry during that time.

-- Paul uses the words when he has a local situation *at that time* in view. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Paul was not describing the characteristics of a kingdom in the distant future. He was pointing out the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God *now*. It is interesting that he mentions *righteousness* and *peace* as being outstanding aspects of the kingdom of God, for Christ, though a Priest after the order of Melchizedec, is (now), like Melchizedec, also a *King* -- King of *Righteousness* and King of *Peace* (Heb. 7:2, 3). Also Paul states, "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power -" (1 Cor. 4:20). It relates to power *at that time* in the lives of the true ministers of Christ -- not power later establishing a worldwide political kingdom.

-- The kingdom of God is being entered into now, rather than in some future day. When

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<sup>1</sup>While the other Gospels uniformly use the expression "kingdom of God" (having the millennial kingdom as related to *believers* primarily in view), Matthew (with the millennial kingdom specifically in focus -- presenting Christ as its King) normally speaks of the "kingdom of *heaven*."

Paul told the believers in Iconium, Lystra, and Antioch they "must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), he was referring to what took place at the time of their conversion. He was warning them that becoming a Christian did not mean their lives would henceforth be a "bed of roses." Instead they would have tribulation, much tribulation. He could not have meant they must go through the *Great Tribulation*, for they lived (as we now know) over 1,900 years too soon for that. We can know what Paul meant if we look at 1 Thess. 3:3, 4. "No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should *suffer tribulation*; even as IT CAME TO PASS." He had warned them of coming tribulation, as he did those in Acts 14:22, but they had already experienced it! There is no reference in either passage to the Great Tribulation -- which is even yet in the future. As the tribulation of which he had warned them was then present, the kingdom of God must have been a contemporary kingdom.

### "Tribulation" and "The Great Tribulation."

Eliphaz once remarked, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Israel has faced trouble, often exceedingly severe trouble, all through her recorded history. Read carefully through the book of Lamentations as one sample of what they have endured in the past. But there is a particular time yet future which is called specifically "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

Oswald T. Allis protests the application of Jeremiah 30:7 to the Great Tribulation. He writes: "'Great' may be used in the sense of 'long' (great in length); and this is favored by the word 'time' which follows. This prophecy was probably uttered before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. There is no reason for believing it refers exclusively to a brief period of 3 1/2 years which are still wholly future. The time of Jacob's trouble, or affliction, if reckoned, as it may well be, from that destruction of Jerusalem which took place in Jeremiah's day, has been incomparably long; it still continues; and the end is not yet. The times of the Gentiles have been, and will continue to be until their close, a time of trouble for Jacob." <sup>2</sup>

The passage says, "The day is great, so that none is like it." As Allis notes, the conclusion of that time coincides with the end of the "Times of the Gentiles." The day closes, not with the return of Israel to the land as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah, but at the return of Christ. It involves no more enslavement for Jacob (Jer. 30:8) and the resurrection of David to be their king (Jer.30:9). A return from captivity will bring them to a place where they will be in rest with none to make them afraid (this surely could not be said of the return recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah --Jer. 30:10). There will also come the *full end* of *all nations* to which they have been scattered (Jer. 30:11). However the preceding verses indicate it is not the *length* of the day, but its *intensity* that is great. "*For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?"* (Jer. 30:5, 6).

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<sup>2</sup> "Prophecy and the Church" by Oswald T. Allis. Published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1955. Page 209.

Jeremiah 30:7 describes a day which is *great* so that *none is like it*, while Matthew 24:21 speaks of a *great* tribulation, "*such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*" Unless they speak of the same time, they are mutually exclusive! Therefore the two must be identical. This being true, the Matthew passage, pointing to a specific beginning, in the future at the time Christ spoke the words (24:14 ff), and still future today, proves that the "time of Jacob's trouble" does have the Great Tribulation in view.

Tribulation (the Greek word θλιψις) was promised to the apostles (John 16:33). Paul uses the word twenty four times and speaks of it as a characteristic of the true believer's life. Not once does he use this word in regard to the future Tribulation, though many of the verses involved would prove helpful to anyone going through that time of distress. But there is a time which is singled out as the greatest period of tribulation the earth will ever see. It is a short time, for if it were not cut short the severity of it would bring about the destruction of all flesh (Matt. 24:21, 22). It is called "the Tribulation, the Great [one]" (Literal Greek of Rev. 7:14).

Every believer of every age will suffer tribulation, but only those, both believers and unbelievers, who are alive during the last half of the seventieth week of Daniel chapter nine, will go through the Great Tribulation. This period of extreme suffering for mankind will begin with the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the future temple in Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15, 21) and will be brought to a conclusion with the outpouring of the vengeance of God at the close of the seven years. Teachers often refer to the entire seven years as the "Tribulation Period," for there will be tribulation even during the first half of that time -- before the Great Tribulation itself begins.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to realize the vast difference between enduring tribulation, and being in the "Great Tribulation" (or even in the "Tribulation"). The former is the experience to some degree of every saint, while the latter will be the fate of only those who happen to be on earth during a particular time in history.

### **The Day of the Lord**

This expression is used many times in the Old Testament<sup>4</sup> and several times in the New Testament.<sup>5</sup> Unquestionably it refers, at times, to the great climax of that day -- the pouring out of the wrath of God directly. However, it cannot be confined only to that exceedingly short period of time at the very close of the Tribulation. For example, in 2 Pet. 3:10 it stretches out into the future for a thousand years. There are clear indications it also, in some contexts, begins some seven years before Christ comes in glory -- at the opening of the seventieth "week" prophesied by Daniel in chapter nine of his book. Consider:

Almost the entire book of Revelation is cast in the "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). The view

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<sup>3</sup>In this study "Tribulation" or "Tribulation Period" will refer to the entire 7 years. The expression "Great Tribulation" will be used when the last 3 1/2 years is specifically in view.

<sup>4</sup>OT references -- Isa. 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Mal. 4:5. A similar expression, "the day to/for the Lord" is found in Isa. 2:12; Ezek. 30:3; Zech. 14:1, 7.

<sup>5</sup>NT references -- Acts 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10. A similar expression, "the Lord's day" is found in Rev. 1:10.

that the Lord's Day is referring to Sunday, a new day of worship for the church, is not tenable. Dr. E. W. Bullinger, a recognized Hebrew and Greek scholar, comments on this in detail:

"The key that unlocks the door to the understanding of this book [Revelation] is, we believe, that it relates to the *Day of the Lord*, and not to any tradition which limits the reception of this vision to a particular day of the week; and that day Sunday.

"It is not a question of *when* John received this vision: but of *what he saw* in it. Whether it was a Sunday or a Monday can have no real relation to the book; nor can it have any weight in determining the interpretation of the contents of the book." <sup>6</sup>

It is very unlikely that "the Lord's Day" refers to Sunday for the following reasons:

\* There is no indication that Sunday was given any particular significance to any but those addressed in Paul's epistles -- the Body of Christ. Only three passages refer to meetings of the believers on the first day of the week: John 20:19; Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 16:2. The passage in John evidently does not refer to a day when the disciples met, for they were together in hiding every day. It must refer to one of those days when Christ made this particular appearance. Just as the kingdom believers in Jerusalem were zealous for the law, worshipping in the temple, and were still practicing circumcision, they must also have been observing the Sabbath. While Revelation was written long after the temple was destroyed and the Jewish believers scattered, John was writing with Israel and her end times specifically in mind -- with tremendous emphasis on Israel and Old Testament prophecy.

\* The Sabbath was not replaced by a new day of worship for Israel. It was given to them forever (Ex. 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12, 20). Even Gentiles, under the prophetic program, were to keep the Sabbath (Isa. 56:6).

\* It is much more likely that the expression "the Lord's Day" began to be applied to Sunday after Revelation was written, and because of a faulty understanding of Rev. 1:10, rather than that it was already being used in this way when John wrote.

\* What day of the week John was "in the Spirit" could have no real significance in this context. To be told that, "in the Spirit," he was placed in the future Day of the Lord would be of tremendous significance, as it would set the stage for the rest of the book.

"Objection has been taken to the interpretation of 'the Lord's Day' (as referring to the Day of the Lord) because we have (in Rev. 1:10) the adjective, 'Lord's' instead of the noun, 'of the Lord,' as in the Hebrew. *But what else could it be called in Hebrew?* Such objectors do not seem to be aware of the fact that there is no adjective for 'Lord's' in Hebrew; and therefore the only way of expressing 'the Lord's Day' is by using the two nouns, 'the Day of the Lord' -- which means equally 'the Lord's Day' (Jehovah's Day). It is useless, therefore, to make any objection on this ground; for, if a Hebrew wanted to say 'the Lord's Day' he *must* say 'the Day of the Lord.'

"In the Greek there are two ways of expressing this ... either by saying literally, as in Hebrew, 'the Day of the Lord' (using two nouns); or by using the adjective 'Lord's' instead. It comes to exactly the same thing as to *signification*; the difference lies only in the emphasis." <sup>7</sup>

Bullinger goes on to explain that when the adjective is used (as in Rev. 1:10) it would be "the Lord's DAY." When the two nouns are used (as in the Old Testament form) it would be "the LORD'S Day." He continues by saying, "The same day is meant in each case, but with a

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<sup>6</sup>"The Apocalypse or the 'Day of the Lord'" by E. W. Bullinger, page ii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Pages 11, 12.



different emphasis." <sup>8</sup>

It would seem strange indeed if the book of Revelation, which gives the last and most complete word in the Bible on the Day of the Lord, never used that expression! Only if Revelation 1:10 contains the full equivalent of it is the matter resolved, for "the Day of the Lord" is not mentioned elsewhere in this book. If the "Lord's Day" is the "Day of the Lord," it indicates that at the very beginning of the book John was transported by the Spirit into a future day, much as Ezekiel was lifted up by the Spirit and "brought ... in the visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezek. 8:3). All that John saw in the following chapters were the events of that long anticipated "Day of the Lord."

-- The "Day of the Lord" in 1 Thess. 5:2 quite clearly refers to the entire seven years of the Tribulation. Consider:

\* It comes unannounced and unexpected -- like a thief in the night. Henry Hudson says, "The Day of the Lord follows the Tribulation ... it comes as a thief in the night -- which is not so with the Tribulation." <sup>9</sup> But if the Day of the Lord is the outpouring of God's wrath at the close of the Tribulation how can it come as a thief in the night? This period is very carefully time documented. After three and a half years have gone by, the "abomination of desolation" will be set up in the temple. The time remaining, from this event until the close of the "week," is given over and over in unmistakable terms. It will be three and a half years (Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Rev. 12:14); forty two months (Rev. 12:2; 13:5); or one thousand two hundred and sixty days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6). What thief will tell you the year, month, and day he will come to rob you?

If, on the other hand, the Day of the Lord is the entire seven year interval itself, it could easily come as a thief in the night. There is no time schedule for the *beginning* of this epoch. Down through church history many dates have been set for it, but always they have been proven wrong and the date setters put to shame. More and more the prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord and associated events are ignored or rejected. Peter tells us that even the religious leaders of the day will be saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet.3:4). But even the opening events of the Tribulation will shake men from that kind of unwarranted complacency. The beginning of the Tribulation will surprise and startle an unsuspecting world. The judgments at its *close* should not.

\* The Day of the Lord is to be preceded by a time of peace and safety (1 Thess. 5:3). This false calm, as Scripture indicates, describes the world situation just before the Tribulation *begins*. During the closing days of 1989 a massive crumbling of Communism in Europe happened so fast that the whole world looked on in shock. Following these events many were convinced we were entering into an era of peace. This has not proved to be the source for that false sense of serenity mentioned in 1 Thess. 5:13 but it significantly illustrates how such an attitude could come upon the world. But the time just preceding the *close* of the Tribulation stands in stark contrast -- a situation as different as it is possible to imagine!

\* The "sudden destruction" which comes upon men (1 Thess. 5:3) must be a reference to the seven year Tribulation as a whole, not merely the final few days of it. "Sudden"

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Leaflet, "Does Holy Scripture teach that Christ will return before the Great Tribulation?" -- Henry T. Hudson, page 5.

does not mean "instantaneous" for it is compared to travail coming upon a woman about to bear a child. The characteristics of travail are: a mild, but recognizable beginning; pains gradually intensifying to a predetermined climax; and intermittent spasms of pain interspersed by periods of rest. As the birth draws near, the periods of rest are shorter, and the times of agonizing pain longer and more severe, until the child is born. This is a very apt description of what will happen over the entire seven years of trouble.

\* During the time just before the beginning of the Day of the Lord the unbelievers will be sleeping, unaware of the approaching danger. Read the book of Revelation through from chapter one to chapter eighteen. How can anyone living during these days be asleep to danger, specially during the last three and a half years? Unbelieving, hard headed, hard hearted, rebellious, and wicked they will be. But asleep? NEVER!

-- The Day of the Lord in 2 Thess. 2:2 is evidently also the entire seven years, as will be shown more fully in the study of Second Thessalonians, chapter two. The Thessalonians were not being told the Day of the Lord was approaching and "nigh," as the King James Version translates it. The teaching was that the Day of the Lord was then present -- that they were already experiencing it. With the time required to deliver letters in those days, if this "Day" was known by them to be very brief, they would have realized there would not be enough time to write to Paul, let alone get an answer back (taking months in those days)!

Whatever the Day of the Lord might mean in other contexts, in Thessalonians and Revelation it refers to seven years of great trouble for the descendents of Jacob climaxed by the glorious return of Christ, bringing judgment on the Gentiles and introducing God's kingdom on earth.

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## The Blessed Hope -- Post Tribulation "Proofs" Examined

*The Post-Tribulationist, the Mid-Tribulationist and the "Pre-wrath Rapturist" all see the Rapture in the Olivet Discourse -- as a phase of the coming in glory.*

Is the Rapture of the church found in Matthew chapters 24 and 25? There are indications it is not.

