

The background of the cover is a photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy hillside with some green bushes. The middle ground shows a wide, sandy beach that curves along the edge of a blue ocean. In the distance, there are rolling sand dunes and a range of mountains under a clear blue sky.

Message

in the

Gospels, Acts, Epistles

A CENTRAL MESSAGE CONTINUING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Study About the End of Angelic Rule and the Beginning of Man's Rule in the Kingdom, As Seen in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles

Arlen L. Chitwood

Salvation by grace through faith, contrary to much popular teaching and belief, *is NOT the central message dealt with throughout the New Testament — NOT in the Gospels, NOT in Acts, NOT in the Epistles. NOR is this the central message dealt with throughout the Old Testament. NOR does any single book, Old Testament or New Testament, deal with this message in a central respect.*

John's gospel and Romans are two books often dealt with as centering around salvation by grace. *But NEITHER book is structured in this manner.* John's gospel, in this respect, is *NO DIFFERENT* than any one of the other gospels; and Romans, in this respect, is *NO DIFFERENT* than any one of the other epistles.

The SAME central message pervades ALL Scripture.

The first man, the first Adam, near the beginning of Scripture, was created to replace the incumbent ruler in the kingdom associated with one province in God's universal kingdom — the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). And the second Man, the last Adam, near the end of Scripture, is seen returning back to this earth to take this kingdom from this same ruler (Rev. 11:15).

And all that lies between these two points, separated by almost the whole of Scripture and 6,000 years of time, has to do with a restoration of those from the lineage of the first Adam so that *they can realize an inheritance with the last Adam when He takes the kingdom, realizing the purpose for man's creation in the beginning.*

Salvation by grace *DOES NOT*, in and of itself, automatically move man back into the position which he occupied prior to the fall. Rather, salvation by grace places him in a position where *he CAN one day find himself completely free from sin, enswathed in Glory, and seated on the throne with the second Man, the last Adam.*

And though Scripture, as seen throughout, *opens at the only beginning point possible — salvation by grace through faith — Scripture NEVER remains at this point. Rather, Scripture moves on and concerns itself FAR, FAR more with present and future aspects of salvation/deliverance than with the past aspect.*

And the preceding is what can be seen throughout the different chapters of this book.

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by
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“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26-28).

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb. 2:5).

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, ASV).

Cover Picture: Mangawhal shore, New Zealand, 2015

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By the Same Author —

HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES
COMING IN HIS KINGDOM
WE ARE ALMOST THERE
THE MOST HIGH RULETH
FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES
FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN
REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE
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IN THE LORD'S DAY
END OF THE DAYS
MOSES AND JOHN
LET US GO ON
RUN TO WIN
BY FAITH
JUDE
RUTH
ESTHER

FOREWORD

The message dealt with throughout the eight chapters of this book — *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles* — is called “so great salvation” in Heb. 2:3. But, even though this is the case, this expression, throughout this book, is only dealt with here (in the foreword) and in the closing chapter, in Chapter VIII (aside from a reference in connection with Paul’s gospel in Chapter VI).

Information is provided in Heb. 2:1-5 which not only connects the central message seen in the epistles with *the central message* seen throughout both the gospels and Acts but also connects this message with *the same goal* out ahead.

In other words, this text shows *beyond question*:

The salvation message proclaimed to Israel in the gospels and then in Acts is EXACTLY THE SAME salvation message proclaimed/being proclaimed to Christians in Acts and in the epistles.

This is not to say that the manner in which the message was/is proclaimed to both the old creation in Jacob (Jews) and the new creation in Christ (Christians) is the same, for differences would have to exist (discussed in Chapter VIII, pp. 142-148). But still, the message throughout is the same.

And that toward which everything moved in the gospels and Acts is EXACTLY THE SAME as that toward which everything moves in the epistles, seen realized in the Book of Revelation (11:15).

(Also note that this message was/is being proclaimed to *a saved people* throughout, *NOT to unsaved individuals*. This message has *NOTHING to do with the past aspect of salvation* [salvation by grace], *ONLY with present and future aspects of salvation* [a salvation connected with *Christ’s coming Glory*].

This is something dealt with extensively different places throughout this book. *And the importance of properly understanding this CANNOT be overemphasized.*)

As previously stated, this message is referred to in Heb. 2:3 as “so great salvation.” And the words “so great” are a translation of a Greek word (*telikoutos*) used in Rev. 16:18 of *a destruction at the time of Christ’s return, a destruction of such magnitude — the destruction of Gentile world power — that, according to the text, NO precedent exists in all of human history.*

And this word is used in *a similar manner* in the other two places where it appears in the New Testament (II Cor. 1:10; James 3:4).

In this respect, *a salvation* is being dealt with throughout the New Testament, carried over from the Old Testament, which is “so great” *that, as well, NO precedent exists in all of human history.*

This is *the greatest thing God has ever designed for redeemed man*, for it has to do with *placing redeemed man in the heavens during the coming age as co-heir with His Son, Whom God has “appointed Heir of all things”* (cf. Rom. 8:14-19; Heb. 1:2, 14).

In this respect, the message being dealt with throughout this book, “so great salvation,” *is an UNPRECEDENTED SALVATION.*

(Note how the preceding would negatively reflect on spending all of one’s time dealing with salvation by grace and *NOT* moving on to “so great salvation,” referred to in I Tim. 6:19 as “that which is really life” [literal translation; *ref.* NIV, ASV, Wuest, Weymouth].)

But, to properly understand “so great salvation,” a person needs *the background* found in prior Scripture — providing *a foundation*. And this will provide the reason *why* “so great salvation” is not dealt with again in this book [following this foreword] until the closing chapter, where it is dealt with at length.

This book, through the first seven chapters, carries the reader through Scriptures providing *this background, this foundation*.

Thus, unless you are already in possession of this type understanding of Scripture, don’t jump over to Chapter VIII and begin there. Rather, after reading the introduction, begin in Chapter I and work your way through the book.

Also, note that there are four appendixes with data to help explain different things at different places in the book.

INTRODUCTION

This book — *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles* — is about *a message concerning a kingdom and an offer of that kingdom*. It is about *the central message in Scripture, Old Testament or New Testament*, but a message often missed.

In this respect, note how the New Testament both begins and ends.

In relation to the message seen throughout the gospels, the New Testament begins with an offer of “the kingdom of the heavens” to Israel (Matt. 3:1ff; 4:17ff; 10:1ff; Luke 10:1ff); and the New Testament ends with “the kingdom of the world [a kingdom, as will be shown, with heavenly individuals (angels) ruling through earthly individuals (man)]” becoming “that of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15).

And all that lies between the gospels and the Book of Revelation — Acts and the Epistles — has to do centrally with this kingdom (the earth and its government), bringing matters, in the end, to the state seen in Rev. 11:15, anticipated 6,000 years earlier in Gen. 1:26-28.

The Old Testament, providing the background for that seen in the New Testament, opens through referencing this same kingdom (Gen. 1:1ff), providing a history of and numerous things about this kingdom different places in the Old Testament.

This is the kingdom over which Satan, with his angels, has ruled from the beginning, in Gen. 1:1, and continues to rule today; this is the kingdom which the first man, the first Adam, was created to rule, replacing the incumbent ruler (Gen. 1:26-28); and this is the kingdom in which the second Man, the last Adam (born “King” [Matt. 2:1, 2]), will one day rule, replacing the incumbent ruler, which the first man, the first Adam, through the fall, failed to do.

Then there is the matter of a kingdom within a kingdom — *the Old Testament Theocracy*, existing within but separate from *the kingdom of this world* under Satan (existing from about 1,445 B.C. to about 586 B.C.).

Rulership in Both Kingdoms

Daniel chapter ten presents certain insights into how the present kingdom of Satan is structured, along with the location of those administering power and authority in this kingdom.

In this chapter (vv. 4-20), a heavenly messenger who had been dispatched to Daniel on the earth from that part of the heavens where God resides and rules (“the uttermost parts of the north [a superlative in the Hebrew text]” — the northernmost point in the universe in relation to the earth [Isa. 14:13, ASV]) was detained at a point enroute to the earth.

This messenger was detained in the heavens above the earth by “the prince of the kingdom of Persia.” Then Michael was dispatched from heaven, and the messenger remained there with “the kings of Persia” while Michael fought with the prince of Persia for his release (vv. 12, 13).

The picture presented is that of *powerful angels in the kingdom of Satan ruling the earth from a heavenly realm (a heavenly realm in relation to the earth) through counterparts in the human race on earth.*

There was a prince (a ruler) of Persia in the heavens, and there was a prince (a ruler) of Persia on the earth.

Then, in the heavens, there were lesser rulers associated with Persia (the kings of Persia); and the same would have been true in the earthly kingdom (*cf.* Dan. 2:39; 5:28-31; 7:5; 8:3-6, 20).

Beyond that, “the prince of Greece” is mentioned — another heavenly ruler, the angelic heavenly ruler over the Grecian kingdom on earth (v. 20). And the reason why attention is called to this heavenly ruler is easy to see and understand.

Daniel, throughout his book, deals with the kingdom of Babylon, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the days of Antichrist; and Dan. 10:20, “...the prince of Greece shall come,” anticipated that day when Alexander the Great, in the Grecian kingdom on earth, would conquer the kingdom of Babylon under the Medes and the Persians (*cf.* Dan. 2:39; 7:6; 8:7, 8, 21, 22).

Thus, there is not only a breakdown of powers in the heavenly kingdom under Satan corresponding to a breakdown of powers in various earthly kingdoms under fallen man but there is also a shift-

ing of powers in the heavenly kingdom corresponding to a shifting of powers in the earthly kingdoms.

In this respect, any person occupying a position of power in any Gentile earthly kingdom during the present age is merely occupying a position of power under Satan and his angels, as they rule from the heavens through counterparts on the earth.

(Thus, note how out-of-place Christians are/would be who involve themselves in the political structure of this present world kingdom under Satan rather than *keeping their eyes fixed out ahead, biding their time, waiting for and anticipating that future day when Christ and His co-heirs take the kingdom.*

This is simply NOT the day in which Christians are to rule and reign in this kingdom. THAT DAY lies in the future, after the kingdom changes hands.)

There though, as previously stated, is *one exception* to this present type governmental rule by angels in Satan's kingdom through men upon the earth.

The nation of Israel is the exception. This nation, *a special creation in Jacob* (Isa. 43:1), is *not* to be "reckoned among the [Gentile] nations" (Num. 23:9; *cf.* Deut. 7:6). Scripture reveals that *Michael* is the "prince" among heavenly angelic beings over Israel (Dan. 10:21); and Michael, along with his angels (*cf.* Rev. 12:7-9), is not part of Satan's present kingdom.

In this respect, heavenly counterparts to earthly rulers in the nation of Israel rule completely separate from heavenly counterparts to earthly rulers among the nations. Not only are two separate creations involved on earth, Gentile and Jew, but two entirely different contingents of angels are involved in the heavens, one fallen, the other unfallen.

(The preceding is the major governmental distinction between *Israel* and *the Gentile nations* which would have allowed God to place Israel at the head of the nations within a theocracy during Old Testament days, out from under Satan's governmental control.

Israel could have ruled the nations, within a theocracy, apart from exercising power emanating from Satan's kingdom [Ex. 19:5, 6]. But no Gentile nation has ever occupied or will ever occupy a governmental position of the nature occupied and held by Israel.)

Thus, there is a present existing kingdom associated with the earth upon which man lives; and this kingdom has two spheres, an earthly, and a heavenly.

(And this is *THE ONLY KINGDOM* in relation to the earth which has ever existed, continuing unchanged in its rulership [except for man's appearance 6,000 years ago] to the present time.

There is *NO mystery form of the kingdom* [an expression which some Bible students use, attempting to explain certain passages, though the expression explains nothing, adding only to an already existing confusion on the subject].)

Scripture plainly states that "the heavens do rule," a rule which begins with God and is enacted through angelic rulers under God, located in heavenly places (even, in this case, through Satan, though a rebel ruler).

It is after this manner that "the most High" rules "in the kingdom of men," positioning and removing rulers among the nations (Dan. 4:17, 25, 26).

And it is in this manner that God rules anyplace in the universe — through angels, though man having a part in God's universal rule would be upon only one province in God's kingdom, only upon the earth.

To succinctly summarize:

In the present kingdom of this world, referred to as "the kingdom of the heavens" in Matthew's gospel, two entirely different groups of rulers exist, in both the heavens and upon earth.

In the heavens, Satan and his angels occupy one realm, and Michael and his angels occupy the other, though in evidently separate locations in heavenly places.

Then, *upon the earth*, all of the Gentile nations occupy one realm, and the nation of Israel occupies the other (in the land which God gave to the Jewish people through an everlasting covenant [Gen. 15:7-21], separate from the nations, with the nations occupying all of the other lands).

(Note just one problem from the preceding, though there are many others, in the call by the nations today for Israel to relinquish land for peace.)

In one realm, Satan and his angels rule from the heavens through the Gentile nations upon the earth.

And in the other realm, Michael and his angels rule from the heavens through the nation of Israel upon earth.

Then, the Old Testament theocracy, existing in the camp of Israel from the days of Moses (about 1,445 B.C.) to the time of the Babylonian captivity (about 605 B.C. [the Glory departing about 586 B.C.]), existed as a kingdom within a kingdom, as previously discussed.

(For additional information on the present world kingdom under Satan and the coming world kingdom under Christ, refer to the author's book, [*The Most High Ruleth.*](#))

The Proffered Kingdom and Matt. 21:43

Now, note some thoughts about the kingdom offered to Israel in the gospels and re-offered to Israel in the Book of Acts:

Why is it automatically assumed — by almost anyone dealing with the subject — that the kingdom offered and re-offered to Israel, in the gospels and in Acts, was *the kingdom covenanted to David*, which would have been an offer of *the restoration of the Old Testament theocracy*?

And, particularly, why would such an assumption even be made when this proffered kingdom is referred to thirty-two times in Matthew's gospel as "the kingdom of the heavens"?

The kingdom covenanted to David was *an earthly kingdom*, **NOT** *a heavenly kingdom*.

(Individuals believing that an *earthly* kingdom is being referenced, as *heavenly*, usually attempt to explain this by calling attention to *the Divine origin of the earthly kingdom, which could only be heavenly*.

This though is an interpretation of the text, based on an assumption [*assuming that the proffered kingdom was the earthly kingdom covenanted to David*], **NOT** *what the text plainly states*.)

Then there is the matter of the kingdom which was offered to Israel being taken from Israel in Matt. 21:43 and offered to another nation.

Note how this verse reads:

“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

How could this have been possible if the kingdom offered to Israel was the kingdom covenanted to David? And the answer to that is quite simple.

IF the proffered kingdom was the kingdom covenanted to David, it COULDN'T have been taken from Israel, for this kingdom CAN NEVER be taken from Israel.

BUT, if words forming statements in Scripture mean anything, the proffered kingdom WAS TAKEN FROM ISRAEL! Particularly contextually, NO OTHER MEANING can possibly be derived from Matt. 21:43!

Bible teachers seeing the kingdom covenanted to David as the kingdom offered to Israel, then attempting to explain that stated in Matt. 21:43, has resulted in a major division in thinking and teaching among Christians in this realm.

And this has left two main groups attempting to deal with and explain the subject, both using a wrong base, resulting in mayhem:

1) One group, a group somewhat increasing in numbers today, uses Matt. 21:43 as a central verse in their attempts to show that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plans and purposes, with God being through with Israel in this respect.

Within this school of thought, Israel has no national future; God's plans and purposes now center around the Church.

2) The other group though, knowing that Israel *MUST continue to remain center-stage in God's future plans and purposes and that the kingdom covenanted to David CANNOT be taken from Israel and MUST one day be restored to the nation*, approach matters from a quite different standpoint.

They see what is stated in Matt. 21:43 as having to do with the generation in existence at that time (or, that generation plus future generations, up to the time Israel is restored as a nation), with the kingdom ultimately being restored to Israel.

Thus, they would not see Matt. 21:43 having to do with a kingdom taken from the nation forever. Rather, they would see the kingdom taken from only one or more generations of

Israelites [particularly the rejecting generation], to ultimately be restored to the nation.

(On the first of the two divisions above, this teaching is so far removed from anything which Scripture has to say about the matter that time need not be spent trying to deal with it. The only reason that it is even mentioned is because a large segment of Christendom follows this line of thought.

On the second of these two divisions, there would be at least two main problems with understanding Matt. 21:43 to refer to a generation or a number of generations rather than to the nation throughout all future time.

First, this is not the way God does things of this nature, unless the matter is specifically so stated [*e.g.*, “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children” in Ex. 20:5]. The results of Adam’s and Ham’s sins [Gen. 3, 9] were not generational. *The results for both still exist and continue today!*

Christ leaving the house of Israel “desolate” in Matt. 23:38 was not generational. *That state of the nation still exists today* [v. 39]!

In the preceding respect, *all succeeding generations of Israelites are held responsible for the actions of prior generations* [Matt. 23:35-37]. The generation of Jews alive today is looked upon as being just as responsible for rejecting and killing the prophets as the generation of Jews alive 2,000 years ago [who didn’t do this directly either; prior generations did it, but *all Jews throughout all time are held responsible* (v. 37)]!

Note the same thing regarding Christ’s crucifixion. The generation of Jews which sees Christ at the time of His return *are going to “look upon” the One Whom THEY pierced* [Zech. 12:10].

All Jews alive today, likely comprising the generation which will look upon their Messiah at the time of His return, are presently seen as being *just as guilty of the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah as the generation of Jews who actually committed these acts 2,000 years ago!*

The passage of generations in the house of Israel means NOTHING in this respect!

Thus, to say that Christ took the kingdom from that unbelieving generation to later give it to a subsequent generation *would be completely out of line with the way God does things in His*

Word. Any subsequent generation would be just as guilty as the rejecting generation present 2,000 years ago, being seen as committing the rejecting acts themselves.

Then, the context of Matt. 21:43 plainly shows that *this verse CANNOT be understood in a generational respect.* In Matt. 21:19, when Christ, returning to Jerusalem, came to and cursed a fig tree because it had no fruit [a fruitless tree typifying fruitless Israel], He said, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever [*lit.*, ‘with respect to the age,’ referring to the future Messianic Era].”

This cursing of the fig tree and this statement appear in Matthew’s gospel at a time early in the same day that Christ made the announcement seen later in the chapter in v. 43, several days before His crucifixion. Thus, viewing these two verses together, which is the only way that they could be contextually viewed, *Israel will bear NO FRUIT relative to the kingdom of the heavens during the coming age*, leaving the clear implication that this facet of the kingdom was about to be taken from Israel for all future time.

Israel WILL bear fruit during the Messianic Era, but NOT relative to the kingdom of the heavens. This heavenly facet of the kingdom has been taken from Israel, with an entirely new entity called into existence about two months later [Acts 2] to be the one who would bring forth fruit for the kingdom and inherit heavenly promises and blessings.)

Thus, both of the preceding two groups (together encompassing almost the whole of Christendom), on their understanding of Matt. 21:43, are flawed from the same faulty foundational point. Both are working from a flawed base. Both begin through referencing the wrong kingdom.

As a result of this type thinking, the former group is left with a completely skewed eschatology, which would negatively affect almost everything — Israel, the Church, the nations. Because of this, they are so far left of right that what they believe is not even worth talking about.

Israel has been left out of the equation. *And, without Israel, in reality, they have nothing left. Thus, there is nothing to talk about anyway.*

And the latter group would be left with their eschatology regarding Israel and the nations somewhat intact, but their view concerning the purpose for the present dispensation and the existence of Christians could only be skewed to varying extents.

The truth of the matter is that the kingdom which was offered to and then re-offered to Israel *has been taken from Israel and is presently being offered to those comprising the Church. And this has NOTHING! NOTHING! NOTHING! to do with Israel's prophesied national future and the kingdom one day being restored to Israel, for the kingdom offered to and taken from Israel WAS NOT the same one which will one day be restored to the nation.*

And these things can easily be seen in Scripture, *if an individual will ONLY allow Scripture to speak for itself, ONLY allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (e.g., refer to Chapter VIII in this book, where this is seen from the standpoint of "so great salvation" in Heb. 2:1-5).*

The Proffered Kingdom

Note two interrelated, self-answering questions:

1) Why even deal with the thought that the proffered kingdom beginning in the gospels was the kingdom covenanted to David when the only kingdom that will fit the sequence of events continuing from the gospels through Acts into the epistles and ending in the Book of Revelation *CAN'T possibly be this kingdom?*

The proffered kingdom in the gospels, re-offered in Acts, COULDN'T possibly have been the kingdom covenanted to David, a kingdom which CAN NEVER be taken from Israel.

And it can easily be shown that the same kingdom offered to and taken from Israel is presently being offered to those comprising the Church. And this kingdom presently being offered to those comprising the Church is certainly NOT the kingdom covenanted to David, for the Church can have no part whatsoever in this kingdom.

The preceding is plainly seen, for example, throughout the book of Ephesians — *blessed in heavenly places*, or the Christian's warfare *in the heavens*; or note *a heavenly calling* in Hebrews 3; or note in Romans 8 that *Christians will be joint-heirs with Christ after He takes the kingdom in Rev. 11:15.*

Then, to further illustrate the matter, compare Matt. 21:43 and I Peter 2:9, 10:

“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

(The Greek word translated “nation” in both Matt. 21:43 and I Peter 2:9 is *ethnos*, from which we derive our English word “ethnic,” a word translated different ways in Scripture [“nation,” “people,” “Israel,” “Gentiles,” etc.]. The word is used of *ethnic groups, whether Jew, Gentile, or the Church [which is neither Jew nor Gentile but a new creation “in Christ”]*.

