

Equipped for the Work of Ministry: The Power of the Spirit of the Truth, the Spirit of Prophecy

Anthony Buzzard, 23rd Theological Conference, May 3, 2014

Quotable quotes:

“Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the Church; the Greek language, having reigned for centuries over philosophy, became the vehicle of Christian literature and ritual...Other pagan cultures contributed to the syncretist result. From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity...and the mystic theosophy that made Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, and obscured the Christian creed... [Orthodox] Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world.”

Historian Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ: The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, 1944.

Heinz Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 29. 30:

[After the church fathers had finished “explaining” Jesus], “Jesus Christ was now no longer a man of flesh and blood like ourselves, but a heavenly being of supernatural origin in human form. With the help of a metaphysical system taken over from Greek philosophy, Christological dogma came into being, and an attempt was made to describe the person of Jesus Christ in the form of the so-called doctrine of the two natures. Jesus Christ, true man and true God. So men said, but from the beginning they shrank back from the bare historical character of the revelation of God. The Church has been in danger of embracing a non-human Jesus (docetism) from the very beginning. That is, from the very beginning right until the present day the Church has been tempted to stress the ‘divinity [Deity]’ of Christ so one-sidedly that his ‘manhood’ threatened to become a mere pretense. In this way, Jesus Christ was made a historical abnormality.

“The ‘Son of God’ was endowed with wonderful, indeed miraculous, qualities, to such an extent that his feet scarcely seemed any longer to touch the ground. What happened to this Christ was no longer the fate of a man but the fate of a remarkable, shadowy, fairytale figure, half-man and half- God. God offered Himself in an earthen vessel, but men down the ages have made it into a golden monstrosity. They have woven a golden veil of pious adoration, love and superstition and spread it over the rugged contours of God's action in history. We can find iconography not only in Russia, but also in our own sermons and theological textbooks. All this has been done with the laudable intention of heightening the wonder of revelation. In reality, however, the result has been only to conceal this revelation and to make an approach to it immeasurably more difficult. Is not the dogmatic picture of Christ for many people the greatest hindrance to belief today? Is it not true that so many people come to grief in the Christian faith because they are expected to believe things of Jesus as historical fact that they cannot accept honestly?”

23 million Seventh Day Adventists: “The keystone of our theology is that one plus one plus one is one.” “One is inherently a plural word” (Whidden, Moon, Reeve, *The Trinity*, p. 76).

“Sir Isaac Newton became almost obsessed with the desire to purge Christianity of its mythical doctrines. He became convinced that the a-rational dogmas of the Trinity and Incarnation were the result of conspiracy, forgery and chicanery... The spurious doctrines of the Incarnation and Trinity had been added to the creed by unscrupulous theologians of the 4th century. Indeed the book of Revelation had prophesied the rise of Trinitarianism, ‘this strange religion of the West, the cult of three equal Gods, the abomination of desolation’” (Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, p. 69).

Millard Erickson: “A good Trinitarian must say, ‘They is One and He are Three.’”

Trinitarians must say that “Jesus is man but not a man,” and that the Son of God had “a beginningless beginning.” (My spell-checker rejected “beginningless!” Even it knows better.)

Dr. Swindoll quoting Max Lucado: “While the angels watched Mary changed God’s diapers.”

AB: “It isn’t fine to add on Gods and go from One to Three.

‘One’ means only always one, and never can mean Three.

Just do the math, and you will see, that Jesus knew that he

Could never be a second God from all eternity.”

(To the tune of “O Little Town of Bethlehem”)

On Mark 13: “Jesus linked his own return with the fall of Jerusalem: all attempts to deny such a connection in apologetic interests are mere sophistry and merit no refutation.”¹

Why we do Bible study: The dynamic words of Holy Scripture are designed to impart life to us, but this is only possible when they are understood by us readers. Paul emphasized that the only ideal worth achieving is to cultivate “a love for the truth so that we can be saved” (certainly not as an optional extra!). And loving truth means refusing to believe what is not true, and standing up for this. Believing falsehood debilitates and dilutes the energy of the spirit of the truth which is designed to animate and invigorate us. Truth is life-imparting and falsehoods undermine our very being. Falsehood is a poison to our system and not better than adding cyanide to our coffee or donuts. Believing what is untrue is to be rejected with maximum conscientious effort. The antichristian threat is that we would not love the truth but believe what is not true, and thus love unrighteousness (Paul in II Thess. 2: Believing the truth is contrasted with “believing what is false, and being unrighteous”). As Micah speaking for God said, “Do not my words do good?” (Micah 2:7).