### **24:3. "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?"**

The apostles were given signs (Matt. 24:30, 33; Luke 21:25 - 28, and they were urged to look for them; but Paul gives no signs regarding the Rapture. He tells us, "the JEWS require a sign, " but we are to be occupied with Christ Himself (1 Cor. 1:22, 23).

### **24:13. "But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."**

This message is found only in Matt. 10:22 and 24:13. Both passages have to do with the Tribulation period -- see Matt. 10:23.

During the last half of the Tribulation, unbelieving Israel will flee from the wrath of Satan and Antichrist, finding refuge in the wilderness (Rev. 12:12 - 14). There God will enter into judgment with them, purge out the rebels from among them, and take those who remain after the purging has been completed into the land of Israel. In the land, this remnant will see Christ, recognize Him from the marks of the nails in His hands, mourn over their past unbelief, and be saved (Ezek. 20:33 - 44; Zech. 12:10). It is not that they are to endure until the end of their *lives* to *remain* saved. They are to endure until the end of the *age* (Matt. 24:3) to *become* saved. Their endurance rescues them from being purged as rebels and assures that they will be present when Christ reveals Himself to Israel. The pressures put upon them to go along with the crowd, and take the mark of the Beast, having been resisted, they are *there* when God pours out on them the Spirit of *grace* and of supplications (Zech. 12:10). They become a part of the "all Israel" which is saved (Rom. 11:26). Somewhat similarly, when a man, today, attends an evangelistic service and is saved, his attendance there is not a *work* for salvation, it just places him where he can hear the gospel and be saved by *grace* apart from any works.

These special circumstances fit only one people -- the nation of Israel, and only one time period -- the Tribulation. Paul never makes such a statement concerning the Body of Christ.

### **24:14. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"** (end of the **age** -- see the question in verse 3).

"Jesus came ... preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*" (Mark 1:14, 15). After Pentecost the message included an actual offer of that kingdom. "Repent therefore, and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that *times of refreshing* [the millennial kingdom] *may come* from the presence of the Lord; and that *He may send Jesus*, the Christ

appointed for you" (Acts 3:19, 20 -- NASB).

The gospel of the kingdom, as preached in early Acts, is similar, but NOT identical, to the "gospel of the circumcision" (Gal. 2:7, 8). After Acts chapter nine (or thirteen?) the twelve apostles preached the gospel of the circumcision, but not the gospel of the kingdom. Israel had been "cast away" (Rom. 11:15) and the kingdom was no longer nigh, nor being offered to them. Also the gospel of the kingdom is NOT the same as "preaching the kingdom of God" (Acts 20:25; 28:31). Paul did proclaim the kingdom of God -- but never the "gospel of the kingdom," nor are we instructed to preach it.

**24:31.** *"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

There is no mention of either rapture or a resurrection here. It is a gathering together of His elect (living Jewish evangelists -- Rev. 12:17) to "where the action is." Their mission of world evangelism during the Tribulation has been completed, and now they will be assembled at Jerusalem where Christ is returning in glory.

**24:32 - 34.**

This coming of the Lord is "near," or imminent, only when the Jews "see *all* these things" (24:33). A look at the parallel passage in Luke will be helpful here. In Luke 21:28 the "things" referred to are the signs listed in the preceding verses (Luke 21:10 - 27), not the situation before the Tribulation begins (described in Luke 21:6 - 9), as verse 9 indicates. The generation that sees these signs shall see His coming.

**24:37 - 41.**

In the days of Noah the flood came and "took them [the wicked] all away," leaving Noah and his family in safety. So in verses 40 and 41 those "taken" are not the righteous ones, but the wicked taken in judgment. While the Greek word translated "took" in verse 39 is "*airo*" and the word for "taken" in verses 40 and 41 is "*paralambano*" they are legitimate synonyms. John F. Walvoord writes, "The fact is that *paralambano* is a common word and is not, in itself, a theological concept. The argument by Reese [Alexander Reese] that it is always used in a friendly sense, however, is destroyed by the fact that the same word is used in John 19:16, 17 in reference to taking Jesus to the Cross, an obvious act of judgment."<sup>1</sup>

In the parallel passage in Luke's Gospel it is very clear that those "taken" are the wicked taken in *judgment*. "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man ... I tell you on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be *taken*, and the other left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be *taken*, and the other left. Two men will be in the field; one will be *taken* and the other left." The disciples then asked a very natural question -- they wanted to know *where* they would be taken. Christ answered them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered" (Luke 17:26, 34 - 37 -- NASB). That doesn't sound very much like a description of saints being taken to heaven!

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<sup>1</sup>"The Rapture Question" by John F. Walvoord, page 189.

As Walvoord remarks, "It states plainly that the ones taken are killed, and their bodies are exposed to the vultures."<sup>2</sup>

This fits with the parable of the tares, where the tares are removed *first* (Matt. 13:30). By contrast, in the Rapture the believers will (first) be "taken" (up into the air to be with Christ) and the wicked left behind!

## 25:1 - 12.

As has been pointed out by Post-Trib proponents, the word translated "meet" in Matt. 25:1, 6 is the same word used in 1 Thess. 4:17, concerning the meeting in the air. It is used also in Acts 28:15 of the disciples who went forth to meet Paul at Appius and, evidently, accompanied him as he continued on to their home city -- Rome. Does the word necessarily imply that we go out to meet Christ and then accompany Him back to our origin, earth, rather than to go on to our home in heaven?

The verb form of the Greek word is found in Mark 5:2, 3. "... There met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs." When he met Christ, neither he nor Christ went back to the tombs. Christ boarded a boat and departed to the other side of the sea, and the former demoniac was sent home (though the city had not been his "home" for a long time!) to his friends in the city -- (Mark 5:18 - 20). Therefore the word does not necessitate a return to the place of origin.

I fail to find any trace of the Body of Christ or the Rapture in these chapters.

***"Can we really imagine the first century believers being divided into two camps with regard to Christ's coming? On the one side, those instructed by Christ and the twelve apostles would be Post-Tribulationists, and on the other side, those instructed by Paul would be Pre-Tribulationists? ... Can our minds visualize them passing each other on the street with the exchange of greetings 'Maranatha Pre' and 'Maranatha Post'?"***<sup>3</sup>

While not essential to the Pre-Trib position, nor a teaching about which one can be dogmatic one way or the other, the view that The Twelve, and others who were in *Christ* before Paul, were not taken into the *Body of Christ*, offers a solution to this problem. In this case, of course, these kingdom saints would not be Pre-Tribulationists, for *their* hope would be the coming in glory. There were important differences between these two groups of believers. For example, the Jews continued to practice circumcision, though admitting there was no need for the Gentiles to do so (Acts 21:24, 25). They were all zealous for the Law (Acts 21:20), while Paul was teaching that the Law was done away in Christ (2 Cor. 3:3 - 11) and we are not under it. (Rom. 6:15).

In any case it is a mistaken idea that the twelve apostles were Post-Trib. They did not have the Rapture in view at all! We believe the *Rapture* will occur *before* the Tribulation: they

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page 190.

<sup>3</sup> A leaflet "Does Holy Scripture Teach That Christ Will Return Before the Great Tribulation?" by Henry Hudson, page 4.

believed Christ would *come in GLORY after* the Tribulation. Both statements are TRUE! The apostles were not Post-Trib. They did not even seek to establish a relationship between the Rapture on the one hand and the coming in glory on the other. They ignored the Rapture and left that teaching to Paul, to whom it had been revealed.

***"If ... the book of Acts can be regarded as recording some kind of transition, why is it so impossible that the last days of this age should witness another transition as God sets the scene in Israel and Jerusalem for the days of Jacob's trouble?"***<sup>4</sup>

There are several good reasons for no "transition" period at the close of this age of grace:

-- Unlike the situation in mid-Acts, this age does not close by removing an offer to a people -- but by removing the *people!* Most of those New Testament Israelites who were saved before Paul were still present as this age got under way. When God returns to His program with Israel, the Body of Christ *will not be here!*

-- While the beginning of this age was an event, not a process, a completely new program was then instituted and it took time for the truths to be revealed, taught, understood, and implemented. When God goes back to Israel, He will be taking up where He left off -- with a program already well known and documented. Let me illustrate. If someone introducing you to a stranger interrupts your conversation with a friend, your contact with this new acquaintance is instantaneous, but it takes some time to get a satisfactory conversation going with him (a transition). However, in returning to your interrupted fellowship with your friend after the stranger leaves, you can return to your conversation at once -- right where you left off (no transition).

-- God may be laying a foundation for the Tribulation events during the last part of this age -- but this is not a transition. God was preparing Paul for his ministry in the age of grace from the time he was born (Gal. 1:15, 16), but the transition period did not begin with the birth of Saul of Tarsus!

***"Now we all agree that there will be believers present during this period [the Tribulation]. Who are they and where do they come from? Let us remember that according to the Pre-Trib theory, every single believer is caught up and none left. Imagine! The whole world without any kind of believing remnant! What a predicament!"***<sup>5</sup>

What human witness was present to lead Saul of Tarsus to the Lord? What human instruments are credited with the conversion of all Israel in Zech. 12:10? God delights to use men, but He is not helpless without them.

However, if the believers were caught away today, current witnessing among the Jews (which is taking place on an unprecedented scale) could, under the power of the Holy Spirit, bring a harvest after the witnesses were gone. Books, Bibles, magazines, and taped messages would still be here to bear a not totally silent, and very effective, testimony. Christian programs aired over secular radio and television stations could go on for some time, since they are usually taped in advance and supplied to the stations far ahead of scheduled broadcasting. God is surely able to bring 144,000 men to Himself at the beginning of the Tribulation if He can bring a whole

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Page 17.

nation to Himself in a day at its close (Zech. 12:10; Isa. 66:8; Rom. 11:26).

To assume the ministry of the Body of Christ is necessary during the Tribulation is to read something into the book of Revelation. Not only is there no mention of the Body of Christ in the book, but all *formal ministry* mentioned there is carefully and specifically said to be through angels (Rev. 14:6) or *Jews* (Rev. 2:9; 3:9; 7:4 - 8; 11:3; 12:17; 14:1 - 5). The natural branches have been grafted back into their own Olive tree,<sup>6</sup> and the wild Olive branches have been broken off. Of course multitudes of Gentiles will be saved during this time and will have a powerful, though brief, personal testimony (Rev. 6:9 - 11; 7:9, 10, 13, 14), but they will evidently not be in places of leadership (see Rom. 11:21 - 24).<sup>7</sup>

There is a very real problem for the Post-Trib position that is related to the above considerations. Having no believers on earth following a Pre-Trib Rapture is not as great a problem as having only raptured believers entering the Kingdom. If the Rapture takes place at the close of the Tribulation, then all believers during that time will be "changed" and will have bodies like the resurrection body of Christ (Phil. 3:21). If no unbelievers enter the Kingdom, then who will continue to have children during that time (Isa. 65:20 - 23)? If the Rapture is Pre-Trib this is no problem, for there is no record of living saints entering into changed bodies (having put on immortality -- 1 Cor. 15:53) at the transition from the Tribulation to the kingdom. Any saints having lived through the Tribulation, and the "all Israel" saved at its close, would live on into the millennial kingdom and populate it.

***"If we read verses 25 - 27 [of Romans 11] we can readily apprehend the terminal point of the 'fulness of the Gentiles' ... it certainly is not before the Tribulation. The condition of blind unbelief continues right up till the Deliverer comes out of Sion."***<sup>8</sup>

Romans 11:25, 26 informs us that Israel will not recover from her blindness (*judicial* blindness, not just "blind unbelief" -- Rom. 11:7, 25), and enter into a national salvation, until after the "full number of the ingathering of Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25 -- Amplified Bible) during this age of grace. If the fulness of the Gentiles refers to the number to be included in the Body of Christ, then this fulness will have been reached at the Rapture. If it is speaking of the number of *all* Gentiles to be *saved*, it could not be concluded until the end of the Millennium, for a great multitude of Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:9, 14) and countless others during the 1,000 years following (Isa. 66:19).

These verses do NOT say that as soon as the Body of Christ is complete all Israel will be saved. It is not the completion of the Body which brings about that national salvation, but the return of Christ Himself (Rom. 11:26, 27 with Zech. 12:10).

God's program with Israel was not broken off just before their conversion, but just before

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<sup>6</sup> "For the Olive tree is not the symbolism of a heavenly calling, but of the place of earthly testimony, and the 'natural branches' of the Olive tree are the covenant people." -- "Forgotten Truths" by Sir Robert Anderson, page 15.

<sup>7</sup> See the study concerning the Olive tree passage in Romans 11 as set forth in the chapter on the Acts 28 position.

<sup>8</sup> From a leaflet, "Does the Holy Scripture Teach That Christ Will Return Before the Great Tribulation?" by Henry T. Hudson, page 10.

they were about to enter the "time of Jacob's trouble," which they richly deserved because they had fully rejected the risen Christ. So when this intervening age is concluded, God will take up where He left off. It will not be followed immediately by the salvation of all Israel, but by the time of trouble that will *lead to* that salvation. "I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; **In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me**" (Hosea 5:15 NASB)

During the entire Tribulation God will be seeking to bring Israel, as a nation, to Himself. This is not what He is doing today. Now He is endeavoring to bring SINNERS to Himself. The individual Jews must take their place beside the Gentiles to receive salvation (Acts 15:10, 11). When this age of grace has been terminated, then God will lift the *judicial* blindness from their *still unbelieving hearts* and begin to work toward the salvation of all Israel. The end of the blindness, and the chastening of the Tribulation, will prepare them for the time of grace and supplications (Zech. 12:10). And so all Israel shall be saved -- *AFTER* the Rapture, but *NOT AT THE SAME TIME* as the Rapture.

***"How simple it is to believe that the 'first resurrection' of Revelation is the first. The Pre-Trib theory would make such language meaningless. How easy and natural to take the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 to be the last, instead of being caught with seven more after it."***<sup>9</sup>

Both the resurrection of Christ Himself and of the saints raised with Him (Matt. 27:52) come before the "first resurrection," as that resurrection is defined by brother Hudson. So there is already a resurrection before the first resurrection, unless the first resurrection be understood to include all who are raised to life -- in contrast to the one where the lost are raised unto condemnation (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28, 29). In this case the Rapture is rightly seen as an unprophesied part of the first resurrection.