Also note Rom. 10:19, where *ethnos*, referring to “the Church,” as in I Peter 2:9, appears twice.)

2) As well, why would individuals even deal with the thought that the proffered kingdom, beginning in the gospels, was the kingdom covenanted to David when *this kingdom CANNOT be restored to Israel BEFORE the events of Rev. 11:15 occur?* That is to say, the kingdom of this world, with its rulership in heavenly places — “the kingdom of the heavens” — *MUST become “that of our Lord and of his Christ” BEFORE the kingdom can be restored to Israel.*

The preceding is simply the way that matters are outlined in the Prophets. *The second man, the last Adam, must take the kingdom from Satan BEFORE the restoration of the kingdom to Israel can occur.*

(Refer to Appendix III in the author’s book, *[O Sleeper! Arise, Call!](#)*, where this complete panorama of events is dealt with.)

With the preceding in mind, note that the Old Testament theocracy could *NEVER* have reached the heights which God intended as long as the incumbent world ruler, Satan, with his angels, remained on the throne. This would have been an utter impossibility.

Also note that Israel, in connection with the nation's regal calling, was made the repository for both *earthly* and *heavenly* promises and blessings (Gen. 14:18-20; 22:17, 18; 26:3, 4; 28:3, 4, 12-17).

In this respect, *the earthly kingdom* would have to do with that part of the kingdom on earth (seen in the Old Testament theocracy), and *the heavenly kingdom* could only have to do with the kingdom presently under the control of Satan and his angels (the kingdom of this world, which has existed under Satan's rule and control, since time immemorial).

(Since Israel was made the repository for both spheres of the kingdom, and since a change in rulership had to occur in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom *BEFORE* the kingdom covenanted to David could reach the heights which God intended, *it could only be thought both natural and necessary that AT SOME POINT IN TIME the scene presented in Matt. 3:1ff WOULD HAVE TO OCCUR.*

After all, Moses, In Gen. 22:17, 18, clearly stated that *the seed of Abraham, AT SOME POINT IN TIME, would "possess the gate of the enemy [i.e., rule over the enemy]" in BOTH heavenly and earthly spheres.*

In the preceding respect, is it any wonder that God sent His Own Son to make this offer to Israel?

Is it any wonder, after over three years, following Israel's rejection of the message, that Christ echoed such harsh words toward Israel's religious leaders at the end of His ministry, in Matt. 23?

Is it any wonder, following Christ's ascension, that a re-offer of the kingdom lasted for almost thirty years, with all stops being pulled out in an effort to reach Israel with the message?

Is it any wonder that Paul, knowing what was being offered to Israel and what this would mean for not only Israel but the nations of the earth, was willing to give up his place in the kingdom if such would result in Israel's acceptance of the message?)

Satan and his angels presently rule in the same respect that Israel would have had to rule in order to realize the theocracy in its fulness. Israel would have had to take and occupy the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, replacing Satan and his angels, and rule in exactly the same manner — rule from the heavens through Jewish rulers in a restored theocracy on earth, along with bearing rule through Gentile rulers among the nations.

The kingdom established in this manner would have positioned a segment of the Jewish nation above and a segment below. Those ruling through Israel and the nations would be above, and the Jewish evangelists to reach the nations would be below.

The incumbent ruler, Satan, with his angels, has borne and continues to bear rule through the nations after this fashion today. And Israel, to realize the fulness of the theocracy, at some point in time, *WOULD HAVE HAD TO REPLACE SATAN AND HIS ANGELS AND RULE AFTER THE SAME FASHION.*

This is why, in the gospel accounts, the message proclaimed to Israel had to do with an offer of *THIS HEAVENLY SPHERE of the kingdom* — “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” (Matt. 3:1ff; 4:17ff) — *NOT THE EARTHLY*, as almost everyone mistakenly thinks. And properly understanding this will do more than almost any other one thing to open the whole of the New Testament to one’s understanding.

Then, relative to a future rule in this kingdom — *both heavenly and earthly* — now that the kingdom is being offered to *the one new man* “in Christ,” the rule can only one day be similar to the way that it could have been had Israel accepted the offer 2,000 years ago.

The seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29) will still occupy both spheres of the kingdom, probably both *spiritual* and *natural* in the heavenly sphere.

Christians, except for the twelve apostles, have never been promised power over Israel in this respect, only over *the nations* (cf. Matt. 19:27-29; Rev. 2:26, 27).

But there will have to be heavenly rulers over Israel other than just the twelve apostles. And these positions will probably be filled by Old Testament saints who looked beyond earthly promises and blessings to heavenly promises and blessings (e.g., Heb. 11:10-16; cf. Matt. 8:10-12), as well as possibly those Jews who believed the message during the offer and re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in the gospels and the Book of Acts.

Thus, in the coming age, when “the kingdom of the world” has become “that of our Lord and of his Christ,” the seed of Abraham above will rule through the seed of Abraham below, along with the nations — through both the evangelists (Israel) and those being evangelized (the nations).

1

Central Message in the Gospels

The Message of John, Jesus, the Twelve, the Seventy

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matt. 3:1-3).

“Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee...

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 4:12, 17).

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these...

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 10:1, 2a, 5-7).

“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come...

And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke 10:1, 9).

The central message in the four gospels is plain and simple enough to understand and deal with, and the same is true concerning the epistles (Pauline, Hebrews, and the general epistles). But the Book of Acts, forming somewhat of a bridge between the gospels and the epistles, is where matters can become complex, though that need not be the case.

And the approach that so many Christians seem to take — seeing the message of salvation by grace through faith, with eternal verities, as the central message throughout — certainly hasn't helped matters. In fact, this type approach to the New Testament, beginning with the gospels, usually centering on John's gospel as the one gospel written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved, *has caused insurmountable problems in correct Biblical interpretation.*

Following this type approach will, for all practical purposes, close the door to any overall, correct interpretation throughout the New Testament, which reflects back upon and negatively impacts correctly understanding the Old Testament in the same manner.

One simply CAN'T approach Scripture from a wrong standpoint and, in the end, come out right. "Error" does not work that way. It never has, and it never will.

As well, it matters little what man may think about something — what is or is not important, what this or that means, etc. When it comes to Biblical interpretation, *expressions such as, "I think..." "I believe..." should be stricken from one's vocabulary.*

That which a person thinks or believes, when it comes to Biblical interpretation, is OF NO MOMENT WHATSOEVER!

THE ONLY THING OF ANY MOMENT is what God has to say about the matter, expressing His thoughts and/or ways on the subject, recorded in His Word, which are invariably quite different than man's thoughts and/or ways:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).

When a person seeks understanding concerning things in Scripture, *understanding MUST ALWAYS be derived from ONE SOURCE*

ALONE! And it MUST ALWAYS be derived ONE WAY ALONE!

Scripture has been designed to explain itself. That is the way God, through His Spirit, structured His Word. *Scripture MUST be compared with Scripture to derive and understand God's thoughts and/or ways, NEVER through any method involving man's thoughts and/or ways.*

With the preceding in mind, what does Scripture itself have to say about the central subject seen throughout the New Testament, which can only have its base in and be an outworking of that previously seen in the Old Testament?

And that can be shown by simply taking the God-Breathed Word — which contains things quite different than have been “seen,” “heard,” or “have entered into the heart of man” — and allowing the Spirit to reveal “the deep things of God” through “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Cor. 2:9-13).

The only alternate to the preceding is seen in the next verse (v. 14), *through “natural” means*. And this verse, kept within context, could only refer to a saved individual resorting to the natural rather than to the spiritual in Biblical interpretation.

Salvation, a Revealed Goal

ONE CENTRAL MESSAGE, with its base in and carried over from the Old Testament, pervades the gospels. This message has to do with “salvation,” which can be traced back to a beginning point in the opening verses of Genesis.

Salvation, deliverance, is the central message pervading ALL Scripture.

But, WHAT salvation is being dealt with? WHAT deliverance is in view? Salvation, deliverance, has more than one aspect in Scripture, though the ultimate goal is always seen to be *the same*.

Note in this respect the basic, overall type beginning in Ex. 12.

The Israelites under Moses, through the death of paschal lambs, were delivered from the death of the firstborn while still in Egypt. They were subsequently delivered at the Red Sea crossing through God opening the waters for them to cross and then closing the waters upon Pharaoh and his armed forces. And they could have been delivered from the nations inhabiting the land at

Kadesh-Barnea had they not disbelieved God and rebelled against His chosen leader, Moses.

In this same respect, when reading and dealing with things in the gospels, why do so many Christians fix their attention on *a singular subject with respect to salvation, deliverance?*

Invariably, individuals doing this see salvation by grace through faith as the central message throughout Scripture, attempting to align practically everything in the gospels with this message, which is the message seen in that dealt with in the death of the paschal lambs in the preceding overall type.

Why do individuals do this, particularly since this is not at all the plainly revealed central subject matter seen throughout the gospels, much less all Scripture?

And it is also quite clear that John's gospel is no different than the other three in this respect, dealing with the same subject matter. It is simply *NOT possible* to read and study through the gospels, seeing three of the gospels dealing with and centering around one subject and John's gospel dealing with and centering around another.

The central message throughout all four gospels is plainly seen to be THE SAME, though from different perspectives. All four can clearly be seen to deal with different facets of EXACTLY the same central message, and salvation by grace through faith is NOT that message.

In fact, there is no such thing as any book in Scripture — Old Testament or New Testament — dealing centrally with salvation by grace. Though this message can be seen throughout Scripture, beginning in the opening verses of Genesis, *salvation by grace is simply NOT the central subject matter at hand anywhere in Scripture. Rather, salvation by grace is ALWAYS seen as the beginning point of the central subject, the central message (e.g., Ex. 12ff; Eph. 2:8-10).*

Jude sought to write an epistle dealing with salvation by grace, but the Spirit stopped him and moved Jude to write on another subject, on apostasy (vv. 3ff).

And, as previously noted, any of the other epistles is the same, as is Acts, as are the four gospels, as are all Old Testament books.

And the preceding is not to minimize the importance of the message surrounding salvation by grace through faith, *for this is*

where one *MUST* begin. But a person is *NOT* to remain there. He is *TO GO ON*. And that is exactly what *ALL* Scripture does.

The Israelites under Moses *DIDN'T* remain in Egypt, continuing to deal with death and shed blood in relation to the death of the firstborn. *NO*, they left Egypt under Moses, enroute to a land set before them, to which they had been called.

Nor are Christians under Christ to continue dealing with death and shed blood in relation to the death of the firstborn. *NO*, they are *TO MOVE ON* to things pertaining to a land set before them, to which they have been called.

And that is the way Scripture is structured. Scripture *BEGINS* with death and shed blood in relation to the death of the firstborn. But Scripture *DOESN'T* stay there. Scripture *MOVES ON* toward a goal, which the beginning makes possible, a goal in another land to which the one having appropriated the blood of a dead paschal lamb in the type, the blood of the slain Paschal Lamb in the antitype, has been called.

The Kingdom Proclaimed Throughout

Salvation by grace through faith is *NOT* seen as the central message throughout any one of the four gospels, the epistles or anyplace elsewhere in Scripture, *for a revealed reason*. And that is quite easy to show, if done the Biblical way — simply allow Scripture to address the issue.

Man, in the beginning, was created for *regal purposes* (Gen. 1:26-28), his fall had to do with *these purposes* (Gen. 3:1ff), and *God's purpose* for restoring fallen man — revealed at the beginning in Genesis and dealt with throughout the Old Testament — was *regal*. *This purpose was to ultimately undo all things surrounding the fall and place man back in the regal position seen at the time of his creation* (Gen. 3:15, 21; Rom. 11:29).

To work out His plans and purposes, God, 2,000 years beyond man's creation and fall, called one man out of the human race — Abraham. And *ALL THINGS* involved in Abraham's calling (Gen. 12:1-3), a separate and distinct creation formed in his grandson, Jacob (Isa. 43:1), and the bringing into existence of the nation of

Israel from the loins of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob — a nation through which God would work out His plans and purposes — *had to do with God ultimately placing man in the position for which he was created in the beginning.*

Jesus, having been sent through the nation emanating from the loins of Abraham, was born “King” (Matt. 2:2). He appeared on this earth and presented Himself to the Jewish people in this respect (Matt. 4:12ff; 21:1-5; John 1:11; *cf.* Zech. 9:9), and salvation, deliverance for Israel in connection with His message, had to do with *His kingship and kingdom* (Matt. 21:6-9).

As seen throughout the gospels — begun by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1ff), continued by Jesus (Matt. 4:12ff), the Twelve (Matt. 10:1ff), and the Seventy (Luke 10:1ff) — *the message was directed to Israel pertaining to deliverance with respect to the kingdom.*

The message throughout was *for Israel alone*, and it had *NOTHING* to do with the message of salvation by grace through faith. Rather, it had to do with an offer of *the kingdom of the heavens* (an expression used thirty-two times in Matthew’s gospel), *based on national repentance* (e.g., as seen in Daniel’s repentant prayer on behalf of himself and the nation in Dan. 9:3-19).

(The expression, “the kingdom of heaven,” found thirty-two times in Matthew’s gospel, should be translated, “the kingdom of the heavens” in all occurrences. Both nouns are *articular*, and “heaven” is always *plural* in the Greek text [*he basileia ton ouranon*].

This expression is peculiar to Matthew’s gospel, except possibly John 3:5. A number of Greek manuscripts have “the kingdom of the heavens” instead of “the kingdom of God” in this verse.

However, the matter of how John 3:5 should read in this respect is immaterial. All four gospels are about *the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, based on national repentance.* And the expression, “the kingdom of God,” as it is used throughout all four gospels *would have to be understood in this same respect [limited to the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, seen in the subject matter at hand and articulated as such in Matthew’s gospel].*

Note for example in Matt. 19:23, 24, both expressions appear and are used in a *synonymous respect* [*cf.* Matt. 10:7; Luke 10:9]. And this same usage of “the kingdom of God,” as will become evident in later chapters in this book, carries over into the Book of Acts and the epistles.)

The offer of the kingdom to Israel, beginning with John, had to do with *the heavenly aspect of the kingdom* (the realm from whence Satan and his angels then ruled and continue to rule today), not the earthly, the kingdom covenanted to David, centered in Jerusalem on earth.

This heavenly aspect of the kingdom was introduced in Genesis in connection with Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) and is seen referenced and/or dealt with numerous times throughout both Testaments (*cf.* Gen. 22:15-18; 26:3, 4; 28:3, 4, 12-15; Dan. 7:18-27; Heb. 11:8-12). Thus, this facet of the kingdom was far from something new, proclaimed and offered to Israel on the basis of national repentance.

There is *NOTHING* in this central message pervading the gospels that is even remotely connected with salvation by grace.

From the type in Exodus, alluded to earlier, salvation by grace is seen in things having to do with the death of the paschal lambs while still in Egypt. That being proclaimed throughout the gospel accounts *has to do with things beyond the death of the paschal lambs* (foreshadowing Christ's death at Calvary, as the Paschal Lamb), *with a deliverance relating to the land of their inheritance, though seen as heavenly, not earthly.*

And *THIS ALONE* would tell a person something about those in Israel to whom this message was being proclaimed and the offer extended. Those being dealt with throughout the gospels — dealt with relative to that which lay beyond the death of the paschal lambs — *COULD ONLY have been a saved people, not unsaved in need of applying the blood of the paschal lambs back in Egypt.*

And all of this should be easy enough for anyone to see and understand, for the Jewish people to whom Christ came were still sacrificing the paschal lambs year after year. And, on that basis, they could only have been just as saved as the generation which left Egypt under Moses, with God seeing efficacy in death and shed blood both times, along with all of the times between where death and shed blood were seen.

Solely from a Biblical standpoint, *it would be IMPOSSIBLE to see efficacy during Moses' day but not see THE SAME THING 1,500 years later, with the same people and the same set of circumstances.*

As well, had Christ come to an unsaved nation 2,000 years ago, it would have been *EQUALLY IMPOSSIBLE* to see John, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy dealing with a message concerning the land set before them — which is what they were doing, a heavenly land in this case — without first dealing with a message concerning the application of the blood of dead paschal lambs, or the shed blood of the Paschal Lamb about to die.

Had the nation been comprised of unsaved Jews at this time, and had John, Jesus, the Twelve, and later the Seventy not begun with a message concerning the death and shed blood of paschal lambs, they would have been ignoring that foreshadowed by things seen on day one in Gen. 1 and beginning with that foreshadowed by things seen in days two through six.

Scripture is simply NOT structured in such a manner, not at the beginning or anyplace beyond that.

And, if a person wants to see a basis for God recognizing efficacy in the shed blood of paschal lambs either during Moses' day or 1,500 years later when Christ was upon earth the first time, note the statement in Rev. 13:8:

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

(Also note something about that seen in the preceding several paragraphs in connection with the importance of Biblical typology, one of the many different ways that God has structured His Word [Heb. 1:1, 2].

The saved status of the nation when Christ came the first time *CAN EASILY BE SEEN FROM THE TYPES*, as previously outlined. And, in that respect, a main reason why a high percentage of Christians make the mistake of trying to see a message of salvation by grace throughout the gospels, with the message directed to individuals comprising an unsaved nation, can only be the neglect of and often disdain for the types.

And because of this, they, in reality, are neglecting/ rejecting a large portion of the revealed Word. And this part of the Word is something which, as previously seen, would open other parts of

the Word to their understanding, preventing them from making mistakes of this nature in Biblical interpretation.

And this particular mistake is far from something minor in Biblical interpretation. *This is something MAJOR, VERY MAJOR.*

[As an added note to illustrate *the importance of types*, numerous Christians, attempting to show the importance of the study of prophecy, often say that between twenty-five and thirty percent of the Old Testament is prophetic in nature.

But, saying this, they have ignored something about Scripture, for *the percentage is MUCH, MUCH higher. They have ignored God's built-in typical aspect of Scripture.*

Including the types would probably *more than double the percentage figures that many present (e.g., referencing the types, try to find something in the Pentateuch alone that, from a typical standpoint, was not prophetic 3,500 years ago or remains prophetic today.*

Most of Genesis remains prophetic today, all of Exodus does...].)

John's Gospel

And if anyone wants to see the Gospel of John as somehow different than the other three gospels in the preceding respect, note *the eight signs* around which the gospel is built and what is not only dealt with in the signs but that which signs have to do with.

That dealt with in these eight signs has to do with *Israel*, with these signs carrying matters out into *the future, into a future kingdom, showing the nation, at that time, what they could have if they would but heed the proclaimed message and repent. And this gospel today shows what they one day will have when repentance is forthcoming.*

Signs in Scripture, as illustrated in the preceding paragraph, have to do with two inseparable things — *Israel* and *the kingdom*. If both are not present, *signs, in the true Biblical sense, CANNOT EXIST.*

Signs have *NOTHING* to do with the Church or with the gospel of grace. *Instead, as previously stated, they have to do with ISRAEL, and they have to do with this nation in relation to THE KINGDOM.*

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to Appendix II in this book, "Signs, Wonders, Miracles.")

"Signs" are seen throughout all four gospels and the Book of Acts. They are seen throughout both the offer [in the gospels] and the re-offer [in Acts] of the kingdom to Israel. Beyond that, they ceased being manifested, as stated in I Cor. 13:8-10 [*ref.* previously mentioned appendix article].

And the eight signs around which John's gospel is built all have to do with and point to exactly the same thing [*Israel, the kingdom, and conditions during a seventh 1,000-year period when the kingdom will be realized*].

And this is exactly what is seen in not only the other three gospels but the Book of Acts as well [*ref.* Chapters IV, V in this book, "Central Message in the Book of Acts" and "A Panoramic View of the Book of Acts"].

Thus, attempts to single John's gospel out as being different than the other three in this respect, as being the one gospel written to relate the message of salvation by grace, can easily be shown to not only be false but very misleading as well [casting a completely wrong light upon the purpose for John's gospel] by simply allowing Scripture to speak for and interpret itself.)

The Gospel of John, written sometime between about 40 to 60 AD (a window in time accepted by many who study these things), records eight signs performed by Christ during His earthly ministry (the eighth sign has to do with events surrounding Calvary).

"Signs" were directed to Israel during the offer of the kingdom (by Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy) and redirected to Israel during the re-offer of the kingdom (starting with the one hundred twenty in Acts 2 [v. 43], later through the signs in John's gospel [which shows that this gospel had to be written before the close of the re-offer, before about 62 AD, else the stated purpose for this gospel, incorporating these signs, could not be realized]).

And the stated purpose for these signs being manifested in the offer (during time seen in the four gospels), with eight of these original signs singled out in John's gospel (written during the Acts period) is given toward the end of John's gospel:

“And many other signs [having to do with Israel in relation to the proffered kingdom] truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written [‘these have been recorded’], that ye [a plural pronoun, the entire Jewish nation] might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life [‘life’ in relation to that being offered, *‘life’ in the Messianic kingdom*] through his name” (John 20:30, 31).