Jeremiah 6:10 “To whom am I to give word, witnessing so that they may take note? See, their ears are stopped, and they are not able to give attention: see, the word of the Lord has been a cause of shame to them, they have no delight in it” (BBE).

God’s story ends brilliantly. And one day all the punishment and tribulation will be over for good. “And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations” (Joel 2:19).

NAU Micah 4:3: **And never again will they train for war.**

NAU Nahum 1:15 **Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; Pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; He is cut off completely.**

But we are not there yet! And we need to be fully informed of the story which will unfold as God deals with Israel and the world *before* Christ comes back. The story is centered on Jerusalem, where eventually after all the extreme distress, the Kingdom will have its governmental center.

Let me begin by putting before you the good translators’ note (NET Bible) to Revelation (the words of Jesus) in 11:2: “The *holy city* appears to be a reference to Jerusalem. **See also Luke 21:24.”**

Now this: “In view of the plethora of material written on the Kingdom of God in the NT, it is a **marvel** that scholars have not bestowed proportionate attention on the same topic as set forth in **DANIEL** — the OT source of Christ’s teaching on the matter [should be Christ’s saving Gospel!]. One classic treatment is found, in Lagrange, *Le Judaisme avant Jesus Christ* (Paris, 1931)” (Desmond Ford. *Abomination of Desolation in Prophecy*, 1939, p.132).

¹Shenkel, *Das Charakterbild Jesu: Ein Biblischer Versuch*, 1864, pp. 183-185.

Now this: “Anyone who has tried to read John’s Revelation can sympathize with George Bernard Shaw’s remark that it is ‘a curious record of the visions of a drug addict’” (cited in Robert Fuller, *the Naming of Antichrist*, 1995, p, 27). “Underlying the Book of Revelation is an undercurrent of vindictiveness and morbidity. John’s references to seven messages, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, and seven unnumbered visions merge together to lead the reader into hopeless confusion” (p. 30).

This gets me going!

So much for “the Revelation belonging to Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must **soon take place**, and he made it known by sending it via his angel to his servant John.” So much for the very words of Jesus which many scholars approach in various oblique and confusing ways. They exhaust themselves with theories of authorship, *anything* to remove the authority of Jesus from the Apocalypse. How few scholars today are impressed with the uncompromising warnings of Jesus:

“I testify to anyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. If anyone will take away from the words which are **written in this prophecy**, God will take from him his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Rev. 21:18, 29).

Revelation has been the brunt of every mad idea conceivable, for example: “666 must be Ronald (6) Wilson (6) Reagan (6) who was shot and yet survived.”

By contrast, a piece of plain truth: “In an obvious allusion to the 3 ½ years mentioned by Daniel, John tells us that the Beast is to function for 42 months” (p. 28).

Jesus fared no better from critics of his apocalyptic² discourse in the gospels:

The enemies of truth, who are always and increasingly present (“evil men will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived”) did not give up opposing Jesus: “Colani laboured to eradicate all evidences of Messianism and eschatology from the teachings of Christ. The disciples, already indoctrinated with Jewish eschatology, were the real culprits. Colani’s theory offered a welcome option for those embarrassed by the apocalyptic eschatology of Mark 13” (Ford, p. 17).

