

# The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

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## The Lord's Return

### **EDITOR'S JOURNAL**

*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.—Revelation 22:20*

Few questions have occupied the Christian mind from the days of Jesus to the present more than the return of Jesus Christ—a return to finish the work he began when he walked the highways and byways of Israel some 2000 years ago. There is little doubt that the followers of Jesus at his first advent anticipated that he would shortly return to set up the kingdom he promised—the kingdom whose power he illustrated in his healings and miracles and which he preached in his sermons and parables.

Christianity exulted when Constantine made it the state religion of Rome. As the power of the established church systems increased under the edict of Justinian in AD 533 and blossomed into full bloom with the crowning of Charlemagne as head of the Holy Roman Empire in AD 800, many of the clergy taught that Christ had set up his kingdom and was reigning through them—the pope in Rome being the vicegerent of Christ. What a sad reign that turned out to be! Free thought was squelched. The laity became engulfed in poverty while the established religious system became wealthier and more powerful.

The Reformation saw great interest in the return of Christ and many of the nascent Protestant churches began calling attention to the prophecies dealing with that return. But it was not until the nineteenth century, through such luminaries as J. A. Bengel in Europe and Joseph Wolfe in Asia, that renewed interest in the subject began to develop. Nowhere was this more evident than in the work of William Miller in the United States. Despite the fact that his prediction of 1844 as the date of Christ's return proved wrong, the stage was set for the birth of the Adventist movement and the continued investigation into the subject.

The Bible Student movement, started by Charles Taze Russell in 1879, endorsed the concept of the return as an invisible event dating to 1874. This concept became a key element of the movement's message with such well-attended public lectures as "Why Are Ye the Last to Welcome Back the King."

The founders of the Pastoral Bible Institute, an outgrowth of that movement, began the publication of this journal in 1918. Their mission statement explained the purpose for choosing the title *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom* as being the proclamation of "the most important message which we have, the presence of the king and his kingdom."

In keeping with that proclamation this issue of **THE HERALD** is devoted to a comparison of the first and second advents of Christ. The two are related as cause is to effect. What Christ's death guaranteed at his first advent becomes a reality at his second advent.

Commenting on the work of William Miller, Charles T. Russell wrote: "Not understanding the manner nor the object of the Lord's return, but expecting a sudden appearance, and the end of all things in one day, he supposed all the time prophecies must end there; and it was his aim and effort to force them all to this common terminus: hence his failure—beyond which God did not then enlighten any, further enlightenment not being then due."—*Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 3, page 87.

Separate articles in this issue of **THE HERALD** investigate each of these three areas—object, manner, and time—of both the first and second advents. A verse by verse study in 2 Thessalonians 2 looks at the apostle Paul's explanation that a great apostasy must both come and be revealed before the second advent. A final article deals with the personal effect beliefs on this subject have in a Christian's life.

Though realizing that all students of the Bible do not hold identical conclusions on these subjects, particularly the dating of the events, this issue is put forward to stimulate study on this important subject which is of great interest to "all who love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

## Object of the FIRST Advent

# Why Jesus Came

*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 Corinthians 15:3,4*

*Michael Brann*

It has been nearly two thousand years since the First Advent of Jesus Christ upon the earth. In our day, Christians look for his promised return, that is, his Second Advent. However, without a proper understanding of the objective or purpose of the First Advent there would be much confusion and misunderstanding regarding the manner and purpose of the Second Advent. The reverse is likewise true, i.e., once a clear understanding regarding the First Advent is reached, the manner and purpose of his Second Advent is more readily understood. Even though the first advent took place long ago and countless books have been written on the topic, still there appears to be widespread confusion and error in the minds of many regarding its purpose. Let us examine this most sublime topic—the object or purpose of the First Advent of Jesus Christ.

Although there is one predominant theme regarding the purpose of Jesus' first advent, there are also some subthemes associated with it.

### **Testimony from the Bible**

Jesus' first advent was itself a fulfillment of certain prophecies found in the Old Testament. They tell of his virgin birth, its time and circumstances, his genealogy, his character, his ministry, his rejection, his betrayal by Judas, his suffering, his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and finally, of his everlasting dominion.

Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17,18) Therefore, one could say that Jesus came because it was prophesied in advance that he would do so. But that does not really give us the purpose.

Jesus' own words leave no doubt as to the main objective of his first advent. Just prior to his death in the garden of Gethsemane, he said: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." (John 12:27) Jesus states that his purpose was to die!

Why did he come here to die? Because he himself was free from sin, for whom did he die?

### **The Redemption of the Human Race**

The Scriptures clearly teach that father Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, without sin and capable of living forever (Genesis 1:26–31; 2:15–17). Once he sinned, he plunged not only himself, but the whole human race which sprang from him, into the condition of sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:12–19). The Scriptures also teach that there is, therefore, a need for the redemption of the human family if it is to have a relationship with God (Romans 3:10,23–25). What an awful predicament! Who could be the Savior of the race? Could one born in a sinful and imperfect condition redeem his fellow man? The psalmist says: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Psalm 49:7)

How sad the human condition if the story had ended there. Every man, woman and child would be either dead or dying with no hope for a return to the Edenic paradise condition which father Adam enjoyed for a brief time. We thank God for the "unspeakable gift" which he has given to solve the tragic dilemma, the gift of his only begotten son, Jesus Christ!

Thus the chief purpose of Jesus' first advent was to be a ransom (Greek: *lutron*, meaning "a means of loosing") for Adam and his posterity. The "means of loosing" was obtained by giving his life for the life lost. Thus since a perfect man (Adam) had by disobedience forfeited his life and the lives of all the human race still in his loins, a perfect man (the man Christ Jesus) redeemed the race by giving his perfect life as an exact equivalent. (See 1 Corinthians 15:16–22; Romans 5:12–19; 1 Timothy 2:3–6.)

Jesus' own words support this primary objective: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."—John 3:16,17

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."—Matthew 18:11

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom [Greek: *lutron*] for many."—Matthew 20:28

The great apostle Paul also adds his testimony: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15)

In the next chapter he states: "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. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who

gave himself a ransom [Greek: antilutron, "that which is given in exchange for another as the redemption price"] for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Timothy 2:3–6)

It is therefore conclusive that the purpose of Jesus' first coming 2000 years ago was to redeem or ransom the world of mankind by giving his own flesh and blood, his perfect life.

### **Redemption for Israel**

One subtheme of the main objective of Jesus' first advent centers on God's chosen people Israel. The apostle Paul states: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4:4,5) Here we are told that Jesus was born a Jew and "under the law" so he could redeem the Jewish race, Israel. The Jewish nation was not only under the Adamic curse, it was also under the "curse of the law." (Galatians 3:10–13) However, Jesus as a Jew was under the same obligations as the others of that race. He was not only a perfect man as was Adam and thus able to redeem all of Adam's posterity, he also was a perfect keeper of the laws of Israel, and thus able to redeem all of that posterity too. Therefore, the apostle states that Jesus came to redeem those under the law.

### **The Call of the Church**

Another subtheme associated with the objective of Jesus' first advent concerns another class among mankind: the Church, the Bride of Christ. One passage of Scripture that has puzzled many students of the Bible is found in Luke: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."—Luke 12:49–53

This passage has caused such confusion because the purpose of Jesus' first advent is misunderstood. Jesus said that he did not come the first time to bring peace on earth, but fire, trouble, separation and division. He separated those who truly loved him and desired to follow him from those who had no real interest in doing so. Jesus knew that this kind of test would cause trouble, even within the same family.

Jesus made another statement regarding the mission of his first advent: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Jesus suggests two classes: one with life, another with "abundant" life. Those who will attain "life" would include all who finally attain life on the earth, resulting from the ransom and restitution provided by Jesus Christ. Those who attain "life abundant" would be those who become participants in the

Lord's grace and sacrifice their lives now, renouncing their own wills and accepting his will. These shall be his heavenly bride and receive life and immortality, the divine nature.

Once we have a clear understanding of the first advent, we can rejoice in the loving kindness of the Lord thus far bestowed upon us, and joyfully anticipate the blessings which await all humanity in the near future.

## The Manner of the FIRST Advent

# They Knew Him Not

***Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?—Luke 7:20***

(The last recorded question of John the Baptist to Jesus)

***Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?—Acts 1:6***

(The apostles' last question prior to Jesus' ascension to heaven)

***We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.—Luke 24:21***

(Two on the way to Emmaus)

Jesus entered this world in a humble manner. Although he descended from the royal line of David, few people were aware of his unique birth. Far from having all the amenities of royalty, his humble surroundings included a stable for animals and a manger for a crib. Neighboring countries were not notified of the event. Rulers within Israel were not excited when the quiet night air was broken with his first cries. Months later when King Herod was told of the royal birth, his reaction was simple: kill him. To make sure there were no mistakes, the added measure of killing all children in the district about his age was included in the plan. This was but the first of a series of attempts to disrupt Jesus' mission at his first advent.

A low-keyed approach for Jesus' first advent was essential to the success of the Heavenly Father's plan. In fact, so low-keyed was the manner of our Lord's first advent, that the effect among his closest friends was an atmosphere of doubt as to whether or not he truly was the promised Messiah. The Scriptures quoted above reflect the sincerity and hopes shared by Jesus' friends. Some words show a tone of disappointment.

Yet the manner of Jesus' first advent was important. If Jesus became prominent and attracted attention too quickly, it might affect the timing of his mission. Timing is a critical aspect of God's plan. When embarking upon an important mission under the authority of the Supreme Being of the universe, it is important to stay focused. The object of that mission never must be misplaced no matter what distractions and tugs at the heart the groaning creation may apply. The three keys to understanding and appreciating the first advent of our Lord in the development of the Divine Plan of the Ages are the Manner, the Timing, and the Object.

### **Jesus' Birth**

Outside of the Bible there is no written evidence of Jesus' miraculous birth. Historians of his day were not interested in his life. Years later, when Jesus' followers became a political concern, attention began to grow. Many looked at Jesus as a religious leader who was martyred. Others saw him as a good man. In defending Jesus some of his followers tried to counter the skeptics' view that he was "just a man" by saying he was much more

than a man—he was a god. Others would embellish this by saying he wasn't just a "god," he was the "God." After the debates and confrontations there was more confusion and division in Christian society.

Born of a virgin? This hardly can be appreciated nor understood by man. Yet the prophet Isaiah says this is to be one of the signs: "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14).

What a confusing sign! A virgin giving birth. How the rabbis and scholars of the Law must have agonized trying to understand this prophecy! How Christian society struggled with this. Critics continue to scoff at the concept of a virgin giving birth to a perfect child begotten by God himself. Many Christians skip this debate entirely.

It was hard for Mary and Joseph as well: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18).

Many assumed that Mary was with child out of wedlock—that she conceived before she and Joseph were married. Had it not been for the angel of the Lord intervening and instructing Joseph about the situation, Joseph would have "put her away privily" (Matthew 1:19). It is to Joseph's credit that he supported Mary at this time. Imagine the difficulty in explaining the truth to friends and relatives. The Pharisees appeared to endorse this rumor when they sneered at Jesus: "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God" (John 8:41).

It was not just the religious rulers who were critical of Jesus' birth. Kinsmen did not accept him. They knew Jesus as the young man who probably had worked as a carpenter in their midst for years. They knew that his home city, Nazareth, had never been reputed for its wealth or its learning. Its sons were not the brightest ones of Jewish society. It was difficult for them to realize that this one whom they knew so well could be the great one predicted by Moses and the prophets. "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and his miraculous power?" They also said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother Mary, and do not his brothers James, and Joses, Simon and Judas, and all his sisters, live with us? . . . And they stumbled at him. . . . And he did not perform many miracles there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:54–58).