As to the "last trump," notice other uses of the word for "last." "And last of all He was seen of me also" (1 Cor. 15:8). This is not the last time Christ will be seen, but the last appearance at that time and in that series of appearances. So "the last error" (Matt. 27:64) does not mean there can never be any more errors. It was the last of those under consideration, not the last absolutely. In Heb. 1:2 the present time is called the last days, but in 2 Tim. 3:1 the last days are seen as being in the future. So we have last days after last days. 1 Pet. 1:5 speaks of the last time as future, but 1 John 2:18 tells us, "It is the last time." Here we have the last time after the last time.

Surely simplicity must give way to accuracy.

***"According to Darby and his followers, the Great Tribulation is the wrath of God against the Jewish people for their rejection of CHRIST. According to the Scripture, it is the Devil's wrath against the saints for their rejection of ANTI-CHRIST, and adherence to Christ. Let the reader once see the Scripture truth on this point, and the whole Darbyist case will be exposed as a campaign of assumption, mis-statements, and sentiment."***<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Pages 5, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Reese -- Cited by J. Dwight Pentecost in "Things to Come," Academy



Israel was already under the wrath of God before Paul wrote First Thessalonians, and it continues on them all through, and until the end of, the Tribulation. In 1 Thess. 2:15, 16 (NIV) he speaks of the Jews "Who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God **has come** upon them at last" In the Greek "at last" is *eis telos* -- "to [the] end." So the wrath of God began with their formal rejection of the risen Christ (at Acts seven evidently), and will continue to the end of the Tribulation when they will turn to the Lord and will be saved. If this age had not been inserted into a break in the prophetic program the wrath of God begun at Acts seven would have taken them very shortly into the Tribulation to find its conclusion at Christ's return in glory.

Also, God has always felt free to use men, or even Satan, to express His wrath -- and has reckoned it as **His** wrath. Consider:

- The things which came on Job were specifically the outpouring of Satan's wrath, yet
- What happened at the Cross was surely due to the wrath of both men and Satan (Matt. 27:20; Gen. 3:15), yet Isaiah says, "But the *Lord* was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief" (Isa. 53:10 -- NASB).
- It is the "*Lamb*" who opens the seals which introduce judgments near the beginning of the Tribulation (Rev. 6:1, 2 and following).
- It appears that Revelation 19:11 - 21 and Ezekiel 38:21 have the same battle in view. The former passage represents Christ and His holy ones as destroying the armies, while the latter indicates God will use man against man in the battle. "I will call for a sword against him throughout all my holy mountain, saith the Lord God; every man's sword shall be against his brother."
- In Rev. 16:19 it says, "... and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of **His** wrath." Yet, see how the judgment is described in chapter 17. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the Beast [ten kings, see Rev. 17:12], these shall hate the harlot [Babylon, see Rev. 17:5] and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill **His will**" (Rev. 17:16, 17). This judgment is described in detail in Rev. 18, and it bears all the marks of an atomic attack. Here man's wrath is referred to as "His [*God's*] wrath."
- The "strong delusion" and "the lie" in 2 Thess. 2:11 are directly the result of Satan's work, but they are said to be sent by God to accomplish His purpose in judgment (2 Thess. 2:12).
- The very satanic wrath described in Rev. 12:12 (and used as the basis for Alexander Reese's statement quoted above) is focused on Israel (the "woman"), and is instrumental in driving her into the wilderness to find a place of safety (Rev. 12:13, 14). In Ezekiel 20:34, 35 God describes this same flight of Israel into the wilderness, He writes, "I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with *fury poured out*. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people." God is using the very wrath of Satan which Post-Tribulationists put into contrast with "the wrath of God," takes responsibility for it, and identifies it as **HIS FURY**.

The Lord does not make such a hard and fast contrast between the Tribulation as "Satan's

wrath" and a later short period as "God's wrath." Israel will recognize the Lord's hand in the afflictions they will endure during the Tribulation. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their *affliction* they will seek me early [saying] Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for *He hath torn*, and He will heal us; *He hath smitten*, and He will bind us up." (Hosea 5:15; 6:1)

**If (as the Post-Tribulationists teach) members of the Body of Christ are present on earth during the Tribulation:**

-- They will have a different message to proclaim. During that time the "gospel of the kingdom" will be preached -- not only to Israel (as it was during the Gospel period, and the first few chapters of Acts) -- but to "all nations," the Gentiles (Matt. 24:14). This message is not just "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (as Paul did -- Acts 28:31), but is proclaiming that the *millennial kingdom is soon to be established*. This message we do not preach today.

-- They will have a different program. There will again be a sharp distinction drawn between Jew and Gentile (Rev. 2:9; 3:9 -- Contrast Rom. 3:22; 10:12; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14). Men will be judged for eating unclean meats (Isa. 66:17<sup>11</sup> -- Contrast 1 Tim. 4:3 - 5). They will be subject to the law of the Sabbath (Matt. 24:20 -- Contrast Gal. 4:9 - 11; Col. 2:16, 17). They will be practicing water baptism (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38 -- Contrast 1 Cor. 1:17; Eph. 4:5). They will again have signs, wonders, and miracles as an integral part of the ministry (Acts 2:18 - 20; Rev. 11:5, 6, 11, 12 -- Contrast 1 Cor. 12:13, 14<sup>12</sup>).

-- They will have no recognition as the Body of Christ. This term is not used even once either in Revelation or the General Epistles (Heb. 13:3 is a reminder that those addressed are still living "in the [physical] body" and may, themselves, be the next to suffer). In the book of Revelation there is no reference back to Paul's teaching. This indicates Paul will have no authority over the message being preached or the program being carried on at that time. This is very striking in view of the many Old Testament references which are found in Revelation, and the emphasis given to the authority of Paul in his epistles (Rom. 16:13; 1 Cor. 14:27; Eph. 3:2 - 4; Col. 1:25, 26; 1 Thess. 2:13; etc.). In Second Timothy, where Paul has the last days specifically in view, there is no mention of a change in message or program, but a challenge to continue preaching the things they have already heard from him (2:1) with an emphasis on their Pauline source (3:14).

-- If one wants to see how the Body of Christ fails to fit the Tribulation scene he need but read Paul's epistles straight through, followed by a one-sitting reading of the book of Revelation. Too much attention to individual verses and proof texts may blind us to the overall picture in each case. We may miss the forest by looking too closely at the trees.

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah sixty-six has the Tribulation, and the salvation and blessing of Israel at its close, specifically in view. Compare Isa. 66:7, 8 with Rev. 12:1 - 6, 13 - 17 and Micah 5:3. Compare Isa. 66:15, 16 with 2 Thess. 1:7 - 9.

<sup>12</sup> See the study on the miraculous gifts in this volume.

## The Blessed Hope -- 1 Thess. & Some non-Pauline passages

### Comments on J. Sidlow Baxter's View of the Return of Christ --

(From "Explore the Book," volume 6) <sup>1</sup>

By pointing out similarities between 1 Thess. 4:13 - 18 on the one hand, and John 14:1 - 3 and chapter twenty-four of Matthew on the other, the conclusion is drawn that all three passages are speaking of the same event.

Similarities, however, do not prove identity. One difference (unless it has a satisfactory explanation) can offset a whole page of likenesses. Think of the resemblances existing between identical twins. Yet one small mark can distinguish one from the other and prove there are indeed two people involved.

Also, things may be made to sound similar when they are not. This can be done by careful choice of words, emphasizing correspondences, and ignoring or playing down contrasts.

### John 14:2, 3 compared to 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

Only three similarities are listed in Explore the Book (vol. 6, page 218), and they lack real significance.

The first pair: "*I will come again*" (John) and "*The Lord shall descend from heaven*" (Thessalonians). In each case, who could be coming but the Lord, and where could He come from but heaven?

The second pair: "*And receive you unto Myself*" (John) and "*Then we ... shall be caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air*" (Thessalonians). To "receive" is hardly the same as catching up. One is passive and the other active. The Greek word translated "caught up" in Thessalonians means "to rescue from danger of destruction ... to carry off by force." <sup>2</sup> The Greek word for "receive" does not contain this idea.

The third pair: "*That where I am, there ye may be also*" (John) and "*So shall we be ever with the Lord*" (Thessalonians). The similarity here means little. Grant for a moment they are two different events -- could one imagine, in either case, that He would come to, or for, His own and then just go off and leave them?

### Now notice the differences.

In John fourteen there is no reference to bringing back those who have fallen asleep, the "change" of the living, nor to a shout, a voice, or a trumpet. There is no mention of being

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<sup>1</sup> "Explore the Book" is an excellent Bible study help. Do not allow my remarks here to discourage you from profiting to the full from his most helpful teaching in the rest of his book.

<sup>2</sup> "The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament" by Kenneth S. Wuest, pages 96, 97.

caught up into the air.

In First Thessalonians four there is no promise of a dwelling place being prepared.

These passages might be thought to be complementary to one another, but other Scripture forbids this.

Christ's return in glory is to be as He went away (Acts 1:11). In order for the Rapture to be a replay in reverse of the ascension, Christ, at the ascension, would have had to take the disciples with Him in the air and then send them back to earth while He continued on to heaven. But He bade them farewell while they stood on the Mount of Olives -- and thus must return to them there. This fits with what they had been told to expect, "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:4).

It is almost universally assumed that when Christ spoke of preparing a place for the disciples He had heaven in mind. As John F. Walvoord writes, "This passage [John 14:2, 3] mentions the translation, and the destination is the Father's house, which most expositors recognize as a reference to heaven."<sup>3</sup>

It would be strange indeed for Christ to be speaking of heaven in such a context. Walvoord admits: "The idea of going to the Father's house in heaven was quite foreign to the thinking of the disciples ... The thought of going to heaven first was a new revelation and one that apparently was not comprehended. In Acts 1:6 they were still asking about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel."<sup>4</sup>

As far back as Abraham the hope set before believers was not heaven, but a heavenly city (Heb. 11:10, 14 - 16). In the New Testament, Jewish believers were to be gathered "unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22), and were seeking a city to come (Heb. 13:14). This city, while prepared by God in heaven (John 14:3; Heb. 11:10, 16), will be located on (or possibly in synchronous orbit over?) the earth (Rev. 21:2, 10 - 27). When Christ added "that where I am there ye may be also," He had the New Jerusalem in mind. He will be there (Rev. 21:22, 23) and so will they. We must not read Paul's epistles back into Christ's pre-Cross ministry -- or a ministry specifically to Israel (Rom. 15:8). The secret of the Rapture was revealed through the apostle Paul, not by Christ in His earthly ministry before the Body of Christ was formed (1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Cor. 15:51).

Also, when the disciples were watching Christ ascend, the angels said, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" In Luke 21:28 they had been told *when* to look up. There was no need for gazing heavenward until the signs of Luke 21:25 - 27 began to occur. He *cannot come* (in glory) until *then*. But we, all through this age, do look up to "heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). Also the early Christians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). They were not waiting for certain prophesied events to transpire -- but for *HIM!*

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<sup>3</sup> "The Rapture Question" by John F. Walvoord, pages 187, 188.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 71.

**Matthew twenty-four and First Thessalonians 4:16, 17.**

Even though both Matthew twenty four and First Thessalonians four are extensive and include many details, only five parallels are called to our attention by Baxter in his *Explore the Book* (vol. 6, page 219). Again, they only have a surface appearance of importance.

The first pair: ***"They shall see the Son of Man coming"*** (Matt. 24:30) and ***"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven"*** (1 Thess. 4:16). *Of course* it is the same One who comes, and *of course* He comes from heaven. Who else could it be? where else could He come from? But it is as the "Son of Man" that He comes in Matthew. This title looks back to Dan. 7:13 where it is His coming as King which is in view. Paul never calls Christ the "Son of Man" -- though, of course, teaching His true humanity. It is as "the Lord" He comes in Thessalonians.

The second pair: ***"His angels, with a great voice"*** (Matt. 24:31) and ***"With the voice of the archangel"*** (1 Thess. 4:16). By cutting off the verse in Matthew between associated words, it is made to sound as if it is the voice of angels -- but it is the "voice of trumpet" (Williams), or "a loud trumpet call" (Berkeley). Where is the parallel between the voice of a *trumpet* and the voice of the *archangel*? No archangel is mentioned in Matthew, and only the archangel is mentioned in Thessalonians.

The third pair: ***"With a great trumpet"*** (Matt. 24:31) and ***"With the trump of God"*** (1 Thess. 4:16). In Matthew angels are sent with the voice of a trumpet, and in Thessalonians it is specified as the trump of God -- with no reference to any angels.

The fourth pair: ***"They shall gather His elect"*** (Matt. 24:31) and ***"Caught up together with Him"*** (1 Thess. 4:17). In Matthew the elect are gathered FROM one end of heaven ("the sky" -- NASB) to the other, but there is no mention of a resurrection. In Thessalonians the living believers are caught up INTO the clouds with the newly resurrected believers who have died.

At the mid-point of the Tribulation the unbelieving nation of Israel will be gathered into the wilderness where they will be protected from the wrath of Satan for three and a half years (Rev. 12:13, 14). Because Satan cannot touch them, he will turn his wrath against the company of Jews who are not in the wilderness, the 144,000 who "have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). They evidently have been scattered over the whole world<sup>5</sup> in their testimony, protected by the seal of God (Rev. 7:2, 3). When they have won "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and people, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9), these elect Jews will be gathered back to Jerusalem where the action is, where Christ is soon to appear, because their work will have been completed.

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<sup>5</sup>-- The four winds ... one end of heaven to the other" is a figure of speech denoting a scattering over the face of the earth -- not in the atmosphere. God said to Elam, "I will bring the *four winds* from the *four quarters of heaven*, and will scatter them toward all those winds" (Jer. 49:36). God made a specific promise to Israel. "If ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast unto the *uttermost part of the heaven*, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there." (Neh. 1:9) See also Deut. 30:4; Isa. 13:5; Dan. 7:2; 8:8; 11:4; Zech. 2:6.