My cousin J.A.T. Robinson: “Mark 13 is a secondary compilation reflecting the expectation of the early church.” Glasson: “This picture of a mistaken fanatic bringing the message that millions now living will never die.” C.H. Weisse, cited by Ford: “An utterance constructed out of the most narrow and superstitious belief in the symbolic sayings of a fantastic book (Daniel), which ignorance or deceit attributed to a renowned old prophet and out of the most extravagant, half-insane imagination.” “Any specifically Christian element is lacking in the discourse. The whole derives from Daniel” (Holscher, cited by Ford, p. 9). Luther: “Christ is not taught in the book of Revelation.”

Augustine, hailed by many as the **greatest spiritual giant** since Paul, became an outspoken critic of apocalyptic thought, influenced by an African scholar Tyconius, who urged a “spiritualized reading of Revelation by which the antichrist must be understood to mean the struggle of good versus evil in every age. This led to an anti-millenarian reading of Revelation. Augustine said that ‘whatever is contrary to the word of Christ is antichrist.’ But Pope Urban justified sending the Crusaders on a bloody conquest of Palestine by announcing that it is the will of God that through the labors of the crusaders Christianity will again flourish at Jerusalem in these last times, so that when Antichrist begins his reign there as he must, he will find enough Christians to fight!” (p. 33).

There are 88 allusions to the OT in Revelation, and Jesus obviously loved this prophet Daniel and based his understanding of the Gospel of the Kingdom and of end-time events on it and on all the prophets.

“The Gospels take into account the Old Testament **program of the End**: First of all, according to the prophets a hostile army is to capture and devastate Jerusalem. Half of the inhabitants will be carried away into captivity, and yet it will continue to be Jewish city (Zech. 14:2)...The eschatological

²The sudden catastrophic intervention of God in the affairs of the earth to right all wrongs, Ford, p.11. “The Apocalypse is direct revelation of divine truth hitherto unknown, or of future events or conditions not capable of merely human prediction, disclosed by God to some one of his favored servants” (Ibid. p. 13).

discourse draws from the OT descriptions of invasions of the Holy Land by Assyria, Babylon and Syria.” (p. 166). “The invasions had come because of transgression, i.e. Israel’s own defection from Yahweh. Israel’s own abominations caused the influx of the abominations of the heathen. This is the import of Jer. 7, Ezek 5-7; Dan 8, 9, as well as Mark 13. In Christ’s day there already existed the understanding that a great and desolating war would herald the coming of the Kingdom and it would be directed against Jerusalem and its TEMPLE...and it is this concept which Christ adopts” (p. 166, 167).

“The word ‘understand’ occurs 27 times in Daniel and it is crucial in Dan 8. Jesus echoes this when he said, ‘Understand what I mean by Abomination of Desolation.’”

To Daniel the angel said: ‘Understand, **Son of Man** [addressing Daniel], that the vision pertains to the **time of the end**’ (Dan. 8:17, 19). “I am going to tell you what will take place at the final time of indignation because it pertains to the appointed **time of the end**.” “None of the wicked will understand but those who are wise will understand.” “The Abomination of Desolation is the terrifying harbinger of the end” (Ford, p. 172). That is exactly what Jesus said in Matt. 24:14, 15: “Then the end will come — when you *therefore* see the Abomination of Desolation standing in the holy place, then flee.” And flee with the utmost urgency.

As believers commissioned to preach the Gospel, we need to have the in-depth story on the Jesus who (as did Paul) announced the future and stated, “I have told you this in advance,” whether it be our future or that of our children. Paul was for only a very brief time in Thessalonica founding the church. At that time he gave them essential information on the antichrist, Man of Sin, and said, “Don’t you remember that while I was with you I used often to be telling you these things?” Prophecy about end-time events leading to the Parousia (Jesus’ arrival), is not an optional extra, but the very fiber of good Gospel of the Kingdom understanding, essential, invigorating equipment for all believers. We are given a mass of material to instruct us in the proper vision of the end-time, the order of events, and the transition at the Parousia from this evil age to the great Age to Come of the Kingdom on earth. Why is the Olivet Discourse, which implies a mass of material from Daniel and the other prophets, less important than say the Sermon on the Mount? What about the 22 chapters of Jesus’ words in Revelation? Is it not all equally energizing truth?