Of all the ways to bring Jesus on the scene, the way God used certainly seems complicated and difficult. There is the appearance of fornication. The government wanted to kill him as a baby. The religious leaders see Jesus as illegitimate and a blasphemer. Family and friends don't believe or support him. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:10,11).



## **The Ransom**

Long before man existed, a plan was devised by which the earth could be inhabited by intelligent beings possessing a free moral right to choose right or wrong. The challenge was to allow experience to train people about the merits or consequences of their actions and still allow an opportunity to benefit from these lessons throughout eternity. By being properly exercised, the motivation to always choose right over wrong would be developed. This experience has been referred to as the "Permission of Evil."

Could the process be reversed? Allowing a perfect man to sin was not the problem. Bringing an imperfect race back into harmony with God required a plan—a plan of redemption—a means to redeem the entire human race from the curse of sin and death. This plan depended upon a ransom. The word ransom is found in 1 Timothy 2:4–6: "Who will have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time."

From these words of the apostle Paul, we learn that: 1) God wants to save the whole human race; 2) Jesus was the way to do that [a ransom]; and 3) it will be testified in due time.

The word ransom comes from the Greek word anti-lutron and means "a corresponding price" (Young's Concordance). It is not enough for God to wipe away sin and its effects on mankind. It must be done in harmony with God's attribute of Justice. A perfect man Adam sinned. As a result all of his children were born in sin and condemned to death like father Adam. To remove this penalty required just one man—a perfect man—willing to give his human life for Adam. By so doing, Adam and all of his children would be freed from the death sentence.

Paul tells us that Jesus was that ransom, a corresponding price. "For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Jesus] came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21,22).

This is why Jesus had to be a perfect man. He could not have had an imperfect father, Joseph, or he would have been imperfect. An imperfect man could not redeem Adam.

But how do you create a perfect man using an imperfect race? The Heavenly Father chose to have a miraculous birth. The Scriptures tell us the Holy Spirit brought about conception in Mary. (Matthew 1:18) Does it really matter whether we understand the technical aspects? The fact that Mary was imperfect did not affect the power the Holy Spirit had in the conception process. The result was the perfect man Jesus. He could not be more than a perfect man either—an angel or God or some hybrid of nature. Otherwise the scales of Justice would be out of balance. This principle of God's Justice is exemplified in Exodus 21:23, 24, "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." A perfect human life must be what is given for a perfect human life.

## **The Lamb of God**

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the World."—John 1:29

Jesus did not come as a mighty warrior with a conquering army. He did not secretly make plans for the overthrow of the Roman Empire or even the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem. When surrounded by crowds, he would slip away. On the night of his arrest in Gethsemane he made sure his followers had a few weapons, but when it came time to use them, he made a point that they not use their swords. "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

Matthew adds the thought: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:53,54).

The manner of our Lord's first advent was deeply entwined with the Scriptural accounts given by the prophets of old. He would not resist. He would not fight back. He allowed himself to be sacrificed—a lamb to the slaughter. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off from the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken" (Isaiah 53:7,8).

It took discipline to accept suffering without fighting back. Jesus could have easily used words to shame his accusers. He had overpowered them in the past with ease. Yet now he said nothing. "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

What would it take to make Jesus confront the rulers of his day? Some have suggested that Judas betrayed Jesus hoping to force this showdown and get change started. But as Judas was to learn—and the other 11 were to witness—Jesus willingly laid down his life without saying a word, that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

## **Opening Their Eyes**

The friends of Jesus were mystified by the manner in which their leader had come into their lives. It was equally hard to understand why he taught the people in parables. When he faced death without so much as uttering a word in his own defense, they were confused. In the words of the two on the way to Emmaus, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

The sadness in those words was soon to change as Jesus began to explain from the Scriptures the things concerning himself. There was so much for them to learn. There was so much they had to share and tell others regarding the manner and events which had transpired. Far from being a time of sadness and discouragement, it was a time for rejoicing to see the Scriptures fulfilled before their eyes. What prophets had foretold

centuries before was beginning to make sense. "And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

They rose up that same hour to return and tell the others. Their eyes were opened to the manner of his [first] advent.

Time of Christ's FIRST Advent

## The 70 Weeks of Daniel

*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.—  
Romans 5:6*

*David Stein*

The plan of God revolves around Messiah. So it makes sense that God, in his written revelation, would make sure that a significant portion of the Bible is devoted to identifying Messiah. There are hundreds of prophecies, types, symbols and shadows that all contribute to identifying Messiah as Jesus of Nazareth.

One of the most interesting prophecies is found in Daniel chapter 9. Its charm and power come from the fact that it is a clock counting down to the appearance of Messiah:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."—Daniel 9:25

The prophecy calls our particular attention to what follows. The imperative "Know . . . and understand" emphasizes its importance. When God tells us to "know and understand," we do well to obey.

Next we have a span of time defined. The starting event is a somewhat vague reference to the giving of a commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. The scale of the command makes it clear that only a king could give such an instruction. Not surprisingly, we find a record of the giving of this command in Scripture:

"And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been before-time sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. and I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. and the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? And when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time."—Nehemiah 2:1–6

God's word gives us everything we need to identify the starting of the clock of this prophecy. The king is Artaxerxes and the time of the command is given as his twentieth year. This is all explicit and clear. But what year exactly was the king's twentieth year? Unfortunately, there is a significant difference of opinion among historians. a typical interpretation of the year can be found in Unger's Bible Dictionary:

"2. Longimanus, who reigned over Persia forty years, BC 465–425. In the seventh year of his reign he commissioned Ezra to return to Jerusalem, granting large privileges to him and those accompanying him (Ezra 7:1), BC 457. about thirteen years later (BC 445) he granted permission to Nehemiah to assume control of the civil affairs at Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1–8)."—"Artaxerxes," page 94.

This source identifies Artaxerxes' twentieth year as 445 BC as do the margins of many Bibles. But there is reason to question this date. From ancient history, there has been a dispute regarding the length of the reign of Xerxes1, Artaxerxes' father. While there is general agreement that Xerxes reign began in 485 BC, many historians ascribed a much longer reign for Xerxes than others.<sup>2</sup> However, a strong and consistent argument can be made for an earlier date based on an interesting account about a Greek general named Themistocles.

## **General Themistocles**

Themistocles was a contemporary of Xerxes and Artaxerxes. He was an able soldier, defeating Xerxes himself in major battles. However, it seems that sometime later he was accused of treason and fled the country, traveling to the Persian capital for safety. This flight is recorded in the writings of the ancient Greek historian Thucydides who lived during the reign of Artaxerxes. Thucydides wrote that when Themistocles arrived in Asia, Artaxerxes "had just succeeded to the throne."<sup>3</sup>

Add to this the testimony of two other historians of antiquity. Nepos, a Roman historian of the first century BC wrote:

"I know that most historians have related that Themistocles went over into Asia in the reign of Xerxes, but I give credence to Thucydides in preference to others, because he, of all who have left records of that period, was nearest in point of time to Themistocles, and was of the same city. Thucydides says that he went to Artaxerxes."<sup>4</sup>

Plutarch, a Greek biographer of the first century, wrote:

"Thucydides, and Charon of Lampsacus, say that Xerxes was dead, and that Themistocles has an interview with his son Artaxerxes; but Ephorus, Dinon, Clitarchus, Herclided and many others, write that he came to Xerxes. The chronological tables better agree with the account of Thucydides."<sup>5</sup>

If we are to accept the accounts of these ancient historians, especially Thucydides, then the flight of Themistocles occurred probably within a year or so after the ascension of

Arta-xerxes to the Persian throne. The date of Themistocles' flight is important because it gives us pivotal evidence on which to date the ascension of Artaxerxes. According to Jerome's Eusebius, the date for the flight is in the fourth year of the 76th Olympiad (four-year periods beginning in 776 BC) which would be 473/472 BC. That means Artaxerxes must have come to the throne in the previous year, 474 BC, which in turn makes his 20th year 455 BC.<sup>6</sup>

Having reasonably established the 20th year of Artaxerxes as 455 BC which would be the starting point of the 69 weeks of Daniel 9:25, we can calculate the end point at which Messiah appears. A week is seven days; 69 weeks is 483 days or about 1 year. Did the Messiah appear 1 year later in 453 BC? No, he did not. It is clear that the application of this prophecy to a chronological period requires further interpretation.

The most frequent time symbol is the day. Often a day in Scripture is used to represent a literal year. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, God uses Ezekiel to act out a judgment period by lying on his side for 40 days. Each day of this drama represents a year, for God explicitly says: "Lie again on thy right side and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year." (Ezekiel 4:6)

If we apply this Scripturally-founded formula to the 69 weeks and convert them to 69 weeks of years (483 literal years), the period ends in AD 29:

From 455 BC to 1 BC 454 years  
From 1 BC to AD 1 1 year  
From AD 1 to AD 29 28 years  
Total: 483 years  
The year when Daniel indicates Messiah should appear is AD 29, a date generally accepted by students of the Bible as the year when Jesus began his ministry by being baptized by John in the Jordan.

The prophecy of Daniel 9:25 furnishes us with remarkable evidence of the planning and overruling of God to make clear the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. This exhibition of God's power and foreknowledge should inspire those who are endeavoring to follow the example of Jesus. This same powerful God has drawn us and called us to walk in Jesus' footsteps. If faithful to this call, we will have the privilege of knowing the Father and glorifying his name throughout all eternity.

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1. Xerxes was evidently the same as Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. This may explain the favor both Ezra and Nehemiah found before the king.

2. Ptolomy's Canon gives Xerxes a 21-year reign, but this period is not fixed astronomically. Morton Edgar deduces from ancient historians that Xerxes' reign must have been 11 years. (Editor's Note: There is, however, the following contrary evidence: 1) Lunar eclipses occur in 18-year cycles and one tablet (LBaRT 1419) specifically mentions year 3 of Xerxes and year 21 of Xerxes. This affirms the existence of the 21st year of Xerxes, and relates the matter to astronomy because of the 18-year eclipse cycle. 2) There are extant tables from years 12, 14, 16, 17, and 18 of the reign of Xerxes. 3) The author acknowledges that Xerxes is the Ahasuerus of Esther, but Esther 3:7,12 requires at least 13 years of his reign. Therefore he must have reigned more than 11 years.)

3. Book 1, Chapter 137. It is noteworthy that several later writers say Themistocles fled to Xerxes. But this can be simply explained by considering that it was Xerxes to whom Themistocles intended to flee. We might also consider that the names, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, are very similar and it may be an error of one mistaken for the other. The writings of Aristotle and Ctesias contain examples of this kind of error.

4. Nepos, *Themistocles*, chapter 9.

5. Plutarch, *Themistocles*, chapter 27.

6. Another Greek historian by the name of Diodorus the Sicilian who lived during the first century BC places the date of Themistocles' death in 471 BC. This harmonizes well with the previously mentioned chronology since it gives Themistocles about two years in Persia before his death.

# A Falling Away First

*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.—1 John 2:18*

*Verse by verse study in 2 Thessalonians 2*

The question of the return of Jesus Christ preoccupied the minds of many of the early followers of Christ. This was particularly so in the church in Thessalonica. Paul's second epistle to this congregation addresses several issues concerning this much-anticipated event.