And attempts by well-meaning Christians to take these two verses and associate them with the gospel of grace, showing a completely wrong purpose for John’s gospel, has probably done more to pervert or destroy any correct understanding of the message seen throughout the gospels than possibly any other one thing.

(For related information on this subject, refer to Appendix III in this book, “Misuse of John 20:30, 31.”)

Rejection of the Offer, Crucifixion of Israel’s King

To further illustrate the nature of the message seen throughout the gospels, carrying matters into Acts, then into the epistles, note that which Israel’s religious leaders brought to pass through their opposition to the Messenger and His message.

Israel’s religious leaders — particularly the Pharisees, who, by their very numbers, governed and controlled the religious life of the people — *followed Christ about the country, seeking, at every opportunity, to cast reproach upon Christ, His disciples, and their ministry to Israel.*

Through this means, the Pharisees, along with the Scribes (the teachers and keepers of the Law, the fundamental legalists in Israel), were the ones primarily responsible (the Sadducees to a lesser extent) for a national rejection of the Messenger and His message, leading to and ending with the events surrounding Calvary.

In days immediately preceding the Cross, because of what the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees had caused, Christ cursed a fig tree which He came across enroute to Jerusalem:

“Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever [*lit.*, ‘henceforward with respect to the age’]. And presently the fig tree withered away” (Matt. 21:18, 19).

(On the preceding translation of “forever” as “with respect to the age” — Greek, *eis ton aiona* — refer to Appendix I in this book, “Aion, Aionios.”)

“The fig tree” is used in Scripture to symbolize *Israel* (Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:6-12). And Christ used this particular fig tree to not only make a statement concerning the nation’s barren condition but also where this condition was about to take the nation.

There was NO FRUIT on the tree, nothing but leaves. And because of this, because of what had happened over the course of the past three to three and one-half years — *Christ seeking fruit from the nation, but finding ONLY a barren tree* — cursed the fruitless fig tree, cursed fruitless Israel, saying, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward with respect to the age.”

The reference to fruitlessness had to do with THE KINGDOM which had been offered, and the time in view relative to fruitlessness would be THE COMING AGE, THE MESSIANIC ERA.

Fruit will appear on the tree during the coming age. This is quite clear from the Prophets. But, NO FRUIT will appear on the tree relative to the heavenly sphere of the kingdom. That, as well, is quite clear.

And exactly why this would be the case, aside from the nation having borne no fruit, is seen further down in the chapter, following the parable of the Householder and His vineyard (vv. 33-39).

Note Christ’s question to the chief priests and Pharisees concerning this parable (v. 40), their response (v. 41), Christ’s response in return (vv. 42-44), and the chief priests and Pharisees’ thoughts expressed among themselves (v. 45):

“When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render

him the fruits in their seasons.

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them" (Matt. 21:40-45).

Note verse forty-three in the preceding.

Because of that which had been done, resulting in rejection on the fruitless nation's part, Christ announced in the presence of those primarily responsible (Israel's religious leaders) that "the kingdom of God" (that facet of the kingdom which had been offered to and rejected by Israel, the kingdom of the heavens, the heavenly sphere of the kingdom [*ref. indented text on page 6 of this chapter*]) would be *taken from Israel* and "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

On the day of Pentecost, about two months later, this "nation," a completely new entity, was brought into existence — *the one new man* "in Christ" (*cf.* II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:11-16; I Peter 2:9-11). And God used this new entity, which was about to come into possession of and be allowed to bring forth fruit for this sphere of the kingdom, to re-offer this kingdom to Israel.

This began in Acts chapter two and is seen being continued for almost the next three decades throughout the Book of Acts, ending with Paul being rejected by the Jewish religious leaders in Rome. And for the third and final time, following two previous climactic rejections, Paul announced to these Jewish religious leaders in Rome that this message would now be carried to the Gentiles (Acts 28:16-31; *cf.* Acts 13:14-46; 18:1-6).

And that is where Acts ends and the epistles pick up, with *Israel completely set aside for the remainder of the dispensation and the Church ALONE seen as the ONE NOT ONLY NOW in possession of the heavenly aspect of the kingdom but the ONLY ONE NOW in a position to bring forth fruit for this part of the kingdom.*

(That seen in the preceding three paragraphs — moving beyond the gospels into the Book of Acts, then into the epistles — is dealt with in Chapters IV-VIII in this book.)

2

JERUSALEM, JUDAEA, SAMARIA...

*Order for the Proclamation of the Message
But, WHAT Message? WHEN Proclaimed?*

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:1-8).

“He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

And he must needs go through Samaria” (John 4:3, 4).

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The preceding verses, arranged in a sequential order of events occurring during or immediately following Christ's earthly ministry, are, in the main, *vastly misunderstood in Christendom today, often resulting in mayhem in Biblical interpretation.*

"Mayhem in Biblical interpretation" may sound a little strong. But, from what has often been done with these sections of Scripture, not so at all!

For example, in the previously quoted verses from Matthew's and John's gospels, Christ, when He called the twelve disciples, specifically commanded them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles," or "the Samaritans" (Matt. 10:5). Yet later, enroute to Galilee, Christ took His disciples through Samaria and had dealings with the Samaritans (remaining two days) — a woman at Jacob's well and others who, after hearing the woman, sought Him out (John 4:3ff).

How is this to be understood in relation to Christ's ministry to Israel at this time? *What, if anything, was different in that which Christ did and said during the two days that He spent with the Samaritans?*

What type ministry did Christ have among a people which He had specifically commanded His disciples *to have NO DEALINGS WITH concerning the message being proclaimed to the Jews?*

If Christ's dealings with the Samaritans had to do with evangelism — the gospel of grace and eternal salvation, as numerous individuals claim and teach — then *He proclaimed a message that He hadn't previously been proclaiming among the Jews.*

But, on the other hand, had Christ proclaimed an evangelistic message to the Samaritans, doing such would not really have run counter to His previous command to the disciples in Matt. 10:5, for, again, the message which Christ and His disciples proclaimed to the Jews *had NOTHING to do with eternal salvation.*

The text though, as can easily be seen, and as will be shown in this chapter, deals with something completely different. The text deals with *something related to His ministry among those in Israel, but NOT the same at all.*

Then, something which the text *DOESN'T* deal with is what almost everyone seems to want to deal with, not only in John 4 but elsewhere in John and the other gospel accounts as well — the gospel of grace and eternal salvation.

Or, viewing the matter in another respect, as previously seen, preceding His crucifixion Christ had sent the disciples to *the Jewish people ALONE*. But following His resurrection, the ministry of the disciples in this respect changed. The Jewish people still held priority, *BUT the message was no longer to them alone*.

The disciples, following Christ's resurrection, were commanded *TO BEGIN by taking the message to the Jewish people; but they were NOT to stop there, as before. They WERE NOW commanded to carry this message to not only the Samaritans but also to the nations worldwide* (Acts 1:8; cf. Rom. 1:16: 2:9, 10).

What made the difference? What is this all about? Why was the proclaimed message restricted to Israel prior to the events surrounding Calvary and Christ's resurrection, then extensively broadened following this time?

And, was the message which had been restricted to Israel in the gospels, preceding the events of Calvary, the same message in Acts which was to be proclaimed not only once again to Israel but also to the Samaritans and the Gentile nations following Christ's resurrection and ascension?

Then, to carry this one step further, was this the same message dealt with in the epistles, proclaimed to Christians, bringing matters down to the present day and time?

Properly understanding the preceding questions is the "key" to properly understanding Christ's encounter with not only the Samaritans in John 4 (at a time when *the message was to the Jewish people alone*) but also properly understanding much of the New Testament as a whole.

In fact, apart from possessing at least some understanding of what has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs, a person can only find himself viewing the whole of the New Testament as so many do — salvation by grace seen as the central message throughout, with little understanding of the correct message carried over from the Old Testament and seen throughout the gospels, Acts, the epistles, and climaxed in the Book of Revelation.

And, there is only one way to properly deal with a correct approach to the New Testament — begin at the base point, the foundational point, and proceed from there.

Thus, Christ's ministry to Israel, preceded by John's ministry as His forerunner, will be dealt with first, drawing from the Old Testament at times to show the "why" of the message being proclaimed to Israel. Then matters will be carried from there, as Samaria, the nations, and the Church are brought into the picture.

Christ's Birth and Subsequent Appearance to Israel

Preceding Jesus' birth, wise men from the East (evidently Jews from the vicinity of Babylon [generational descendants of Jews taken captive centuries earlier]), following the supernatural appearance of a star, came to Jerusalem looking for that which the star signaled — the birth of Israel's long-promised Messiah.

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth [probably referencing unruly individuals in Moab]" (Num. 24:17).

The appearance of this star in the East clearly had to do with the appearance of *a Messiah Who would hold the sceptre and rule*. And, accordingly, the question asked by those having traveled to Jerusalem from the East, followed by an explanatory statement, was *singular*:

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2).

Israel (Jews in the diaspora and in the land) was looking for a "King," a reigning Messiah, apart from any thought of a suffering Messiah (something which would precede His reign, though not understood). They wanted a Messiah who would overthrow Gentile world power (Rome, in this case) and restore the kingdom to Israel.

And the preceding, among orthodox Jews, or Jews believing in some form of a Messiah's future appearance at all, has never really changed down through the years, extending into modern times.

And throughout this time, in this respect, there has been somewhat of a paradox between Jews and Christians. *The Jews*

want a Messiah who reigns but doesn't suffer, while Christians want a Messiah who suffers but doesn't reign.

This whole scenario of a suffering/reigning Messiah is what confused John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. He found himself imprisoned, with things in Christ's ministry not moving in the direction which he thought that they should be going — the forerunner was imprisoned, Messiah was being rejected — and he sent two disciples to Jesus with a question concerning the matter:

“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” (Matt. 11:3b).

And Jesus answered John after a manner that *no question would be left in John's mind about His identity*:

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt. 11:4, 5).

John would know, from Old Testament revelation (which is all that he had), that the supernatural signs which Christ was manifesting in connection with the message being proclaimed could have to do with *ONLY ONE DUAL SUBJECT — Israel and the kingdom*.

Thus, John, though evidently not understanding the direction things had taken in Christ's ministry, would then have known that *Jesus was the Messiah Whom the Jewish nation had been awaiting, the One Who would rule and reign*.

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to Appendix II in this book, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles.”)

John didn't understand that the suffering of Israel's Messiah must occur first. And this suffering, resulting from the nation's rejection rather than their acceptance, confused John, prompting his question.

And he would not have been alone in this type thinking. This was something not understood by the Jewish people at all.

(John though, as seen in John 1:29, 35, 36, seemed to have somewhat grasped the suffering part of Christ's complete ministry when "looking upon Jesus" ["intently looking" in v. 36, Greek text].)

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

And looking ['intently looking'] upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"

The wise men from the East had come to Jerusalem looking for a reigning Messiah. And, accordingly, Israel's Messiah had not only been born in a regal manner (born King) but later appeared to the nation in this same regal respect, proclaiming a message pertaining to the Kingdom, not a message pertaining to the Cross.

John 1:1, 2, 11, 14, would deal with Christ's appearance at the time of His birth, and later during His ministry, after the same fashion. He was the Word (God Himself), made flesh, Who appeared to the Jewish people after the manner seen in verse 11:

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

There is a usage of Greek words in this verse which is not seen in the English text at all. Note the word "own," appearing twice. The first is neuter, the second masculine, both plural. And the verse should be understood in this respect:

"He came unto his own things, and his own people received Him not."

Christ's Own things had to do with the manner in which He was born and conducted His ministry. *EVERYTHING WAS REGAL*, having to do with *A REIGNING MESSIAH*, until things began to move more toward *THE CROSS*, with *A SUFFERING MESSIAH* then progressively coming more and more into view.

His Own things, to which He came, had to do with the Davidic throne and kingdom and His Own throne in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom.

And His Own people, who rejected Him, were the Jewish people

— those who, had they received Him, would have been elevated to the head of the nations and would have reigned with Him in the proffered kingdom.

1) *Christ's Ministry to Israel in the Gospels*

John the Baptist appeared as the forerunner of the Messiah, with a singular message:

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven [*lit.*, ‘the kingdom of the heavens’] is at hand” (Matt. 3:1, 2).

(As previously seen [Ch. I], the expression, “the kingdom of heaven” appears thirty-two times in Matthew’s gospel and is peculiar to this gospel, with the possible exception of its appearance in some Greek manuscripts of John 3:5. Without exception, both nouns are preceded by the definite article, with “heaven” always plural. Thus, the expression, in all instances, should be translated, “the kingdom of the heavens.”

Then, the expression, “the kingdom of God,” used throughout the four gospels, must be understood *in the same sense* as “the kingdom of the heavens.” Both are used in Matthew [note, for example, the interchangeable use in Matt. 19:23, 24; cf. Matt. 10:7; Luke 10:9], and, with the possible exception of John 3:5, *only* the expression “the kingdom of God” appears in the other three gospels.

The expression, “the kingdom of God,” could refer to God’s complete universal government. But this is not the way that it is used in the gospels, or really anywhere else in Scripture [except possibly a statement such as seen in Ps. 103:19]. Scripture pertains centrally to events as they relate to *man, this earth, and 7,000 years of time — from man’s creation and fall to the end of the Messianic Kingdom*. All of this has been set in an unchangeable manner in the opening thirty-four verses of Scripture (Gen. 1:1-2:3; also in John’s gospel [1:1-2:11], which should begin the N.T.).

Both “the kingdom of the heavens” and “the kingdom of God” relate to that which was offered to, rejected by, and ultimately taken from Israel in the gospel accounts, extending into Acts. In this respect, both expressions would have to reference the same thing.

And this same kingdom, seen in the epistles [*e.g.*, I Cor. 6:18, 19; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; I Thess. 2:12; II Thess. 1:5], is now being offered to the “nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,” seen in Matt. 21:43 and

I Peter 2:9-11 — *the one new man “in Christ,” Christians.*

Then, this kingdom, as the name in Matthew’s gospel implies, is *a heavenly kingdom* [cf. II Tim. 4:1, 18].

There are two facets of the kingdom — *heavenly* and *earthly* — introduced in Genesis in connection with the Melchizedek priesthood, then seen throughout Scripture [Gen. 14:18-20; cf. Gen. 22:17, 18; 26:3, 4; 28:3, 4, 12-15; Gal. 3:29].

That taken from Israel in Matt. 21:43 is the same thing previously offered to and rejected by Israel. *If the kingdom covenanted to David — the earthly sphere of the kingdom — was that kingdom offered to Israel, then this kingdom has been taken from Israel, with Israel, following that time, having NO national regal future, along with the fact that numerous O.T. prophecies having to do with a regal future for Israel would FAIL of fulfillment.*

But, *if the heavenly sphere of the kingdom was that facet of the kingdom previously offered to, rejected by, and taken from Israel — exactly as seen beginning in Matthew — then EVERYTHING falls into place relative to both Israel and the calling into existence of the Church [“Abraham’s seed” (through positionally being “in Christ”), and “heirs according to the promise” (heavenly, not earthly, cf. Gal. 3:26-29)], called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected.*

BOTH Israel and the Church, accordingly, have a prophesied regal future. “Israel’s” future has to do with the Davidic kingdom, the earthly sphere of the kingdom [as the restored wife of Jehovah]. And “the Church’s” future has to do with the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, occupying regal positions as co-heirs with Christ in the heavens over the earth [as His wife].

Note that Christ and His co-heirs [the “called out” from among those being saved (the “called”) during the present dispensation] will replace the earth’s present rulers — Satan and his angels — who rule through the Gentile nations from a place in the heavens [Dan. 10:12-20].

And, in this respect, our present warfare, under Christ, relative to the coming inheritance is *against the incumbent inhabitants and rulers in these heavenly places*, just as the Israelites warfare, under Moses, was *against the nations inhabiting and controlling the land of their inheritance* [cf. Num. 13:26-30; Eph. 6:12ff].

Christ will rule both from His Own throne in the heavens with His co-heirs and on earth from David’s throne in the midst of a converted and restored Jewish nation [Joel 2:27-32; Luke 1:32, 33; Rev. 3:21].

Looking at the matter any other way will result in some form of skewed doctrine concerning Israel, the Church, and the Kingdom.)

With the preceding in view, note that the message seen throughout the four gospels was a message directed to Israel, and this message concerned the kingdom (*the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, not the earthly*).

This message began to be proclaimed by John the Baptist, then by Christ, then by the Twelve, and later by the Seventy. *And as previously seen, it was a message for ISRAEL ALONE — NOT for the Samaritans (a mixed race, resulting from intermarriages between Jews and Gentiles [two separate creations]); NOR was it for the Gentiles.*

The message, though a salvation message, *had NOTHING to do with salvation by grace.* It had to do with *salvation, deliverance, in relation to a proffered kingdom for a people who were already saved.*

(Something must be clearly understood at this point, else one can only become hopelessly confused concerning what is involved in that proclaimed to Israel by John, Christ, the Twelve, and the Seventy.

Everything in the gospels, save late in this period when the Cross began coming more and more into view, has to do with the subject at hand — *the proffered kingdom and life or non-life therein.*

And even the Cross would have to do with the proffered kingdom, for there are two preachings of the Cross — one for the unsaved, the other for the saved [*ref. the author's article, "[The Preaching of the Cross](#)"*].

Salvation [deliverance] and blessings for individuals in the gospels had to do with THE PROFFERED KINGDOM; the opposite, no salvation [no deliverance] and no blessings for individuals — resulting from rejection — had to do with THE PROFFERED KINGDOM as well.

Eternal verities — eternal salvation, eternal damnation — *ARE NOT, THEY CANNOT BE, in view, at any time, through the proclamation of this message throughout the gospels.*

And any attempt to read eternal verities rather than the proffered kingdom into this message at any time throughout the four gospels, which is quite often attempted, particularly with John's gospel, will only militate against and destroy that which is clearly stated and taught.

A saved people are being dealt with throughout the gospel accounts, and the salvation or loss in view *HAS TO BE understood in relation to THE SUBJECT AT HAND, which is THE KINGDOM.*

The Jewish people did not reject Christ as their Paschal Lamb. Rather, they rejected Christ as *their King*, claiming before Pilate to have

no king but Caesar.

[Those comprising the Jewish nation *were dealt with (beginning with John, then Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy in the offer of the kingdom, then the Disciples in Acts in the re-offer of the kingdom) as A PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN SAVED*, though nothing is said about this per se. It is seemingly taken for granted that the reader would know and understand this from the past history of the nation, with the whole matter not even being an issue in the subject at hand.

As previously seen in Chapter I in this book, those comprising the Jewish nation in the gospel accounts and in Acts are simply seen as a people who were continuing to sacrifice the paschal lamb year after year (sacrifices preceding Calvary), as seen 1,500 years prior to this time in the camp of Israel during Moses' day. *And they would have been just as saved — saved on the same basis, death and shed blood — as the generation during Moses' day, or generations of Jews continuing to sacrifice the paschal lamb year after year at any other time in between.*

And, again, if one wants a *basis* for God recognizing efficacy in these slain lambs, that can be seen in Rev. 13:8.)

To illustrate the preceding in connection with how it is being completely ignored and erroneously dealt with in Christendom today, note the account of Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night in John 3:1ff.

The subject matter had to do with “signs,” in connection with the message being proclaimed. And Christ remained with the subject matter which Nicodemus had introduced, dealing with the proffered kingdom and the absolute necessity for an individual, in relation to understanding the message being proclaimed and entering the kingdom being offered, *to be brought forth from above rather than from below.*

NONE of this has anything whatsoever to do with salvation by grace through faith. Rather, all of it has to do with the message being proclaimed to Israel in relation to the kingdom. Again, note the reference to “signs” and “the kingdom of God” in John 3:1-5.

Nicodemus *DIDN'T* approach Christ with any type statement or question dealing with eternal salvation. Why should he? *Eternal salvation was already A SETTLED MATTER among those comprising the Jewish nation, to whom Christ came.* And, accordingly, in response,

Christ remained with the subject at hand — *signs, and a message to Israel concerning the proffered kingdom.*

And what the whole of Christendom, over decades of time, has done with this account in John 3:1ff, is nothing short of a tragedy in Biblical interpretation. Scripture has been lifted from its context and made to deal with something which it doesn't deal with at all, *which is NEVER good in Biblical interpretation. Doing so will ALWAYS result in more misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Error simply DOES NOT produce truth. Error CAN ONLY produce more error.*

(For additional information on John 3:1ff, refer to Chapters VII-IX in the author's book, [*Signs in John's Gospel.*](#))

And John 3:1ff is just one of numerous texts in the gospels where things of the preceding nature have been done.

Using a couple of other texts to illustrate what is being done in Christendom to aid in closing the gospel accounts to any proper understanding of the subject matter at hand, note two sections of Scripture, again in John's gospel (for this is the gospel used over and over by individuals, *attempting to make large parts of this gospel relate to the gospel of grace, removing the gospel from its proper place and setting among the other three*):

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever [*lit.*, 'he shall live with respect to the age']: and the bread that I will give is my flesh..."

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life [*lit.*, 'hath age-lasting life']; and I will raise him up at the last day..."

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever [*lit.*, 'shall live with respect to the age']" (John 6:51a-54, 58).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death [*lit.*, 'he certainly will not see death with respect to the age'].

Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil.

Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death [*lit.*, 'he certainly will not taste of death with respect to the age']" (John 8:51, 52; cf. John 11:26).