As Desmond Ford observed: “It should be recognized that Christ’s attitude to the OT presupposes his acceptance of the prophetic and apocalyptic concepts reflected there. There is nothing in Mark 13 [Matt. 24, Luke 21] that would seem foreign to one who knew the OT well” (*Abomination of Desolation in Prophecy*, p. 15).

But do we know this well?

A Sidelight on Spirit. Mark 13:11: “The Old Testament and Jewish understanding of the Holy Spirit is implicitly in the promise of v. 11. The spirit is given to inspire especially marvelous utterances and is given to special men, the martyrs, in times of special need — in court proceedings. The book of Acts and the letters of Paul especially emphasize that the holy spirit is given to every member of the church and that the spirit initiates those actions and attitudes *also* which do not appear miraculous in any way (I Cor. 12:1-3). Observe that among the gifts of the spirit are found power to help and to lead others, generosity and kindness (I Cor. 12:28; Rom 12:8). The parallel verse in Luke 21:15 (cp Luke 12:12) speaks of the exalted Jesus instead of the spirit. Luke equates the two in other passages also. No other than Jesus addressed the church in the holy spirit.

“**Mark 13:14** marks the beginning of something *quite extraordinary*. In Daniel 9:27, “the Awful Horror” designates the pagan altar which was erected at that time on the altar of burnt offering in the temple courtyard. The discussion [by Jesus] which follows clearly indicates that here in Mark 13:14 the term refers to a person [linking easily to Man of Sin in Paul]. Undoubtedly the phrase ‘where he ought not to’ **refers to the temple**, since the entire passage **presupposes a Jewish situation** (*Mark*, Edouard Schweitzer, p. 271. 272)... This very limited local emergency is looked on here as the beginning of the crucial and unparalleled tribulation of the end time. In a short time, which cannot be

defined more precisely [but Matthew has ‘immediately after’], after THAT time of trouble, there will be distinct visible cosmic signs and then Jesus will arrive.”

In II Thess. 2 we have a piece of “Jewish” prophecy. Paul makes this prophecy of the Man of Sin in the Temple the one key sign, parallel to Jesus’ Abomination of Desolation, of the impending end of the age. The appearance of the Man of Sin, who has his own counterfeit Parousia, backed by miracle, is the heart of pre-Kingdom eschatology, negated and neutralized alas by the false system of Hal Lindsay, which promises a lift-off to heaven for true believers, *before* the Man of Sin arrives. Hal Lindsay would tell us that we believers will view the end-time events from the comfort of spectators in heaven!

The rationale for a future temple would be this: The Jews have not accepted their Messiah and the Christians have. So our sins are paid for and blotted out, “paid in full.” But the Jews need a temple desperately, the spot where Abraham was willing to offer his son, to provide atonement for sin. The Antichrist ingratiates himself with them and allows them to have it. In the middle of the final heptad, it “all goes wrong” (to quote the line from *Les Miserables*).

Now note this: It is Christianity which has made it impossible for Jews to accept God as the Triune God, and thus they are deprived of the true God and true Jesus offered by Scripture. The Church has therefore kept Jews away from atonement in Christ. Thus naturally they look to the wailing wall and a rebuilt temple to appease their consciences.

Zech. 12:3 in the LXX reads like this: “It will come to pass in that day that I will make Jerusalem a stone of trampling by all the nations. Everyone who tramples on it will utterly mock at it. And all the nations will be gathered against it.”

Worse still, 2/3 of Israel will be eliminated and one third of the city exiled (Zech. 13:8, 9; 14:1-2): “I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle and the city will be captured, houses plundered, women ravished and half of the city exiled and the other half not cut off.” To Israel Isaiah said: “Then hail will sweep away your refuge of lies., your covenant of death will be canceled and your pact with Sheol will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through and you become its trampling place.” Isa. 28:18: “Your covenant with death will be canceled and your pact with Sheol will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge passes through, then you will be a trampling place.” (cp. Dan. 8:13).