## **A Falling Away First—Verses 1 to 5**

*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*

In his first epistle Paul had stirred the Thessalonians with the prospect of the second coming of Christ with its attendant resurrection of the saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:6). In that letter he emphasized the suddenness and thief-like manner of that return and therefore the need to be awake, alert, and watching.

Evidently there were some in Thessalonica who mistakenly had deduced that Christ had already returned. A similar situation may have also occurred in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:8). This misapprehension indicates that they anticipated an invisible return of their Master for there is no evidence they had heard reports of Jesus being seen in the flesh.

There were three methods that Paul feared might lead them astray on this subject: 1) "by spirit," that is, by someone claiming to have the spirit of prophecy; 2) "by mouth," as by some claiming they had heard Paul himself make this statement; 3) "by letter as from us." The fact that there may have been just such a spurious letter is suggested by Paul's assurance that any letter from himself would bear his distinctive signature (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Paul then informs the church that two things must occur before the anticipated presence of Christ: an apostasy and the revelation of its consequence, the man of sin.

This apostasy had been predicted by Jesus himself in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24–30). The tares ("children of the wicked one"—Matthew 13:38)



were to grow side by side with the wheat until the harvest, which Jesus defined as "the end of the age" (Matthew 13:40).

Not only was this prophecy of an apostasy a New Testament truth, it was testified adequately in the Old Testament as well, particularly in the book of Daniel under the figure "the abomination of desolation" (Daniel 11:31 and 12:11).

This apostasy was to be fostered by "the man of sin." This developing apostasy not only would occur, it would be revealed before the return of Christ. The description of this wicked one stands in marked contrast to Christ himself.

He is described as "the man (or embodiment) of sin," "the son of perdition (or destruction)," and the self-exultant one who "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." In contrast, Jesus at his triumphal entry is described prophetically as "just, having salvation, and lowly" (Zechariah 9:9). The two stand in bold relief:

**Jesus**

Just [righteous]  
Having salvation  
Lowly

**The Apostate**

The embodiment of sin  
The son of perdition  
Exalting himself above God

These things, Paul assured the Thessalonians, were not new. He had taught them the same things when he was with them in Thessalonica.

**The Development of the Apostasy—Verses 6 and 7**

*And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

It did not take long for the great Adversary to plant seeds of evil in the church. These seeds—variously described as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the mystery of iniquity," and "antichrist"—were already evident in the apostles' days. In their epistles, the authors allude to several of these apostates. Some of those thus named were Diotrefes (3John 9), Demas (2 Timothy 4:10), and Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17). The apostle John showed similar awareness of the ingrowing evil when he wrote in 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

In the book of Revelation, the message to the angel of the first church, Ephesus, was: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"

(Revelation 2:6). Since Revelation is a book of symbols, we might well take this name as symbolic. The name Nicholas means "lord over the people" and may well indicate the spirit of this "mystery of iniquity." It was during the first century that a clergy class began to develop, taking on near dictatorial powers in the supervision of their followers. The apostle Peter warns of this very danger in admonishing the elders of the church, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2,3).

Verses 6 and 7 of 2 Thessalonians are clearer in the New American Standard translation: "And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. 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."

Because the gospel message was not only unpopular to the Jews but also was oppressed by the Roman government, these tendencies to dominate lay latent. They could not be manifested openly until Christianity became the state religion in the days of Constantine in the fourth century. It was then that this developing trend toward clerical domination became openly evident. It came into full fruition during the "Dark Ages" when persecutions drove the true followers of Jesus literally into the wilderness, and the inquisitions introduced an epoch of torture.

### **Destroying the Apostasy—Verses 8 to 10**

*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

The revelation of that "Wicked" is in stages. First, from the time of the exaltation of Christianity under Constantine, this spirit of dominance became evident. Then, as centuries rolled by, reformer after reformer began calling attention to the apostate nature of the ruling "papal" system and applying the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation to it.

These revelations of apostasy preceded the return of the Lord; however, the subsequent destructive processes were to follow it. Two steps in the tearing-down process are outlined in verse eight: "consuming with the spirit of his mouth" and "destroying with the brightness of his coming." These steps appear to be listed in the reverse order of their fulfillment.

The latter action, "to destroy," is from the Greek *katargeo*, meaning "to render powerless." Throughout the centuries of the gospel age the power of the dominant system has been in the superstitions foisted on the laity as though they were truth. The enlightenments of the past two centuries largely have dispelled these superstitions and many have increasingly lost confidence in organized religion. In Psalm 97:4 these

enlightenments are attributed directly to the return of the Lord: "His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled." These enlightenments are "the brightness of his coming" and have the effect of notifying all who see them that there is a new day dawning.

Not only will this apostate system be rendered powerless, eventually it will be utterly consumed. This second action will mark the permanent removal of that "mystery of iniquity" which was already at work in the days of the apostles. This will not mean, however, the final destruction of the great architect behind these powers of evil for we read of his being "loosed" at the end of Christ's millennial kingdom to attempt once again to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:7–10).

Nor should we assume that the individuals who succumb to this "deceivableness of unrighteousness" will perish eternally. Professor W. E. Vine says of the Greek word *apollumi*, here translated perish: "The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of wellbeing."

This is the same thought given in Revelation 18. In that chapter we find the pronouncement of doom on this same system in the words, "Babylon is fallen" (Revelation 18:2). However it is not until Revelation 18:21 that we see the final destruction of Babylon. Between these two verses we have a detailed listing of those whose well-being is affected by its fall.

### **Strong Delusions—Verses 11 and 12**

***And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

In these verses we have the reason why God permitted the apostasy in the first place—to try the hearts of men. God desires servants who yield instant and willing obedience. During the centuries of apostasy, the easy course for an individual was to go along with the masses in their obeisance to the dominant systems. The "little flock" (Luke 12:32), in contrast, is more interested in yielding service to God than to man-made organizations.

At the Lord's return, when these false religious systems come into great difficulty, there tends to be a pulling away from them. Yet God desires the test to continue. Therefore he permits other strong delusions to sift out those who are unwilling to uphold the high ideals of complete consecration to him. The apostle carefully chose the Greek word *pempo*, rather than the stronger *apostello*, to describe this action of God. Citing the noted Greek lexicographer Thayer, Professor Vine notes that *pempo* is a more general term than *apostello*; *apostello* usually "suggests official or authoritative sending." Here the thought is more of permission than of directing the delusions upon men. The Living Bible catches the thought well with this translation: "So God will allow them to believe lies with all their hearts."

The New American Standard correctly translates verse 12, "in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness." Although the judgment is negative, there is no thought in the word of eternal punishment. Their fate is to endure the destructive processes of the systems in which they trusted. Their destiny is the "outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

### **Salvation Through Sanctification—Verses 13 and 14**

*But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Turning now from the class who receives the negative judgment, Paul directs his attention to his Thessalonian brethren. He expresses his grateful confidence that they will not receive such negative judgments because they have engaged in a two-fold process toward the obtaining of their heavenly glorification.

The first of these steps is "sanctification of the spirit." Called to holiness, they seek to practice holiness in their daily lives. They accept their every experience as sent from God for the purpose of setting them apart for a holy work in the future—to assist their Master in the uplifting of the human race.

The second step is "belief of the truth." This is not mere intellectual acquiescence to the precepts of Christ, but it is a living faith. This faith, as James says, is demonstrated by their works (James 2:18). It is this active, appreciative faith, which sets them apart from those who are deceived by the "strong delusions."

Some may take the statement of these verses as indicating predestination. However, they fall far short of that concept. Rather than saying that God has pre-selected them to receive salvation, Paul's point is that they were chosen with that goal in mind and that they must follow successfully the steps of sanctification and belief if they would reach that goal. As the same apostle expressed it in Ephesians 4:4, "ye are called in the one hope of your calling."

### **Admonitions—Verses 15 to 17**

*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.*

The chapter closes with the admonition to stand fast in the doctrinal understanding which they had received, both from personal teachings and through Paul's epistles. By using the word "traditions" he distinguished between direct Scripture (from the Old Testament) and the teachings which he deduced from his study of those inspired writings. The body of

apostolic teaching, while in accord with the law which they had received, was a radical expansion of the body of Old Testament writings, it represented, in many cases, a departure from the traditions handed down through their Jewish rabbis.

As elsewhere, Paul clearly distinguished between the Lord Jesus Christ and God. How comforting to note that God is introduced in this passage, not merely as the Father of Christ, but as "our Father." Through their consecrations, the Thessalonians had become spiritual brothers of Jesus and uniquely sons of God.

What everlasting consolations and good hopes such a relationship portends! It should comfort our hearts and establish us in every good work and word just as it did the Thessalonian church.

## The Object of our Lord's SECOND Advent

# Why Christ Returns

*And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.—Acts 3:20,21*

*Larry McClellan*

The main object of our Lord's return as declared by the apostle Peter is the "restitution of all things." Along with the object of "restoration," there are other features as well. Christ comes: 1) to judge the saints, the institutions of the world, and the human race itself; 2) to destroy; 3) to subdue; 4) to prepare and educate the world for a final inspection by Jehovah God.

### **Restitution**

The Scriptures speak mainly of restoring the earth, Israel, and the world of mankind. The restoration of the earth is ultimately to the perfection surrounding Adam, God's first human creation. Adam had dominion over all of the earth including all of God's creation on the earth (Genesis 1:26). He and his wife Eve enjoyed all their God-given rights and liberties until the sin of disobedience occurred. Had they not sinned, God would have allowed them to have much more than they already had. As a result of disobedience, they lost their rights and liberties, and finally they lost their lives which they and their children could no longer claim as a right (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:17–19).

Jesus was the only other perfect man. When Jesus "kept the law" by perfect obedience, he claimed rights granted by the law of God to the ownership of the earth—rights Adam had lost through disobedience—as well as the "life rights" granted by the Law (Romans 10:5; Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:12).

Jesus' first advent was mainly to "redeem" Adam and his race; his second advent is to "restore" Adam and his race. Although Jesus did have the rights to earth's dominion at Jordan when he presented himself perfect, he consecrated himself and sacrificed those earthly rights. He withheld his claim to earth's dominion and restoration until the proper time at a future second advent. This provided time for the development and selection of his bride-to-be—the second Eve, the little flock. (See 1 Corinthians 15:45; Luke 12:32; Daniel 7:13,14.)

Peter said that the object of Jesus' return would be "the restitution of all things." That will eventually mean all that Adam lost—earthly life for him and the whole human race, and the rights and liberties of a restored earth (1 Corinthians 15:21,22). As the promise given to Abraham declares: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8,16,29; Isaiah 35).

Many equate the Lord's return with the restoration of rights to the people. This seems indicated by the name of the last church in Revelation—Laodicea, meaning "justice for the people"—and the biblical picture of Israel's jubilee. This trend seems further indicated with the twice-repeated Scripture that "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" (Isaiah 40:4; Luke 3:5).

We have begun to see some evidence that rights are being restored to people who have long been subjected to injustice, such as women and black people. Since slavery was abolished in the 1860s, the blacks have become more liberated in the United States. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. In 1964, the strongest civil rights bill in U.S. history ordered restaurants, hotels, and other businesses that serve the general public to serve all people without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. It protected a person's "freedom" to seek employment without discrimination. On the international scene, the fall of apartheid in South Africa and the establishment of a government under Nelson Mandela has demonstrated the fall of yet another racial barrier.