The preceding sections of Scripture are similar passages, one from the sixth chapter of John and the other from the eighth chapter. These two sections have been singled out to illustrate, from two standpoints (a general misunderstanding of the gospels, and a mistranslation of the text), what is being done with interpretation in the gospels, which, in turn, extends over into interpretation in the Book of Acts and the epistles.

That is to say, go wrong on interpretation in the gospels, and, with a skewed foundation, you can only go wrong on interpretation in the Book of Acts and in the epistles.

(Or, matters could, and should, be carried back behind the gospels to the Old Testament, particularly to Moses, where the beginning foundational data for any Biblical doctrine can be found.

In short, one doesn't begin in the gospels, but in Moses. That seen in the gospels MUST be understood in the light of that first seen in Moses.)

Note the words "forever," "eternal," and "never" in the preceding sections of Scripture from John's gospel (6:51, 54, 58; 8:51, 52). These words are either translations of or are inseparably connected with the two Greek words translated "forever," "eternal," or "everlasting" throughout the New Testament — *aion* and *aionios*. The former is a noun, and the latter is the adjective form of the noun, both meaning and referring to exactly the same thing.

The translation problem arises from the fact that neither word means "eternal," and both have been indiscriminately translated "forever," "eternal," or "everlasting" throughout the New Testament (*aion* has also been translated "world" a number of times). Both words have to do with *a period of time*, with the length of that time to be determined by its contextual usage, with the words often referencing *an age*, for *a future age* is the "time" which the proclaimed message deals with in the four gospels.

That is to say, "time" comprising *the Messianic Era* — *the coming age* — when the proffered kingdom would be realized, was

inseparably connected with the subject at hand. Thus, *aion* and *aionios*, in this respect, are used over and over in the gospels to reference “time” which will exist during *THIS ERA*. And both words should be translated accordingly, which is “age,” *NOT eternal*.

Combining this mistranslation of *aion* and *aionios* with a non-understanding of the subject matter being dealt with throughout the gospels, extending into Acts and the epistles — which is exactly what can be seen throughout much of Christendom today — *a perfect scenario for disaster in Biblical interpretation CAN ONLY EXIST, starting with the gospels.*

(For extensive information on *aion* and *aionios*, refer to Appendix I in this book, “Aion, Aionios.” This six-page appendix has been taken from Marvin R. Vincent’s work on the subject over 100 years ago [from his four-volume set, titled, *Word Studies in the New Testament*].

On the quoted verses from John 6, 8, the Greek expression, *eis ton aiona* [“with respect to the age” (dealt with in Vincent’s work)], is used in 6:51, 58; 8:51, 52 and *aionios* [“age-lasting”] is used in 6:57.

As well, in the next section of this chapter, parts of John 4:14-40 will be dealt with. Both *eis ton aiona* and *aionios* appear in v. 14, and *aionios* appears again in v. 36.

[Scripture deals centrally with “*TIME*,” *not with eternity*. This is the way matters are set forth at the beginning in Genesis, or at the beginning in John’s gospel, which should begin the New Testament, not Matthew — *a foundational, septenary structure seen beginning both Testaments.*

That is to say, *The WHOLE of Scripture, as revealed in the opening part of each Testament, moves toward a seventh day, a seventh 1,000-year period, NOT toward eternity. Eternity, an endless array of ages — which lies beyond this septenary structure upon which the WHOLE of Scripture rests — comes into view ONLY AFTER the seven days, ONLY AFTER the 7,000 years. Both Testaments BEGIN and CONTINUE in this manner.*

And this will provide the evident reason why neither the Hebrew text of the Old Testament nor the Greek text of the New Testament uses a word for “eternal,” “everlasting.” Both Testaments use words which have to do with “*TIME*” — *ages, periods of time, etc.*

Olam is the main word used in this manner in the Hebrew Old Testament; and *aion*, with its adjective, *aiionios*, is the main word used in this manner in the Greek New Testament.

Note also, in the preceding respect, that even salvation by grace *CAN ONLY have to do, first and foremost, with this septenary structure, though in its larger scope moves into the ages beyond*].)

The subjects under discussion in the quoted verses from John chapters six and eight are related subjects in perfect keeping with the subject matter seen throughout the gospels, both present and future. They have to do with both *an intake and assimilation of the Word* (6:51-58), and *keeping the Lord's commandments* (8:51, 52).

There is a literal eating of *the living bread, which is His flesh, and a drinking of His blood* (the Word made flesh [John 1:1, 2, 14]), but this is done in a different type literal manner other than partaking of His physical body and blood. It is accomplished through an intake and assimilation of the Word in another form, in written form (ch. 6).

And, of course, keeping the Lord's commandments in this written form of the Word would need no explanation (ch. 8).

And it should also require no explanation to see that none of that seen in these two sections can have anything to do with a person's eternal salvation, a manner in which the verses are often interpreted and used.

Rather, that seen in these verses *has to do with actions undertaken by those who have already been saved, with a view to the kingdom out ahead* (cf. Acts 20:25-32).

Then, as well, as would be self-explanatory, *the preceding CAN ONLY BE SEEN as part and parcel with the message which was being proclaimed to Israel throughout the ministries of John, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy, with a view to the coming age, the Messianic Era.*

But note what has been done with these two sections of Scripture by trying to read eternal verities and the gospel of grace into them, which is the same thing seen in John 3:1ff and numerous other places in not only John's gospel but the other three gospels as well, not to mention the Book of Acts and the epistles.

It is little wonder that people are confused and the Churches

of the land have had to resort to the ways of the world to attract individuals or even keep their members.

Any semblance of correct interpretation has been thrown to the winds, with even *a skewed salvation message* often replacing that actually taught in the text (for the salvation message has to be made to have some type connection with that stated in the text, *something which has NOTHING to do with that being taught*).

2) Christ's Ministry Passing through Samaria in John 4

Now, let's look at something a little different in John's gospel but often mishandled in a similar respect to that seen in the previous material.

Christ, at a time during the course of His ministry, as seen in John 4, took His disciples and traveled from Judaea to Galilee, taking the more direct route, though less traveled, through Samaria.

Many Jews of that day, traveling between Judaea and Galilee, one way or the other, to avoid any contact with the Samaritans, would cross the Jordan River, travel the distance required to bypass Samaria, then re-cross the river once north or south of Samaria.

But Christ chose to take His disciples through Samaria rather than bypass this region on the east side of Jordan.

And since He had specifically told His disciples *NOT to go to the Samaritans with the message being proclaimed to Israel*, why did He do this?

And why did He have dealings with the Samaritans enroute (the woman at Jacob's well [which surprised His disciples], and later men whom she had told about the encounter)?

And what did these dealings involve?

Note a number of verses from John chapter four, picking up in the middle of Christ's conversation with the woman at Jacob's well:

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst [*lit.*, 'certainly will not thirst with respect to the age']; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life [*lit.*, 'water springing up with respect to age-lasting life'].

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw...

And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Then they went out of the city, and came unto him...

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal [*lit.*, 'gathereth fruit with respect to age-lasting life' (*ref. v. 14*): that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together...

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days" (John 4:14, 15, 27-30, 36, 39, 40).

Christ spent *two days* in Samaria, then left Samaria and went into Galilee.

Or, to state that another way, Christ spent *two days* with those associated more with the Gentiles than with the Jews, then left and went back to a work among the Jews.

Or, to state that another way yet, Christ is presently spending *2,000 years* with the Gentiles, and following these *2,000 years* He will leave the Gentiles and return to a work among the Jews.

The preceding would present one reason why Christ went through Samaria. The same spiritual lessons could not have been taught had He crossed and traveled on the east side of Jordan, bypassing Samaria, though these same truths are seen other places in Scripture.

Then there is another evident reason. Though Christ and His disciples *COULD NOT, at this time, take the same message to the Samaritans that was being proclaimed to Israel*, the day was not far removed when *Jewish evangels WOULD take this message to not only the Samaritans but the nations worldwide*, which would reflect on the previously discussed type — *two days, THEN, NOT BEFORE, the third day* (for, though a first fruit of this was fulfilled during the Acts period [33 AD to about 62 AD], and will be fulfilled during

the coming Tribulation, the main harvest fulfillment awaits the third day, the Messianic Era [*ref. the next section of this chapter*]).

And, with the preceding in view, with the subject matter which Christ dealt with in Samaria, He evidently was looking more toward events of a future day than the present. This is something which can easily be seen from that which Christ both dealt with and didn't deal with, that uppermost on the minds of the Samaritans, and the fact that the Samaritans *COULD NOT be dealt with at this time relative to the subject being discussed but WOULD BE in a position to be dealt with after this manner in the immediate future.*

Several things should be noted about Christ's encounter with the woman at Jacob's well and then the men in a nearby city (Sychar) whom she had told.

First, *there is NO proclamation of the same message to the Samaritans which Christ and His disciples had been carrying to Israel — "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand." And insofar as the record is concerned, only Christ, not His disciples, spoke to the Samaritans.*

Second, the Samaritans recognized Christ after the same manner in which He was presenting Himself to the Jewish nation, the manner in which believing Jews recognized Him — *as their Messiah, in a regal respect, as the One Who would rule and reign.* And, *EVERYTHING* which Christ had to say to the Samaritans was in *this same regal respect, with any thoughts of salvation having to be looked upon in this SAME manner — NOT relative to eternal life but life in the kingdom.*

Note verses four and fourteen in the previously quoted text from John 4 where the use of *aion* and *aionios* have been properly translated. Christ, speaking to the Samaritans, told them some of the same basic things about the kingdom which He was telling the Jews, but *there was NOTHING in anything which He had to say while in Samaria about national repentance in relation to a proffered kingdom.*

There COULDN'T BE! This was a message for ISRAEL ALONE at this time.

(In John 4:14, "a well of water springing up into age-lasting life," *EXACTLY* the same thing is being dealt with as seen in John 6:51-58 —

eating of the living bread, which is His flesh, and drinking of His blood, with aion and aionios used in both sections in connection with the “time” when this would occur — a present eating and drinking [during the present age], with the results to be realized in the coming age.

Note in the preceding respect that “time” dealt with by the Greek word *aionios* in v. 36 has to do with both *wages* [rewards — exact payment for services rendered in the house] and *fruit-bearing*.

If eternal verities are in view, as seen when translating *aionios* as “eternal,” a major, insurmountable problem exists, for *wages* and *fruit bearing* can have *NOTHING* to do with eternal salvation. That would be bringing works over into a realm where works *CANNOT* exist.

But, if *aionios* is understood as “age-lasting” [which is what was uppermost in the thinking of the Samaritans, in line with Christ’s message to them — *i.e.*, the coming age, the Messianic Era], then *EVERYTHING* fits.

[It is widely taught that “rewards” are *eternal* rather than *millennial* in nature (in line with the erroneous English rendering of “eternal” in the preceding texts).

However, rewards are NEVER dealt with in an eternal respect in Scripture. Rewards (or loss) are ALWAYS dealt with in relation to the coming age (the coming aion). And any teaching on rewards MUST be kept in line with the septenary structure which begins both Testaments (with John occupying its proper place, beginning the N.T.), to be realized on the seventh day, the seventh 1,000-year period, the coming aion.

To carry matters regarding rewards beyond this seventh day, this seventh millennium, is to carry matters beyond the point Scripture takes them.

Comparing Scripture with Scripture, this is clearly seen any place that the subject is dealt with — *e.g.*, note the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds in Matt. 25 and Luke 19, a corrected rendering of the text in John 6, II Thess 1:7-10 (with *aionios* translated correctly in v. 9), or the seven overcomer’s promises in Rev. 2,3 (*with ALL seen to be MILLENNIAL in their scope of fulfillment*).

Numerous scenes in the preceding Scriptures cannot exist beyond the Millennium during the eternal ages, particularly evident in several of the overcomer’s promises in Rev. 2, 3].)

The Samaritans simply could not be dealt with at this time in the same manner that Christ and the disciples were dealing with the Jews. Thus, Christ could go no farther than that seen in the

text in His dealings with the Samaritans.

A continuance of this matter can be seen in the following section of this chapter.

Christ's post-Resurrection Ministry and Beyond

After Christ had been raised from the dead He spent forty days with His disciples (a complete period of time), teaching them things pertaining to "the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:1-3).

Then, in verses 4-8, He dealt with what was about to occur ten days later (*another complete period of time*) in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1ff).

Following Christ's final instructions to the disciples, He was taken up from them, into "a cloud" — evidently *the Glory of God*, for up to the time of His ascension *there had been NO indication that any type covering of Glory enswathed His resurrection body; and He, at this time, was "received up into glory"* (Acts 1:9ff; cf. I Tim. 3:16).

(Individuals often talk about Christ being raised in *a glorified body* [*lit., "His body of Glory,"* Phil. 3:21], with Christians yet future to be raised, or removed without dying, *in bodies of Glory as well*.)

However, that is a completely incorrect way to view the matter. Christ was raised in what Scripture calls "a spiritual body," as opposed to "a natural [soulical] body," which He had possessed throughout His earthly ministry, the same body which hung on the Cross (I Cor. 15:43-49). Both were the same physical body of flesh and bones, but the life-giving, animating principle of the "natural body" was *the blood* (Lev. 17:11), and of the "spiritual body" *the Spirit*.

And *the Glory, which is a covering of the body, enswathing the body*, was evidently no more connected with His spiritual body at the time He came out of the tomb than it was with His natural body at the time He had been placed in the tomb.

[There is no indication that anyone, during the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry, saw any difference between His bodily appearance before His crucifixion and following His resurrection. The disciples enroute to Emmaus, seeing Him, thought that He was just another Jew. *His appearance was NO different*.

But note His appearance once His body had been enswathed in Glory.

Paul, enroute to Damascus was blinded (Acts 9:3ff), later describing *the blinding "light"* that he saw when Christ appeared to him (evidently *Christ's Glory*), as *brighter than the noon-day sun* (Acts 22:6ff; 26:13ff). Or note His appearance in Rev. 1:12-18, showing Christ as Christians at the judgment seat will see Him yet future — "...*his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*"

This covering of Glory is what Adam and Eve lost at the time of the fall, attempting to replace it with fig-leaf aprons (Gen. 3:7). And *this covering of Glory* is what Christ's co-heirs will one day be enswathed in during Christ's coming reign].

Christ's ability to move at will from place to place, as seen following His resurrection, could only have had to do with *the spiritual aspect of His body* which He possessed following His resurrection, not the Glory, for there was evidently *NO Glory connected with His body at this time.*

Then, beyond that, Christians will be raised from the dead or removed from the earth alive in the same manner in which Christ was raised from the dead — *in spiritual bodies, apart from the Glory* [Phil 3:20, 21]. The body being enswathed in Glory comes into the matter later, having to do with Christ and His co-heirs subsequently occupying regal positions in the kingdom.)

During these forty post-resurrection days, Scripture records certain events which occurred as Christ and His disciples traveled about the country, while He taught them.

He was seen in His resurrection body by a great number of individuals, though aside from appearances to women near the tomb, the two disciples enroute to Emmaus, and His disciples a number of times, nothing about these appearances is recorded in the gospels. Appearing to numerous other unnamed individuals (*e.g.*, above 500 at one time) was recorded some years later by Paul in I Cor. 15:5-7.

In what has been recorded, time during Christ's post-resurrection ministry was spent on *ONE major thing* — on that which is often called "the Great Commission," though little understood.

This commission has to do with that which began on the day of Pentecost and lasted throughout the Acts period, during the time when the kingdom was being re-offered to Israel.

The commission has NOTHING to do with the Church per se throughout the dispensation. But that seen in the commission will

once again be in effect and realized *yet future during the Tribulation (the 144,000 Jewish evangelists) and through a restored Jewish nation during the Messianic Era.*

Parts of this commission can be seen toward or at the end of the three synoptic gospels and in the first chapter of Acts (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:47, 48; Acts 1:8). Each of the four parts is worded in a different manner, given at different times during Christ's forty-day, post-resurrection ministry to His disciples; and the four together can only form the different parts of one commission, similar to the gospel writers recording four different parts to the statement which Pilate placed (or had placed, though he wrote or dictated the words) above Christ's head at the time of His crucifixion, together forming the complete statement (Matt. 27:37; Mark. 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19).

This commission, in the Acts period, was inseparably connected with the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, portending Israel's acceptance, with Messianic conditions following.

Then, once the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel ceased, the fulfillment of this commission, as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, which began to be fulfilled in Acts 2 and continued throughout the Acts period, was set aside for the remainder of the dispensation.

The fulfillment of this commission, as previously stated, *has NOTHING to do with the Church.* Rather, *it has to do with the kingdom, Joel's prophecy, Israel, and the nations.*

It is only within the scope of Joel's prophecy and this commission that the message can be carried beyond Jerusalem and Judaea to Samaria and the nations, which is the reason for Christ's command to His disciples concerning the Samaritans in Matt. 10 and that seen concerning the manner in which Christ dealt with the Samaritans in John 4.

(The whole of the preceding matter regarding *the kingdom, Pentecost, Israel, and the nations* — is dealt with at length in Chapters IV, V of this book.

As well, the place which the Church occupies during and following the Acts period is dealt with in this same section and in subsequent chapters in this book as well, in Chapters V-VIII.)

3

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE GOSPELS

As Seen in an Oft-Misunderstood Parable

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).

The account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is one of those sections of Scripture much like "inherit eternal life" in Mark 10:17-30 ("eternal life" is a *free gift, not inherited*), or "saved in childbearing" in I Tim. 2:9-15, or "if they shall fall away" in Heb. 6:4-6. There is some unanimity of interpretation on all four, though invariably skewed; and, as well, on all four, there are all types of off-shoot interpretations, resulting in a sea of misinterpretation.

The simple truth of the matter is that not any one of the four forms a complex text, in reality, no more so than understanding what almost any Bible student would consider a simple text, such as John 3:16.

And that statement may sound too over-simplified, even misleading. But, not so!

The Spirit of God *DID NOT* move men such as Mark, Luke, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, or any other writer to record *things which COULD NOT be understood*. But understanding *MUST be derived through the method and means that God has provided* — comparing Scripture with Scripture, comparing spiritual with spiritual.

And *the principle* which God set forth immediately following the fall in Genesis would continue to apply as well: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19a). Properly understanding Scripture takes study and time, lots of study over time. A person has to continually be thinking about these things (*cf.* Josh. 1:8; Ps. 63:6; 119:148).

Nor did the Spirit of God do anything different with John through moving him to pen a gospel with numerous verses or sections, which some might look upon as simpler to understand than some Scriptures seen in one of the other three gospels. It is all part of one complete revelation providing one complete word picture.

That which John was moved to write in his gospel is no different in this respect than that which Matthew, Mark, and Luke were, individually, moved to write in their gospels, or Paul moved

to write in his epistles, or the writer of Hebrews moved to record, or any other writer of Scripture moved to pen, with things seen in one gospel, in reality, no simpler or no more complex than things seen in any one of the other three.

Each has its own unique place *to ultimately form one complete word picture*. And, apart from that seen in one gospel, or apart from that seen in any part of one gospel, *the picture would be incomplete*.

Each one of the four gospels has its own unique place among the other three, providing its own unique part in a complete word picture. And each must be understood in the light of the other three, along with the remainder of Scripture.

In Biblical interpretation, individuals talk about understanding that which is unclear in the light of that which is clear, or understanding the complex in the light of that which is simple.

And no one really knows for sure how anyone goes about determining which is which, but it doesn't matter. That is not how Scripture is to be interpreted anyway. *Scripture is ALWAYS to be interpreted in the light of itself, comparing Scripture with Scripture, apart from any regard to what some may consider unclear, clear, complex, or simple*.

If you want help one place in Scripture, refer to and study what God has provided other places in Scripture. *Scripture will open itself to a person's understanding ONLY ONE WAY — through the built-in method which God has designed, comparing Scripture with Scripture, coupled with "time" devoted to this type study*.

With the preceding in mind, note the passage in Luke 16:19-31, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Properly understanding this passage is really quite simple, *IF a person goes about it the correct way, allowing Scripture to interpret the text for him*.

And, within this same manner of interpretation, an important aspect, seen in the text, is to have some understanding of what was happening at this point in Christ's ministry.

As well, the opposite of that is equally true. *Go about it in an incorrect manner, apart from comparing Scripture with Scripture and apart from correspondingly noting what was happening at this point in Christ's ministry, and a person can only find himself lost in a sea of misinterpretation*.

The Context, the Subject Matter at Hand

Luke chapter sixteen begins with a parable concerning a man's steward who, in one respect, was unfaithful, but in another, had acted shrewdly, allowing him to collect monetary amounts which individuals owed his master (vv. 1-13). Other than introducing the covetous Pharisees (vv. 14-18), the story itself, though dealing with Israel, has little direct relevance to a proper understanding of the subsequent story about the rich man and Lazarus.

However, the introduction of the Pharisees between the two stories, leading into the story of the rich man and Lazarus, has *EVERYTHING* to do with the matter.

Note these five verses separating the story about the unfaithful but shrewd steward and the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

“And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

Immediately following the story about the steward, the Pharisees, who followed Christ about the country, began to ridicule and mock Him. In the parable, Christ drew spiritual lessons from certain actions of the steward, involving monetary values. But the Pharisees, lovers of money, among other things, probably saw Christ as a poor person, in no position to be dealing with any type monetary values as He was doing. Regardless, no matter what Christ said or did, the Pharisees usually found room for fault as they sought to quell the message through discrediting the Messenger.