The Hebrew version of Zech. 12:3 is easier on Israel and harder on the attacking nations. A tiny variation (one difference of consonant) gives us the fuller and grimmer picture reported in the LXX of Zech. 12:3. Instead of the nations finding Jerusalem a burdensome stone -- the verb is *amas*, to burden -- Israel will be a trampled, trodden on stone, the verb was read as *ramas*, to trample. This reading is reflected in Jesus in Luke 21:24 and again in Rev. 11:2. You can hear the awful trampling of the army boots. *Ramas*.

Both Jesus and Paul, based on **Zech. 12:3 LXX** and Daniel 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, Rom. 9:27, 28; 11:25-28, present us with a coming very bad time for Israel. The appearance of the Abomination of Desolation, the surrounding and trampling of Jerusalem (Luke 24:21), the Man of Sin (II Thess. 2:3 in the temple) are the key, key signs of the impending countdown to the Second Coming. Jesus repeats all this in Rev. 11:1-2. There is a temple building in which persons worship God. The outer court is “thrown out,” recalling the “cast out” of Dan. 8:11 (see the excellent remarks of Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, p. 268-273). Dan. 8 has been regularly preterized. People were told it was all over with Antiochus Epiphanes, i.e. the unwanted future has been “put behind us” and thus negated and lost from view.

Thus Desmond Ford says rightly: “It does not appear correct to say that Luke in ch. 21 or elsewhere anticipates the future in a way different from Mark... Luke’s ‘times of the Gentiles’ are identical with the **great tribulation** of Mark 13 and this is an allusion to Dan. 8:13” (p. 24). “**In Luke 21 Jerusalem’s fall is still viewed *eschatologically***” (p. 71). “The difficulties in the way of dividing up Mark 13 are grave and insurmountable. It ignores the coupling together the two parts in the discourse as belonging to *one great event*. **Matt. 24:29** says that they (Great Tribulation and Second Coming) will follow each other immediately, Mark that they belong to the same general period. The

wrong method attempts to explain away the obvious notes of time” (p. 63). “In Luke 21 the fate of the Holy City is still considered an eschatological event” (p. 23).

The antichrist, Paul says, recalling Dan. 11:36ff, poses eventually as God, or a god, and then turns on the Jews and others as a Beast, and according to Jesus and Daniel sets up a “disgusting horror” in the temple. This triggers the unprecedented time of Great Tribulation.

All this brings Daniel 7, 8, 9 and 11, 12 into focus as expounded and expanded by Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 and by Paul in II Thessalonians 2. And by Revelation. This is a mass of biblical material.

This is also Jewish history in advance, but it provides the essential sign for Christians that the final 3 ½ years is about to kick in. This Jewish Temple prophecy in II Thess. 2 also enables Paul to teach that only **after** the appearance of the Man of Sin (Antichrist) in the Temple can Jesus come back to raise the dead and catch up the living faithful to meet him, and escort him, as the King arriving to rule! Not until then. Not before then.

The Second Coming of Jesus is not a “drive through.” He is coming *back*. He has a one-way ticket.

Paul knows that the ultimate restoration of a remnant of the now blinded, *natural* Israel is a key to prophecy. Abrahamics have from the beginning always rightly insisted on a future restoration of a remnant of now blinded, disobedient Israel -- “the Israel of the flesh” (I Cor. 10:18, KJV), as distinct from the Israel of the spirit, the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), the true circumcision (Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:16 and of course Gal. 3:29), Abraham’s seed, members of the New Covenant commonwealth of Israel. The return of *natural* Israel to nationhood in 1948 was *not* the restoration described in the Bible, which always implied a converted Israel, but the 1948 event certainly makes the prophecies possible as does the building of a temple.

The Hal Lindsay scheme (a novelty since 1830) should be dropped as offering a false escape. Jesus makes the Abomination of Desolation *the* sign, otherwise called by Jesus “the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies” (Luke 21:24), which signals “the trampling down of Jerusalem” (Luke 21:24) until the times of Gentile domination are finally and thankfully brought to a close, as Dan. 9:24-27 predicts, unpacking Isa. 10:22, Isa 28:22 and Rom. 9:27. All of this is also found in Zech. 12:3 (LXX). Isa. 63 gives a tribulation-time prayer of those suffering in the time of Temple-trouble and trampling and invasion. So also Ps. 79. Isa. 28:18 speaks of a covenant of lies and a trampling of Israel.