The fifth pair: "*In the clouds of heaven*" (Matt. 24:30) and "*In the clouds, to meet the Lord*" (1 Thess. 4:17). In Matthew the clouds are where *all men on earth* SEE Him. In First Thessalonians they are where *believers only* MEET Him. There is a strong possibility that 1 Thess. 4:17 should read, "we ... shall be caught up together with them in clouds" (see the margin of the revised Scofield Bible on this verse). That is, the clouds are clouds of believers. The same figure is found in Heb. 12:1 where it speaks of "so great a cloud of witnesses."

### **CONTRASTS between Matthew twenty-four and First Thessalonians four.**

Matthew twenty-four is Tribulation from beginning to end, with the coming in glory at its close. If that is our hope, there must come a time when we stop preaching the gospel of the grace of God and preach the gospel of the kingdom "unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14)! There are other problems just as serious in this interpretation. They will receive more attention in another place. First Thessalonians has the coming spoken of in chapter four in *contrast* to the Day of the Lord (here, at least, the whole seven years of Jacob' trouble), which is presented in chapter five. So also Second Thessalonians places the situation of the believers of this age of grace in *contrast* to the Tribulation, as we will see later.

In the context of these contrasts Baxter remarks, "All are agreed that there are not two returns predicted. So if there is a preceding descent for believers, it must necessarily be secret."<sup>6</sup>

It is true that only one return, the "coming in glory" is predicted in the non-Pauline Scriptures. This is why the coming related in First Thessalonians four is specifically called a "secret" ("mystery" in the King James Version) in 1 Cor. 15:51. For this reason the Thessalonians would have been ignorant of it if Paul had not told them about it (1 Thess. 4:13). Not being a subject of prophecy (prior to Paul) the Rapture was indeed a secret.

Can the Rapture happening secretly -- so no one who does not take part in it will be aware of it? There is no way millions of loved and respected people should suddenly disappear without the whole world knowing *something* of vast importance has taken place. However, those left behind may not know, even from the shout and the trumpet blast, *what it was*. It has been assumed the Rapture would happen quietly, but no verse says it will. Even very meaningful sounds from heaven have been heard by unbelievers and understood to stem from natural causes (John 12:28, 29; Acts 22:9). However, neither in First Thessalonians four or First Corinthians 15:51, 52 is there any indication of others actually looking on or listening. This is in contrast to the coming in glory (see Matt. 24:27 - 30; Rev. 1:7; 19:11 - 14).

The lack of a verse which specifies "two comings" (following the incarnation), a "third coming" (including the incarnation), or some such expression, does not prove much. The Old Testament will be searched in vain for any specific reference to Christ's "first coming" or His "second coming," even though neither was a secret. It only speaks of His *coming*. Partly because of this, the leaders in Israel did not believe Christ, in His incarnation, could really be the Messiah -- because so many prophecies about His "coming" were left unfulfilled. If someone had told them there were to be *two* advents of the Messiah, they would have been challenged with the

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<sup>6</sup> "Explore the Book" by J. Sidlow Baxter, vol. 6, page 218.

reply, "Where do you find a verse which speaks of the 'first coming' or the 'second coming' or the 'two comings' of the Messiah?" Yet there *were* two! They should have been able to expect two appearances due to the differences in the circumstances in various passages. Christ asked, "Ought not Christ to have suffered [first coming] and to enter into His glory [Second Coming]?" (Luke 24:26). He scolded them gently for not believing *all* God said about this matter, and "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). They had believed the passages that spoke of His appearing in power and glory and neglected or explained away the others.

The mention of the "trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16) and the "last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52) has been a problem to many. The presence of a trumpet in these verses is often used to link them to Matt. 24:31, or Rev. 10:7 and 11:15. One proponent of the Post tribulation Rapture states, "The trumpet has to do with judgment, and that relates to the nations (Rev. 8)." <sup>7</sup> How strange to so dogmatically restrict the use of the trumpet in view of its primary use -- to assemble Israel, whether for peace or for war (Num. 102 - 10). A trumpet was also used for many other purposes, such as announcing the Year of Jubile (Lev. 25:9), the beginning of the reign of a king (2 Kings 9:13) or to terrorize the enemy, as Gideon did (Judges 7:18). There are many passages that show the several uses of the trumpet.

*IF* the trump of 1 Thess. 4:16 and 1 Cor. 15:52 must be linked to a series of other trumpets (as the expression "last trump" is said to indicate), it would seem more sensible to link it to the annually recurring Feast of Trumpets than to make it the last of the seven trumpets in Revelation. The latter series of trumpets had not yet been revealed as Paul was writing.

The next feast of Israel to be fulfilled is the Feast of Trumpets. The trumpets have sounded out every year for centuries, anticipating Israel's future re-gathering at the beginning of the Tribulation. Some day the last of these trumpets will sound as the feast finds its fulfillment. It will be God's trumpet this time, an *invitation* for Israel to return to the land.<sup>8</sup> "And it shall come to pass in that day ... ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye *children of Israel*. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a *great trumpet* shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the Holy mount of Jerusalem." (Isa. 27:12, 13) Notice also Joel 2:1, where a trumpet is to be blown in Zion to introduce the Day of the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

*IF* this is to be the "last trump" of 1 Cor. 15:52, the Rapture (to end this age) and the recalling of Israel (to open the Tribulation) would coincide. I am *NOT* saying this *IS* the meaning of the expression in Paul's writings, but *IF* there *MUST* be a link between the last trump

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Page 200.

<sup>8</sup> They evidently will have the *opportunity* to return to the land under the terms of the covenant signed by the Beast (Dan. 9:27), but -- as in the return related in Ezra and Nehemiah -- few will take advantage of it. At the midpoint of the week God will force them to reassemble, not in the land, but in the wilderness (Ezek. 20:33 - 36). Evidently it is the wrath of Satan against Israel, inciting the Beast to persecute them, which God will use to accomplish this (Rev. 12:13, 14).

<sup>9</sup> In this case the Day of the Lord refers to a great plague of locusts (see the following description) -- though it serves as the basis for revelation concerning the still future Day of the Lord presented in the book of Revelation.

here and some series of trumpets in other passages of Scripture, this explanation is the most logical, and has the fewest problems. This does involve some difficulties however. It would tie the Rapture down to a certain day of the year -- the day the Feast of Trumpets begins. It also would rule out any passage of time between the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation. Since certain preparations must be made in the world situation to make possible the events of the seventieth week of Daniel nine, it would mean, not that these preparations *might* take place before the Rapture, but that they would, *of necessity*, take place before we were caught away. This would tie the Rapture down, to a degree at least, and indirectly, to the prophetic program.

There is another distinct possibility that has no problems for the Pre-Tribulationist position, does not tie the Rapture down to a Jewish feast day, and does justice to the Scriptures involved. J. Dwight Pentecost writes: "The word 'last' may signify that which concludes a program, but not necessarily the last that will ever exist. Inasmuch as the program for the church differs from that for Israel, each may be terminated by the blowing of a trumpet, properly called the last trumpet, without making the two last trumpets identical and synonymous as to time." <sup>10</sup>

He also points out "the summons for the church is called the 'trump of God,' while the seventh trump is an angel's trumpet." He quotes J. F. Strombeck as writing, "In the search for the 'last trump' one must, then, be guided by the fact that it is God's own trumpet, sounded by the Lord Himself ... Both men and angels are creations of God. They cannot sound the trumpet of the Creator." <sup>11</sup>

Thus the word "last" does not require a preceding series of trumpets. It only indicates the finality of the event heralded.

J. Sidlow Baxter is an outstanding teacher. Disagreement on this matter should not dim one's appreciation for his dedicated and exceedingly helpful ministry, even though this doctrine is one of importance.

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<sup>10</sup> "Things to Come" by J. Dwight Pentecost, page 189.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Page 190. Citation taken from "First the Rapture" by J. F. Strombeck, page 109.



## First Thessalonians and The Rapture

### The Thessalonian Epistles

In 1 Thess. 1:3 we find the theme of these letters. It is three-fold: **faith, love, and hope**. The same three words are listed in 1 Cor. 13:13, where *love* is listed last because it is the theme of the chapter. Here *hope* is put last since it is Paul's main topic in First and Second Thessalonians.

These concepts occur again and again (always in the same order) in both Thessalonian epistles. Notice 1 Thess. 1:9, 10 as illustrating verse three. "Ye turned to God from idols" -- the work of **faith**; "to serve the living and true God" -- the labor of **love**; and "to wait for His Son from heaven ... who delivered us from the wrath to come" -- the patience of **HOPE**.

The tragic antithesis of this trilogy of truth, as it related to unbelieving Israel, is found in 1 Thess. 2:15, 16. They " ... killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us." This is *the work of unbelief*; "They please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway." Here is *the labor of hate*. Then, "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," which is the resulting *prospect of despair*.

Again, the three are embodied in Paul's prayer in 1 Thess. 3:10, 12, 13. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your **faith**. ... And the Lord make you to increase and abound in **love** one toward another, and toward all men ... to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (**HOPE**).

In this first epistle there is much said about their **faith** and their **love**, but from 4:13 through 5:11, and again in 5:23, it is their **HOPE** that takes center stage.

Paul opens his second epistle by thanking God because their "**faith** groweth exceedingly" and "the **love** of every one of them toward each other aboundeth" (1:3). However he does not commend their **HOPE**, for they have a problem in connection with their hope. It needs some corrective teaching. Someone has been telling them they are already in the "Day of the Lord." This does not fit with what Paul had taught when he was with them (2 Thess. 2:5), therefore they were shaken in mind and troubled. The central part of the second letter is taken up with answering this false teaching.

With their **HOPE** as the very topic of these two books, we may expect to find the answer to the Rapture question here. The doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the church largely stands or falls upon a close perusal of these eight short chapters.

### FIRST THESSALONIANS

**1:10.** "-- To wait for his Son from heaven, ... which delivered us from the wrath to

**come."**

The nature of the deliverance will be discussed later, but here consider the attitude which characterized these young believers regarding their hope. They were not waiting for antichrist, but for Christ: not for tribulation and wrath, but for deliverance. They had an eager anticipation such as that indicated by the disciples when they stood looking up into heaven at the ascension of Christ. Those present on that occasion were gently rebuked by the question, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" (Act 1:11). They had already been told when to gaze into heaven -- when to look for the return of Christ -- in Luke 21:28. "And when these things [events of the Tribulation] begin to come to pass THEN look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth near."

Yet Paul commended the Thessalonians for their expectant attitude. He also tells us in Phil. 3:20 (NASB), "Our citizenship is in heaven, from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Since none of the things Paul mentioned in Luke twenty one had begun to come to pass at the time Paul wrote this verse, we can draw the conclusion that our hope is something different from the coming in glory set forth in Luke 21:28 and in Acts 1:11.

**2:19, 20. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."**

If the Rapture takes place in the air (Greek *aira*, the atmosphere) as Christ is on His way down from heaven (Greek *ouranou*) to earth to fight against the Beast and the armies gathered at Armageddon, these verses seem strange indeed. They describe the coming of Christ as a time of joy and rejoicing due to seeing and recognizing those we have won to Him. Would there be time, or inclination, for this kind of fellowship if we were on our way to battle?

**3:13. "- at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."**

This is not a description of the believers of this age accompanying Christ as He comes in glory. Rev. 19:14 says, "And the armies which were in heaven [*ouranou* not *aira*] followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." This may refer to the Old Testament saints, and those described in Rev. 7:9 as being in heaven (having been killed during the Tribulation and then clothed with white robes) -- IF the description "fine linen, white and clean" necessarily indicates PEOPLE rather than angels (Rev. 19:8). However 2 Thess. 1:7 specifies that those coming with Christ are "His mighty angels," and Rev. 15:6 speaks of "angels ... clothed in pure and white linen."

The saints coming with the Lord in 1 Thess. 3:13 are mentioned again in the next chapter, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God *bring with him*" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Their souls and spirits will be brought from heaven to be united with their resurrected bodies at the Rapture. "All" the saints of this age who have died will be included, in contrast to the few from among the kingdom saints who were raised at Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:52, 53).

**4:13 -- 5:11.**

Both chapter four and chapter five have the Rapture basically in view:

- \* In chapter four it is related to the problem of believers who have died, and we are assured they will NOT miss the Rapture. In chapter five it is linked to the problem of those who will live until that day, and the assurance is that they WILL miss the Tribulation (5:9).
- \* There is comfort both for those who have lost loved ones (4:18) and for those who will be living during the troubled days of this age of grace (5:11).
- \* In both passages there is reference to the dead and the living saints. This is clear in 4:16, 17 and echoed in 5:10 in the words, "whether we wake or sleep."
- \* The recovery from death and the deliverance from the wrath are both based upon Christ's death and resurrection, not upon our godliness or worthiness (4:14 and 5:10).
- \* The unbelievers who have died have "no hope" (4:13) and the unbelievers who are alive at the Rapture "shall not escape" the Tribulation (5:3).
- \* It is not to be a partial Rapture, for ALL of the members of the Body of Christ have an appointment to meet the Lord in the air, and NONE of us are appointed to wrath (5:9).
- \* Concerning the dead, we are to *sorrow not*, even as others (4:13), and we who are alive in the last days are to *sleep not*, as do others (5:6).
- \* The Thessalonians needed revelation concerning the Rapture (4:13) and instruction concerning its relationship to the well known truths of the Old Testament about the Day of the Lord (5:1, 11).

**4:13. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."**

Why were they so concerned about those who had died? Surely not because of the agony of dying itself, for that was already behind them. They must not have feared that death was the end of everything for them, for they knew about resurrection. This truth was a very necessary part of the very message they had believed to be saved (1 Cor. 15:1 - 5).