The Pharisees were the largest of the religious sects in Israel.

And, by their very numbers, they controlled the religious life of the people. The Pharisees were the legalistic teachers of Moses and the Prophets; and the Scribes, often mentioned with the Pharisees, were the corresponding keepers and interpreters of the Word.

The Pharisees — a group that would be seen as fundamental legalists if they were around today — followed Christ about the country, seeking to counter the different things which He said and/or did on practically every occasion (as seen in Luke 16:13-18). They, as a group, seemingly couldn't wait to see what Christ did or said next so that they would know what they were against.

(Note something very similar in political circles in this country today, emanating from what is often referred to as “the left,” as they watch and make negative comments on the actions of the nation's president, among others.

And if one moves over into religious circles, the same thing can also be seen today as well, emanating from religious leaders and other Christians, as they often oppose the truth [particularly as it relates to different facets of the central message of Scripture, *the Word of the Kingdom*].)

The end result of all this is the reason for the severe condemnation of the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees near the end of Christ's ministry, preceding His crucifixion, seen throughout the thirty-nine verses of Matthew chapter twenty-three. This religious sect (the Scribes, seen at times with the Pharisees in this respect, though one sect [a Pharisaical sect]), seated in Moses' seat (v. 2), governing the religious life of Israel, *had been DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE for the Jewish people rejecting Christ and His message* (an offer of the kingdom of the heavens by Israel's Messiah, God Himself, manifested in the flesh [Matt. 3:1ff; 10:1ff; John 1:1, 2, 14]).

They were the ones *DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE for the Jewish people's attitude at the time of the crucifixion* — the rulers and people together calling upon Pilate to release an incarcerated insurrectionist and murderer rather than their Messiah (Luke 23:18-24), pledging allegiance to a pagan Roman ruler, and calling for the crucifixion of the One “born King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2; John 19:14-16, 19).

In the words of Matt. 23:13, the Scribes and Pharisees had “shut up the kingdom of the heavens in the presence of men” (literal

rendering). They were not going to enter the proffered kingdom themselves, and they were doing everything within their power to prevent others from entering as well.

And in connection with the preceding, note the words “presseth into it” relative to the actions of the Pharisees in Luke 16:16, something expanded in Matthew’s account of Christ’s reference to the same thing.

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12).

With the corresponding verse from Matthew’s gospel in view, note three words — “violence” and “violent” in Matt. 11:12 and “presseth” in Luke 16:16. All three words are translations of verb and/or noun forms of the same word in the Greek text (*biazo* or *biastes* [verb and noun forms respectively]). The word in either form has to do with “forceful actions,” “violent actions.”

To show what is involved through the use of this type expression to describe the actions of the Pharisees, note Matt. 18:1-7:

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”

The proffered kingdom is in view in all that has been referenced (Matt. 11:12; 18:1-4; Luke 16:16), and the actions of the Pharisees (among others) relative to the message surrounding this kingdom

in Matt. 11:12 and Luke 16:16 are exactly the opposite of that set forth for entrance into the kingdom by Christ in Matt. 18:1-6.

The Pharisees, in Matt. 23:13, had no interest in entering the kingdom, and they were doing everything within their power to prevent any other Israelite from entering as well.

Then, a Second Story

In Luke chapter sixteen, Christ had just finished one story (the parable of the unfaithful but shrewd steward) when the Pharisees and things about them are brought into the picture. And Christ, immediately following these statements having to do with the Pharisees, then relates another story.

Now, what is this second story about? And why relate this story at this particular place in Luke's gospel? Then, again, why does only Luke among the gospel writers record this story?

1) The Commonly Held Interpretation

Individuals usually attempt to deal with the story of the rich man and Lazarus as an actual account of two individuals — one saved, the other unsaved — having to do with issues regarding eternal salvation or eternal damnation. Some form of the preceding is widely held throughout Christendom, and a fair amount of so-called theological teaching, concerning conditions of both the saved and the unsaved following death, is based mainly on this type understanding of the story.

However, any form of understanding this story after the preceding fashion can only be held through removing the complete story from its contextual setting and making the story and different things in the story stand alone, dealing with an overall subject not being dealt with at all in either the preceding or the following context.

And, as well, such an understanding of the passage would deal with some subject matter (particularly certain things about the current state of the dead) not dealt with any other place throughout the four gospels, or even elsewhere in Scripture.

Nonetheless, isolated Scriptures of the nature that any of this

would portend — Scripture in the gospels having no connection with the context or the general subject matter seen in the gospels, apart from the existence of related, comparative Scripture elsewhere — *simply DO NOT exist, they CANNOT exist.*

The existence of such would militate against the way God has designed His revealed Word, incorporating His Own built-in interpretative method. And the fact that comparative Scripture does not exist for an isolated interpretation of this nature should tell individuals something about this common interpretation which is widely held in Christendom.

Also, interpreting Scripture after such a fashion, which can only result in an erroneous understanding of the passage, will do away with that which the passage does deal with.

2) *But...*

So, if the common interpretation is incorrect, what is this story about? And what is the correct interpretation?

As stated at the outset of this chapter, if understood within context and the subject matter at hand in the context, it is really all very simple, again, as simple as understanding John 3:16.

To see this, we'll begin with the text, stay within the context, and remain with the central subject matter being dealt with, not only in the text and context but in all four gospels — the message being proclaimed to the Jewish people by Christ and His disciples.

And, putting all of this together, referencing other corresponding Scripture, the story, in reality, will be seen to interpret itself.

The Text

Note how the text begins: "There was a certain rich man..." (v. 19a). Then go back and note how the parable of the steward began: "There was a certain rich man..." (v. 1a).

Both begin *exactly the same way* (in both the Greek and English texts), and if the first story is a parable (no one questions this), why isn't the second story seen as a parable as well (numerous individuals do question this)?

There are two main reasons why individuals see this story as

other than a parable, dealing with actual individuals and events:

1) The only thing that many Christians see in Scripture is saved-unsaved, heaven-hell issues. And, ascribing to this type understanding of the story, a person would normally object to any thought of this being a parable. Instead, individuals viewing Scripture after this fashion are often very adamant about this being an account relating actual events.

2) And an individual is named in the story (Lazarus). If a parable, it would be the only parable with a named individual (*ref. indented data at the end of this section, p. 46*).

The context with its subject matter, a subject matter seen not only in this context but throughout the four gospels as a whole, will address the former (dealt with beginning in the next section), and time will be spent at this place in the chapter to address the latter — *an individual's name being used in the story*.

But, is a particular individual really being named? Or, is a name which was commonly used of numerous individuals in Israel being used to reference a group of individuals in Israel? After all, in any correct understanding of the rich man in what can only be a parable (which will become increasingly evident), the reference is not to a single individual. Why should the matter be any different in the reference to Lazarus?

And proper names are used in a similar manner throughout Scripture. Note, for example, on names, that Judah in Gen. 38, 44, Ephraim in Hosea 4, 5, 14, or Lazarus in John 11, are used to represent *the entire Jewish nation*. Or note the use of Jezebel in Rev. 2:20 (evidently an allusion back to Jezebel during Elijah's day), with the name used *in a similar respect* to the way that the use of Lazarus in Luke 16 is evidently used. Or note something similar through the use of one or several named nations to represent *all nations* in Isa. 34 and Ezek. 38. Or note the use of Jerusalem to reference *the entire Jewish nation* (Matt. 23:37; Rev. 17:18).

Using a name after this fashion in a parable, or even elsewhere, would really say *nothing*. The use of names in this or a similar type manner is simply one of the ways Scripture is structured. Proper names are used throughout the parables, though

this would be the only parable using an individual's name after the same fashion.

(Then, again, it could be open to question concerning this being the *ONLY* parable where an individual is named, depending on how Heb. 11:19 is viewed.

Note the verse within context, vv. 17-19:

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure [Gk., *parabole*, ‘in a parable’].”

The offering of Abraham's son is looked upon in two senses in Scripture — *typical* and *parabolic*. And though the type is evident, attention is called to the *parabolic aspect of the matter* in the Book of Hebrews, leaving two individuals named in an account which Scripture itself associates with a parable [and, in actuality, there are two individuals named in Luke 16:19-31 also — not only Lazarus but Abraham as well].)

A Key Verse

Note something about the five verses in Luke 16:14-18 between the two parables. It is evident that the first four verses have to do with the actions of the Pharisees, but the fifth verse (v. 18) appears to be completely out of place, seemingly having nothing contextually to do with the subject matter at hand.

But, as will be shown, rather than the verse being out of place, the verse not only provides *A VERY GRAPHIC FINISH* to the description of the actions of the Pharisees but is *A KEY VERSE*, perhaps *THE KEY VERSE*, which will allow an individual to properly understand exactly what is involved in the continuing verses dealing with the rich man and Lazarus.

Note the referenced verse:

“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

Then, to obtain the basics of what is involved, which will begin opening the matter to one's understanding, a person has to refer back to an overall type in Genesis, that covered by Joseph's life extending from Gen. 37 to Gen. 45. And the reason individuals haven't picked up on this can undoubtedly be traced to the disdain for and ignoring of Biblical typology among Bible teachers and Bible students today.

Thus, the CORRESPONDING KEY is back in Genesis. Miss it in Genesis, and you will probably miss it in Luke. But, see it in Genesis, and you can easily see it in Luke.

This overall type in Genesis (comprised of numerous individual types), in its antitypical framework, covers events extending from Christ's first coming to His second coming.

The type begins in chapter 37 with events surrounding Christ's first coming, extending to the time of His crucifixion and resurrection.

Then, exactly as in Luke 16:18, seemingly out-of-place events covering an entire chapter appear before the account at hand continues (the continuing account after Joseph, at the end of ch. 37, had been sold into the hands of the Ishmaelites [Midianites, descendants of Abraham through Keturah, though referred to as Ishmaelites in a general respect], taken down into Egypt, and sold to Potiphar [an official under the Egyptian Pharaoh]).

The preceding happens to Joseph at the end of chapter 37. Then chapter 39 begins and continues *EXACTLY* where chapter 37 leaves off (with Joseph in Egypt, a servant-slave owned by Potiphar), with events in chapter 38 lying between these two points (harlotry surrounding actions by Judah).

And this chronology of events, with a chapter lying between the events, is *EXACTLY* in line with that seen in Luke 16, where a verse, seemingly out-of-place, lies between the events.

In Luke 16, the actions of the Pharisees are dealt with in verses 14-17 (paralleling that seen in Gen. 37), then there is what appears to be a strange verse (v. 18, paralleling what appears to be a strange chapter in Genesis, ch. 38), and Scripture then follows with a parable in Luke (which, within this parallel between Gen. 37-39 and Luke 16:14ff, can only be seen paralleling Gen. 39ff).

What is this all about? Well, it is all about *EXACTLY THE SAME THING*. And, it is about *comparing Scripture with Scripture*.

In Genesis, Scripture begins with an account of events surrounding Joseph and his brethren (ch. 37); then Scripture continues with a chapter concerning *harlotry* (ch. 38); and then Scripture picks up in chapter 39 by continuing *EXACTLY* where chapter 37 left off, dealing with Joseph, later with his brethren as well.

Now note how this same thing is handled in Luke 16, *IN AN EXACT PARALLEL MANNER*.

The account begins with the actions of the Pharisees (vv. 14-17); then the account continues with a verse concerning *harlotry* (v. 18); then, remaining with the manner in which the parallel account in Genesis is structured, the continuing parable *CAN ONLY be about ONE THING* — *a continuation of that seen before the verse dealing with harlotry*. *Within this parallel, the parable which follows CAN ONLY be about THE PHARISEES on the one hand (the ones dealt with before the verse on harlotry) and THE JEWISH PEOPLE on the other (or, at least a segment of the Jewish people)*.

This is the way matters are set forth in the Genesis parallel; and it can only become increasingly evident as one studies Luke 16:14-31 in the light of Gen. 37-39ff that matters are set forth *after EXACTLY the same parallel fashion* in Luke.

Gen. 38 is about *harlotry*; Luke 16:18 is about *harlotry*; *and both have to do with EXACTLY same thing, with the harlot, with Israel (or, in Luke's gospel, with a singled out segment of the nation)*. Beyond that, *both appear EXACTLY where they should appear in their respective texts*.

In Gen. 38, Israel's harlotry is brought to the forefront at the beginning of the typology covering the nation's actions between Christ's first and second advents. Then, centuries later, the same Spirit which had previously moved Moses to write Genesis moved Luke to draw from this overall type in Genesis, singling out the actions of the Pharisees, and associating Israel's harlotry in a more direct manner with this religious group in Israel.

This is perhaps a main reason why Christ, at the Temple, singled out "the publicans [Jews aiding Rome, taxes, etc.] and harlots," telling the chief priests and elders of the people that "the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31).

Since this occurred at the Temple, these were probably mainly Sadducees (the second largest religious group in Israel), though the Sadducees traveled about with the Pharisees and were guilty of the same thing when it came to Christ's ministry to Israel and the message being proclaimed.

Thus, it is not just the first four verses lying between two parables which have to do with the Pharisees (vv. 14-17), but all five verses (vv. 14-18), with the fifth verse, which deals with *harlotry*, somewhat forming an apex to the whole of the matter.

(Israel's harlotry is a major theme of both Testaments. The subject is introduced in a very graphic and unmistakable manner in Genesis, covering one complete chapter [ch. 38], dealt with numerous places throughout the Old Testament [e.g., Judg. 19; Isa. 1; Jer. 3-5; Ezek. 16; Hosea 1ff], and seen brought to an end in Revelation, occupying a major place in the book, covering two complete chapters, leading into a third [chs. 17-19a; cf. Isa. 1:25ff; Hosea 14:1ff].

For additional information on Israel's harlotry, with an emphasis on Rev. 17-19a, refer to the author's book, [*Mystery of the Woman.*](#))

The Parable Itself

The information which has been provided thus far should allow the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to be easily understood and interpreted.

(Note that *parables*, by their very name, are given to *provide additional information to help explain previous revelation.*

The word "parable" is an Anglicized form of the Greek word *parabole* [a compound word: *para*, meaning "alongside," and *bole*, meaning "to cast"]. Thus, a parable is simply *one truth cast or placed alongside of a previous truth to help explain the previous truth.*

In Luke 16:19ff, *the previous truth had to do with the actions of the Pharisees relative to the ministry of Christ and His disciples* [vv. 14-18]. And, understanding how and why Christ used parables extensively in His ministry, *that seen in these preceding verses could only be seen as the expected subject matter to be dealt with in the parable which follows.*

Relative to the account of Abraham offering his son in Gen. 22, seen as both *a type* and *a parable* [*ref. top of p. 46*], *a type* points to Biblical truth in a reverse sense to that of a parable. A type appears *first* and points to a corresponding antitype out ahead [rather than, as a parable, appearing *last* and pointing to corresponding, previously revealed truth]. But both types and parables are given for the same basic purpose — *to shed light upon and help explain that to which they relate.*

Abraham offered his son upon a mount of the Lord's choosing, though death itself occurred in a substitute [a ram caught in the thicket died in Isaac's stead (Gen. 22:9ff; Heb. 11:17-19)]. Isaac died in a substitute, and Abraham received his son from the dead *in a parable* [reflecting back on previously revealed truth (*e.g.*, events in Gen. 3, 4, where teachings pertaining to death and shed blood are introduced in Scripture)]. And events surrounding the offering of Isaac, as well, form *a type* [pointing forward to the antitype, where teachings pertaining to death and shed blood are climaxed in Scripture (Matt. 27:35ff)].

As previously seen, the rich man can only depict one group, with the beggar depicting the only group left. Both are Jews, part of a nation to which the kingdom of the heavens was being offered through the ministry of Christ and His disciples.

The parable CANNOT possibly have ANYTHING WHATSOEVER to do with issues surrounding a message pertaining to eternal salvation, the saved, or the unsaved.

The parable CAN ONLY have to do with THE SUBJECT AT HAND — with the message being proclaimed by Christ and His disciples, with the Jewish people and what was happening in the camp of Israel at that time relative to the actions of their religious leaders, and the result of these actions, both present and future.

And eternal salvation WAS NOT the message being proclaimed.

Conditions seen through the actions of the rich man and the place occupied by Lazarus shows, among other things, an end result of the nation's harlotry, extending over centuries of time.

Israel's religious leaders (the rich man) were the ones which should have been supplying spiritual food to a starving nation (Lazarus). And, in this respect, one is described as "clothed in fine linen" faring "sumptuously every day" (a people faring well, in possession of the food), while the other lay "at his gate, full of

sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" (a people far less prosperous, starving for lack of food).

That's the picture depicted at the beginning of the parable, which could only be a true picture of *the entire nation* — *Israel's religious leaders on the one hand, and the people of Israel on the other.*

But, to stay with that depicted in the remainder of the parable, which could be true of *only part of the nation* — *the Pharisees on the one hand, and the publicans and harlots (or others in the nation exercising faith) on the other hand* — it would probably be best to understand the first part of the parable as referring more specifically to these same two groups as well.

Then both individuals die, the beggar first.

The beggar finds himself transported by angels to a place referred to as "Abraham's bosom," which would signify close association with Abraham, the realization of promises and blessings made to the Jewish people through him, etc.

But the rich man found himself in *Hades*, the place of *the dead*, separated from Abraham and all involved therein, with torment rather than blessings accordingly involved.

Note the same thing pertaining to "life" and "death" in Christ's statement to Martha surrounding her brother's death in John 11:25, 26 (a statement within the seventh sign in John's gospel):

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die [*lit.*, '...certainly will not die with respect to the age']. Believest thou this?"

That being offered to the nation by Christ and His disciples was in view — *life in the kingdom during the coming age, NOT eternal life* (cf. John 8:51). And, as seen in John 11:25, 26, *life in the kingdom lay in store for any believing Jew, living or dead.* But the same thing *COULDN'T be said for an unbelieving Jew, living or dead.*

(Something must be clearly understood at this point, else one can only become hopelessly confused concerning what is involved in Christ's statement in John 11:25, 26, among numerous other related places.

Everything in the parable in Luke 16:19ff, as well as John 11:25,

26, has to do with the subject at hand — *the proffered kingdom and life or non-life therein.*

Deliverance [life] and blessings for one individual has to do with THE KINGDOM; the opposite, non-deliverance [death] and loss for the other individual, has to do with THE KINGDOM as well.

Eternal verities — eternal salvation, eternal damnation — *ARE NOT, THEY CANNOT BE, in view.* And any attempt to read these into the parable, or understand John 11:25, 26, contextually, in this manner, will only militate against and destroy that which is clearly stated and taught.

A saved people are being dealt with — both the ones depicted by the rich man and the ones depicted by the beggar, or Lazarus in John 11 [forming a “sign,” *dealing with the future resurrection of the Jewish people, with the kingdom in view.*]. Salvation or loss in view *HAS TO BE* understood in relation to *THE SUBJECT AT HAND, which, again, is THE KINGDOM.*

The Jewish people did not reject Christ as their Paschal Lamb. Rather, they rejected Christ as *their King*, claiming before Pilate to have no king but Caesar.

[Those comprising the Jewish nation *were dealt with (beginning with John, then Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy in the offer of the kingdom, then the Disciples in Acts in the re-offer of the kingdom) as a people WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN SAVED, though nothing is said about this per se.* It is seemingly taken for granted that *the reader would know and understand this from the past history of the nation, with the whole matter not even being an issue in the subject at hand.*

As seen in the previous two chapters in this book, those comprising the Jewish nation in the gospel accounts and in Acts are simply seen as a people who were continuing to sacrifice the paschal lamb year after year (sacrifices preceding Calvary), as seen 1,500 years prior to this time in the camp of Israel during Moses’ day. *And they could only have been just as saved — saved on the same basis — as the generation during Moses’ day, or generations of Jews continuing to sacrifice the paschal lamb year after year at any other time in between.*

And, again, if one wants a *basis* for God recognizing efficacy in these slain lambs, that can be seen in Rev. 13:8].

In the preceding respect, Jews believing or not believing in Jesus, in accord with John 11:26, *ARE NOT* believing or not believing in Him with respect to eternal verities but with respect to that which He was offering, which had to do with *life in the kingdom.* *And life or non-life, accordingly, had to do with the subject at hand.)*

The beggar in the parable found himself in the place associated with *life*, not death; and this had to do with *the proffered kingdom*, NOT with *eternal verities*. He, in effect, found himself in the kingdom, associated with that which God had promised to the Jewish people through Abraham.

On the other hand, the rich man in the parable found himself in the place associated with *death*, in *Hades* (note that this word is used of *the rich man ALONE*, not of the beggar, for *the beggar COULDN'T be associated with death, with Hades*).

Again, in both the beggar's case and the rich man's case, *their association with life or death had to do with the subject at hand, the proffered kingdom, NOT with eternal verities*.

One was *associated with the kingdom*, realizing that which God had promised the Jewish people through Abraham; the other was *separated from the kingdom*, separated from that which God had promised the Jewish people through Abraham.

One was *comforted*, realizing that which had been offered; the other was *tormented*, evidently knowing what he could have had but, instead, had forfeited (cf. Matt. 8:11, 12).

Moses and the Prophets

The rich man in the parable, realizing too late that which he had done and that which he had resultingly forfeited, remembered his five brothers, still living back on earth, calling upon Abraham to send him back to warn them before it was too late for them as well. But the simple response was that *they had already been warned, with the warning remaining ever before them*. And if they would not believe the existing warning, they would not believe him either, even though he had been raised from the dead and could furnish a personal, firsthand, eye-witness report.