The Olivet Discourse is Jesus’ extended exegesis of the Great unparalleled Tribulation of Matt. 24:21 (referring of course to Dan. 12:1, connected with the time of the death of the final King of the North). “Immediately following” that great tribulation (Matt. 24:29) the cosmic signs introduce the one, single, great, visible Parousia of the Messiah. The “immediately after” of Matt. 24:29 of course rules out AD 70! Unless one imagines a Great Tribulation twice the length of the Millennium! Jesus blocked that amazing idea by describing the Great Tribulation as “days in which it will be impossibly difficult for pregnant women and nursing mothers” (see Mark 13:17, 19).

What I am saying here is nothing new. It is classical premillennialism found in the second-century premills. Joyce Baldwin (Dean of Women at Trinity College, Bristol), in her commentary on Daniel (*Tyndale Commentaries*) has to remind us of what is really obvious: “To confine the meaning of Daniel’s prophecy to the second century BC is to close one’s eyes to the witness of Jesus and of the NT writers in general that it also had a future significance” (p. 173). She notes, too, the obvious references of Daniel to the Assyrian. “But as in the case of the cruel Assyrian invader (Isa. 10:23) an end has been decreed for the [wicked leader of Dan. 9:24-27]” (p. 172). She refers to the final heptad (7 years) of Dan. 9 and later says, “In the Gospel Jesus makes reference to the seventy ‘weeks’ only in terms of the Abomination of Desolation (Matt. 24:15; Mk 13:14, ‘the desolating sacrilege,’ RSV). For him the significance of the phrase was not exhausted by its applicability to Antiochus Epiphanes. The book of Revelation takes up the symbolism of the ‘half of the week,’ [of Dan. 9] expressed in Rev. 11:2 as the 42 months during which *the holy city is trampled under foot* and in 13:5 the Beast has authority for the same period. If Revelation was written after AD 70 [it was] it makes a further application of our passage to an end time yet to be. Thus the NT positively encourages the view that

while there are interim events which bear out the truth of the imagery, it points to a culmination at the end-time [she mistakenly says ‘end of history’]” (p. 175).

Baldwin warns: “With regard to prophecy as foretelling the church has lost its nerve. An earthbound, rationalistic humanism has so invaded Christian thinking as to tinge with faint ridicule all claims to see in the Bible anything more than the vaguest references to future events” (p. 185) Compare Greg Deuble’s “They Never Told Me This in Church”! These prophecy issues are basic to Christian discipleship, learning to be like the master rabbi whom we claim to follow!

Pulpit Commentary (early 1900s): “The man of sin sitting in the temple of God. The popes have never claimed to *be* God. The temple of God cannot be the Vatican, nor the Christian church which is an ideal building. Nor can Rome be considered the center of the Christian church... This terrible person, the Man of Sin, sits down in God’s place — for the temple is God’s dwelling *in some actual temple* and appropriates it for his own use... nothing is more remarkable than the growth of error in the patristic age. False opinions held by pious fathers in one age were held by errorists in the next age to the exclusion of the truth... There have been precursors to the Man of Sin such as Caligula in AD 40, but THE apostasy is still to come, the Man of Sin is still in the future, the mystery of iniquity is working even now. The Man of Sin is a person, a man of mighty intellect and giant strength of will who will take advantage of a general development of unbelief and lawlessness and gain for a time widespread sovereignty... he sits in the Temple of God reviving the madness of Antiochus Epiphanes and Caligula... Such a man the world has not yet seen... He is the last and worst product of the apostasy... The appearance of the Man of Sin is the sign of the Approaching Advent of Christ... The penalty of rejecting the love of the truth (II Thess. 2:10) is the incapacity to distinguish the truth from error. God punishes men in this condition by sending them a working of error, that they would believe falsehood. This is an awful fate. Those who do not love the truth will not have it. Liars become incapable of knowing the truth. The habit of indifference to truth so grows upon some people that the whole idea of truth becomes meaningless and obscure to them... Is this not a veritable destruction — the spiritual eye blinded and burned out by the fires of falsehood and unrighteousness; the highest intellectual faculty, that of grasping truth, killed by corruption and falsehood. God save us all from this hideous doom!” (from pp. 48-61).