Women have had their rights suppressed for millennia by selfish men. In 1890 the National American Women Suffrage Association was formed because women were not allowed to vote in public elections in the United States. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment granted women the right to vote. In 1893 New Zealand granted women voting rights, Australia in 1902. Sweden and England gave women full voting rights in 1921 and 1928, respectively. In 1918 the Soviet Union instituted maternity leave, government funded child care, equal pay for equal work, equal education, and the right to hold any political office. The U.S. Equal Pay Act of 1963 required equal pay for men and women doing the same work. Jesus said no feature of the Law could fail until all had been fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). We have seen at least a beginning "restoration" of rights and liberties to some of earth's billions of women as well as civil rights for minority groups.

## **Judgment**

Christ's reign on earth will be "to subdue and to prepare" humanity for the final inspection given by God during the little season (1 Corinthians 15:24–28; Revelation 20:7–9; Revelation 2:26,27). Those who pass that inspection will be privileged to have everlasting life on earth during the "ages to come" (Revelation 22:1–3; Ephesians 2:7).

Peter declares that it will be a "day of judgment" (2 Peter 3:7) for indeed, all judgment hath been committed unto the Son (John 5:22). Judgment, also according to Peter, "must first begin at the house of God," the Gospel Age Church (1 Peter 4:17).

Paul tells us that in that day the "righteous judge" shall give his faithful saints a "crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:8). The apostle John informs us that at Christ's second advent he rewards the saints during a time when the nations are angry—due to the commotion of judgment brought about by his return and reign (Revelation 11:17,18). In

the parable of the nobleman Jesus points to this object of his return, namely, judgment and rewarding of his saints (Luke 19:12–27).

But the judgment of that day continues and extends to the "institutions" dominated and deluded by Satan, the "god of this world" (2Corinthians 4:4). Christ's object is also "to destroy" the unrighteous and misleading doctrines and practices of these institutions beginning with the gradual destruction of spiritual Babylon. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise" (2 Peter 3:10). Heavens symbolize "spiritual powers." It is obvious from a comparison with Matthew 24:31 that the heavens are symbolic because Christ doesn't gather his saints from heaven if that is where they are going.

Babylon represents the "systems" of Christendom in the widest sense (not the people), primarily the Papacy which is styled "the mother of harlots" in Revelation 17:5. These systems have committed "spiritual harlotry" with the "kings of the earth." The Papal system in particular has a long history of illicit relationships with earthly kingdoms. It is styled "Jezebel" who "seduced" God's servants to commit spiritual fornication (Revelation 2:20–23).

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Paul taught that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20, NAS). So nominal Babylon is "judged and destroyed" as an object of Christ's return particularly for their adulterous relationships and "coalition" with the nations and politics of the world (Revelation 14:8; 18:1–21; 2 Thessalonians 2:8).

### **Destruction Begins**

There is evidence that Christian church institutions today are beginning to "melt with a fervent heat," losing attendance in their pews compared to centuries past. Fewer people are attending Catholic and Protestant churches today compared to 50 or 100 years ago. Most of the churches are in a "tailspin" of downward financial support from the masses and are frantically trying to stay afloat on a restless (and faithless) sea (Revelation 18:17–20).

Peter states that an object and result of Christ's return is that "the elements [political, religious, social, and industrial elements] shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth [societal institutions] also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up [consumed wholly]." (2 Peter 3:10)

The heat of public discussion, debate, and investigation by a more and more educated and informed people has been destroying the way political leadership has been perceived. The "core" of human society—the family unit—has been melting into dysfunctional relationships because of the breakdown of societal standards and traditional marriage moral values. Partly because of the trouble of the past century caused by all the wars, and with education awakening an awareness of rights and liberties, we have seen the social and political organizations that society once had "dissolve" at an accelerated rate.



The societal combustion of strife and friction from the home to the Office of the President has been the effect of a world illuminated by education that has become more widespread over the past 100 years. Real and fancied rights have been demanded by a selfish and proud society. Knowing about rights is there, but the "heart" has not caught up to it nor to God's righteous laws. Therefore there is a great deal of trouble in the world (Zephaniah 1:14–18; Hebrews 12:26,27).

We are told to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5). The mass media has played a large part in manifesting things that, prior to this century, were hidden from the eyes of the public. What presidents did in the past, they cannot hide today. Exposing immoral leadership has caused a further breakdown of respect for leaders in organized society under the tottering domain of Satan (Isaiah 24:19–23).

### **Education and Preparation**

The Lord's anger will burn against every kind of injustice and iniquity in the world of Satan. The light of truth will expose the many superstitions and erroneous practices of the past with its bondage to sin and unrighteousness. This will tear down the old order and plow up the ground for God's kingdom, preparing the hearts of mankind for the seeds of truth and righteousness. Indeed, one of Christ's objects is "to teach." He will awaken, correct, resurrect, and teach mankind the universal righteous laws of love and justice. He will teach mercy and humility. Christ will pour out the spirit of God upon the entire race and become the light that will "lighten every man" (John 1:9).

Christ's reign on earth will be to subdue and to prepare humanity for the final inspection given by God during the "little season" (1 Corinthians 15:24–28; Revelation 20:7–9; 2:26,27). Those who pass that inspection will be privileged to have everlasting life on earth during the "ages to come" (Revelation 22:1–3; Ephesians 2:7).

Christ's kingdom will be the "desire of all nations." His object is the restoration and the reconciliation of the entire race of humanity with the great God of all creation, Jehovah (Ephesians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Revelation 22:17).

## Manner of the SECOND Advent

# The Return of Jesus Christ

*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.—Acts 1:11, American Standard Version*

*Richard Evans*

Angels declared to the apostles that Jesus "shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." Over the centuries there has been much conjecture concerning the meaning of "in like manner." Is it to be understood in a literal sense, or is it figurative? Does it mean Jesus returns in flesh, physically visible to the earthly creation; or, does it mean his return will be unobserved by the world and known only to his small band of faithful followers? With the verse taken by itself it is difficult to determine.

God, however, made sure those whom he calls to be of that small band, a "little flock," are not limited to those in just this one text. When we talk about the return of Jesus Christ, therefore, we must be sure to include all the information providentially provided.

We must also be very clear what it is we mean. There have been many different thoughts presented on this subject and, consequently, preconceived ideas make communication difficult. Often the thing said is not the thing heard.

### **The Return of God**

For example, the return of Jesus is often confused with the promised return of God. Though closely related they are not the same!

"Behold, I [God]\* come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."—Revelation 22:12,13, ASV.

Regrettably, some translations have inappropriately put these words in red giving the impression "I come quickly" pertains to the return of Jesus. The titles used in this text, however, belong to the heavenly Father. First/Last was used by Isaiah three times and applied to God in each instance (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). The other two titles were used of God earlier in the context: "And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."—Revelation 21:6,7, ASV.

The statement "I will be his God" links the titles Alpha/Omega and Beginning/End to God himself. Thus, the context and the titles require Revelation 22:13 be understood as

referring to the return of the heavenly Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of Israel.

This understanding is confirmed in both the Old and New Testaments:

"Then Jehovah thy God will turn thy [Israel's] captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee. . . . for Jehovah will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers."—Deuteronomy 30:3–9, ASV.

"And it shall come to pass, after that I [God] have plucked them [the Israelites] up, I will return and have compassion on them; and I will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land."—Jeremiah 12:15, ASV.

These prophecies by Moses and Jeremiah define God's return to be the return of his favor—the result of which is the regathering and restoration of Israel. The words of Jeremiah bring to mind the unprecedented provisions of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8–17).

The apostle James, in quoting the prophet Amos (Amos 9:11,12; Acts 15:14–16), understood this. He declared that after the Almighty Creator takes out of the Gentiles a people for his name (the "little flock," a new creation), then he [God] "will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David [Israel]."

Amos' prophecy is based on the covenant God gave David (2 Samuel 7:10–16; Isaiah 16:5; Zechariah 12:10; 13:1)—a covenant that expressly concerns David's kingdom, Israel.

"And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."—2 Samuel 7:16, ASV.

This is an unconditional covenant and does not depend upon the righteous conduct of any creature, neither David nor that of his seed.

"Once have I [God] sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David: his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as the faithful witness in the sky."—Psalms 89:35–37, ASV.

The perpetuity of David's throne—thus, David's kingdom—is based upon an oath by God, an oath that rests upon his holiness. Like the gracious covenant the Lord made with Abraham, David's covenant is as permanently secured as the sun and the moon, and as the "witness in the sky" (i.e., the rainbow—Genesis 9:12–17).

Because of their disobedience, God departed from Israel—divine favor was removed. They were cursed. God promised, however, following the cursing he would return and they would receive a blessing.

"And they [the Jews] also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved."—Romans 11:23,25,26, ASV.

### **Natures Separate and Distinct**

The Bible indicates there can be no direct interaction between the divine and the human. The earthly creation is not compatible with the environs in which God dwells. As God told Moses, "Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). This statement implies that the very nature of human beings precludes the literal seeing of God. This, of course, is beyond our understanding. Our experience is limited to our four dimensional cosmos (space plus time). The Creator of all things exists outside those dimensions.

God's cosmos is spiritual where, apparently, there is no time. Otherwise how do we explain God having no beginning and no end? If there is no time, movement as we understand it in our physical cosmos, distance divided by time, has no meaning since it results in division by zero.

The promised return of God cannot be understood in a literal sense. It does not involve his movement in the physical cosmos nor any visual personal appearance. Rather, it speaks of his intervention in earthly affairs, the use of his holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6) to accomplish his purpose. This understanding of the "return" of God has a direct bearing on the "return" of Jesus, the Son, who is the "express image" of the Father (Hebrews 1:3). What is true for the Father is now true for the Son.

### **The Nature of Jesus**

There is no direct statement of Scripture that declares the glorified Jesus to be a divine being. There is, however, a logic that may be developed from a group of Scriptures that validates such a conclusion.

Paul stated all who are baptized into a sacrificial death like that of Jesus are raised in "newness of life" (Romans 6:3–5). He identified those who have this new life as "new creatures" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Peter indicated these privileged ones, these new creatures, are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). John declared to those so privileged, "now we are sons of God" (1 John 3:2, KJV). The apostle concluded, "when he [Jesus] shall appear, we [the sons of God] shall be like him." Thus, if those who are baptized into Christ receive the divine nature, and if they are to be like Jesus, then it is evident Jesus must also be of this divine new creation.

Paul's description of the elevated status of the glorified Jesus confirms this logical conclusion.

"Which he [God] wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet."—Ephesians 1:20–22, ASV.

"I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, . . . that thou keep the commandment, . . . until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he [God] shall show, who [Jesus] is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who [of those whom God has given life (Ephesians 1:13)] only [at the time of the writing] hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable [the Shekinah]; whom [God] no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen."—1 Timothy 6:13–16, ASV

When we think of our Lord, we should remind ourselves that the man Jesus died some 2000 years ago. He was raised a divine being and that is how we should think of him.

"Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also."—John 14:19, ASV

"Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more."—2 Corinthians 5:16, ASV

We must not allow the confused teachings of Christendom to befuddle our minds. We must remove from our thinking the totally inappropriate mental pictures we have as a result of all the false representations we have been exposed to (e.g., Renaissance paintings, movies, television). Jesus is divine, therefore he is like God. God is invisible and, as Paul declared to Timothy, "no man hath seen, nor can see [him]" (1Timothy 6:16).

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."—John 1:18, ASV

"God is spirit; and those worshipping him must worship in spirit and truth."—John 4:24, Diaglott

"And the Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form."—John 5:37, ASV

"Who [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."—Colossians 1:15, ASV

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."—1 Timothy 1:17, ASV

"No man hath beheld God at any time."—1John 4:12, ASV

What is true of the Father is true of the glorified Son. Again, we have the lesson of John—"we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2, KJV). To see Jesus, now a divine being, it is necessary to be "like him." Only beings who are like Jesus will see him. This would rule out any physical manifestation on his part to the earthly creation. What is true for the glorified Jesus would also be true for the glorified Church.