Note this section, closing out the parable (vv. 27-31):

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

This man's five brothers already had in their possession what he had previously possessed, something which he now found himself separated from as well, *for the Word is living, and he is in the place of death.*

This man's five brothers (and previously he himself) already had something *far greater* than anything else which could ever be set before them. Even his returning from the dead, as a personal eye-witness, could not even begin to approach that which they already had.

Note the POWER of the Word as set forth in Abraham's statement. NOTHING supersedes the Word, which is why Abraham told the man what is recorded. In short, the man was told, If your brothers won't hear the Primary, they are not going to be persuaded through anything secondary.

And there is the reason for the "why" of II Tim. 4:2: "Preach the Word!" *Don't preach the secondary, preach the Primary; don't preach that which is dead, preach that which is Living.*

An illustration of the entire matter is seen in John 11, 12. The religious leaders in Israel wouldn't believe the proclaimed message by Christ and His disciples *before* Lazarus had died, and they didn't believe the message *after* he had been raised from the dead. In fact, they were so adamantly set against the whole of what was being proclaimed that they tried to kill Lazarus after he had been raised (12:9-11).

— In Summation —

The Setting for and That Dealt with in the Parable

The parable in Luke 16:19-31 has to do with spiritual truths surrounding the ministry of Christ and His disciples to the nation of Israel, the message being proclaimed, the reaction of Israel's spiritual leaders to the Messenger and this message, and how this affected the Jewish people in general.

1) *In Israel Then, Yet Future*

The parable takes one from the time when all these things were occurring to where all of it would ultimately lead.

Overall spiritual truths rather than a chronology of events is seen in the parable. Otherwise, with the rich man seen at the time of the ultimate outcome of all which he had sown — which would be realizing, in relation to a future existing kingdom, that which he had sown during his lifetime (just payment for services rendered in the house, in the house of Israel) — how could he still have five brothers back on earth? But, with *spiritual truths alone* being taught, which, textually, can only be the case, a chronology of events of this nature does not enter into the matter.

Thus, as previously shown, textually, “a rich man” is used to represent *the Pharisees*, and “a beggar” is used to represent *the publicans, harlots, or anyone else in Israel exercising faith in their Messiah*. And in some respects, also evident through spiritual truths being drawn from the parable, *the entire nation could be seen under its religious leaders (e.g., the nation being starved spiritually under the control and sway of its self-righteous, hypocritical religious leaders)*.

The entire nation though could not be seen in the realm of *faith*, for most in the nation did not believe and could not be seen at the ultimate outcome in connection with the things which Abraham’s bosom portends.

That part of the nation not exercising faith could only be seen in an ultimate respect occupying a place with the unbelieving Pharisees, which is the only way that matters could ultimately be brought to pass.

2) *In Christendom Today, Yet Future*

Then, an application of all these things could easily be made in Christendom today.

There are “spiritual leaders” *who will look with disdain upon and speak out against teachings concerning the Word of the Kingdom*, there are “Christians” *starving for lack of spiritual food*, and there are “believers and non-believers” in Christendom *relative to the counterpart of the message proclaimed 2,000 years ago by Christ and His disciples, which would be the Word of the Kingdom*.

And the ultimate outcome for Christians will be *the same as the ultimate outcome seen relative to Israel in the parable*, for, exactly as matters existed in Israel 2,000 years ago, *eternal life is a settled matter and ONLY things pertaining to the proffered kingdom remain.*

4

Central Message in the Book of Acts

Continuing from the Gospels...

Having to Do Centrally with Israel and the Kingdom

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:1-9).

The original offer of the kingdom to Israel in the gospel accounts is a relatively simple matter to understand, though few seem to do so. As previously seen, many individuals seem to want to see the central message proclaimed throughout the gospels, particularly John's gospel, as a message pertaining to salvation by grace.

And if a person does this, they can forget about everything when they come to Acts and begin reading about the re-offer of the kingdom, for they have not understood the base, the original offer.

Then, beyond Acts, any correct understanding of the epistles will be skewed as well, attempting to understand them within the same erroneous framework as previously seen in the gospels and in Acts, *for the same subject matter is continued in the epistles.*

If an individual comes out of the gospels in a correct manner, understanding what has happened in the gospels, Acts is not really that difficult, for it is simply a continuation of that previously seen in the gospels. Acts, in one sense of the word, forms a fifth gospel.

But, if an individual comes out of the gospels in a wrong manner, not understanding what has happened in the gospels, it will not be possible to have any type proper understanding of Acts, or the epistles beyond. Acts, continuing from the gospels, and the epistles, continuing from Acts, can only be dealt with after the same erroneous manner that the gospels had been dealt with.

This is why, for example, that Peter's message to the Jews in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14-40 is often treated as a gospel message, directed to unsaved Jews, with individuals trying to fit and explain what is stated in the message, particularly in verse thirty-eight, into this erroneous type thinking.

Continuing from the Gospels

Note the continuation of the subject matter from the gospels in Acts chapter one. Christ, following His resurrection, *spent forty days with the disciples teaching them things pertaining to "the kingdom of God"* (v. 3), the subject previously seen throughout the gospels.

Then, immediately prior to His ascension, He commanded His disciples to "not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father." They, through this promise being realized, were

to “receive power” after the Spirit had come upon them (vv. 4, 8). And this could only have had to do with *His commission to the disciples* (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark. 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8), *which was to be carried out in its fulness by a repentant and restored Jewish nation, with the stage being set through events on the day of Pentecost in chapter two, allowing this, over time, to subsequently occur.*

(All these things are dealt with in Chapter V of this book, also to some extent back in Chapter II.

It is all about laying correct foundations, then properly building on these foundations. This is the manner in which Scripture begins in Genesis and continues throughout.)

Beginning in Acts chapter two, there is *an immersion in the Spirit* (which would have to do with bringing *the one new man* “in Christ,” the Church, into existence [v. 2]), followed by *a filling of the Spirit* (which would have to do with *Joel’s prophecy and Israel* [v. 4]).

This is then followed by the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel by *the one hundred twenty who had been immersed in the Spirit* (*forming the inception of the Church*) and then *subsequently filled with the Spirit* (*providing power to fulfill Christ’s previous commission*).

From that point throughout Acts, you have those comprising *the one new man* “in Christ” (along with other saved Jews) later proclaiming the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. And this is where people tend to get things completely mixed up.

Relative to the offer of the kingdom to Israel and the bringing into existence of the Church, the four gospels and the Book of Acts are structured somewhat the same way.

In both, the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, this message was *the ONLY message seen UNTIL a climactic rejection point occurred* (rejection of the proclaimed message [rejection by Israel’s religious leaders, leading to rejection by the people — Matt. 12, 13 in the gospels, and chapters 7, 8 in Acts]). Beyond this time, the kingdom remained in the offing in both the gospels and Acts, but the Church began to come into view (along with the Cross, as well, in the gospels).

(The first three appearances of the word “Church” [Gk., *ekklesia*] in Acts are 2:47; 5:11; 7:38.

The validity of the appearance of the word in 2:47 is questionable. The word *ekklesia* appears in some Greek manuscripts, not in others, which accounts for its appearance in some English translations, not in others.

Generally, among textual critics [those studying these things], the word is looked upon as spurious in 2:47. But that is really immaterial. If *ekklesia* does appear in 2:47, it would have to be understood the same way that it can only be understood in 5:11, seen in 7:38 [and undoubtedly a number of places beyond that in the book as well].

The word *ekklesia* means “assembly,” as it is used of *Israel* in Acts 7:38, or of *Christians* many places in the N.T. [forming an assembly, referred to as “the Church” in English translations of *ekklesia*].

As well, the name “Christian,” Gentiles referring to *followers of Christ* in Acts 11:26 [cf. Acts 26:28], could have been used of either saved Jews or those forming *the one new man* “in Christ” during the Acts period.)

The Message at Pentecost and Following

The message, proclaimed in different languages by one hundred twenty empowered Jews on the day of Pentecost, by Peter alone as he stood up among those proclaiming the message, and proclaimed by these individuals and others throughout time covered by the first seven chapters of Acts, was a *message having to do with Israel and the kingdom, NOT with the Church*.

Bear something in mind when moving from the gospels into the Book of Acts. Before the 3,000 had believed the proclaimed message on the day of Pentecost (2:41), along with those believing in subsequent days (vv. 42-47), there were already *numerous believing Jews (undoubtedly thousands) in and around Jerusalem (e.g., Matt. 3:1-6; 4:23-25; 8:1ff; 21:1-11)*. And the 3,000, plus others referred to toward the end of the chapter, were additional believing Jews, added to the former, *NOT added to the newly formed, existing Church proclaiming the message to Israel*.

And exactly the same thing is seen concerning the 5,000 added in 4:4, or those seen in Peter’s dealings with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1ff, or *the multitudes* added in 5:14 and 6:7. These were *believing Jews*, a believing part of the nation, believing with a view to that which occurred on the day of Pentecost being worked out and completed,

something which began back in the gospels and could be brought to pass ONLY through the national repentance and conversion of the entire nation.

As stated in Acts 2:40, those who had believed the message on the day of Pentecost had been saved “from this untoward [‘crooked,’ ‘perverse’] generation.” And the same thing could only be seen as the message continued to be proclaimed, particularly throughout the first seven chapters of Acts.

Then, note that *supernatural signs are seen accompanying the message throughout this time (2:43; 3:1-16; 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12-16; 6:8), with signs having to do with Israel and the kingdom throughout both the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom (ref. Appendix II in this book).*

Then, beyond the preceding, note that *the Jewish people, during the first few years of the re-offer of the kingdom, as seen in the first seven chapters of Acts, were brought to climactic points relative to the proclaimed kingdom at least FOUR TIMES (2:36-40; 3:17-26; 5:29-41; 7:51-60).*

And, as well, an individual will find the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel continuing through the remaining chapters of Acts.

Attempting to read any type building up of the Church via Jews being saved throughout the time of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (from 33 AD to about 62 AD) can only be completely out of place. *This is simply NOT what the Book of Acts is about.*

Status of Believing Jews

If the Jews being saved (saved from the perverse, unbelieving nation) during the Acts period were being added to the Church, this would run completely counter to the message being proclaimed, defeating the purpose for the kingdom being re-offered to the nation. Jews being saved in this manner would become *new creations* “in Christ,” no longer a part of the Jewish nation in a spiritual respect, but part of *the new man* brought into existence on the day of Pentecost (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:27-29).

Conditions among believing Jews in the re-offer of the kingdom in Acts could only be seen as *THE SAME among believing Jews in the previous offer of the kingdom in the gospels*, otherwise two separate and distinct creations would exist in Israel relative to the proffered kingdom. The re-offer of the kingdom, in all respects, can only be a continuation of that previously seen in the gospels,

with believing Jews in Acts being added to the numbers already existing from the gospels.

Properly understanding this will address and help clarify certain passages in Acts.

Note, for example, Apollos in Acts 18, in Ephesus, already a believer, from before Calvary, but knowing nothing about events on the day of Pentecost, etc. Then note other similar believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff), receiving the Holy Spirit through a laying on of hands, with signs following (v. 6). And, particularly with signs following, this could only have been a filling of the Spirit, as seen in Acts 2:4, something connected with Joel's prophecy (vv. 16ff).

Things like the preceding fit easily into Jews being saved during this time, forming a believing part of the nation (exactly as Apollos and others in Ephesus). But, trying to somehow fit them into things pertaining to the Church, comprised of *new creations* "in Christ," can only present insurmountable problems.

The time covering Acts (almost three decades) is not necessarily an easy period to understand (e.g., Acts 15). Things become more complicated than the period before (*Jews and the gospels*) or after (*Christians and the epistles*). In Acts, you have God dealing with both at the same time, with God using the Church, brought into existence on the day of Pentecost, *in a maximum effort to bring about Israel's repentance*.

Then, to further complicate matters, some of the epistles were written during the Acts period, with believing Gentiles forming Churches (e.g., the Church in Ephesus in Acts 20, or the Church in Corinth in Acts 18 [note Paul's action in v. 6], in which "signs" were later being performed, which could only have occurred in an effort to provoke Israel to jealousy [Deut. 32:21; Rom. 11:11], for "signs" have to do with *Israel and the kingdom*, *NOT with the Church*).

Then, things could be complicated even further, though they need not be, for Scripture does not deal with some matters surrounding the different things seen occurring throughout Acts.

For example, the believing Jews during the Acts period, saved from a perverse, unbelieving nation, were not part of the Church but were a believing part of the Jewish nation. What, if anything,

changed concerning the status of those still living following the close of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts 28:28?

And the same question could be asked about any believing Jews living on both sides of calvary who would have still been alive at the time of the events in Acts 28.

Then another question could be raised about positions in the kingdom which these individuals will one day hold — *heavenly positions* with the Church, or *earthly positions* with Israel (note that the message which they accepted had to do with *the heavenly aspect of the kingdom, not the earthly*)?

Scripture simply does not address some issues, such as the preceding. Thus, we need not spend time trying to figure out answers either, which would be of no value if we did come up with supposed answers, for no Scriptural base to deal with the matters exists.

5

A Panoramic View of the Book of Acts

Continuing from the Gospels...

The Re-Offer of the Kingdom to Israel Seen Throughout

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:1-11).

The true nature of the events which occurred on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the first two chapters of the Book of Acts — when the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel began — is generally not understood in Christendom today at all. And because of this, among other things, whole denominations have been built on a misunderstanding of these chapters.

Then, this misunderstanding has resulted in related problems. That which occurred in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost (vv. 1-13), followed by Peter's explanation of matters (vv. 14-36), is seen coming to a climax in verses 37, 38. And cult groups, not understanding the things revealed in this chapter at all, have isolated and singled out Acts 2:38 as revealing the way in which a person is to be saved.

And numerous individuals, to counter the teaching of the cults on this verse, though not understanding the context either, have taught things concerning Acts 2:38 which are equally erroneous.

And, if either the Christian groups or the cult groups *rightly understood that which is stated in the verses leading into Acts 2:38*, the whole matter wouldn't even exist. Neither would act so completely out of line with Scripture.

In this respect, the matter really doesn't revolve around what Acts 2:38 states per se. Rather, the matter revolves around what is stated in the verses leading into Acts 2:38.

Understand the contextual verses first; then the text can be properly understood. But, attempt to isolate a verse such as Acts 2:38 from its context, and an individual finds himself in exactly the same place that so many find themselves today — committing mayhem with Scripture and involved in cultic teachings.

Correct Scriptural interpretation and understanding is really that simple. Note the EXACT wording of the text, READ and UNDERSTAND the context, and COMPARE Scripture with Scripture (I Cor. 2:9-13).

On the day of Pentecost, 33 A.D., one hundred twenty believers were waiting in a house in Jerusalem for the Spirit which Jesus had, ten days prior to that time, promised. They were "all with

one accord in one place," *waiting* (Acts 1:15; 2:1).

(Note the significance of the number *one hundred twenty* [10X12], particularly contextually. "Ten" is the number of *numerical completeness*, and "twelve" is the number of *governmental perfection*.

Christ has just spent "forty" post-resurrection days instructing His disciples in things pertaining to "the kingdom of God" [Acts 1:3]. Now, ten days later [again, completeness shown in both the numbers "forty" and "ten"], something very significant in relation to the kingdom previously proclaimed was about to occur [events on the day of Pentecost].)

Then, "when the day of Pentecost was *fully come*," just as the Lord had previously promised (though not having specified the particular day), the one hundred twenty were all "immersed in the Holy Spirit" (literal rendering of the promise in Acts 1:5 [cf. Matt. 3:11, *lit.*, immersion "in water," "in Holy Spirit," "in fire"]):

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4).

As seen, the promise concerning the Spirit being sent in Acts 1:5 had to do with an *immersion in the Spirit*; and that promise was fulfilled in Acts 2:2 (the house *filled*, those inside *immersed*). Then these disciples were also correspondingly *filled with the Spirit* (v. 4). And both can be seen occurring at subsequent times in other parts of the Book of Acts as well (*e.g.*, 10:45; 11:15, 16; *cf.* 9:17, 18; 13:9).

A two-fold experience of the nature seen in these sections of Scripture though *has NO PARALLEL in Christendom today*.

When an individual is saved by grace through faith today, the norm is *ALWAYS the same*. "Immersion" in the Spirit *ALWAYS* occurs at the point of salvation (I Cor. 12:13), and "a filling" with the Spirit is *ALWAYS* a subsequent experience, progressively occurring over time (*having to do with maturity in the faith, wrought through an assimilation of the Word* [cf. Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16, 17]).

(Note that neither *immersion in the Spirit*, occurring at the time of one's salvation, nor the subsequent *filling with the Spirit* can have anything to do with one's salvation experience per se. If either had to do with one's salvation, then salvation could only be seen occurring different ways in different dispensations, for, throughout the three dispensations during Man's Day — Gentile, Jewish, Christian — immersion in the Spirit is something peculiar to the present [Christian] dispensation.

The means which God uses to restore ruined man *were set in the opening chapters of Genesis and CAN NEVER change*. Thus, to see either *the immersion in the Spirit* or a *filling with the Spirit* having to do with one's presently possessed salvation today *is an impossibility*.

The immersion in the Spirit has to do with *the new creation* "in Christ," [cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26-29], which, again, *has nothing to do with one's presently possessed salvation*; and the filling with the Spirit, having to do with dwelling in the Word — an eating of His flesh and a drinking of His blood [cf. John 6:53-56; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16, 17] — *has to do with something subsequent to the immersion in the Spirit, with the continuing process of salvation, the salvation of the soul*.

And, though one's eternal salvation always remains in view, *the central subject in the whole of the matter, as seen in Scripture, is ALWAYS upon the continuing part of salvation, which has to do with the coming kingdom of Christ, with realizing or not realizing an inheritance in this kingdom.*)

Thus, the immersion in the Spirit and the filling with the Spirit *NEVER occur at the same time today*, as in the first two chapters of Acts and several other parts of the book. And there is a *clearly revealed reason* why these differences exist in Scripture.

In short, one experience (a filling with the Spirit, as seen in Acts chapter two) is seen *ONLY DURING the time when the kingdom was being re-offered to Israel* (especially during the early years); and the other (an immersion in the Spirit) is seen *DURING this time as well, but this experience CONTINUES FOLLOWING this time*.

The emphasis in Acts chapter two is on *Israel and the kingdom*, not on the Church. Though the Church was brought into existence on this day as the entity in possession of the kingdom of the heavens and the entity through which God would extend a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, events throughout Acts chapter two *are essentially Jewish, not Christian*.

Acts chapter two records the beginning of a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, an offer connected with Joel's prophecy (vv. 16-21), and an offer attended by signs, wonders, and miracles (vv. 6-13, 43). And *the immersion in and the filling with the Spirit* which were brought to pass on this day had to do with two things:

- 1) *The beginning of the Church (an immersion in the Spirit).*
- 2) *A beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (a filling with the Spirit).*

A filling with the Spirit *in connection with Joel's prophecy*—something experienced by individuals on the day of Pentecost and at subsequent times during the period when the kingdom was being re-offered to Israel (from 33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.) — *CANNOT be the norm for any type Christian experience today, for Joel's prophecy is not presently being fulfilled.* The fulfillment of this prophecy has been set aside until such a time as God once again resumes His dealings with Israel.

Two Explanatory Greek Words

Though *Christians experience an immersion in and a filling with the Spirit throughout the present dispensation*, there are marked differences when these experiences are viewed in the light of a beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in Acts chapter two. The latter is something which the Spirit of God deals with in the New Testament through the use of two different Greek words for "fill."

1) *Pimplemi*

The word in the Greek text for *fill* in Acts 2:4 is not the same as the word for *fill* in Eph. 5:18 (for Christians today). The word used in Acts 2:4 is *pimplemi* (*pletho* [a different rendering of the same word] in some lexicons or concordances), and the word used in Eph. 5:18 is *pleroo*. Both words mean "to fill"; but there is a contextual difference in how the words are used, seen in *the purpose* in view.

Pimplemi in Acts 2:4 is used in a manner which refers to individuals being filled with the Spirit in view of *an end to* or *a conclusion of* something being attained. This is the word, for example, which is used referring to Elizabeth being brought to full-term in her pregnancy, prior to the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57). And, in conjunction with this thought, it is also the word used of John the Baptist being “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15).

John was the forerunner of the Messiah. He was the one who *initially* appeared to Israel with the message, “Repent ye [a plural pronoun, *the entire nation*], for the kingdom of the heavens is *at hand*” (Matt. 3:2). And note the terminal point — *the kingdom WAS AT HAND*. And John was *filled with the Spirit, from his mother’s womb, to proclaim this fact as he went forth preparing the way for the Messiah*.

This word is used *five times* in the Book of Acts referring to individuals being filled with the Spirit (2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9).

The first occurrence has to do with events on the day of Pentecost; *the second occurrence* has to do with Peter addressing the Sanhedrin; *the third occurrence* has to do with individuals collectively (as on the day of Pentecost); and *the fourth and fifth occurrences* have to do with Paul, following his conversion on the Damascus road.

In the first three occurrences, where a filling with the Spirit is referred to by the word *pimplemi*, a message to the Jews is in view; and that message is accompanied by signs, wonders, and miracles (2:43; 4:14-16). That is, a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel is in view, accompanied by miraculous signs.