Prospect and Destiny of the Faithful³

The destiny of the faithful of all the ages, we all know, involves immortalization at the Parousia in the “first resurrection,” the “advance resurrection” (*exanastasis*) of Phil. 3:11. There will be a surviving *mortal* population in the millennium, without which all the many promises of co-rulership with Jesus over the nations (Rev. 2:26, etc.), i.e. being promoted to be governor of 5 or 10 cities, or being put in charge of many things, would be denied and negated. Loss of such truth inevitably debilitates believers who are deprived of the energizing power of a massive truth, that they are now royalty in training, God’s “choice people” being groomed to BE the Kingdom of God, not just be vaguely in it. This life is training for reigning and schooling for ruling. Jesus did not say, “Well done, faithful servant. Take part in 5 or 10 cities” but “Be governor over 5 or 10 cities.” There is a very great difference. “Don’t you know that the saints are going to manage the world?” (I Cor. 6:2). For Paul this was an elementary truth of the Gospel.

“Behold a king will reign in justice along with princes” (Isa. 32:1). The prophets and the psalms are rich with the prospect of co-reigning with Jesus, and Daniel of course is saturated with this promise, especially 7:27 where “all nations are to obey the saints,” whose time to take charge of the Kingdom will come in 7:22. All this is part of the destiny of the Son of Man, the Human Being, who is seen doing what Adam failed to do — organize and supervise an empire that will really work, with laws of righteousness and justice which will be enforceable.

³For an excellent read on this neglected element of the Gospel, do see Gerard Noel, *A Brief Enquiry into the Prospects of the Church of Christ in Connexion with the Second Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1828 (babel.hathitrust.org). Also the Abrahamic book free at our site, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* by Wiley Jones.

Isa. 65:17ff. presents this idyllic Kingdom, where mortals living a mere 100 years will be considered failures, along with a mass of material in the Hebrew Bible — not least the marvelous time coming in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 when the nations will learn to beat their tanks into tractors. When the Kingdom and dominion returns to Jerusalem (Micah 4:18) and the Kingdom of the Lord, formerly in the hands of the family of David (II Chron. 13:8) reappears, in the hands of Jesus Messiah and his international faithful followers, Obadiah 21. The Kingdom is going to be restored (Isa. 1:26).

Jesus celebrated this truth about the reversal of the failure of Adam to rule the world, and he describes it as the Kingdom-covenant recalled at the Lord's supper. "As my Father has **covenanted** to give me a Kingdom, so I covenant with you to give you the right to rule, and you will sit on 12 thrones to administer [the regathered] tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). So we have the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the Jesuanic covenant — all pointing to kingdom and royalty on earth, the reversal of the Adam failure. No wonder Jesus begins by commanding us all (Mark 1:14-15): "Repent and believe the Gospel *about the Kingdom of God*," which is repent and stop NOT believing in your destiny, which is to rule with Jesus in the coming Kingdom.

In Mark 4:11 Jesus warned that repentance is impossible without belief in the Kingdom of God. "If they did believe in the Kingdom they could repent and be forgiven." A staggering statement that belief in the gospel of the Kingdom is the essential prerequisite for repentance and forgiveness. If we don't grasp and believe in the Kingdom future in Christ, to be prepared for urgently now, how can it be said that we have repented of our failure in Adam?

The Kingdom of God and GOD

Effective evangelism requires some prolonged, intensive training on how to communicate the great Truth, acceptable to a billion Muslims and millions of Jews, but vigorously resisted by "orthodox" churches, that God is a single Divine Person, so described thousands and thousands of times by singular personal pronouns. This is a *huge* issue, teaching and persuading about who God and Jesus are.