### **The Need for Faith**

If there were visible manifestations of divine beings, it would nullify the need for faith. God has made it plain that faith, belief in him and of him, is essential for life. As shown by his conduct over the past 6000 years he will not give his earthly creation evidence of his existence in such a way that faith is unnecessary. The testing foretold to take place in the Little Season (Revelation 20:3,7–9) supports this thought. If there were a physical manifestation, faith would be set aside and the test would not accomplish its purpose. As the prophet and the apostle taught, the just live out of faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). God's criterion for righteousness is a life that is an outgrowth of faith. One's thinking, one's conduct, one's lifestyle, the whole of one's existence, must be ordered by faith.

Such a life of faith is required to appreciate, to perceive, to "see," the things which are spiritual. As Jesus instructed Paul on the road to Damascus, sanctification requires faith (Acts 26:18); without faith there can be no sanctification. Sanctification is a prerequisite for having the faculty to "see" the Lord.

"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see [horao] the Lord."—Hebrews 12:14, ASV

Since only the sanctified "shall see the Lord," the importance of faith becomes apparent.

Those who live in faith and have the insight to "see the Lord" will realize the great work God accomplished through his Son.

"Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see [horao] him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him."—Revelation 1:7, ASV

The time will come when every sanctified eye of the human creation will perceive through faith the glory of Christ and will come to understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Romans 7:13).

"Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."—Ezekiel 36:31, ASV

Just as with Israel in the beginning of the restoration, all who "see" Jesus will have remorse for their previous behavior and their defiance of God and his Christ, and will "mourn over him."

Though there have been and will be many wonderful signs and evidences such as this, there will be no personal manifestation of the heavenly Father. No human being can see God in person. The same is true for his divine family. It will always be true. If it were otherwise, the need for faith would be unnecessary.

"And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."—Hebrews 11:6, ASV

### **The Work of Jesus—Before His Return**

During the Christian age—the age in which God develops his new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) by taking out of the world a people for his name (Acts 15:13–17)—Jesus has been a sympathetic high priest (Hebrews 4:14–16), always there to assist all whom God calls (Matthew 28:20; Acts 18:10).

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matthew 18:20, ASV

He is their "advocate" (1 John 2:1). This help can entail any and all factors that have to do with the spiritual growth of those called, as well as overruling providence in mundane daily affairs. It must be noted, however, this advocacy does not require his physical presence, but is accomplished through the power of the holy Spirit (John 14:16–18,26).

This activity with the called of God by Jesus must not be related to the return foretold by the angels in our theme text. The apostle Peter made this evident: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence [face] of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old."—Acts 3:19–21, ASV

Shortly after Pentecost, while preaching in the temple, Peter declared Jesus would not return until the "times of restoration." Just a few days previous the apostles had used a form of the same Greek word rendered "restoration" in a question to Jesus.

"They [the apostles] therefore, when they were come together, asked him [Jesus], saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—Acts 1:6, ASV

So, the times of restoration to which Peter referred directly concern the restoration of "the kingdom to Israel." The apostle indicated in his temple sermon the return of Jesus was closely involved with that restoration, an activity which has had its beginnings only in recent times; therefore, the return of Jesus cannot be construed to be the advocacy that has occurred since the wondrous events on the day of Pentecost some 2000 years ago.

## **The Work of Jesus—After His Return**

Recorded history reveals God has not interacted with his human creation directly, but always through intermediaries—intermediaries who are created beings themselves. Such a protocol continues with his return.

The same is true for his divine family. The interaction between the glorified Christ, Head and Body, and humanity will be through angels and the nation of Israel. Israel will be the visible link to God for humankind.

"Ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they shall take hold of [the hem of] the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."—Zechariah 8:23, ASV

During the Christian age Jesus did not interact with the world. Throughout the age God's purpose was to develop a people for his name, the Church (Acts 15:14). So, Jesus did not deal with individuals of the world, except perhaps in the way in which God dealt with the Pharaoh of Moses' day.

With his return, however, the relationship changed. The return of a divine being does not mean he left some isolated location in the material universe and physically moved to planet Earth. Just as with his work with the Church throughout the Christian age, his return has nothing to do with movement from one location in the physical cosmos to another. We must be extremely cautious when we apply physical characteristics to a divine being. We must not take metaphoric language literally! The statement that he has returned indicates he changed his way of interacting with the world. He began a new work—the work God assigned to him to bring about restoration of Israel as well as of all God's creation.

"And he [the Father] gave him [the Son] authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."—John 5:27–29, ASV

Jesus' return and the work of restoration are not evinced by a visible manifestation, but are made apparent by the consequences, the effects, they have on the cosmos. As Jesus himself foretold: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3, ASV).

This metaphor describing the Lord's return as a thief appears a number of times in the Bible (Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 16:15) and validates the principle of a return not seen by the human eye, but by the human spirit.

Another metaphor used to describe our Lord's return, meaning his direct intervention in the affairs of humanity, is found in the book of Daniel.



"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people [Israel]; 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 [Israel] shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."—Daniel 12:1, ASV

Michael is another title for Jesus. A topical study of the phrase "stand up" in Daniel reveals it to be an idiomatic expression meaning "to assume rulership," "to execute authority," (Daniel 8:22,23,25 and 11:2,3,4,7,20,21). It has nothing to do with a literal getting up on one's feet; it describes one who "takes charge."

Thus, the return of our glorified Lord, his "standing up," means he is now personally and intimately involved in the affairs of this world. This work is many faceted. The events in Israel, the overthrow of governments, the outcome of elections, the raising up of popes, the development of technology, the increase of knowledge, etc.—all of these activities are being overruled by the returned Lord to accomplish the desired end. This end includes:

### **Judgment of Angels**

1 Corinthians 6:3; Matthew 8:29; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Isaiah 11:4–9 and 35:9; Zephaniah 3:9.

### **Judgment of Nations**

Psalms 46:2,6; Isaiah 2:4; Jeremiah 51:20; Daniel 2:44; Zephaniah 3:8; Zechariah 14:12–19; Revelation 2:26; 11:18; 19:15.

### **Judgment of Babylon**

Revelation 17:1 to 18:24; Jeremiah 51:1–9; 2 Kings 9:30–37.

### **Completion of the Church**

1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:23,52; Romans 11:25; 1 Kings 6:38 and 8:32 (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Peter 2:5); Revelation 14:13.

### **Restoration of Israel**

Deuteronomy 30:1–4; Jeremiah 30:7–11 and 46:28; Ezekiel 11:14–20; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:25–28; Acts 15:16; Matthew 24:31,32.

### **Restoration of Humanity**

Matthew 25:31–46; Revelation 20:11–14; Isaiah 26:9; 35:5–10; 40:1–11; 65:20–25; Daniel 12:2; Zephaniah 3:9; Zechariah 8:23.

Jesus must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25). Then, the work of restoration for which Jesus "returned" will be complete and God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

## The Time of the SECOND Advent

# The Time Is At Hand

*The prophets have inquired and searched diligently . . . what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.—1 Peter 1:10,11*

*David Rice*

As the time of the first advent of Christ was of deep interest to the noble ones tutored under the Law, so the time of the second advent of Christ has been of deep interest to all those longing for "the adoption ... the deliverance" of the saints and the establishment of Christ's kingdom (Romans 8:23).

The long cherished hope of our master's return maintained the faith of the early disciples, and gave strength to the saints during the vilest persecutions of Rome and Papacy. Enduring the Dark Ages, earnest students of Daniel and Revelation mused whether their prophecies pointed to the return of Christ as near—perhaps in the year 1000, or 1260, or 1290, or 1335, or perhaps 33 or more years after those dates.

One after another of these possibilities passed without fulfillment. But those of faith realized the prophecies were sure, and the lack was in their correct application. Indeed, Daniel himself was informed that these prophecies would not be understood until "the time of the end," at which time "knowledge [of their meaning] shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). True to the promise, the understanding of these prophecies opened up at the end time, the close of Papacy's reign of oppression, and formed the kernel of the expectations of the Adventist Movement of the early 1800s. It was this movement which directly prepared the way for the work of the second advent.

### **"At That Time Shall Michael Stand Up" (Daniel 12:1)**

Michael is our Lord, and to "stand up" is the prophet's way of saying assume regal authority (see Daniel 11:2,3,4,7 for example). This is the same prophetic point of time mentioned in Revelation 11:15, "the seventh angel sounded: and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." It is the time of the second advent.

The next two verses in Daniel explain the events thus precipitated—a time of trouble, the deliverance of God's people, and the resurrection of the dead. These events have begun. World Wars I and II ushered in a time of trouble unlike any in history for scope and magnitude. Meanwhile the deliverance of the Lord's spiritual people from Babylon through the harvest work and present truth, and the restoration of the Lord's earthly people Israel since 1878, are visible effects of the regal power and authority of our returned Lord.

But it pleased the Lord to give us additional insights into the time of his return and "standing up" in the balance of Daniel 12. There are three time prophecies marking successive compelling episodes directing us to the second advent, that by these united strands of evidence —the signs and the time—the evidence for our faith may be precise.

Some now see the signs so strongly they ease their concern for the time prophecies. But it is wise for us to receive with thanks all the evidence Divine Wisdom judged good to give on so important a matter. Indeed, early in the harvest, it was just such time prophecies as these which awakened the Lord's people then and since, to the point and meaning of the signs then just developing.

### **The Three Time Prophecies**

The three prophecies are of 3 times, 1290 days, 1335 days. The first of these takes us to the conclusion of Papacy's baneful rule of power, "when he [papacy] shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people" (Daniel 12:7). This period is mentioned seven times in the prophecies, variously as 3 "times" (years), 42 months and 1260 days, which a little computation will show are all equivalent periods (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5). This seven-fold repetition emphasizes the intrinsic significance of these foundational time prophecies, and compels us to recognize a great importance to the issue.

These prophecies are fulfilled on the scale of a day for a year, just as with the first advent prophecy of 70 weeks. The Adventists generally dated this period from 538 to 1798 when the Pope was left in charge of Rome by Justinian's General Belisarius and the later Pope was forcibly evicted from Rome by the French General Berthier. Others subsequently advanced these dates one year to 539 and 1799, noting that 539 was the date of the fall of the Goths, the Pope's Italian adversaries, in the capture of their capital Ravenna, and 1799 the date of the death of the evicted Pope Pius VI, leaving Papacy temporarily headless and broken. These dates and the history supporting them are firm and clear. They are explained in *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 3, pages 61–90, and in a detailed and well researched article "The Little Horn," *Beauties of the Truth*, August 1992.1

The second prophecy, that of 1290 years, takes us 30 years further to 1829. Daniel 12:10,11 indicates this would be the time "many . . . shall understand" the unfolding prophecies of Daniel. About this time began the Adventist Movement under the general leadership of William Miller, which propelled the study of these very prophecies throughout the Christian world.

But the blessed time appointed for the appearance of "Michael," our Lord Jesus at his second advent, was to be at the close of 1335 years. This span takes us another 45 years further to 1874, and the "blessedness" of present truth has unfolded ever since. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching . . . he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37). The feast of present truth has been wonderful. (Compare Revelation 3:20.)