And the same thing is seen *in the fourth and fifth occurrences* of the word, following Paul being introduced in the book.

When Israel had reached a climactic point in the nation’s rejection of the kingdom in Acts 7:54ff (similar to the climactic point which the nation reached in the original offer [Matt. 12:22ff]), Paul appears in the book for the first time (Acts 7:58), the Samaritans from Acts 1:8 appear in the book for the first time (Acts 8:5), and Paul was subsequently set apart as the apostle who would carry the message concerning the proffered kingdom to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-15).

Note the order for the proclamation of this message as originally given to the disciples in Acts 1:8:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Paul was the one called to carry this message to the latter group (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7). And the word *pimplemi* is used of Paul being filled with the Spirit for power, to carry this message, simply because the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel (with the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy still being in view); and the offer would remain open for over two more decades.

The fact that the offer was still open to Israel was the reason Paul *always* went “to the Jew first” before turning to the Gentiles, though he was the apostle called to go to the Gentiles.

The order in Rom. 1:16, in accord with Acts 1:8, was “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]” (cf. Rom. 2:9, 10); and Paul didn’t, he couldn’t, violate this order (note that the Book of Romans was written very near the end, though within the approximate-thirty-year period in which the kingdom of the heavens was re-offered to Israel).

2) *Pleroo*

The word *Pleroo* though, used for being filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18, is used in a different manner. Both *pleroo* and *pimplemi* mean “to fill”; and both words can be used referring to an end or to the fulfillment of something, such as “time,” etc. (e.g., Acts 7:23, 30); but the use of *pleroo* in Eph. 5:18 is not connected with Joel’s prophecy. The Holy Spirit previously used *pimplemi* for that purpose, at a time when the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy was in view.

(Note that the Holy Spirit was very careful in His use of words in Acts 2:2-4.

The word used for “fill” in verse two is *pleroo*, referring to the house where the one hundred twenty disciples were waiting *being filled* by “a

rushing mighty wind"; but the Spirit of God changed words when He wanted to reveal that those inside that house had been "filled" with the Spirit in verse four.

Here He used *pimplemi*, and He continued to use *pimplemi* for this purpose [or a cognate, *pleres* (6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 11:24)] in other parts of the Book of Acts.)

Joel's prophecy either being fulfilled or not being fulfilled is *the key*. The Spirit used *pimplemi* to describe His filling work *IN CONNECTION WITH the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy*; and the Spirit later used *pleroo* to describe His filling work *APART FROM the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy*.

This is *the distinguishing difference* which marks the way that the two words are used in Scripture.

(The preceding presents the basics of how two different Greek words for "fill" are used in the New Testament — something which will allow a person to better grasp the true nature of that which began on the day of Pentecost and continued for about thirty years.

And possessing at least some understanding of this period is vital to a correct understanding of the central subject matter in both the Book of Acts [which presents a history of this period] and the epistles which follow [which were written both during the latter part of and immediately following this period].)

The Scene in Jerusalem, 33 A.D.

On the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D. there were Jews gathered in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, states that it was not uncommon to have as many as 2,000,000 Jews in Jerusalem on this day.

The day of Pentecost was one of three annual feast days (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) which adult Jewish males were required to keep *in Jerusalem* (Deut. 16:1-16), and some had to travel great distances to get to Jerusalem in order to keep these feasts. Consequently, it was only natural that many Jews who came for the feast of Passover would remain in Jerusalem until the feast of Pentecost, slightly over fifty days later.

Thus, the Spirit was sent on a particular day — the day of Pentecost, effecting a beginning fulfillment of this festival — when numerous Jews from “every nation under heaven” were in Jerusalem; and those filled (*pimplemi*) with the Spirit (the one hundred twenty) were empowered to proclaim a message concerning the kingdom to these Jews, in all the various languages of their native countries. And these Jews, having heard the message, were, in turn, evidently expected to carry this message back to other Jews in the countries from which they had come.

This was the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, a ministry which would last for about thirty years (until about 62 A.D.).

Then, as previously stated, all of this was inseparably connected with a beginning fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (vv. 15-21). And immediately afterward, Peter delivered a message to Israel, which, after different fashions, became quite common in the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (vv. 22-36; cf. 3:12-26; 4:5-12; 5:12-16, 29-32; 6:8-7:53). And that which the religious leaders and all the others in Israel were accordingly confronted with is also something which became quite common in this re-offer of the kingdom (vv. 37-41; cf. 4:1-4, 13-22; 5:17-28, 33-42; 7:54-60).

The religious leaders in Acts 2, confronted with what they had done, asked:

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v. 37).

And Peter told them exactly what they must do:

“Repent [*i.e.*, ‘Change your minds’], and be baptized every one of you [national repentance and baptism]...” (v. 38; cf. Matt. 3:1ff).

Only through this means could the wrong be corrected (the Jewish people, having previously rejected the message and crucified the Messenger, now being called upon to *change their minds* [vv. 22, 23, 36-38a]); only through this means could the Jewish people receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38b; cf. vv. 4, 16-21; Acts 10:45; 11:15, 16), which had to do with Joel’s prophecy and a filling with the Spirit in connection with the Greek word *pimplemi*.

And only after the Jewish people had done this would Messiah

return and dwell in Israel's midst, resulting in a continued and complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy — the entire Jewish nation filled with the Spirit, speaking other languages in a bold manner, enabling them to go forth to the Gentile nations of the earth with God's message (Joel 2:27-32; Acts 3:19-21; 7:51-56).

(Note two things about Acts 2:38, one positive, the other negative:

- a) *That dealt with in the verse.*
- b) *That not dealt with in the verse.*

Acts 2:38 has to do *solely with a message to Israel pertaining to the kingdom*. Accordingly, this verse has *nothing to do with unsaved man today — Jew or Gentile — in relation to eternal life*.

Acts 16:31 would address the latter issue, answering the question in verse thirty ["Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"] and being perfectly in line with all of the Old Testament types bearing on the subject.

Attempting to see Acts 2:38 as having to do with the unsaved and eternal verities — then or today — is *completely out of line with:*

- a) *That which this verse states.*
- b) *The question asked in the preceding verse.*
- c) *The context leading into this question and the response.*
- d) *All Old Testament typology dealing with the subject.*

Re-Offer of the Kingdom, Pentecost, the Commission

The ministry of the apostles (and others), seen beginning anew as the kingdom began to be re-offered to Israel on the day of Pentecost, *would have had to be IN COMPLETE KEEPING with Christ's previous commission to them*, seen at the end of the three synoptic gospels and the beginning of the Book of Acts.

The message COULD NOT possibly have been separated from this previous commission. One COULD ONLY have been part and parcel with the other.

Christ's commission to His apostles during His forty-day post-resurrection ministry appears to have been given in four different parts at different times, *with all four parts together forming the whole*

of the commission as it COULD ONLY be seen and understood.

(This would be similar to the statement Pilate placed above Christ's head at the time of His crucifixion — "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." All four of the gospel writers record a part of this statement, but not the complete statement. The complete statement is seen *only through comparing all four.*

Four parts of a complete commission, forming the whole of that commission, would also be completely in line with the way Scripture is structured throughout. No one part of Scripture provides the complete picture. But, comparing Scripture with Scripture, as Scripture is added to Scripture, *the picture ALWAYS progressively comes more and more into focus.*)

Thus, the different recorded accounts in which Christ commissioned His apostles during the forty days following His resurrection — given at the end of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and at the beginning of Acts — *CAN ONLY be viewed as different parts or forms of one commission, with ALL FOUR having to do with EXACTLY the same thing.*

These different accounts of what *CAN ONLY be seen as ONE commission MUST ALL be seen as a message "beginning at Jerusalem," with the message to the Jews in Jerusalem (also elsewhere to both Jews and Gentiles, but proclaimed by Jews and attended by signs, wonders, and miracles [cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8]).*

And, as becomes quite evident, the carrying out of this commission began to occur ten days following Christ's ascension — on the feast of Pentecost. As well, that which occurred on this day, inseparably associated with the carrying out of this commission, was the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, along with the bringing into existence of the Church (forming those who would carry out this commission during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel).

The beginning of and initial carrying out of this commission on the day of Pentecost had to do with one hundred twenty disciples *filled with and empowered by the Spirit, speaking other languages, beginning at Jerusalem, with everything*

completely in line with that which Christ had previously laid down when He gave the commission (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:2-43; 3:1-4:13).

The fact that the message was to be carried to Israel *first*, attended by supernatural signs (Acts 2:4-43; 3:1ff), reveals one truth. And the fact that the message was subsequently to be carried to the Gentile world, also attended by supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:8), reveals another.

(In the previous four gospel accounts, during the offer of the kingdom to Israel, there are at least thirty-five separate *signs*, along with a number of general statements regarding signs [often referred to as “miracles,” *i.e.*, *miraculous events* forming “signs”]. Several of the same signs appear in all four gospels, a number appear in all three synoptic gospels, and a few appear in only one gospel, particularly in John’s gospel.

In the Book of Acts, during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, there are at least thirty separate signs, along with a number of general statements regarding signs.

But these are only the recorded signs. Note the statement in John 20:30: “And many other signs...” [many unrecorded (John 21:25)]. And continuing “signs” in Acts could only be looked upon *in the same manner.*)

Israel, hearing the message *first*, beginning on the day of Pentecost, was expected to repent, bringing to pass *the return of the King and the restoration of the kingdom.*

And, following Christ’s return and the restoration of the kingdom, Israel was to carry this message *to the Gentile world.* The nation was to fulfill its calling as *Jehovah’s witness to the ends of the earth* (Isa. 43:1-10), carrying the message concerning the King and the kingdom to the Gentiles worldwide.

Viewing Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 together, one can easily see and understand this complete, overall truth. And these are two verses which have suffered about as much at the hands of Christians in general as they have from the cult groups.

Cult groups have removed these verses from their contexts to form a basis for their false salvation doctrines and practices. And numerous Christians, attempting to counter the cults — but, as the cults, seeing only basic issues surrounding one’s eternal sal-

vation in these verses — have, as well, removed them from their contexts (though interpreting them quite differently, but *ALWAYS non-contextually*).

Thus, with respect to correct, basic interpretation, both groups — usually attempting to align all Scripture, regardless of the text and context, with basic issues regarding the salvation message — *have missed the mark COMPLETELY. Both have ignored and, accordingly, have not dealt with THE SUBJECT AT HAND.*

Note how these two verses read:

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The verse in Acts has to do solely with *Israel and the kingdom* (vv. 36, 37, 43). The fulfillment of this verse does not extend beyond Jerusalem and Judaea in the Lord’s commission.

But the verse in Mark has to do with *the Gentile nations and the kingdom* (v. 15), *with Jews proclaiming the message*. The fulfillment of this verse extends beyond Jerusalem and Judaea, into Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

But Jews MUST be the ones present as the proclaimers of this message, for “signs” would accompany the message (v. 17).

(Note something about *the message to the Gentiles in Mark 16:15-18*. “Signs, wonders and miracles” cannot exist apart from two things being present — *Israel, and the kingdom*. This is the way matters were set forth at the beginning in the O.T., forming a first-mention principle, necessitating that matters remain this way throughout the remainder of Scripture.

[For information on the preceding, refer to Appendix II in this book, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles”].

Thus, first and foremost, the message seen in Mark 16:15-18 *CAN ONLY have to do with Israel and the kingdom. Accordingly, it CAN ONLY have to do with saved Jews proclaiming the message to saved Gentiles, with the message having to do with the kingdom, NOT salvation by grace through faith.*

This, as well, is perfectly in line with the commission as seen in Matt. 28:18-20. There is *NOTHING* in this part of the commission about salvation by grace. Rather, matters begin with baptism and progress to discipleship and keeping the Lord's commandments. And, the other two forms of the commission [Luke's in both his gospel and in the Book of Acts] *MUST* be understood in this same respect.

Attempts to associate any of the four forms of this commission with the Church and evangelism, as has invariably been done over the years, is *completely out of line with any type sound Scriptural interpretation, closing the door to any correct understanding of the complete, overall message as presented in Scripture.*)

Israel though, preceding the carrying of this message to the Gentiles, had to repent and be baptized *first* (national repentance and baptism [Acts 2:38]) — same message as seen in the original offer of the kingdom in the four gospel accounts. And this would result in the nation receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit” — as previously seen (vv. 4-38), *the Spirit being poured out on all flesh (i.e., those forming the Jewish nation being filled with and empowered by the Spirit, being able to deliver the message in all of the different Gentile languages worldwide (cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:15-21).*

Then Israel, as Jehovah's witness (Isa. 43:1-10), would be in a position to go forth to Samaria and to the Gentile nations throughout the earth, *boldly carrying the message to these nations in their own languages*, bringing about the fulfillment of the Lord's commission in Mark 16:15 (cf. Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

And supernatural signs would follow the proclamation of the message *to ALL seen throughout the commission* — whether to Jews, to Samaritans, or to Gentiles throughout these different nations.

Had Israel followed Peter's instructions on the day of Pentecost (in response to the question which had been asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” [Acts 2:37] — “Repent, and be baptized...” [v. 38]) — Christ would have returned and restored the kingdom to Israel.

And the nation — following the reception of “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (a continued and complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy) — would subsequently have gone forth to the Gentiles with the message concerning the King and the kingdom, fulfill-

ing Mark 16:15ff, along with that seen in the other three forms of the commission.

Christ's return and the "restitution ['restoration'] of all things" (which would include the restoration of the kingdom to Israel) was contingent on *Israel's repentance* (Acts 3:19-21; cf. Acts 7:51-56). And the ministry of the disciples throughout the Book of Acts was a ministry toward this end.

That toward which ALL THINGS had been moving for the past 4,000 years was in the offing.

A repentant and restored Jewish nation would dwell in a restored land, the theocracy would be restored to Israel, and the Gentile nations of the earth would be reached through the Jewish people going forth as God's witness to these nations, fulfilling their calling.

And these disciples, realizing the importance of Israel's repentance in the preceding respect, carried the message to the nation after *such a zealous fashion and with such fervor* that they were threatened, beaten, imprisoned, and even killed by the Jewish religious leaders (Acts 3:1ff; 4:1ff; 5:1ff; 7:1ff).

And Paul, *comprehending the importance of this matter*, near the close of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, went so far as to say:

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh [if such could bring about Israel's repentance and that which would follow]" (Rom. 9:3).

(Note that the previous statement had to do with *Paul's position in the kingdom*, not with his eternal salvation. The former could be forfeited, but not the latter.

Israel's repentance was of such import that Paul, knowing and understanding the gravity of that involved, *was willing to go to the extent of relinquishing HIS OWN POSITION in Christ's coming kingdom if the nation's repentance could be effected through such actions on his part.*)

But Israel didn't repent — not on the day of Pentecost nor on any subsequent day throughout the approximately thirty years

in which the re-offer of the kingdom remained open. Thus, since Israel didn't repent, Mark 16:15ff not only remained unfulfilled but, in actuality, *CAN'T be fulfilled today*.

The Commission, Israel, the Church, the Nations

All things with respect to miraculous signs, Israel, and the Gentile nations can perhaps best be seen in their proper perspective by observing the Lord's commission in Matthew in the light of the forms of this commission seen in Mark, Luke, and Acts (particularly in Mark). In so doing, it can only be seen that what is often called "The Great Commission" in Matthew's gospel has to do, *NOT with the Church, but SOLELY with Israel and the kingdom*.

And once God had terminated His dealings with Israel relative to the kingdom — at the end of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, about 62 A.D. — the commission given by Christ following His resurrection but prior to His ascension could no longer have to do with Israel and the nations in the same respect that it had before this time.

Beyond this time, and for the remainder of the dispensation (lasting over 1,900 years), individuals in the Church would continue carrying a message regarding *baptism* (following salvation) and *discipleship*; but this would be done *APART FROM Christ's commission and APART FROM dealing with Israel in any way relative to national repentance and the kingdom being restored to the nation*.

And since Israel would no longer occupy her previous position in relation to the proclamation of the message and the kingdom, *miraculous signs would, as well, no longer exist*.

In relation to the Church, Christ's commission given to His disciples before His ascension could involve no more than *an application* of the different parts of the commission found in the three gospels and in Acts. But, applying any part of this commission to the Church would, of necessity, involve *a completely different approach*.

It would involve the proclamation of *the gospel of the grace of God* on the one hand and the proclamation of *the gospel of the glory of Christ* on the other (*cf.* Eph. 2:8-10; I Tim. 1:11; 2:4). In

fact, so little would be the same or could be associated with or drawn from this commission that *it would undoubtedly be best to not even attempt to associate one with the other, avoiding confusion.*

(An application of this commission to the Church today would be somewhat like trying to apply II Chron. 7:14 to the Church [ref. Appendix IV, "If My People," in the author's book, *O Sleeper! Arise, Call!*].

None of the four forms of the commission deals with salvation by grace per se. Nor could they, for *ALL of them deal with the same thing, which has to do with a continuing message beyond the simple salvation message. All deal with "Jews" who are filled with and empowered by the Spirit proclaiming this message, in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, as seen in Acts 2.*

NONE of the preceding could possibly have had anything to do with the Church after about 62 A.D., when the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel ceased. And this commission COULD ONLY have had to do with the Church before that time — from 33 A.D to about 62 A.D. — in ONE RESPECT:

Those forming the Church, beginning on the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D., were the ones now in possession of the kingdom [the kingdom of the heavens, not the earthly segment of the kingdom covenanted to David, which can NEVER be taken from Israel (cf. Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10)]. And they were the ones whom God was using to re-offer the kingdom to Israel.

Beyond this time [beyond about 62 A.D.], salvation by grace could only have been the central message proclaimed by Christians going forth to the nations. And the proclamation of salvation by grace would have a purpose in view beyond the message [which would fall more in line with that seen in Christ's commission to His disciples, but not the same at all]; and that purpose is to be seen in *the gospel of the glory of Christ, to be proclaimed to individuals after they have been saved.*

The preceding, beginning with the gospel of grace, as stated, is by *application only.* Things seen in the commission which Christ gave to His disciples, preceding Pentecost, begin at a point in time *following* the salvation message. This commission has to do with *baptism and discipling all nations*, not with proclaiming the gospel of grace ["teach," KJV, in Matt. 28:19, 20, should be translated, "disciple"]. And discipling individuals has to do with *a work among the saved, not the unsaved.*)

1) Exact Wording of Text

In most versions of Scripture, as in the KJV, Matt. 28:19 begins

with a command: “Go ye therefore...” However, in the Greek text, the verse begins with an aorist participle, which could be better translated, “Having gone...” The thought is that Israel was *expected to repent*; and because of the nation’s calling — called to be Jehovah’s witness to the Gentile nations of the earth (Isa. 43:1-10) — Israel, following the nation’s repentance and the reception of “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (empowered by and filled with the Spirit, in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy), *would have then been expected to go to the Gentiles in fulfillment of her calling* (as Jonah did following his repentance and removal from the place of death [chs. 2, 3]).

The command in this verse actually begins with the word “teach [*lit.*, ‘disciple’].” This word is an imperative in the Greek text; and the thought is that Israel, having gone out among the nations with the good news (concerning salvation, the King, and the kingdom), was to bring forth *disciples*. Saved individuals, in line with that stated in Matt. 28:19, 20, were to be *baptized and taught*, in that order.

Now, with these things in mind, note the form of the commission as given in Mark 16:15-18. The words “Go ye” (v. 15, KJV) are a translation of the same aorist participle seen in Matt. 28:19. And the translation here, along with the expectation relative to Israel repenting and going, would be the same as in Matthew’s gospel — “Having gone...”

The command (imperative) in Mark 16:15 is in the word “preach.” That is, “Having gone into all the world,” they were then to “preach the gospel to every creature.” And the message, as Israel went forth, would be attended by signs, wonders, and miracles (vv. 17, 18). Supernatural manifestations of power would accompany the message because of the presence of not only *Israel* but a message pertaining to *the kingdom* (not the message of salvation by grace, which is *NEVER proclaimed in connection with signs*), with the end result of the message having to do with blessings to be realized by the Gentiles in the kingdom.

(Note again John’s gospel in the preceding respect. This gospel is built around *eight signs*, and *the purpose for these signs* is given toward the end of the book, in 20:30, 31:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these [these eight signs] are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.”

These eight signs were originally performed by Christ and were now recorded in the manner seen in this gospel to *effect belief that Jesus was the Christ, God’s Son, providing life for those believing [NOT eternal life but “life” in relation to that toward which the signs pointed and had to do with – THE PROFFERED KINGDOM].* And those to whom the message was directed *could only have been the Jewish people.*

These supernatural signs were performed by Christ to *effect belief among the Jewish people during the original offer of the kingdom; and these signs, later recorded in the gospel of John, had to do with effecting belief among the Jewish people during the re-offer of the kingdom [placing the writing of John’s gospel at a time prior to about 62 A.D., which is in line with late scholarship on the matter].*

And “belief” during the offer or during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel had *NOTHING to do with the gospel of grace or with eternal salvation.* Eternal salvation is simply *NOT a message connected with signs.*

Numerous Christian groups today though associate that stated in John 20:30, 31 with the simple salvation message, *associating belief and signs therein with the gospel of grace, not only corrupting this message on the one hand but destroying the central message of John’s gospel on the other.*

And something quite similar is seen in the Lord’s commission to His disciples following His resurrection, as recorded in the three synoptic gospels and the Book of Acts. *This commission, as the signs in John’s gospel, has NOTHING to do with the simple preaching of the gospel of grace by the Church today.*

The whole of the matter is Jewish, having to do with the kingdom; and the signs and/or commission MUST be understood in this manner.