Here is a good sample from the Internet. This person could be contacted and given books to encourage them further. This is the question which needs to be engaged. How can we get Megyn Kelly or Sean Hannity to engage the conversation about who the true God is? Could anything be more interesting or relevant?

"Did Jesus believe in Trinity since he was a Jew? No. In one discussion Jesus had with his enemies, they said to him: 'We aren't illegitimate children! God himself is our true Father.' (John 8:41) So, to the Jews, the Father — a SINGLE person — was their God. Jesus did not dispute that. In fact, he agreed with them, saying: 'If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but He sent me.'

So, both Jesus and the Jews were in agreement that the Father — not a Trinity — was God.

At John 20:17, Jesus told Mary: 'I am ascending to MY Father and MY God.' Again, this shows that Only ONE person — the Father — is God.

According to the Trinity doctrine: 'We worship one God in Trinity.' Did Jesus ever say that the Son and holy spirit were to be worshipped along with the Father? NEVER! At John 4:23, he said: 'But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—WHEN TRUE WORSHIPERS WILL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.' So, instead of worshipping a three-Person Deity, Jesus instructed his followers to worship ONLY the Father, who he later called the 'ONLY TRUE GOD' (John 17:3). Jesus made this the key to Life in the Coming Age.

The Trinity doctrine says, in part: 'In this Trinity NONE IS GREATER OR LESS THAN ANOTHER.' Jesus proved this a lie when he said: 'THE FATHER IS GREATER THAN I AM' (John 14:28).

SO, IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION, NEITHER JESUS NOR THE JEWS BELIEVED IN THE TRINITY" (answers.yahoo.com)

I have been in discussion with James Dunn, his student James McGrath, and also with the famous Bishop Tom Wright who seems intent on maintaining his C of E Trinity, as a "reformulated Shema"!

Recently I said:

My question to you, Dr. McGrath, is simply this: You and Dr. Dunn have argued cogently that Bishop Wright's attempt to "reformulate the shema" in I Cor. 8:4-6 does not work. Paul constantly defines Jesus as the Lord **Messiah** (Ps. 110:1 being the pervasive background for this identification). The Lord **Messiah** is not the Lord God! In I Cor. 8:4-6 Jesus is as always the Lord Messiah. God is a single SOMEONE and Jesus is SOMEONE else. They cannot possibly both be God.

It seems desperate to plead, with Bishop Wright, that Paul has altered the unitary monotheistic creed of Jesus. And you agree that Paul has not done this.

So then, why don't we all return to the "Jewish creed" of the Jew Jesus? After all, Protestants claim to "go by the Bible." What could be a more obvious and unifying way of doing this than reinstating the creed of our founder Jesus? At present Jesus is being relegated to "pre-Christian"! And his creed, which he describes as the most important command of all, is superseded by what became an obviously NOT unitary monotheistic creed. There are vast issues at stake here. We are all grateful for your plain opposition to Wright, Bauckham and Hurtado and their "reformulation of the Shema" in I Cor. 8:4-6.

I hope I am clear here. The voice of Jesus in Mark 12:29 ought to be heard. Why not?

Is Christianity to remain the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder's creed? Would this not be in the highest degree embarrassing and shattering when we are all judged by Jesus (Acts 17:31)?

Bishop Wright (in correspondence): "But what we do find in Scripture, as is now increasingly realised by scholars in many traditions, is the Jesus-and-**spirit reshaping of first-century Jewish monotheism**, in such a way that we are forced to say that if the doctrine of the Trinity didn't exist **we would have to invent it**. This goes back at least to Galatians 4.1-11. As I say, it's all there in chapter 9 of my book, and in the work of scholars like Hurtado and Bauckham. The later official doctrine re-expresses, in different and philosophically oriented terms, what the very first Christians **were saying in deeply Jewish and scripture-based terms**. As I've said, until you engage with the relevant texts and arguments there's no point taking this further."

Suggestion for a bumper sticker: "Jesus was not a Trinitarian, why are you?"

(I'll visit you in prison!)