If they had been taught that the Rapture follows the Great Tribulation, the greatest time of trouble earth will ever see, they would surely have considered those who had died the "lucky" ones. *They* would have died before the time of trouble came and would be raised after it was all over. Their concern should have been for those still living, who would have to endure the entire seven years of agony before relief came.

However, if they had been taught there was no danger of experiencing the horrors of the Tribulation, to live on until the Rapture took place would be a distinct blessing they would not want their loved ones to miss.

Also it seems they had expected the Rapture before any of the believers died. They could never have come to this conclusion if they had been taught they were to go through seven years of intense, and usually fatal, tribulation and persecution before it could happen!

**4:15, 17. "Who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord ... shall be caught up."**

While there are strong indications that the Jewish *remnant* in Israel will be protected

during the Tribulation,<sup>1</sup> the great majority, if not all, of the Gentile believers will be slain for their testimony. A great slaughter takes place during the second half of the Tribulation. John cries out, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ... And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, *that should be killed as they were*, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9 - 11). That these are, at least largely, Gentiles is seen from Rev. 7:9, 14.

How, then, could these Gentile believers in Thessalonica be expecting not to die if the church is to go through the Tribulation? Of course the Thessalonians could not read the referenced verses recorded much later in the book of Revelation, but the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul in his oral (1 Thess. 2:13) and written (1 Cor. 14:37) ministry knew the truths contained in the passages penned later. Surely He would not have had Paul give them the assurance "we shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51 -- the same is implied in 1 Thess. 4:15, 17) if all members of the Body of Christ alive at the time will go into the Great Tribulation and most, if not all, be martyred.

**4:17. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."**

The word translated "caught up" (arpagasometha) means, "to rescue from danger of destruction ... to carry off by force."<sup>2</sup> As Wuest suggests, this implies that Satan, the prince of the power of the air, will contest the passage of the church through his domain. This is one good reason why Christ comes to meet us in the air, rather than to just catch us up to meet Him in heaven. He comes to protect us and give us safe passage home. It is no surprise that Satan should rally all his forces against the Body of Christ as it passes through his very headquarters!

Wuest also says this verse means "to claim for one's self eagerly."<sup>3</sup> He relates this to the eagerness of the Bridegroom taking His Bride. But Christ would just as eagerly claim His Body, a concept more in keeping with the church as one new *man* (Eph. 2:15), bearing the name "the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12 -- Greek). It is the word used to describe the catching away of Philip

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<sup>1</sup> See Deut. 4:30, 31; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1. Notice also the protection provided for God's people in Ezek. 9:6; Daniel chapters three (compare Isa. 43:2) and six; Matt. 24:15 - 18; Luke 21:20, 21; Rev. 7:3; 12:14 - 16; 18:4.

Of course the two Jewish witnesses of Rev. 11:3 - 12 will be slain, and Rev. 12:11 *may* indicate the death of other Jewish witnesses. However consider Daniel chapter three. The three youths there faced death willingly. They were even tied up and cast into the furnace. According to the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar they "yielded their bodies [to die]" (Dan. 3:28) -- but *they did not die*. It could have been said of them, as it is said of the witnesses during the Tribulation, "They did not love and cling to life even when faced with death -- holding their lives cheap until they had to die [for witnessing]" (Rev. 12:11 - Amplified Bible).

It is not specified in Rev. 20:4 whether those beheaded for the witness of Jesus are Jews, Gentiles or both.

<sup>2</sup> "The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament" by Kenneth S. Wuest, page 96.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Page 98.

(Acts 8:39), Paul being caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2, 4) and the catching away of the "man child" to God (Rev. 12:5). This concept indicates the meeting in the air is the very purpose of His expedition from heaven, not merely an incidental interruption on His way to Armageddon.

**4:17. -"- Caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."**

Nowhere else is this heavenly meeting revealed specifically as taking place in the air. Outside of Paul's epistles the picture is one of believers awaiting Him and meeting Him on earth. The Mount of Olives is scarcely the same as "the air." It is not said in this verse where believers will be after the Rapture except that they are to be with Christ. If He, at that time, is on His way to the greatest battle of all ages, it seems strange such information is completely missing here.

**5:1, 2. "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."**

There is a change in these verses from something which does not have a time schedule, to "times and seasons." Israel's program runs on a time schedule. The entire Tribulation is part of a time prophecy in Daniel nine. The Thessalonians evidently knew perfectly about the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, but wouldn't have known about the Rapture unless Paul had told them.

**5:2, 3. " For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."**

As we have seen previously, the "Day of the Lord" could not refer to only the last few days of the Tribulation. As soon as that last "week" begins -- and there is a very clear time marker for its beginning in Dan. 9:27 (the seven year covenant with the "Prince that shall come") -- anyone with knowledge of Daniel and Revelation will be able to count off the very days until the period closes. Also, there is to be no "Peace and safety" during that time, particularly during the closing three and a half years.

True, it says that *sudden* destruction will come on them, but it does not indicate the destruction will come all at once or that it will be quickly concluded. (The same Greek word is translated "unawares" in Luke 21:34). It is to come "as travail upon a woman with child." Such travail comes suddenly and irrevocably -- but waxes and wanes over a prolonged period. It becomes progressively more severe until it culminates in the birth of the child, which is the inescapable climax of the travail. How well this describes the entire seven years of the Tribulation! The message is to unbelievers in the last days of the age of Grace that, without warning, the seventieth week of Daniel nine will be upon them.

**5:4 - 10.** It will help to have the Bible open to these verses as the following remarks are studied.

What should our attitude be in view of this approaching time of trouble? The unbelievers are of the night. They will feel secure, asleep to the danger, not expecting the

Tribulation to come upon them -- and they shall not escape it (v. 3).

We believers, on the other hand, are not to be asleep, unaware of its nearness, for we are not of the night (v. 4). We are to bring into play the very trilogy of truths that we noted previously. In wakeful soberness we are to "Put on the breastplate of *faith* and *love* and, for a helmet the *HOPE* of salvation (v. 8).

We are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain "salvation" (v. 9). The "wrath" here (and in 1:10) does not refer to God's wrath against the lost in hell, but to the sudden destruction of verse three, His fiery vengeance poured out on the earth (2 Thess. 1:8). The salvation (deliverance) is from the entire Tribulation.

We will escape this time of wrath because He died for us that, whether we will have died before that day comes, or are still alive (5:10-a), we will live together with Him! Our deliverance is not to be protection on earth during the Tribulation (as will be the case with the remnant of Israel), but safety because we will not even be here -- we will be in heaven together with Christ and with those who have died (5:10-b).

## The Blessed Hope -- Second Thessalonians & the Rapture

From the time Paul first took the gospel to the Thessalonians, they had been suffering persecution and affliction. The preaching which had won them to Christ had been carried out in the midst of much conflict and opposition (1 Thess. 2:2 NASB -- with the marginal reading). They had "received the word in much tribulation" (1 Thess. 1:6 NASB), and Paul had told them in advance they were going to suffer further tribulation (1 Thess. 3:4). After he left Thessalonica, he became concerned as to how these young believers would stand up under this persecution, and sent Timothy to encourage them in the faith (1 Thess. 3:5). Timothy returned to him with good news. In spite of the afflictions which came (as Paul had predicted) they were standing fast in the Lord (1 Thess. 3:6 - 8). In his joy over them, and to further instruct them, he wrote First Thessalonians.

After Timothy left the Thessalonians to return to Paul, their sufferings evidently became much more intense. To add to their problems, someone apparently claimed to have received revelations from a spirit and/or a letter from Paul teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived (2 Thess. 2:2 NASB). The intensity of their persecution made it easy to believe this. While Paul had warned them that they would have much tribulation, he had told them they were not appointed to go into the Tribulation period, the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:9). But if this new message was true, and they were already in the Day of the Lord, they were faced with two very disheartening possibilities: either Paul was wrong in what he had already taught them -- or the Rapture had taken place and they had missed it. No wonder they were "shaken from [their] composure" and "disturbed" (2 Thess. 2:2 NASB).

As soon as Paul heard of this development he penned Second Thessalonians to correct the false teaching and settle the problem of their relationship to the Day of the Lord. Risking the accusation of "begging the question," it does seem to us that the evidence in this little epistle indicates Paul was the first one in church history to defend what is now called the "Pre-Trib" position.

### **1:5. "- That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."**

Paul does not say their suffering will continue right up until the *millennial* kingdom is ushered in, but that their suffering is for the kingdom of *God*. The two expressions are not interchangeable in Paul's terminology.

This distinction is important, for the Post Tribulation view is supported partly by this verse linked with Acts 14:22. There Paul said "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." They interpret this to mean, "We must go through the Tribulation (the seventieth week of Daniel nine) to enter the millennial kingdom." If Paul meant this, he himself didn't make it into the kingdom of God, for he died before the Tribulation even began.

While the expression "kingdom of God" is often used in the Gospels in relation to the millennial kingdom, it is not used this way by Paul, either in his epistles or the book of Acts. Luke says Paul was "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern

the Lord Jesus Christ" during the two years he was awaiting trial in Rome (Acts 28:31). We have an extended sample of what he was preaching and teaching during that time in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. These epistles will be searched in vain for teaching about the millennial kingdom. Even if Eph. 5:5, Col. 1:13 and 4:11 have the millennial kingdom in view, which they do not, this theme would be quite incidental, not characteristic of his entire message at that time. Rather than force our concept of the "kingdom of God" upon Paul we need to see HIS use of this expression as it is unfolded in his epistles.

None of the allusions to the kingdom of God in Paul's epistles can be clearly related to the millennial kingdom, and two of them serve to identify his use of the expression. In Rom. 14:17 the kingdom of God is not a political theocratic monarchy in the future, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" now. Similarly, 1 Cor. 4:20, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," relates to the power (or lack of it) of the Corinthian leaders at that time, not the power of God establishing His rule over the governments of the world in the future.

As we have previously seen, both the Body of Christ and the believers in the millennial kingdom are evidently part of the much more extensive "kingdom of God," but this does not equate them to one another. Both Washingtonians and New Yorkers are Americans, but Washington is not New York. When I say I am an American I am not saying I am a New Yorker. When Paul speaks of us being in the kingdom of God he is not saying we are (or will be) in the millennial kingdom.

## **2 Thess. 1:6 - 10.**

**6. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;**

**7. And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,**

**8. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:**

**9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;**

**10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.**

The Thessalonians were being severely persecuted. Paul assures them that a time will come when the situation will be reversed. A day will dawn when it will be those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel (v. 8) who will be undergoing tribulation. Their tribulation will lead to everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord when, at the culmination of this time, Christ will come in flaming fire, pouring out His vengeance. During this time of tribulation upon those who have spurned the gospel, the true believers of this age, as a Body, will be resting with Paul (v. 7), their troubles all past.

Evidently "them that trouble you" refers to a *class* of people rather than specific individuals living at the time, for those personally responsible for the trouble in Thessalonica died without ever seeing the threatened Tribulation. Their successors in the last time will not fare so well!



During the seven years of tribulation and the return of Christ in glory, we will be in heaven with Paul and the rest of the Body of Christ. The idea that we will return to the earth with Christ does not fit with verse seven. Paul specifically says He will come with His mighty *angels*. First Thessalonians 3:13 does not refer to our participation in the coming in glory but to the Rapture, as the next chapter indicates (1 Thess. 4:14). Colossians 3:4 does not have the return of Christ to the earth in view either. It tells us that when He calls us to be with Him, and we see Him face to face, we will be with Him in glory (heaven) and have a body like His glorious body (Phil. 3:20, 21).

The "saints" who will come with Christ according to Jude 14 will probably be angels. Angels are referred to in Scripture as "saints" or "holy ones." Eliphaz once said, "He put no trust in His servants, his *angels* He charged with folly; how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay" (Job 4:18, 19). Later he rephrased the thought in the words, "He putteth no trust in His *saints* . . . how much more abominable and filthy is man?" (Job 15:15). If men *are* in view in Jude 14, surely the Old Testament saints (raised to life in Rev. 11:18) fit the picture better than the members of the Body of Christ.

While those accompanying Christ are said to be "clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:14), and "fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8), it is also said that at least seven angels are "clothed in pure and white linen" (Rev. 15:6). Those returning with Christ are the "armies which were in heaven" (Rev. 19:14), but the war fought in heaven earlier was between Satan's hosts on the one hand and Michael and his *angels* on the other (Rev. 12:7). This indicates who the armies in heaven are located.

Both during the tribulation to befall the unbelievers and the war fought against their armies we will be resting with our apostle in glory.

Our entering into rest from affliction precedes the coming in glory. So the coming in glory precedes, and results in, a time when the millennial believers will look at all of the redeemed of this age of grace and glorify Christ for what He has done in them. (2 Thess. 1:10, 11) The coming in glory itself is a revelation of His wrath against the sinners, not a display of His work in the saints. Once the judgments are past, however, it would indeed be most fitting if He brought His heavenly people from the place where they have been resting, and where they have their citizenship, and introduced them to the millennial population. Their presence there would be evidence of what He has been doing during the past 2,000 years, while the program of prophecy was in abeyance.

This would not compromise our heavenly position, or the location of our eternal home, in the slightest. It would, instead, demonstrate that when the world was watching the course of "church history," and sneering at the weakness and waywardness of the "church," they were looking at the wrong church. They were looking at Christendom instead of that often-small minority of people within it who are truly born of the Spirit. Much of the "Church" of church history will have missed the Rapture and gone on to the judgment it deserved. The mystical church, the Body of Christ, will have gone from triumph to triumph and arrived -- every member of it -- safely in His presence, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:27)! The

world has been ridiculing the "Church" for centuries. But those who live through the Tribulation and are present in the millennial kingdom will gaze in awe and wonder, and glorify Him, when they finally see the Body of Christ in all the perfection produced by His loving care and glorious power.

**2:1, 2 (NASB)**

- 1. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,**
- 2. That you may 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.**

Now that they have been comforted concerning their *many tribulations* and trials which are to be characteristic of this whole age, Paul turns his attention to their exemption from the "GREAT Tribulation" which takes place only in the Day of the Lord. They will be given rest from the former, but will never taste of the latter. For *them* tribulations will have an end, but they will not even see the beginning of THE TRIBULATION.