## **Other Time Prophecies**

Bro. Miller had supposed the 1290 years ended at the same time as the 1260, and so began the 1290 (and therefore the 1335) 30 years earlier than the 1260. This is one reason he anticipated the Lord's return in 1843 ( $508+1335=1843$ ). Bro. Miller also blended these with other time calculations regarding the Gentile Times, the Jubilees, and the close of 6000 years of chronology from Adam.

Bro. Nelson Barbour, a younger associate of Bro. Miller, later recognized that the 1290 and 1335 should begin at the same time as the 1260. He subsequently found that Bowen's chronology showed 6000 years from Adam would close about the time of the newly focused 1335 years, and adjusted the Gentiles Times and Jubilees to meet his improved deductions regarding Daniel. To these he appended the consideration of the Jewish Double and the Harvest Parallels, all described in *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volumes 2 and 3.

These applications have been much discussed and sometimes disputed. But most brethren who embrace present truth agree that some or all of these considerations are scripturally supportive of the presence of Christ since about 1874. We concur. It is the writer's view that after some modification in accord with the latest studies of Scripture and the extant factual records from the ancient Middle East, these lines of evidence, including the Jubilees, do indeed identify the progress of events since the return of Christ. Our Lord presented himself as Messiah in the year 29, and returned in 1874. 3 years after the first advent Israel was cast off from favor; 3 years after the second advent Israel was favored by a beginning of a return to the land. As the fire of judgment consumed Jerusalem 40 years after the first advent, so the fire of judgment ravaged Christendom 40 years after the second advent, during World War I, at the close of Gentile Times.

## **Why Is This Not Apparent To All?**

If the signs of the Lord's presence are about us—the Harvest Truth, the Harvest Movement, the Restoration of Israel, and the Time of Trouble—and if the time prophecies regarding Michael's assumption of power lead us so carefully through the 1260 years of Papal rule, the unfolding of Daniel's prophecies in the 1820s, finally to the appearance of our Lord in 1874 at the end of the 1335 days, just when the signs themselves began to appear—and if the ancillary time and other prophecies accord with these—why then does not the Christian world with one voice embrace the return of Christ?

There are three reasons. First, they are largely unaware of these evidences. This is partly due to a lack of earnest concern with the subject, and partly because of a lack of our public ministry to assist them. Second, most expect the return of Christ to be visible, and therefore so apparent that it will be unmistakable and unambiguous. In such a case Christ could not have returned in the past. Third, most expect that at the Lord's return the saints will be taken in a moment, collectively, into glory—which has not yet occurred.

The second point is not a difficulty for those imbued with a sense of present truth. They long ago learned that Christ is a spirit, not flesh and blood, and that during his thousand year kingdom he will rule as the invisible spiritual master of the world just as Satan has done by usurpation for so long. "Every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7) in the sense that the restored world will "see his [God's] face" (Revelation 22:4), in the sense that Job said "now mine eye seeth thee [God]" (Job 42:5) —that is, through the eye of faith and understanding.

But the third objection is problematic even for some of the dear brethren of our fellowship. There are three reasons for this. (A) The many New Testament references to the Lord's return as the culmination of our labors, and our entrance into glory. (B) Specifically 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. (C) The apparent paucity of texts explicitly affirming that the return of Christ will be followed by a period of time during which the call of the saints will continue. Though the evidence for the presence of Christ is compelling, these objections are not without force and should be addressed.

### **These Objections Considered**

(A) Here are some examples. "I will come again and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3). "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). "When Christ . . . shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him" (Colossians 3:4). "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown" (1 Peter 5:4). These, and many like them, so tightly connect the return of Christ with the reward of the saints it is sometimes assumed the entire glorification of the saints will take place at the moment of Christ's return. In the absence of any contrary evidence this inference may be excusable. But the conclusion at issue is but an inference, and contrary evidence does exist.

The harvest of the Jewish age involved the work of years. John 4:35–38 makes this clear, and Matthew 10:23 affirms that the disciples would scarcely have completed the work before the time of judgment, about 40 years later. Is the more important harvest of the Gospel Age to take less time? Is it, unlike the Jewish Harvest, to take but a solitary moment? On the contrary, Matthew 13:39 declares "the harvest is the [sunteleia, conclusion] of the age." Vine's expository dictionary says of this word: "marking the completion or consummation of the various parts of a scheme. In Matthew 13:39 . . . the rendering 'the end of the world' . . . is misleading . . . 'the consummation of the age' is correct. The word does not denote a termination, but the heading up of events to the appointed climax."

The work of the harvest is not simply a work of snatching the saints momentarily into heaven. When the tares were discovered springing up among the wheat, the question was natural: "Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matthew 13:28,29). Notice that the separating work intended might have occurred during the age, but as it would cause injurious commotion this separation was deferred to the end of the age. The separation at issue was clearly not the momentary snatching of the good to glory. It is the separation of wheat and tares spoken of in Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people." This

requires a message, understanding of the call, and a decision to respond. It describes a work of years, not of moments. It describes precisely the separation of the saints from Christendom which has occurred since the advent of present truth. It means the Lord of harvest is present (Revelation 14:14), separating the wheat, and subsequently receiving them into the barn beyond.

(B) 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. "The Lord himself shall descend . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them." This text clearly requires a sequence of events. The dead rise first. Then [Greek: *epeita*, "afterward"] we who are alive and remain will join them. How long afterward? The text does not specify. Apparently at the time of each one's death, there being no need to sleep in death, their awakening on the other side proceeds without a lapse.

The difficulty is that some render the expression "together with" as "at the same time" (for example the Wilson Diaglott). The rapture concept of Christendom is based on this understanding. But even among some who do not embrace the rapture—because clearly our old bodies will never float to heaven (1 Corinthians 15:50)—a concern for this rendering induces them to suppose all the saints are changed to glory in a moment.

It may be helpful to note other uses of the words *hama* (together) and *sun* (with) by the same apostle. The context of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 onward is about the brethren who had already died. "We sorrow not as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with [*sun*] him" (verses 13,14). The last expression, containing the Greek word *sun* (with), is not as simple as it may seem. It does not refer to God bringing the church with Jesus at his second advent, for clearly the church is raised after his return, not before. "Will God bring with him" means that God will bring us from the dead just as he brought Jesus from the dead. We will be raised "with" Jesus. Clearly this does not mean at the same time, for his raising and ours are separated by 2000 years. We are raised "with" him in a common experience, but not at the same time.

The word *hama* (together) appears in Romans 3:12, "They are together [*hama*] become unprofitable." The text refers to the whole race of mankind. We did not all "become unprofitable" simultaneously, but each one in his course over the 6000 years of human experience. Together means a common experience, not at the same time.

But, some may continue, when the two words appear together, "*hama sun*," they mean "at the same time." Not so. 1 Thessalonians 5:10 is such a case. "Who died for us, that whether we wake [are alive when he returns] or sleep [are dead when he returns] we should live together with [*hama sun*] him." Living together with Jesus denotes a common experience rather than a common moment.

(C) The third objection is the apparent paucity of texts affirming the saints continue in the flesh. The keyword here is apparent. As the writings of the apostles in the New Testament epistles were mainly exhortation—or in Paul's case wrestling with the issue of Grace versus the Law—naturally the usual references to the coming of Christ would be

exhortations to faithfulness until the blessed advent. But when the particulars of the matter are discussed, it is different. Here are some examples.

1. Luke 12:36,37 implies a feast of truth after the Lord's return. As Matthew 24:45 shows, feeding the servants occurs while they are on earth. Revelation 3:20 speaks of the same thing, and also intends by it an experience while on earth (the promised reward in glory is different, and appears in verse 21). These words of our Lord affirm there is a work to be done among the saints, in the flesh, following his advent.
2. 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2 and following. Having apparently understood from Paul the concept of a return of Christ during which some saints would be "alive and remain," some supposed the time had already arrived. Rather than use the obvious argument—"if Christ had returned we wouldn't be here"—Paul uses a more indirect argument about the appearance of the Man of Sin. The discussion presupposes the concept of a secret presence before the saints are complete.
3. Matthew 24 (and parallel accounts) distinguish between a parousia (presence) of Christ, during which the saints are gathered, and a subsequent revealing (Luke 17:30) in the climactic difficulties which manifest his presence to the world. The former is marked by a time of difficulty, decision, judgment and response—implying the saints continue into the parousia of Christ for some time (Matthew 24:15–28).
4. Revelation 15:6 refers to some saints in glory before the seven plagues are poured—which means the Lord has returned—but Revelation 16:15 makes it clear some are in the flesh through plague six. Apparently some are there, while some are here, for a considerable time.

### **The Restoration of Israel**

Acts 3:21 affirms that Christ is retained in the heavens "until the period of restoration" (NASB). To the Jewish audience Peter addressed, this meant the restoration of Israel as the prophets had predicted—and of course through them, the blessing of "all the kindreds of the earth" (Acts 3:25). The disciples also were concerned about the restoration of Israel before Jesus left them. In Acts 1:6, their parting question to Jesus was "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Our Lord in essence replied not now, but later. Then he left, and the angels affirmed "This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner" (verse 11). Apparently, therefore, the time for restoring the kingdom to Israel would be at the Lord's return, and this is precisely the connection Peter makes in Acts 3:21.

Therefore the restoration of Israel is a function of the return of Christ. From the Berlin Treaty and Petah Tikvah in 1878 to the Balfour Declaration in 1917 to the restored statehood of 1948, the restoration of Israel has progressed as a visible demonstration of

the influence of our returned Lord. The process will climax with the breath of faith breathed into Israel in the troubles incident to the four winds (Ezekiel 37:9), when the sealing of the saints is complete (Revelation 7:3).

### **The Time is at Hand**

For all of these reasons, it is evident that the Presence of Christ involves a period of time during which all the work of the harvest of the Gospel Age proceeds. The now clear prophecies of Daniel affirm that Michael was due to "stand up" in regal authority in 1874. Other time prophecies and parallels blend their support to the same conclusion. Just at the time indicated Present Truth appeared, an ardent spokesman appeared for its promulgation, the harvest separation of wheat and tares ensued, Israel by stages began returning home, the time of trouble subsequently broke forth in unprecedented world wars, and now the nations are gathering for the final distresses incident to the incoming Kingdom of Christ.

The Lord of Harvest is present. The Messiah of Israel has returned. The King of Earth has arrived.

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1. There is sometimes confusion about the precise year of the fall of Ravenna, and as the matter has been raised from time to time among the brethren it deserves some attention. There are two possible reasons for the confusion:

The first is a conflict in the received text of Procopius, the historian who wrote in Greek a narration of the Gothic Wars which resulted in the Pope's increased authority. In one case Procopius equates the 1st year of the Gothic war with the 9th of Justinian (Procopius 5.5.1, Loeb Classical Library edition, Volume 3, page 43). In another, narrating events of the 2nd year of the war, he equates it with the 11th of Justinian (compare pages 147, 307). To be consistent, the latter reference should have said the 10th year of Justinian. Since tenth is "dekaton" and eleventh "endekaton," it is supposed a writing error is at issue. (This is explained in a footnote in the "Little Horn" article.) Or perhaps "endekaton" should be "en dekaton"—"in tenth."

A second possible confusion arises from the fact that Procopius narrates events from spring to spring, identifying the close of each year of the war as ending with the close of winter, when the spring equinox of the following year approached. Thus, for example, he ends the narrative of the year 539, during which the Ravenna fell to Justinian's General Belisarius, with these words: "And Belisarius took his way to Byzantium; and the winter drew to its close and the fifth year ended in this war, the history of which Procopius has written" (*Procopius* 6.30.30, Loeb Classical Library edition, Volume 4, page 147). As the marginal notation in the Loeb version properly indicates, the year was 540 (in the spring). But the episodes recorded prior to this, including the fall of Ravenna to Belisarius (pages 113–138), apparently occurred before the winter, thus in the year 539.



## A Practical Lesson

# Loving Christ's Appearing

*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.—2 Timothy 4:8*

*Carl Hagensick*

Without doubt, the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth in Judea some 2000 years ago had a great impact on his followers. They left their fishing nets and other instruments of trade to spend all their time with him. They beheld miracles to an extent never witnessed before. They heard lessons from a master teacher. After his death and a short period of confusion they became totally engrossed in preaching the message they had been taught. Their lives were changed forever.

At first during his ministry his disciples could not bring themselves to believe that he would die and leave them. Gradually, as that fact began to sink in, they became intensely interested in the subject of his return. On one occasion they asked, "What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). His detailed answer was essentially one word: "Watch!" (Mark 13:33–37).

They needed to watch because the day of the Lord would come "as a thief in the night" (1Thessalonians 5:2-4). They would need to watch because some would deny his return saying "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4). They would need to watch because there would be a tendency for some to become drowsy (Romans 13:11).

They knew that his presence would be invisible since some at Thessalonica believed, without physical sight, that he had already returned (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

Although the metaphors differed, their anticipation of that return was variously described as waiting for a groom to "return from a wedding" (Luke 12:36) and welcoming him to a wedding (Matthew 25:1–13). In either event the anticipation is an emotional high.

There is no question that Jesus' followers when he walked the earth were eagerly anticipating his return. They "loved his appearing." They hoped, when he appeared to them after his resurrection, that he would then "restore again the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). The Bible itself ends with the fervent prayer, "Even so, come Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

What does his return mean to us today? How should it affect our lives? What should we do differently, knowing the fact of his return, that we would not do otherwise?

## **Separation from Babylon**

In the question asked Jesus about his return in Matthew 24:3, the disciples linked his coming (Greek: parousia) with the "end of the age." This same expression is used in the parable of the wheat and the tares. In that parable both the wheat and the tares were to "grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:30) which, we are further informed, is "the end of the age" (Matthew 13:39). In a parallel picture in Revelation 14:14 the Lord Jesus is shown as being present during this harvest.

Thus a belief in the Lord's return would lead one to separate himself from the surrounding "tares." This is substantiated further with the declaration in Revelation 14:8 that "Babylon is fallen" (see also Revelation 18:2). It is in connection with this latter statement that we hear a voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

The harvest is a time for separation—of wheat from tares, not of wheat from wheat. Thus to live in harmony with the Lord's return is to avoid being joined with the false Christianity called "Babylon" by the Revelator. A belief that the second advent is a reality should lead a Christian to seek a place of worship and study that brings forth truths that can be fully supported by harmonizing all the Bible has to say on this subject.

## **Rejoicing in Truth**

Those who are watching successfully for the Lord's return are to be given special spiritual food: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

Fresh insights into the Lord's word should occur when the Lord returns. This should lead to greater zeal in searching out the deep truths of the word of God. The New International Version furnishes an interesting corroborative reading of Daniel 12:4, "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

What rejoicing the child of God enjoys at this time when things both "new and old" are brought forth from God's great "storehouse" of truth (Matthew 13:52).

Another practical effect of the Lord's return is the perspective it brings to world events. We are living in an age of uncertainty. In his account of the Lord's great prophecy about his return, Luke writes: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25).

Professor Vine has this to say about the Greek word *aporia*, translated "perplexity": "Literally, 'at a loss for a way,' a, negative, *poros*, 'a way, resource,' of the distress of

nations, finding no solution to their embarrassments; papyri illustrations are in the sense of being at one's wit's end, at a loss how to proceed, without resources."

While media pundits and the world's best diplomats flounder in their search for a way out of current world problems, accepting the fact of the Lord's return places all these crises into the context of a transition from the present world order to that of Christ's kingdom.

## **Israel**

Numerous prophecies link the return of Christ to a regathering of the Jews to their promised land and a reestablishment of God's ancient people as a modern nation. Current conflicts in the Middle East between this newly established nation and Arab claimants for the land pose great questions before the world community. Even the present Israeli government is constantly seeking solutions that will produce peace while maintaining secure and definable borders for their homeland.

Students of the Bible see prophesied solutions for these concerns. The Jews not only would be gathered "from all coasts of the earth" (Jeremiah 31:8), but their regathering would be permanent: God would not "pluck them up" nor permit man to do so (Jeremiah 24:6). Although their enemies would surround them and seek to "cut them off from being a nation" (Psalm 83:3), such attacks would be fruitless.

Based upon so many prophecies, this return of Israel at the time of the second advent of Christ gives students of the Bible great confidence in seeking to "comfort" Israel in her current trials (Isaiah 40:1,2).

Note that the audience to whom Peter preaches his sermon in Acts 3 is located in the temple at Jerusalem. He is speaking to a Jewish religious people. It is to those who "denied the Holy One and the Just" and "killed the Prince of life" (though it is attributed to "ignorance") that he promises God would "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:13–21). Considering this context, certainly the "restitution of all things" must include restoring the Jewish people to their ancient homeland.

## **Instantaneous Resurrection**

When the apostle Paul was concerned with the feelings of the Thessalonian brethren about those of their number who had died, he wrote: "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."

He then proceeded to connect their hopes for their beloved dead with the return of Christ: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thessalonians 4:14–18).

The same apostle assures us that this resurrection would be instantaneous in 1 Corinthians 15:51,52, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

What a comfort it is for a believer at the blessed time of the second advent to have the assurance of an instantaneous resurrection following death of those he has come to love so much!

### **The Anticipation of Centuries**

When the return of Christ would be a reality, it was to be greeted with great jubilation. To the generation that witnesses the actual return of Christ belongs this joy of the centuries—centuries of waiting, of anticipation.

One Christian writer has illustrated this joy of Christ's return, the love for his appearing, in the following words:

"Fiction has painted the picture of a maiden whose lover left her for a voyage to the Holy Land, promising on his return to make her his beloved bride. Many told her that she would never see him again. But she believed his word, and evening by evening she went down to the lonely shore and kindled there a beacon-light in sight of the roaring waves, to hail and welcome the returning ship which was to bring again her betrothed. And by that watchfire she took her stand each night, praying to the winds to hasten on the sluggish sails, that he who was everything to her might come. Even so that blessed Lord, who has loved us unto death, has gone away to the mysterious Holy Land of Heaven, promising on his return to make us his happy and eternal Bride. Some say that he is gone forever, and that here we shall never see him more. But his last word was, 'Yea, I come quickly.' And on the dark and misty beach, sloping out into the eternal sea, each true believer stands by the love-lit fire, looking, and waiting, and praying, and hoping for the fulfillment of his word, in nothing gladder than in his pledge and promise, and calling even from the soul of sacred love, 'Amen! Come! Lord Jesus.'

"We would call attention to the sequel to which this beautiful picture points: The long-predicted, dark, stormy morning, that was to witness the return of him who gave the promise, is at last dawning; but before the blessed sunshine of his revealing, before the full dawn of the light, comes the darkest of the night. While a stricken world has been reeling to and fro with the shocks of war, revolution, and strife; and while the sea and waves of anarchy have been roaring and lashing the doomed ship of state of present institutions, and the pilots have been endeavoring vainly to weather the terrible storm;

some of the Lord's saints who have preserved the true spirit of betrothal ("Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly") and have been watching and longing for the glorious Apocalypse of the Divine One, who said that his coming would be like a thief, have by the eye of faith through the sure word of prophecy, seen a form rising up through the stormy mists, growing more and more distinct, as once it was seen from Galilee's shore, and have recognized it to be the One for whom they have been longing. Though these still find themselves in the midst of life's tempestuous sea, they have the assurance that soon they will once more hear their Divine Lord command the sea and the waves, saying, 'Peace, be still!' In obedience to that voice, the storms and tempests of earth will cease and again there will be a great calm. Yea, verily, his presence will yet, soon we trust, bring in the Day long promised when all the mists, shadows and darkness of the night time will pass away and give place to the morning of light—the morning of the resurrection; the day of the prisoner's release; the day for which the whole creation for six thousand years has waited and travailed in pain; indeed, the day of the great consummation, the day that shouts the Harvest Home—the day that never dies!"—R. E. Streeter, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### **A Message to Proclaim**

Finally, a belief that the Lord has returned leaves believers with no other option than to proclaim it. What thrills their hearts becomes a joy to tell to others. Not only is it a joy to their hearts, but the perception it gives to all that happens in their lives and in all the world around them gives new meaning to the song, "We've a story to tell to the nations."

To them is the privilege of proclaiming the return of their Lord as prophesied in Isaiah 52:7,8: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion."

# NEWS AND VIEWS

## Pastoral Bible Institute News

### New Booklet

We are pleased to offer the new booklet *This Land is Mine*. It examines the claims of both Jew and Arab to the most hotly-contested piece of real estate on the globe today—the land of Israel. Relevant biblical texts describing the land given by God are considered. God's promises to the Arabs as well as the Jews are reviewed and the prophecies predicting a resolution to this difficult problem in the near future are explained.

The book was produced by the Chicago Bible Students. Use the back of the usual insert sheet found in every issue of this magazine to order your copy.

### New Promotion

The Institute is placing a full-page, four-color advertisement in the winter edition of *Christian History*. The ad offers a one-year subscription to *The Herald* and a copy of the video "For This Cause" for just \$10 on a send-no-money basis. If the requestor does not like the magazine, he may keep the video and cancel his subscription without charge.

Current subscribers may wish to take advantage of this promotion and send both the video and a one-year subscription of *The Herald* to friends as a gift. Video tapes are available only in the VHS-USA format and will be shipped with the January-February issue in mid-December. A card announcing your gift will be enclosed.

### Letters

I just received the convention book of the Miskolc, Hungary, convention. It warmed my heart and I praise the Lord for such a beautiful work. How great to see the unity in the Lord's people to put it together. I will follow the program as I do with the local conventions when I cannot attend. I'm there in spirit. The feet members are really busy doing the Lord's work. God bless all that have a part in this endeavor to please the Lord. I am 89. I have opportunities to preach the gospel [because] I correspond with many people. God be with you.

*Eva Morgan, Ohio*

I received my very first *Herald* magazine with a lot of gratitude. Thank you for extending such a favour to me. I also read the magazine more than once and was very blessed. The teachings go very deep and are well researched and presented. I was wondering whether it is possible to receive magazines from the recent past, say, from the beginning of this year. The message does not go stale. It is the word of God. I sincerely remain grateful to

you and my prayer is that God may uplift you even more. May God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you abundantly.

*Moses Kibe Kihiko, Kenya*

## Around the World

Western experts quoted in the US media have voiced concern that the Russian economic crisis could result in the illegal sale by unpaid, desperate military employees of nuclear weapons technology to terror groups or terror-supporting states. Joseph Cirincione, director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told the San Francisco Examiner that Russia "has 22,000 nuclear weapons. 10,000 to 15,000 of them are in storage and are guarded not by elite forces but by regular troops" whose trustworthiness is less certain. "You've got to be a little concerned . . . about how vulnerable those weapons might be to sale or theft. And those concerns are certainly increased by the economic situation." The research director of the Nuclear Control Institute in Washington, Steven Dolley, said he was "less worried about 'loose nukes' until the Russian situation became decidedly worse."