The very topic of the opening verses of chapter two is the evacuation of the Body of Christ from the earth. The place of the meeting, and the manner of gathering the believers to it, was described in First Thessalonians 4:13 - 17. How quickly it will happen is mentioned in First Corinthians 15:52. This event is looked at in four ways in Second Thessalonians. As it relates to the "mystery of lawlessness" it is a *removal*. We will be taken out of the way (2:7). In connection with the Tribulation taking place on earth it is an *absence*. We will not be here, but resting in glory (1:7). The world will see it as a *departure* (2:3), but as it relates to our Lord Himself it is an *arrival* -- a gathering together to Him (2:1). By establishing this as Paul's topic in these first eight verses of chapter two we are given help in interpreting the passage correctly.

It is important that we know the meaning of the expression "the Day of the Lord" (not, "the Day of Christ" as in the King James Version) in verse two.

Those holding the Post-Tribulation view must insist it refers to the events taking place upon the arrival of Christ from heaven. Not even judgments from God immediately preceding the actual coming of Christ can be admitted as part of the Day of the Lord. Otherwise, even if believers are caught away to meet Christ on His way down to the Mount of Olives, they would have gone part of the way though the Day of the Lord before that meeting was consummated. Can the phrase in question have this greatly restricted meaning in this passage?

As noted in detail earlier, the Day of the Lord is not thus restricted in Scripture. The use of the expression in Second Peter (3:10) extends it on into the future, to the destruction of the heaven and earth, at least 1,000 years after Christ's return. In the book of Revelation, John, in spirit, is transported into the "Lord's Day" (an equivalent expression referring to the same time) at the very beginning of the book (Rev. 1:10). Thus all of the events taking place during the last week of Daniel's prophecy, and described in the first eighteen chapters of Revelation, are in the Day of the Lord.

If the "Day of the Lord" refers only to the closing hours, or even days, of the seven-year period, then an exchange of letters about the matter would be pointless. With correspondence taking months to deliver, there would not be time for word to get to Paul, and an answer back, before it would be evident to all concerned that they could not be in the Day of the Lord. If they were, it would all have been over before the letter was well on its way. But if they were told they had entered into a seven-year period of tribulation, there would be reason for, and time for, an exchange of letters.

Also, if the Day of the Lord is a time when God is pouring out His vengeance personally, how could the Thessalonians imagine they were going through it? The tribulation they were experiencing was at the hands of MEN (1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4, 6). If this was their mistake, how easily Paul could have answered the teaching! By merely pointing out the source of their troubles they could be shown their error. Evidently the "Day of the Lord," as he used the words, at least in its opening days, will involve the kind of troubles they were going through -- so he had to use a different approach to solve their problem.

If they understood the Day of the Lord as being restricted to the closing events of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, as described in Luke 21:25 - 27, why were they shaken in mind and troubled? In that case they should have been looking up and lifting up their heads thinking the seven year period was nearing its conclusion and their redemption was drawing nigh (Luke 21:28).

Both of the things that must take place before the Day of the Lord (the "departure" and the revelation of the man of sin) are to happen at the very beginning of the seven years. If the Day of the Lord comes at the close of this time, why didn't Paul use events nearer the time in question to warn of its approach?

We conclude that the Thessalonian believers were puzzled and deeply disturbed because they were being told they had entered the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:27).

### **2:3 - 8 (NASB)**

**3. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition,**

**4. Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.**

**5. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?**

**6. And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.**

**7. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.**

**8. 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.**

### **The "mystery of lawlessness."**

The almost universal assumption among expositors is that the mystery of lawlessness

("mystery of iniquity" in the KJV) has to do with the extent, or seriousness, of wickedness and sin in the world. They envision the restrainer of this mystery as one (usually identified as the Holy Spirit) who keeps the world from being as wicked as it otherwise would be. The context does not have the *extent* of *lawlessness* in the world in mind, but the *revelation* of the *man* of lawlessness.

Satan has been trying for the past 2,000 years to put his man in charge of the kingdoms of the world. At the beginning of Christ's ministry, in diabolical blasphemy, he tried to get Christ to defect from obedience to His Father and be that man! "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8, 9). Christ did not dispute Satan's authority in this area for, in the garden if Eden, Adam had relinquished to him his God given dominion over the earth. At the time of Christ's temptation the restrainer of 2 Thess. 2:6, 7 had not yet appeared on the scene. Satan failed of his sinister purpose only because Christ, of course, utterly refused the offer.

Down through the centuries this mystery has been at work. Satan has never turned from his purpose to openly rule over the whole earth. Many men have come and gone on the pages of history who seemed to be good candidates for the position refused by Christ: Nero, Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler, to name but a few. Some, at least, would have been willing to grant Satan the worship he demands in order to "get the Job." As recently as April 25, 1982 the announcement was made in full-page newspaper displays around the world, "The Christ is now here!" The ads promised that within two months he would make himself known over worldwide television and radio broadcasts.<sup>1</sup> Yet this imposter has not come. Why not?

Ever since Paul's day something -- some ONE -- has hindered, and still does, the working of the mystery of lawlessness, and Satan has not been able to accomplish his purpose. When the hinderer is removed, THEN the man of lawlessness will be revealed and put firmly in charge of the kingdoms of this world, having given Satan the worship he demanded (2 Thess. 2:9).

**The "apostasy"** ("falling away" in the KJV).

The Greek word translated "apostasy" (2 Thess. 2:3 - NASB) means simply "departure." Most conservative Bible teachers, and almost all translators, take for granted that the apostasy is a departure from the faith. However, the verb form of this word is used in 1 Tim. 4:1 where it states, "Some shall *depart* from the faith." If the word "depart," in itself, means to depart from the faith, the sentence is redundant. It would be saying, "Some will depart from the faith from the faith." The NASB does not really translate the word, but takes the Greek word over into English, "unless the apostasy comes." The Revised Standard Version translates it "rebellion;" the New English Bible, "the final rebellion;" and Phillips puts it, "a definite rejection of God." However, the Amplified Bible, after putting the word "apostasy" in the text, has a footnote suggesting, "A possible rendering of *apostasias* is 'departure' (of the church)."

John F. Walvoord remarks, "A number of ancient versions such as Tyndale's, the Coverdale Bible, the version by Cranmer, the Geneva Bible, and Beza's translation, all from the sixteenth century, render the term (apostasias) 'departure.' He [E. Shuyler English] therefore suggested the possibility of rendering Second Thessalonians 2:3 to the effect that the departure

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<sup>1</sup>"The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow" by Constance Cumbey, pages 14, 15.

must 'come first,' i.e., the Rapture of the church must occur before the man of sin is revealed. If this translation be admitted, it would constitute an explicit statement that the Rapture of the church occurs before the Tribulation."<sup>2</sup>

If, as is indicated above, the word can be translated "departure," in the sense of departure from a place instead of departure from truth, then we must consult the context to see which way Paul used the term.

Paul could hardly be referring here to the departure from truth revealed in 2 Tim. 3:1 - 5, for these verses were written years later, after it became evident the age of grace was going to last longer than Paul at first anticipated. In 1 Thess. 4:15, 17 he expected to still be alive at the Rapture, While in 2 Tim. 4:6 he knew he was soon to die. He could hardly expect the Thessalonians to know Second Timothy, which had not yet been penned, and it is not likely this topic had been taught by word of mouth at the beginning of Paul's ministry and not put into writing until its very end. The only great departure from truth mentioned in the context of 2 Thess. 2:3 is found in verses 9 - 12. But there the departure from truth does not take place *before* the revelation of the man of lawlessness, but *following* his appearance and because of his satanic influence.

Departure from the faith has been in progress since apostolic days and, even though it will be greatly accelerated as the end of the age approaches, it would not be a clear time marker. It is a gradual process and not an event. One would never know just how far the falling away must develop before 2 Thess. 2:3 could be considered fulfilled. The spiritual apostasy reached abysmal depths during the "dark ages," yet the man of sin did not appear. When I was a young believer, over sixty years ago, teachers were saying, "The Great Apostasy is upon us. It can't get any worse." They were using this argument to prove that the Lord must come very soon. But He hasn't come yet -- and it has become worse, much worse! As bad as conditions are in the professing church today, we would have no way of knowing whether "the apostasy" has finally arrived or not.

Importantly, we do have in the context of 2 Thess. 2:3 references to a departure from a *place*. As noted before, our gathering together to Him (v. 1) necessitates a departure. The very *topic* of this section has to do with the departure of the Body of Christ from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. Verse seven is very specific and clear. Someone (the "what" in verse six is modified and particularized by "he" in verse seven) has been in the world since Paul's day and is still here. He must be taken out of the way -- a departure -- before the man of lawlessness can be revealed and the Day of the Lord begins. The context, then, favors taking the word *apostasia* as meaning departure from a place.

Having determined the meaning of the terms used, we must now identify the one who departs -- who is taken out of the way. Since it is a person ("he"), and since he was hindering in Paul's day and is still hindering today, most able expositors identify him as the Holy Spirit. Some of the arguments advanced to prove this are as follows.

1. The Holy Spirit is the only *person* who has been here since Paul's day.

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<sup>2</sup>"The Rapture Question" by John F. Walvoord, pages 67, 68.

2. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to restrain the sinfulness of the world, and the activity of Satan. The wickedness of men is restrained both through the influence of Spirit filled men, and directly by the Spirit Himself. (Isa. 59:19-b; John 16:7; 1 John 4:4).

3. Since (according to these teachers) this age began with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, it seems likely that it will close with the departure of the Spirit.

There may be other proofs offered but these are the main ones. Are they valid? Let us examine them, in the order listed above, to see if they will stand.

1. There is another *person* who has been here since Paul's day. He is the "one new man" of Ephesians 2:15. He is the mystical -- but nevertheless real -- Body of Christ. He is given a name that emphasizes his personality and reality. He is called "the Christ" in 1 Cor. 12:12. This is not a reference to the Lord Jesus personally, otherwise the verse would only be telling us His physical body is similar to ours. Verse 13 rules out this meaningless interpretation.

2. The passage is not saying the restrainer is limiting sin in the world, but that he is holding back the revelation of the man of sin (and hence the judgments during and following his brief reign). It is not the godliness or spirituality of the Body of Christ which restrains, but the very fact that "he" is HERE.

We have two outstanding examples in the Old Testament of men who restrained prophesied judgments by their very presence. We know nothing about the personal life of Methuselah. We have no record that he believed or preached like his father, Enoch, or found grace in the sight of the Lord, as did his grandson, Noah. All we know is that he was THERE. But his name meant, "When he is dead it shall be sent" (The Companion Bible - marginal note at Gen. 5:21). The flood came upon the earth the very year Methuselah died, but *not until he died*.

Lot was told by the angel, "Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there" (Gen. 19:22 NASB). Lot was a righteous man, evidently by faith (like Abraham-- 2 Pet. 2:7 - 9), but he was selfish, worldly, and had no testimony. He held back the pending judgment, not by his godliness and influence, but by just BEING THERE.

So the Body of Christ holds back the event which introduces the Day of the Lord simply by "his" presence in the world. As long as we are here God cannot resume the prophesied program which was interrupted by the beginning of the age of grace. When this age has been terminated, and God is free to turn His attention back to Israel, one of the first events will be a covenant between the Beast and Israel, evidently allowing the Jews to rebuild their temple. While many will be deceived for over three years as to his true character, this treaty will demonstrate beyond doubt the identity of the man of lawlessness.

Remember that the restraint of wickedness is not the issue in these verses. The extent and degree of wickedness, both in the world and in the professing church today, is so great that restraint from any source is not very significant. In 2 Tim. 3:1 - 9 and 4:1 - 4 Paul does not foretell a restraint of wickedness, even in the professing church, but warns of the extent to which it will grow.

3. The church which is Christ's Body did not begin with the coming of the Spirit, but with the unbelief and casting away of Israel (Rom. 11:12, 15), and the raising up of Paul so he

could be entrusted with this age of grace (Rom. 15:16; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). Considering Pentecost as the "the birthday of the church" clouds the picture and leads to false conclusions. The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost was not to indwell the Body of Christ (though He graciously does so today). I was to prepare the remnant of Israel for their testimony during the day when God "will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." This will take place "before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (Acts 2:19, 20).<sup>3</sup> Both the prophecy in Joel, and Peter's use of it, clearly indicate this interpretation.

Would it not be strange indeed if the Spirit, who came for the express purpose of vitalizing the ministry of the remnant during the days of the Tribulation, should be removed from the scene just before that time began? That He is not absent during the Tribulation is proved by Zech. 4:2 - 6. Describing the ministry of the two Olive trees, the two witnesses whose ministry takes place during the Tribulation (Rev. 11:3 - 12), the angel says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT saith the Lord of hosts."

Marvin Rosenthal has strongly and dogmatically set forth another view as to the meaning of 2 Thess. 2:7. He writes:

*"Speaking of this one who will hinder the Antichrist, Paul said, 'only he who now hindereth will continue to hinder until he be taken out of the way' (2 Thess. 2:7). The word hindereth means to hold down, and the phrase taken out of the way means to step aside. Therefore, the one who had the job of hindering the Antichrist will step aside; that is, he will no longer be a restraint between the Antichrist and those the Antichrist is persecuting.*

*"The Bible is explicit that the archangel Michael is the personage who will step aside. Daniel records that event this way: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time".<sup>4</sup> (He conveniently omits the rest of the verse, "-- and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.")*

Commenting on the passage in Daniel he says:

*"But what does the Hebrew word for stand up (amad) mean? Rashi, one of Israel's greatest scholars and one who had no concern regarding the issue of the timing of the Rapture under discussion in this book, understands stand up to literally mean stand still. The meaning, according to one of Israel's greatest scholars, would be to stand aside or be inactive. Michael, the guardian of Israel, had earlier fought for her (Dan. 10:13, 21), but now this one "who standeth for the children of thy [Daniel's] people" would stand still or stand aside. He would not help; he would not restrain; he would not hold down. The Midrash, commenting on this verse, says, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Michael, 'You are silent? You do not defend my children?'" (His emphasis) ... The archangel Michael will step aside, he will desist from helping Israel. That is why this period is called "the time of Jacob's trouble." (His emphasis)<sup>5</sup>*

But does the Hebrew word "amad" mean, "step aside" or "desist"? This word (number 5975 in Strong's Concordance) is found over 140 times in the Old Testament and is translated in

<sup>3</sup> The expression "Great and notable Day of the Lord" (in acts 2:20) may well refer to the final climax of judgment at the close of the Tribulation.