—International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, 9/3/98

Growing worries towards Rwanda and Uganda underlie the new dimension in the Congolese conflict that threatens to shake Africa to its foundations. The fragmentation that has haunted western powers since the UN intervened to prevent Katanga's secession from the Congo in 1960 has produced a source of continual problems. Zimbabwe and Angola's dispatch of forces to the Democratic Republic of Congo, in open defiance of South African President Nelson Mandela, raises the prospect of Rwandan and Ugandan troops clashing with southern African soldiers. It also deals a body blow to hopes entertained by the 14-nation Southern African Development Community of presenting itself as a credible regional security organization and undermines western dreams of an African continent capable of policing itself. A protracted conflict in the Congo could bring to the forefront questions held in abeyance during 32 years of Mobutu rule: whether a country twice the size of France and Germany, embracing hundreds of tribes and ethnic languages, can hope to function as a nation state. For the southern and eastern African countries which have been sucked into the war, it could herald a new era of destabilizing regional rivalries.

—Financial Times, 9/1/98

## Israel

Israel said Monday that it has agreed in principle to turn over an additional 13% of West Bank land to the Palestinians, the figure specified in a months-old U.S. peace initiative. The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which had said it could not accept the 13% figure without endangering Israeli security, has told U.S. mediators that Israel is now prepared to withdraw from that amount of land if other conditions are met,

an Israeli spokesman said. The U.S. initiative has not been officially announced, but details of it are widely known. The proposal calls on Israel to withdraw in three stages over a 12-week period from 13% more of the West Bank. In exchange, the Palestinians would give Israel a detailed plan for combating terrorism and take other security measures.

—Los Angeles Times, 8/25/98

Israel is preparing for a possible new wave of Russian Jewish immigrants. Israeli officials in Russia say there has been a flurry of inquiries in recent days about immigration visas. The reports came as Jewish leaders said they were concerned about the possible ramifications the current instability in Russia could have on the country's Jewish community. One of Russia's leading businessmen, a Jew, said anti-Semitism prevents him from taking part in a future government. "A Jew cannot run for top posts in Russia at the moment," said Boris Berezovsky.

—Israeli News Wire Service, 9/3/98

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, speaking about the August 27 terrorist bombing in Tel-Aviv which injured 21 people, said "the bombings which took place in Tel-Aviv are the natural result of the torpedoing of the peace process in the Middle East since the coming to power of the Likud government headed by Netanyahu. Such explosions will continue so long as the current government adopts a position which is opposed to peace and so long as the land is not returned to its Palestinian owners." Mubarak's comments were reported in the official Egyptian newspaper Al-Gomhuriya on August 28.

—Israel Wire, IMRA, 9/3/98

## Islam

Pakistan, the world's newest nuclear power, now faces the greatest knock-on threat of Afghanistan's Islamist and tribal instability. "We're in a difficult position," says Abida Hussain, Pakistan's former ambassador to the US and now minister of population, welfare, science and technology. "Iran is mad at us because of the Taliban. India is mad at us over Kashmir. The US is mad at us because we detonated nuclear weapons. And we've got these obscurantist friends, who have overrun Afghanistan." Pakistan, which officially supports the Taliban, has become intimately bound up in the fate of Afghanistan. It is in the religious "madrassah" schools of Pakistan that refugee children became indoctrinated with the Taliban's classless, ultra-fundamentalist brand of Sunni Islam. And Pakistan's population along the permeable border with Afghanistan is mostly Pushtun, the same tribe that dominates Afghanistan and the Taliban. An appeal to Islamic solidarity is the only way to keep together Pakistan's unruly mix of peoples.

—Wall Street Journal, 8/25/98



With municipal elections just down the road, the Islamic Movement is making steady inroads in carefully targeted cities throughout Israel. "The Islamic Movement is the new, fresh, well-organized force in Israeli-Arab politics," said Prof. Elie Rekhess, head of Tel Aviv University's Arab political studies program, sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. "It has a strong social message, and the potential to fill the vacuum left by [the declining appeal of] Hadash." Noting that the movement has not incited to violence, called for the overthrow of the Zionist state or given Israeli authorities any excuse at all to crack down on it, Rekhess continued: "Clearly the Islamic Movement is not actively plotting to realize any maximalist goals. But the \$64,000 question is: If and when this growing force gathers more and more strength, will it be transformed into a strategic threat?" The answer, Rekhess said, depends largely on whether the state, representing the Jewish majority, ends its traditional policy of "disastrous neglect of the Arab sector and its refusal to recognize that while Israel is a Jewish state, it is not exclusively Jewish."

—Jerusalem Post, 8/21/98

## Christendom

The newly appointed Archbishop [Mouallem] of the Galilee for the Greek Catholic Church finds himself at the center of the most serious crisis between Israel and the Vatican since the two states established diplomatic relations in 1994. Accused of having ties to extremist PLO elements and to Syrian intelligence, Mouallem almost was denied an entry visa by the government. Government officials say that the struggle for control of the Greek Catholic Church mirrors a similar process taking place in other local churches—including the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran—where bishops much more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause have been appointed in recent years. In the Palestinian Authority, numerous reports have surfaced of Christians being persecuted by the ruling Moslem majority, sparking an exodus of Christians from the region. Those who remain do not feel as free to criticize the government of Yasser Arafat as they do to attack Israeli policy. The Vatican, which has far more followers and interests in the Arab world than in Israel, has similar concerns, an Israeli spokesperson says. "This shows that the influence of the PLO now is so strong at the Vatican, that it completely overshadows our influence."

—Jerusalem Post, 8/31/98

## Economics

The West is now watching Russia's economic collapse with a quiet and helpless desperation matched only by that of the long-suffering Russian people themselves. Unpaid wages on a massive scale have reduced many workers to virtual slave laborers. Mass unemployment in big rust-belt cities, a free-falling ruble and climbing prices have left millions of Russians without a kopec in their pockets and forced to survive on their wits and on bartering for essential items. A report yesterday that thousands of new Russian companies are actually run by criminals will do little to hold at bay Russians' anger at the robber capitalism that has replaced robber Communism in their country. The

present system offers nothing but despair. Male life expectancy in Russia has plunged to a shocking 58 years. Russia manufactures nothing the world wants to buy, the government has no income. Russia has collapsed, as many wise experts predicted it would, because its foundations were so rotten they might be made of decayed wood. A Western system [has] poured in billions of dollars to shore up Boris Yeltsin and his anti-Communist reformers. Now the reformers have gone down the drain along with the Western dollars they squandered, and, at the moment when it most needs a powerful leader, Russia has none.

— Jerusalem Post, 9/6/98

The financial firestorm that has been scorching economies around the globe is intensifying into one of the world's worst—and most baffling—currency crises since the system of fixed exchange rates crumbled a quarter of a century ago. Frightened investors and quick-moving speculators in markets as far apart and different as Brazil and Hong Kong, Canada and Russia, Japan and Venezuela are scurrying to exchange local currencies for the US dollar. What makes the crisis so unnerving is that there is no clear solution in sight—no financial firebreak that governments or international financial institutions can construct to slow the spread. Hopes that the crisis, ignited by the July 1997 devaluation of the Thai baht, would soon burn itself out have been dashed by devaluation and default in Russia, record lows for the Mexican peso and the Canadian dollar, and the Venezuelan central banks' decision to give the bolivar more room to fall.

— Wall Street Journal, 8/24/98

Japan's crisis is slow-burning. Its neighbors, such as South Korea, might have crashed last year but Japan's deterioration has lasted the entire decade. The value of land—a key component of family wealth—has crumbled for seven years. Furthermore, pain is still being deferred. For the most part, companies are extremely reluctant to make their workers redundant, even when they are heavily in debt.

—Financial Times, 9/1/98

## Science

The direct conversion of solar radiation into energy, photovoltaics, is gaining more and more significance as an alternative environmentally friendly source of energy. "If development continues at its current pace, in 30 years we will be able to replace the world's current production of nuclear power with solar energy," said Professor Juergen Schmid of the Institute of Solar Energy in Kassel, addressing the Second World Conference on Photovoltaic Solar Energy Conversion in Vienna. In a scenario presented by Shell Oil, which has recently elevated renewable energy to a new and separate branch of its business, 50 per cent of the energy will be delivered by alternative forms of energy in the year 2050.

—Deutsche Press Agentur (DPA), 8/5/98

The United Nations said Wednesday that the growth rate of the world population is slowing. In its annual world population report, the U.N. said that although the population will continue to expand for several decades, the growth rate has fallen to 1.4% a year from 2% in 1960. The world population is increasing by more than 80 million a year and, at the current rate, will rise to 9.4 billion in 2050 from 6 billion in mid-1999.

—Los Angeles Times, 9/3/98

With almost one-third of Americans using alternative therapies, a majority of US medical schools now offer their students such classes, a new study shows. Researchers from Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center found at least 60 percent of the 125 medical schools in the US offer classes in alternative medicine. The courses, electives at most schools, include chiropractic, acupuncture, homeopathy, herbal therapies, massage and other mind-body techniques. "Medical educators increasingly realize that it is not a question of whether to address these issues in the education of future physicians but rather how to respond to this relentless challenge to evolve," said the researchers. The study appears in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

—Bloomberg News, 9/1/98

If all movement of Earth's tectonic plates—the large land masses floating on the planet's molten interior—stopped, Earth would become a very different place, according to seismologist Kerry Sieh of Caltech, although it might take a long time for some effects to become apparent. There would be far fewer earthquakes because most of them are caused by stresses resulting from plate movements. The volcanoes of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" would all shut down, and the steady southeastern movement of volcanic activity along the Hawaiian Islands would also stop. New mountains would no longer be formed, and erosion from wind and rain would eventually level those now in existence, so Earth's surface would become much flatter. Finally, the motion of tectonic plates absorbs some of Earth's internal heat. If the plates stopped moving, Sieh said, the planet would have to find a new and efficient way to blow off that heat, and it is not clear what it would be.

—Los Angeles Times, 8/27/98

## Book Review

*The Gifts of the Jews*, Thomas Cahill, Doubleday, 1998, 291 pages.

Historian Cahill looks back to ancient times and sees a world where events are perceived as an endless cycle of birth and death, where time is a wheel that never alters its course. That notion was to forever change when Abraham heard The Voice saying, "Go forth." The future need not be like the past. It can be altered. Abraham did "go forth" and the conventional world view was forever changed. This is one of the gifts the Jews have given the world.

The giving of the ten "words" at Sinai is another example. Cahill suggests that the commandments were received by the people as reasonable, even unalterable because they were always there within the human heart. He asks the unbeliever which commandments concerning man would he drop, which missing one would he add. Certainly if we would keep these commandments, the world would be an entirely different place. Yet for all our collective resourcefulness, we have never managed to do it.

Jewish law favors the powerless in their poverty not the powerful and their possessions. It presumes that all people, even slaves, are human and that human lives are sacred. This ran counter to the laws of the ancient world and constitutes yet another gift to our world today.

At the death of Moses Joshua tells the people as they are about to enter the promised land to follow the ark of the covenant because they have never been here before. (Joshua 3:3,4) In Cahill's words, "This is the great moment, the moment of maximum anticipation—to go the way one has never gone before, and yet to go home." The parallel to the Christian's experience is not articulated, but is obvious.

It is stimulating to have a non-Jew examine Jewish history and describe it in a new way. Some of this book seems speculative and some conclusions may be a stretch. Yet Cahill forces even those to whom the Bible has nothing to say to see ancient history in a new way. God's hand and voice did reach down and touch a people, and through that "touch," the world has been changed.

—Michael Nekora