<sup>4</sup> "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church" by Marvin Rosenthal, page 257.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Pages 258, 259.

at least 25 ways in the KJV.

While there are some places where the meaning of this word might be "step aside" or "desist," let us bypass the "authorities" and see how the word is used elsewhere in Scripture.

Here are a few examples for consideration -- and they are not isolated instances. Try reading the following verses inserting "step aside" or "desist" in place of the underlined words.

"And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians" (Exodus 9:11).

"You are not to act against the blood of thy neighbor" (Lev. 19:16 - NASB).

" -- The God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, . . . to stand before the congregation **to minister** unto them?" (Numbers 16:9) See also Deut. 10:8; 18:15.

" -- Who can stand before the children of Anak!" (Deuteronomy 9:2).

There are many others passages equally strong against brother Rosenthal's definition of the word, but the most important consideration is how Daniel uses this word. It is found 23 times in his short prophecy. Reading carefully all of these passages I do not find even one instance where the word could be translated "step aside" or "desist." To give us a good look at the matter I will quote in full the verses where the KJV translates the word "stand up."

"Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall **stand up** (*step aside, desist?*) out of the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist ?*) . . . He shall also **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand" (Dan. 8:22, 23, 25).

"And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*), that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*), his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. . . . But out of a branch of her roots shall one **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. . . . And in those times there shall many **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) against the king of the south. Also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. . . . Then shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. And in his estate shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries" (Dan. 11:2, 3, 4, 7, 14, 20, 21).

In light of the above can we translate Daniel 12:1 as follows? "And at that time shall Michael **step aside / desist**, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." How could this translation be valid when the verse tells us that Daniel's people (those written in the book) shall be **delivered**? It is important also to notice that, before Daniel's day, Jeremiah specifically prophesied the time of trouble, and he also spoke of Israel's deliverance.



"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; **but he shall be saved out of it**" (Jeremiah 30:7).

Also, if Michael has been busy protecting his people until Dan. 12:1, when he finally steps aside -- he has surely been very ineffective during the past 2,000 years -- as witness the holocaust!

We must conclude that the Body of Christ, by its very presence in the world, prevents the occurrence of the opening events of the final week of Daniel's prophecy. Not until "he" is taken out of Satan's way, departing in the Rapture for the meeting in the air, can the Day of the Lord begin. Paul has proved the Thessalonians were not in the Day of the Lord and, in doing so, has proved we today, as members of the Body of Christ, will not, yea cannot, be in it either.

### **2:8 - 12 (NASB)**

**8. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord shall slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;**

**9. That is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,**

**10. And with all deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.**

**11. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false ["the lie" -- margin],**

**12. In order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."**

Paul has taught that before the revelation of this man of lawlessness the Rapture must take place. Now he discusses what will follow that revelation, after the church is gone.

This wicked dictator is headed for sudden destruction when Christ comes in glory. The Body of Christ has been taken out of the way so he can begin his evil career; now that career will be terminated as Christ Himself stands in his way (v. 8).

Paul sounds a warning: escape from the Day of the Lord is only for the true believers. Those in the last days of this age of grace who have sat under the preaching of the gospel time after time but have had no love for the truth, preferring the pleasures of unrighteousness, will find themselves in the Tribulation.

They will not find it easier to believe then -- even though they have seen the truth of Scripture graphically demonstrated in the catching away of millions of true believers. Rather, they have not loved the truth, so God will give them an alternative, a strong delusion through the activities of the man of lawlessness with his satanic powers. They have not loved God's truth and will end up believing Satan's lie. They would not receive Him who came in the Father's name and will, instead, receive him who comes in his own name (John 5:43).

This principle is at work, to a degree, even today. We are seeing a generation of educated people, who scoffed at the miraculous content of Scripture as mere superstition, now swallowing the occult -- and even downright Satanism -- hook, line and sinker.

Some advocates of the New Age movement, busy preparing for a one world government and religion, are already suggesting a plausible explanation for the disappearance of believers at the Rapture. They say enemies of their movement must be removed, hinting broadly of a supernatural element in that removal.

Constance Cumbey tells of the activities of New Age leaders using hypnosis to condition people to accept the New Age agenda. They are told, when under hypnosis, that "a cleansing action will have to occur before the New Age can begin." (Their "New Age" is Scripture's Tribulation period). She writes further, "The ease with which some seemed to 'go under' suggested that they had been subject to prior conditioning. It was chilling to watch hundreds of intelligent adults give a standing ovation to the prospects of 'false teachers about the Christ' (i.e. fundamentalist Christians) DISAPPEARING" (her emphasis).<sup>6</sup> She tells of source books for the New Age movement, "Alice Bailey, David Spangler, Agni Yoga, Theosophical, Rosicrucian, H. G. Wells writings" where one sees "cold plans for a near future 'cleansing action.'" She continues, "Reading that all who express recalcitrance towards the New Age 'Christ' will be released from physical embodiment and sent to 'another dimension than physical incarnation' [physical death] certainly does nothing towards giving the reader warm feelings about the writers and their followers -- the New Agers."<sup>7</sup> Immediately following the Rapture, these and similar New Age prophecies could be quoted, explaining the event as a clear fulfillment of their predictions -- and not the intervention of God on behalf of His people.

It is important to notice that the working of Satan, with all his power, signs and wonders, is "for those who perish" (v. 10). There is no warning by *Paul* to the true believers of *this* age against this activity of Satan at *that* time, for *they* will not be objects of his attacks -- they will be safely with the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

### **3:10 - 12.**

**10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.**

**11. For we hear that there are some, which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.**

**12. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.**

There seems to be more to this problem than mere laziness on the part of some of the believers. With the general theme of these two epistles as a background, a possible source of their behavior suggests itself. With Paul teaching them that the Rapture could take place at any time, and perhaps very soon, some of them may have yielded to the temptation to set at least approximate dates for the event. They felt no need to plant and water crops when they did not expect to be there to harvest them. Several groups, in the years since, who thought they knew when Christ was coming, have indulged in this kind of behavior. Paul calls upon them to lead disciplined lives. They are to expect Him at any moment, but plan and work as though His coming is years away (as it has indeed proved to be).

<sup>6</sup> "The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow" by Constance Cumbey, pages 184, 185.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Page 185.

<sup>8</sup> The "elect" in Matt. 24:24 and Mark 13:22 are the elect of Israel.

If Paul had told them the Rapture would be at the close of the seventieth week of Daniel nine, he could have sent them back to the fields by reminding them that His coming was at least seven years in the future. If he had taught the Post-Tribulation view they probably would not have adopted this lifestyle in the first place. This does not justify the Post-Trib view, however, any more than the misunderstanding of grace by the antinomians justifies legalism.

While this interpretation, in itself, does not prove the Pre-Tribulation view, the verses take on vital meaning in light of it.

Sadly, the first major doctrinal problem to require an answer in Paul's epistles is still with us. Many believers today think they have been appointed to "the wrath." Tragically, they are being robbed of their blessed hope by adopting Post-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, or "Pre-Wrath" eschatology, just as the realization of that hope appears to be at the very door!

## Conclusion

A missionary tells of entering an area that had never so much as heard one word of Scripture. The whole village gathered in avid curiosity to hear this white man who could speak their language so well. As he led them from the creation, through the fall of Adam, the highlights of Old Testament history and prophecy, and the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, they gave him wide-eyed attention. Tired after several hours of teaching, he closed his message, intending to give them a time of rest before continuing. They looked perplexed and one man asked, "Is that all? Is that the end of the story?"

"No" he replied, "He is coming back again to take those who love Him to be with Him in heaven." Their faces broke into smiles and they gathered in small groups discussing the wonderful things they had heard. Even at the first hearing, the story was not complete without the Rapture.

When Paul penned his epistles to the Thessalonians they were very young Christians, yet Paul had already taught them about the Rapture, and they were waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10). Not content with that, he gave these babes in Christ further details about the Rapture in his first letter to them, and defended the teaching against error in his second. Obviously, eschatology was not too heavy a diet for new believers. It was one of the first things they needed to know.

Not only did Paul make the Rapture the outstanding topic of his first two epistles, but also he mentioned it from time to time in the rest of his writings.<sup>9</sup> However, the subsequent passages must be referred back to the definitive revelation in the Thessalonian epistles to be fully and rightly understood.

But, important as it is to be clear in understanding what Scripture teaches about the Rapture, is this enough?

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<sup>9</sup> Some of these passages are: Rom. 8:18, 19, 23; 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 16:22; 2 Cor. 5:1 - 5; Eph. 2:7; 4:30; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 3:20, 21; Col. 1:5; 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.

As a very young pastor I once asked an elderly brother, whose theology was not known to me, "Do you believe Christ will come again and take us bodily home to heaven?"

He looked at me for a moment and then replied softly and reverently, "My dear brother, I'm **looking** for Him!"

We all remember how thrilled we were when we first heard of Christ's coming in the air for us -- to bring our salvation to its glorious consummation. But it is nearer to us now than it was then! "**Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed**" (Rom. 13:11).

The Rapture question is merely academic if it does not turn the eyes of our heart heavenward in joyous anticipation and expectation that He **could**, that He **might**, come **TODAY**.  
**Maranatha!**

## DID MARY HAVE OTHER CHILDREN?

In seeking to exalt Mary above the place of honor given to her in the Bible, it has been widely taught that she never lived with Joseph in a normal family relationship, but remained a perpetual virgin. The passages in the Gospels that mention Christ's "brethren" are explained as referring merely to His "relatives." John the Baptist was a "relative" of Christ (Luke 1:36) yet he is never referred to as Christ's "brother."

What does the Bible teach on this matter?

*"And [Joseph] kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son; and called His name Jesus"* (Matt. 1:25 -- NASB). This declares Mary's virginity at the time Christ was born, but implies strongly that she did not remain a virgin afterward.

Matthew 13:55, 56 indicates that He had four brothers (James, Joses, Simon and Judas) and at least two sisters. They were not in sympathy with His ministry, for at that time they did not believe on Him (John 7:3 - 5). If Psalm 50:20, 21 is Messianic, as seems certain, the basic mistake His brothers made was that they failed to realize, or believe, that Christ was essentially different from them in His ancestry. *"You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. [They may have accused Him of being illegitimate] These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; [having an earthly father] But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes"* (Psa. 50:20, 21).<sup>1</sup>

Later, after the death and resurrection of Christ, at least James and Judas (not Judas Iscariot) believed on Him, and were prominent among His disciples. Paul speaks of "*James the Lord's brother*" in Galatians 1:19. This is the James who took charge of the meeting recorded in Acts fifteen. Judas, the author of the book of Jude, was the brother of James (Jude, verse one) and thus also Christ's (half) brother -- though, in recognition of Christ's deity, and in fitting humility, he speaks of himself as "a bondservant of Jesus Christ."

The passage which settles the matter is Psalm 69:8, 9. *"I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children [mother's sons' in the NASB] because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me."* His disciples recalled this passage when He first cleansed the temple early in His ministry. *"Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise.' Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up'"* (John 2:13 - 17).

Christ's family stared, aghast, as He entered the temple -- the most holy place in the world to the Jews -- and totally disrupted, verbally and violently, the use being made of it by the top

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<sup>1</sup>The Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

leadership of Judaism. Their understandable response, like that of his friends in Mark 3:21, was, "He is out of His mind!" *"For even His brothers did not believe in Him"* (John 7:5). To paraphrase Psalm 69:8, 9, "Because I took it upon my self to drastically and violently cleanse the temple I have become like a stranger to my mother's children." Clearly, then, the passage predicts what Christ will be thinking at the time He cleanses the temple, and He calls His brethren, "my mother's children."

The virgin birth of Christ is carefully protected in Psalm 69:8. It is not "my father's children" but "my mother's children." They were, of course, His half brothers. This verse does more however – it indicates strongly that they were only half brothers. The Old Testament consistently determines genealogies through the father. There are two seeming exceptions to this rule. It is the seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15, and "*a woman shall encompass a man*" in Jeremiah 31:22. But both of these verses have the virgin birth of Christ specifically in view, just as Psalm 50:20 and Psalm 69:8 do. Christ calls His brethren His mother's children because they had a different father than He did. Their father was Joseph, His Father was God!

Both Psalm 50:20 and Psalm 69:8 rule out the idea that His "brothers" were but cousins or such: His mother was their mother also. Mary did, indeed, have other children.

The Scriptural truth that Mary was a virgin at the time Christ was born is essential to a true concept of the deity of Christ, and is therefore necessary as a theological basis for our very salvation.

The truth that Mary did not remain a virgin afterward, but lived a normal life with Joseph, and had other children, exalts the purity of the home and the holy character of the husband and wife relationship.

It also eliminates one of the false concepts about Mary -- that she is a perpetual virgin -- which has been used to give her a place of exaltation beyond what is warranted by Scripture. Mary was, indeed, honored greatly when she was chosen to be the mother of Christ, but even she would want us to turn our eyes on HIM, rather than on her. She tried, at the marriage in Cana, to inform Him of the need, as though she knew something He did not know. She seemed also to suggest that she was more compassionate than He was, and He needed her motherly influence to get Him to solve their problem. She was lovingly and mildly rebuked. But the advice she gave others, advice we can take to heart for ourselves, is perhaps the best advice ever given. Mary said to the servants, "*Whatever HE says to YOU, do it!*" (John 2:5).

# TITHING IN THE WORD OF GOD

## WHAT IS TITHING?

It is not merely giving, but bringing ten percent of one's income to God. The word "tithing" means "tenth." If five percent or twenty percent is given, it is giving, but not tithing.

## WHO ARE COMMANDED TO TITHE?

There is no recorded commandment, nor even a request or suggestion, that anyone give a tenth until after the Law of Moses was introduced in the book of Exodus (The first occurrence of the word "tithing" is Lev. 27:30). Both Abram and Jacob gave a tenth, but there is no record that either one was asked or commanded to do so.

Also there is no command to tithe in the New Testament epistles. Paul teaches that we should give in proportion to our income (2 Cor. 8:11 - 15) but he leaves the decision as to what percentage of the income is given entirely up to the free choice of the giver (2 Cor. 9:7).

Hebrews 7:5 makes it clear that the Levites were to receive tithes from their brethren, the other tribes of Israel. In Malachi 3:8 - 12 it is the nation (Israel -- Mal. 3:9), not the nations (Gentiles), who are robbing God by withholding the tithe.

The Levites (who received tithes) were to tithe also by giving their "tenth of the tenth" to the High Priest (Num. 18:26, 28; Neh. 10:38).

## WHO ARE TO RECEIVE THE TITHES?

Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedec, and Jacob gave his to God (with no information as to how this was to be done), but under the Law the tithe went chiefly to the tribe of Levi. This is made clear by the very basis upon which legal tithing rested.

When the Israelites entered the land of Palestine, under Joshua, it was divided into twelve parts and one part given to each of the twelve tribes. This was their "inheritance" and was to be the source of their livelihood. The tribe of Levi was not to be included among the other tribes in this distribution (the number of tribes was brought up to twelve by making Joseph into two tribes -- Ephraim and Manasseh). The Levites had no way to grow crops or raise cattle. To make up for this and to set them free to do their work as priests and ministers, God commanded the other tribes to give one tenth of their crops and cattle to Levi. This was to be their inheritance (Num. 18:21, 24, 26).

Some of the tithe was used differently however. Every three years it was to be stored up in the giver's home and made available to those who were in need: strangers, widows, and orphans, as well as the Levites living in his area (Deut. 14:27 - 29; 26:12 - 14). The tither himself used also part of the tithe. God commanded every man in Israel to go up to Jerusalem three times a year to the feasts (Ex. 23:14, 17; 34:23). He promised to protect their homes while they were away (Ex. 34:24) and fed them, out of their own tithes, while they were there (Deut. 12:17 - 19;

14:22, 23).

## HOW WAS TITHING ACCOMPLISHED?

While Abram and Jacob gave "tithes of **ALL**" (Gen. 14:20; 28:22), the tithing commanded under the Law was primarily of the products of agriculture: grains, fruits, cattle and sheep -- what the Filipino brethren would call "in kinds" giving (Lev. 27:30 - 32). Except on the third year, when the tithe was stored in the Israelite's storehouse, it was brought to Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5, 6, 17, 18) where a large room was provided in the temple area to store it (Neh. 10:37; 12:44; 13:5 & Mal. 3:10). If the giver lived too far from Jerusalem to bring the actual farm products, he could sell them and use the money to buy similar items when he arrived at the temple (Deut. 14:22 - 27). It was this practice which made possible the thriving business of the "thieves" who were driven from the temple by Christ (John 2:14 - 16).

If the tither wanted to give money instead of products of the field, he was to sell them and then add one fifth (20%) to the price before he presented it to the Lord. For instance, if he had a harvest of ten sacks of Barley his tithe would be one sack. But if he sold that one sack for ten shekels his tithe in currency would be twelve shekels (Lev. 27:31).

When, in the third year, he stored his tithe within his gates for the use of the needy in his hometown, he made a report of it before the Lord in Jerusalem. There he would declare that he had faithfully given the Lord the full amount and had used it according to God's instructions (Deut. 26:12 - 14).

## THE TITHE AND TAXES

The tithe was not an "income tax" to pay for governmental costs. Even though the government was a theocracy, and the king considered as a servant of God over Israel, none of the kings were Levites. Therefore they could not accept any of the Levitical tithe. When Samuel explained the operation of the theocracy to the Israelites he said, concerning their king, "***He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants***" (1 Sam. 8:15 - 17).<sup>1</sup> This was what amounted to an income tax. It was in addition to the tithe given to God. Solomon greatly increased this tax, evidently, for ten tribes rebelled against his son, Rehoboam, when he refused to give them relief from the burden (1 Kings 12:4, 16).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TITHING

With Abram the tithe was a voluntary recognition of the greatness of Melchizedec (Heb. 7:4, 7). Jacob, in a move characteristic of him, made a bargain with God. If God would first keep him, provide for his needs, and bring him safely home, he would return a tenth of his income to Him (Gen. 28:20 - 22).

Under the Law the tithe was commanded by God. To fail to bring it was an act of disobedience and "robbing God" (Mal. 3:8).

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<sup>1</sup>The Scriptures quoted will be from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.



Yet, even under the Law, tithing was not of supreme importance. Remember that the proud Pharisee who prayed in the temple, "*I give tithes of all that I possess*" went away without being justified (Luke 18:10 - 14). The Pharisees were so careful to keep this command that they even tithed the insignificant plants which grew wild where there was water. Yet they were rebuked for not giving heed to the "*weightier matters of the Law*" -- justice, mercy, faith (Matt. 23:23) and the love of God (Luke 11:42). Their tithing was as nothing compared to two mites cast into the treasury by a poor widow (Mark 12:41 - 44). They had brought their tithe, probably more -- for they "*put in much*," but she had cast in "*all that she had*." She had not given ten percent -- she had given one hundred percent!

It is significant that the ultimate in giving which is set before is as an encouragement, in Second Corinthians eight and nine, is not the "tenth," but the gift of Christ Himself who became poor that we might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9). He, like the poor widow, gave one hundred percent. Very few, if any, can match His giving -- and none can surpass it!

### GIVING UNDER GRACE.

While Paul mentions giving in many places in his epistles, he gives two full chapters to the theme in Second Corinthians. A brief outline study of Second Corinthians eight and nine will not only deliver us from legalistic tithing, but will so instruct us in grace giving that the results, for those who really want to please the Lord, will **far surpass** those produced by compulsory tithing.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS concerning Second Corinthians eight and nine.

Giving is presented, not as a command, but as a "grace" (2 Cor. 8:1, 6, 7, 19; 9:8, 14). It is strongly encouraged, but is to be wholly voluntary. Many incentives to give generously are listed, but obedience to a command is not one of them.

Giving is to be proportional, but there is no demand that the proportion must be one tenth of one's income. The tithe is not even suggested as a standard. If a believer today voluntarily chooses to give a tenth of his income, he has Paul's blessing. But if he insists that others must do the same, he is going back to the Law.

Those who are giving in Corinth are not Israelites, as such, but a Body of believers -- mostly Gentiles. They give not to the Levites, but to all of the poor saints in Jerusalem.

There are three outstanding verses in these chapters which are generally thought of apart from the grace of giving, yet they are the very heart of it!

-- "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich*" (2 Cor 8:9). Christ is set before us as an example of giving. This is grace **FOR** us.

-- "*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work*" (2 Cor 9:8). We have

God's enablement for our giving. This is grace **THROUGH** us.

-- **"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"** (2 Cor 9:15). In this context God's gift seems to be not Christ given for our sins (though this is blessedly true!), but the opportunity and ability to share that which is so characteristic of God (James 1:17), the ministry of giving. How wonderful is His grace **TO** us!

### **HOW TO GIVE. Some principles of giving from Second Corinthians eight and nine.**

- The opportunity to give is a gift of God's grace (2 Cor. 8:1, 2). Compare 2 Cor. 12:9.
- Giving should be voluntary. Notice "readiness to will" (8:11) and "not of necessity" (9:7). The Macedonians were eager to give and begged Paul to accept their gifts (8:3, 4).
- Giving should be joyful (9:7).
- Giving should be with a purpose in mind: planned, systematic giving (8:11, 12-a; 9:2, 7). See also 1 Cor. 16:2.
- Giving should be proportional to income (8:11 - 15). See also 1 Cor. 16:1, 2. What the proportion will be is left up to the voluntary decision of the giver.
- Giving should be carried out with determination (8:11, 24; 9:7).
- Giving is not limited to the rich (8:2). The Macedonians were very poor in money, but rich in their desire to give. Even the very poor can give themselves (8:5). However it was the Corinthians who had an abundance (8:14) who were urged to give in order to supply the needs of those who were suffering from extreme poverty (8:13 - 15).
- Giving should be sacrificial. It should cost one something. The Macedonians gave **"beyond their ability"** (8:3).
- Giving is to be characterized by honesty, both before God and men (8:18 - 24, particularly verse 21). Compare Ananias and Saphira who were dishonest in giving (Acts 5:1 - 10). Judas was dishonest in using what had been given by others, for **"he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it."** (John 12:6).

**NOTE** -- Giving is sometimes practiced as though it was a loan to the church instead of a gift. When the giver has a need he expects to get it back. This is an attitude sometimes found among the poor believers in the Philippines (and possibly elsewhere also). Also, givers are sometimes discouraged when the offerings are not used the way the church has voted they be used, or are actually misdirected toward bringing riches to those carrying on the "ministry" rather than accomplishing the work of God. Both those giving and those receiving must be totally honest.

### **WHY GIVE? Reasons given in Second Corinthians eight and nine**

- It proves the sincerity of our love for Christ and other believers (8:8, 24). The gift from Philippi demonstrated the loving concern of that congregation for Paul (Phil. 4:10).
- It supplies the needs of the brethren (8:14; 9:12). Compare Phil. 4:18.
- Giving provides "seed for the sower" (9:10). Less seed means a smaller harvest. Paul rejoiced in the giving of the Philippians because it would cause fruit to abound to their account (Phil. 4:17).
- Giving multiplies one's own ministry (**"multiply the seed you have sown"** -- 9:10). A believer can be "preaching" day and night if he is supporting preachers and missionaries around

the world.

-- Giving produces thanksgiving to God on the part of those who receive the gifts (9:11 - 13).

-- The generosity of one encourages others to give also (9:2). Think how many have been challenged by the woman who gave her two mites (Mark 12:41 - 44). Also consider the woman in Mark 14:3 - 9. She gave all, even breaking the expensive alabaster box. Christ commended her gift highly. He said, "*wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.*" (Mark 14:9).

-- Those who receive the gift will be praying for the giver (9:14).

--- Giving brings joy to the giver (9:7).

-- God will return the donor's giving to him, like the harvest after the sowing of the seed, in proportion to the seed sown -- but greatly multiplied (9:6, 10). The church in Philippi gave regularly (Phil. 4:18), generously and sacrificially (Phil. 4:19), and now God will supply their need (Phil. 4:19).

Indeed the opportunity to give is an unspeakable gift from God! (9:15).

## CONCLUSIONS.

What shall we say then? Should we tithe today in this age of Grace?

Let us go back to Abram as he returns from a glorious victory given to him by the Lord he served. He is not an Israelite, for the very word "Israelite" will come from the name given to his now unborn grandson. He is not under the Law of Moses, for that will not be in effect for more than four hundred years. He is not even circumcised at this time. He is just a sinner who has exercised faith in God (Heb. 11:8), a man whose faith will soon be announced as the basis for his justification -- when that faith stretches to believe a message of life out of death (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:18 - 22).

Coming to meet him is a mysterious man. He is a king over Salem (later called "Jerusalem"), the city which will one day be the capital city for the whole world. His throne is resting where one day the throne of the King of kings will be situated. He is a priest but, strangely, he does not offer a sacrifice. Instead he sets a simple table of bread and wine symbolizing a sacrifice already accomplished. This feast was not to be repeated until nearly two thousand years had rolled by, not until it represented a completed sacrifice on a cross outside of Jerusalem. He is one who is even greater than Abram, though only four verses in the entire Old Testament mention him (Gen. 14:18 - 20; Psa. 110:4).

This stranger does not come with commandments for Abram to keep, or to scold him, or threaten him with judgment. He comes only to bless. Abram has fellowship with him around a table provided totally by his kingly guest. Abram is not asked to do a single thing. He receives the blessing, enjoys the fellowship and the meal, and voluntarily responds to this wonderful grace by giving a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedec.

How close this comes to our position in this day of Grace (though this age is in no way prophesied here)! Like Abram, we are just sinners justified by faith apart from the ceremonies,

works, or commands of the Law. Christ meets us on the basis of grace, as One who has completed the sacrifice, and shares a feast with us to commemorate the fact. We receive His blessing, and bring our gifts to Him as a token of our recognition of His greatness and an expression of love for Him. Our gifts, like Abram's, are voluntary. Abram **chose** to give a tenth to one greater than himself. What shall **we** choose to give to the One who is greater than Melchizedec?

For some, one tenth is too much. If one cannot give a tenth cheerfully God doesn't want it! For others, a tenth is not enough. They have been blessed so greatly, and provided for so well, that it doesn't begin to be a sacrificial gift until much more than a tenth is given. God is looking for those who will give sacrificially, regularly, systematically, willingly, and cheerfully. Our giving is not just to Melchizedec, great as he was, but to the One he pictured -- Christ our Lord!

All things considered, if a tenth fulfills the requirements for grace giving for us, we should by all means give a tenth and be tithers! If not, then we must find out how much we should give -- and **give it**.

**NOTE** to pastors and teachers. Scriptural, gracious giving should be taught to the believers, but it should not be a constant sermon topic. Too much preaching about giving may be counter-productive, reduce the giving and, perhaps, drive some of the congregation away. After all, the best way to get chickens to lay more eggs is not to scold them, but to **feed** them better **food**. When spiritual believers have been instructed in Scriptural giving, and are well fed from the whole Word of God, they will give generously and cheerfully -- the kind of giving God delights in! Also, when the Word of God is taught through an expository ministry, the matter of giving will come up from time to time, and find a place in the hearts of the people, without taking up the entire message.