[Refer to Appendixes II, III in this book, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles” and “Misuse of John 20:30, 31,” for more information on the preceding.]

The commission which Christ gave to His disciples following His resurrection, was to bring about *a salvation* connected, textually, with *belief and baptism*: “He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall

be saved..." (Mark 16:16a).

With the commission beginning at Jerusalem and Judaea — "Repent, and be baptized... (Acts 2:38a) — *repentance* (a change of mind) would result in *belief*, followed by *baptism* (same as the original offer of the kingdom in the four gospels).

Then the Jewish people, following the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit, would carry this message to the nations, with *belief*, followed by *baptism*, being the issue regarding *salvation*, as seen in Mark 16:16. And *belief*, *baptism*, and *salvation*, as the words are used in this verse, of necessity, deal with *issues beyond the thought of individuals passing from death unto life*.

These words used together in this manner, textually, have to do with *discipleship*, as in Matt. 28:19, 20. And *discipleship is seen to be for a purpose, to be realized in the associated kingdom being re-offered to Israel*.

This CAN ONLY BE the case, for *belief*, *baptism*, and *salvation* in Mark 16:16 or *repentance* and *baptism* in Acts 2:38 (note how *salvation* is used in v. 40), are associated with *a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles* (Mark 16:17, 18; Acts 2:43), which have to do with *the kingdom*. And all of this sets forth the indisputable fact that "salvation" or "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in these verses CANNOT have to do with *the gospel of grace and eternal life*.

"Salvation" in these verses is inseparably associated with events on *the day of Pentecost*, and, in turn, inseparably associated with *Israel and the kingdom*.

In this respect, note that seen in Acts 2:21 relative to these events:

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved [a quotation from Joel 2:32 pertaining to 'deliverance' during the Messianic Era (cf. Rom. 10:13, 14)]."

And, in this same respect, note *the type* which begins in Exodus chapter twelve, and matters should become quite clear. Things having to do with one's *eternal salvation* are dealt with in events surrounding the death of the firstborn at the very beginning (in ch. 12). But *belief*, *baptism*, and *salvation*, as in Mark 16:16, textually, are associated with *a subsequent deliverance* (made possible because of *the previous death of the firstborn and associated deliverance*).

In the type, *this subsequent deliverance* had to do with events *beyond the death of the firstborn*. This deliverance had to do with *the Red Sea passage (foreshadowing baptism and all which is involved [Ex. 13, 14])*, looking out ahead toward *the land of Canaan (the land in which the theocracy, the kingdom, was to be realized)*.

And these are the things which, *first and foremost*, are involved in the Lord's commission to the disciples, whether seen in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or Acts.

2) The Message Today

As previously seen, the gospel to be proclaimed in the Lord's commission in Mark 16:15ff, or in any of the other forms of the commission, was *the gospel of the kingdom*; and the message was to be attended by *signs, wonders, and miracles*.

And all of this is *COMPLETELY ALIEN to the message which is to be proclaimed by the Church today, to either Israel or to the Gentile nations*.

The message which the Church is to carry today *begins with the simple gospel of grace, progressing to the gospel of glory*. Israel has been set aside, and the kingdom is no longer "at hand." And with Israel set aside and the kingdom no longer at hand, signs, wonders, and miracles can no longer form a part of any message being proclaimed (*ref. next chapter in this book*).

Thus, a message today, in line with that which is stated in Mark 16:15-18, would be *COMPLETELY out of place*.

A message of this nature, under the direction and power of the Spirit of God, *CANNOT possibly exist during the present time*. *Such, from a Biblical standpoint, would be IMPOSSIBLE*.

And the reason for *the impossibility of the matter* is very simple: The Spirit of God empowering individuals to manifest supernatural signs today would be acting contrary to the very Word which He had previously moved men to pen.

But, note what can presently be found in Christendom.

Entire denominations have been founded on seeking after signs, wonders, and miracles, as seen in parts of Christ's commission to His disciples, along with related parts of the gospels and Acts (also I Corinthians, written during the time covering Acts).

And the present Charismatic Movement, which has crossed all denominational lines, has been founded upon and proclaims the same erroneous view relative to these supernatural signs.

This whole thing has taken its toll in Christendom over the years. And Christians today, seeing all of this, *are confused to say the least*. They generally have little to no understanding of the place which signs, wonders, and miracles occupy in Scripture; and Christians, on a scale larger than at any other time in history, *are, accordingly, being misled on every hand* (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).

And note the serious nature of the matter. We're dealing with *the very crux* of a central teaching in Acts, which will allow one to properly understand this book, a book leading into the epistles.

Go wrong here, and you will remain wrong the rest of the way.

6

Central Message in the Epistles

Continuing from Acts...

Israel Set Aside, the One New Man Now Center-Stage

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood [‘a regal priesthood’; cf. Ex. 19:5, 6; Rev. 5:9, 10], an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:9-11).

Though God brought into existence and dealt with the Church in Acts, *Israel remained (continuing from the gospels) His main focus of attention throughout the book.*

God used *the one new man* “in Christ” throughout Acts to carry a continued message from the gospels to the nation of Israel. But once God had completed His work with Israel in this respect, He then turned completely to *the one new man* (a new creation, “in Christ,” separate from both Jew and Gentile [II Cor. 5:17]), *the one now in SOLE POSSESSION of a kingdom which had been offered to Israel in the gospels, re-offered to Israel in Acts, and now completely taken from Israel.*

And that is *the centerpoint of the message in the epistles—Pauline, Hebrews, and general epistles. EVERYTHING in these epistles, after some fashion, centers around and relates to this message.*

And since the Pauline epistles occupy almost three times as much space in the New Testament as Hebrews and the general epistles combined, most of the material in this part of the chapter will be taken from and reference places in the Pauline epistles. But it would matter little if this were reversed, for exactly the same thing can be seen in Hebrews and the general epistles, though from different perspectives.

(Relative to the authorship of Hebrews, which many assign to Paul, it is a simple matter to show that Paul didn't write the book, though it is impossible to show who did write the book.

Different things about the book — the Greek text, the subject matter and the way that it is laid out — would *suggest* that someone other than Paul wrote the book. But note Heb. 2:3. *The author of Hebrews was evidently not among those who had personally seen and heard the Lord. Paul though had spent a considerable length of time with the Lord, possibly as long as three years, taught by Him personally* [cf. II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:15-19; Eph. 3:1-3].)

The Gospel Message

The word “gospel,” as it is used in the New Testament, means *good news, glad tidings*. And the type good news, glad tidings in view *MUST ALWAYS be determined from the context*.

Then “salvation,” as seen throughout Scripture, both Testaments, always refers to *deliverance*. And the type deliverance in view, as when reference is made to “the gospel,” *MUST ALWAYS be determined from the context as well*.

But, a major problem in relation to *the gospel* and *salvation* exists throughout Christendom today. Bible students, far more often than not, when they see the words “gospel” and/or “salvation,” think of only one thing, regardless of the context — the simple gospel message having to do with Christ's death and shed blood, and salvation from eternal damnation.

However “salvation” in Scripture, having to do with “the gospel,” with “good news,” has *past, present, and future* aspects — *I have been saved* (Acts 16:30, 31; Eph. 2:8, 9), *I am being saved* (I Cor. 1:18; James 1:21), and *I am about to be saved* (Heb. 1:14; I Peter 1:9). And the context *MUST ALWAYS* be referenced to ascertain which

of these three aspects of salvation, which of these three aspects of the overall gospel message, is being dealt with in the passage.

And when one does this, he will find, *FAR, FAR MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, that present and future aspects of the gospel, of salvation, are being referenced, not the past aspect.*

Thus, one can immediately see that *something MAJOR is wrong in Biblical interpretation* when only the past aspect of “the gospel” and “salvation” seemingly come to mind when the words appear in Scripture. A large part of Scripture is being *erroneously dealt with* (actually, *above eighty percent of the times* “salvation” or “the gospel” are referenced), *resulting in erroneous interpretation on the one hand and the door being closed to correct interpretation on the other.*

The Mystery, Paul’s Gospel

“Paul’s gospel” is inseparably related to *the mystery revealed to him*. And Paul’s gospel, along with the mystery revealed to him, are part and parcel with the way that the gospel and its salvation message are seen *throughout ALL of the epistles*.

And the preceding is what this part of the chapter is about, showing how the epistles deal with the whole of the matter.

To begin, note the following verses and sections of Scripture relative to *the gospel and the gospel’s salvation message, with ALL of these verses and sections pertaining to present and future aspects of this gospel and its message, as will become evident in this part of the chapter:*

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16).

“Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25).

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery (as I wrote aforetime in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

Which in other ages [‘other generations’] was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Whereof I was made a minister...” (Eph. 3:1-7a).

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit; and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (I Thess. 1:5, 6).

“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions [the handing down of information] which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (II Thess. 2:14, 15).

The epistles (Pauline, Hebrews, and general epistles) were written by at least five — probably six — different men (as previously seen, the author of Hebrews is unknown), and certain individual, distinguishing qualities and characteristics of the writers can be seen in their writings.

In Paul’s case, his extensive use of the word “gospel” — how and why he used the word — forms a major trait which makes his writings different from those of any other writer of a New Testament book. Paul, for evident reasons, appeared almost *obsessed* with this word, using it *FAR MORE EXTENSIVELY* than any of the other writers. And he used the word both alone and through qualifying it various ways (*e.g.*, “gospel,” “gospel of God,” “gospel of Christ,” etc.), usually referring to the same facet of the gospel, though possibly with different emphases.

Paul’s writings comprise slightly less than one-third of the New Testament, but of the one hundred thirty-two times that the word “gospel” appears throughout the New Testament — in both its noun and verb forms (*euaggelion* and *euaggelizo* respectively) — almost two-thirds of these occurrences are found in the Pauline epistles.

The word appears twenty-three times in the synoptic gospels,

seventeen times in the Book of Acts, six times in the general epistles, and three times in the Book of Revelation. But Paul used the word *eighty-three times* throughout his epistles.

Why did Paul use this word so extensively? The writer of Hebrews only used the word twice; James didn't use the word at all; Peter only used the word four times; John didn't use the word in either his gospel or his epistles, though he used it three times in the Book of Revelation; and Jude didn't use the word in his epistle.

And beyond that, what was Paul referring to when he used this word?

As previously seen, the word "gospel" simply means *good news*. What was *the good news* to which Paul referred?

Invariably, people want to associate the word "gospel" with only one thing — *the good news pertaining to Christ's finished work at Calvary*. They see the word "gospel" in Scripture, and this is what invariably comes to mind. And, looking at the word after this fashion, they seek to understand any portion of Scripture where this word appears solely in the light of the gospel of the grace of God.

And, interpreting Scripture after this fashion, they usually end up with a perversion, for the word "gospel" is used *far more often than not* — including the Pauline epistles — referring to good news *other than Christ's finished work at Calvary*.

And erroneously understanding the word "gospel" to refer to Christ's finished work at Calvary, in a text where it doesn't, will not only *do away with* that which the text does deal with but it will also often result in *a perversion* of the message pertaining to the simple gospel of the grace of God.

An example of the preceding would be the manner in which I Cor. 15:1-4 is usually understood. The word "gospel" appears in the first verse, and all four verses are usually looked upon as referring to the same thing — the gospel of the grace of God. But both the text and the context reveal that such an interpretation is not correct at all.

Paul used the word "gospel" in connection with that which is stated in verses one, two, and four; but it is evident that this has no reference to the gospel of the grace of God. Salvation in these

verses is spoken of as *an ongoing process in the lives of those to whom he was writing*, and it is also spoken of as something which *could be lost*. Neither would be true relative to the gospel of the grace of God which Paul had proclaimed to them “*first*,” referred to in verse three (referred to apart from the use of the word “gospel”).

And when individuals combine these four verses and attempt to make everything pertain to the gospel of the grace of God, the truths referred to in verses one, two, and four *are always done away with*; and the gospel of grace, referred to in verse three, *is often corrupted* (through bringing elements [from vv. 1, 2, 4] over into this message, where they do not belong).

And the manner in which this passage is normally handled would be true numerous places in the Pauline epistles when the context is ignored and the word “gospel” is made to refer to something which the text doesn’t refer to at all.

(I Corinthians 15:1-4 is dealt with in a more extensive manner later in this part of the chapter, following some preliminary material, allowing the passage to be better understood from a contextual respect.)

Paul’s extensive use of the word “gospel,” particularly his extensive use of this word to refer to something other than the gospel of the grace of God, goes back to his experiences at the outset of his ministry.

Before Paul ever launched out on the ministry to which he had been called — *to carry the good news rejected by Israel to the Gentiles* — the Lord took him aside and taught him all the various things about the message which he was to proclaim. And after this, as Paul went about fulfilling his calling, it was only natural for him to use the word “gospel,” meaning *good news*, to refer to the good news (which the Lord had personally taught him) which he had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world.

This “good news” had to do with *the mystery* revealed to Paul by the Lord (evidently after he had been taken to Arabia, then into heaven [II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-17]). It had to do with believing Jews and Gentiles being placed together in “the same body” as “fellowheirs [‘joint-heirs’]” (Eph. 3:1-11); and these Jewish and

Gentile believers (Christians), together, possessed a “hope” relative to one day occupying positions of honor and glory with Christ in “his heavenly kingdom” (cf. Col. 1:25-28; II Tim. 4:17, 18; Titus 1:2; 2:11-13; 3:7).

And Paul referred to *the good news* pertaining to this message as “my gospel” (Rom. 16:25), “our gospel” (II Cor. 4:3), “the glorious gospel of Christ [lit., ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’]” (II Cor. 4:4), “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1; II Cor. 11:7), “the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:7), etc. Then, numerous times Paul simply used the word “gospel” alone to refer to this good news (Rom. 1:15; Gal. 1:6).

The fact that the mystery had been revealed to Paul, with Paul called to carry this message to Christians throughout the Gentile world, is the evident reason why he used the word “gospel” so often in his epistles. It was only *natural* for him to refer to the message which he had been called to proclaim through the use of a word which meant “good news,” for *the message was good news*.

For the unsaved, Christ’s finished work on the Cross was “good news.” As unsaved individuals, this was THE BEST NEWS that they could ever hear.

But once *they had been saved*, they were then to hear the “good news” about *why* they had been saved. And, as *saved individuals*, this was, as well, *THE BEST NEWS that they could ever hear*.

And Paul’s ministry centered around *the latter*, not the former. Paul’s ministry centered around proclaiming that which the Lord had revealed to him following his conversion. And the message contained therein dealt with the reason an individual had been saved (cf. Deut. 6:23); and this gospel, Paul’s gospel, was *THE BEST NEWS redeemed man could ever hear*, which was why Paul let *nothing* stand in the way of his proclaiming this message.

This “good news” had to do with *the greatest thing God could offer redeemed man*—*occupying positions as co-heirs with His Son, from a heavenly realm, in the coming kingdom*. To reference words which the writer of Hebrews used, it was “so great salvation” (Heb. 2:3).

And Paul's repeated reference to the message pertaining to this offer as "good news" is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his writings.

1) *The Mystery*

"The mystery" revealed to Paul, "hid in God" *from the beginning* (the beginning of the ages), of necessity, forms an integral part of the Old Testament Scriptures. There is nothing in the New Testament that does not have its roots in one or more places in the Old Testament. The New is simply an opening up and unveiling of that drawn from foundational material previously set forth in the Old, *drawn mainly from the types* (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44; I Cor. 10:6, 11; Eph. 3:9-11; Col. 1:16-18, 25-27).

And, aside from the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the New Testament has to do mainly with *one major facet of Old Testament revelation*:

The New Testament, in this respect, has to do mainly with *numerous things pertaining to the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom — first, as these things pertained to Israel [offered to Israel in the gospels, re-offered in Acts]; and then, as these things presently pertain to the one new man "in Christ" [to whom the kingdom is presently being offered, after having been rejected by and taken from Israel].*

"The mystery" was revealed to Moses first, though remaining *a mystery, remaining veiled*.

Then, some fifteen centuries later, God took Paul aside (evidently to Arabia [the same country to which he had previously taken Moses to reveal things pertaining to the theocracy], then into heaven [II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-17]); and, in the person of His Son, God *opened up and unveiled* various things which He had previously revealed to Moses and other Old Testament prophets (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

(A "mystery [Gk., *musterion*, meaning, 'a hidden thing,' 'a secret']" in the New Testament can be defined as *something previously hidden in*

Old Testament revelation but now revealed [cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:4, 5].

Contrariwise, a mystery *CAN NEVER* be thought of as a reference to something not found at all in previous revelation, for, again, there is *NOTHING* in the New Testament that does not have its roots in one or more places in the Old Testament.

Thus, a “mystery” pertains to *something dealt with in previous revelation [seen mainly in the types] but not opened up [or fully opened up] to one’s understanding until a later point in time [seen mainly in the antitypes].*

[Note that the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 2, 14) before a single word of the N.T. had been penned would have been *incomplete* had something later appeared in the N.T. that had not previously appeared in some form in the O.T.].

And the opening up and unveiling of a mystery [such as the mystery revealed to Paul following his conversion] could occur only through Divine intervention. *Only the same Person* Who had previously established the mystery [via revelation, through one or more of the Old Testament prophets] could open up and make known the mystery [via revelation, to one or more of the New Testament writers].

And, in Paul’s case, this can be seen through that which he himself testified concerning how he came into possession of a knowledge of the message which he had been called to proclaim among the Gentiles.

The Lord Himself took Paul aside, then moved Paul into His presence, and personally taught him — *One-on-one* — the message which he, in days ahead, was to proclaim to individuals [Christians] and groups of individuals [Churches] out among the Gentile nations.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself *personally* opened up and explained things to Paul which had previously been revealed through Moses and the Prophets [Gal. 1:11-18; Eph. 3:1-11; Col. 1:20-28; *cf.* Luke 24:25-27]; and Paul had been called to take these truths and proclaim them to *the one new man* “in Christ” out in the Gentile world, in both verbal and written form.)

Progressive revelation of this nature can be seen in Peter’s reference to angels desiring “to look into” things pertaining to *the salvation of the soul*, things which the Spirit moved him to write about, and things intimately associated with the mystery revealed to Paul (I Peter 1:3-11).

These angels could only have previously seen, *in the Old Testa-*

ment Scriptures, that which was being opened up and unveiled to Peter (and others). These were things which they desired to know more about; but, *apart from later revelation, which opened up and provided additional light on these things*, the saving of the soul in connection with sufferings and glory could be little understood.

Thus, “the mystery” revealed to Paul was simply *an opening up and an unveiling of things which had lain in the bosom of an existing revelation — a revelation wherein the roots of all Biblical doctrine lie*.

And, as previously stated, it lay centrally in the types, which God had established in the beginning. Then, the various types which deal with the bride of Christ, and thus “the mystery,” do so in different ways.

For example, Genesis chapter two deals with the bride being removed from the body; Genesis chapter twenty-four deals with the bride being taken from the family; Genesis chapter forty-one, Exodus chapter two, and Ruth chapters three and four deal with the bride being taken from among the Gentiles. And there are numerous other types as well, which, together, deal with *all the various facets of the matter*.

Further, “the mystery” has to do with revealed truth surrounding believing Jews and believing Gentiles — forming *one new man “in Christ”* (where there is neither Jew nor Gentile) — being *heirs together, “of the same body.”* It has to do with “Christ in you [*lit.*, ‘Christ being proclaimed among you’], the hope of glory” (*cf.* Eph. 2:12-15; 3:1-11; Col. 1:24-28).

Note again how “the mystery” is explained in so many words in the Book of Ephesians — a book centering around Christians one day realizing an “inheritance” *in heavenly places* (ch. 1), a sphere presently occupied by the incumbent rulers, Satan and his angels (ch. 6):

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...

That the Gentiles [believing Gentiles] should be fellowheirs [with believing Jews], and of the same body [forming *the one new man ‘in Christ’*], and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel [which, contextually, could only be *the gospel of the glory of Christ, NOT the gospel of the grace of God*]” (Eph. 3:3a, 6; *cf.* Eph. 2:11-15).

And a type which, among other things, would have to do with Jews and Gentiles together in one body would be the account of Caleb and Joshua's experiences, beginning in Numbers chapter thirteen and extending through the Book of Joshua. The name "Caleb" means *dog*, and the name "Joshua" means *salvation*.

It was the "Gentiles" who were looked upon by the Jews as *dogs*, for whom *salvation was provided through the Jews* (John 4:22). And Gentile believers, with Jewish believers, are destined to realize *an inheritance together in a heavenly land*, just as Caleb and Joshua realized *an inheritance together in an earthly land* (cf. I Cor. 9:23-10:11).

And though God, in the beginning, designed various Old Testament types to reveal these things, once He had called *the one new man* "in Christ" into existence and Israel had rejected the re-offer of the kingdom, these things had to be *opened up and further revealed* to those comprising this new creation. Apart from such an opening up and unveiling, God's purpose for the present dispensation and the place which the Gentiles would occupy in this purpose could not be properly understood (cf. Acts 10:45-48; 11:15-18; 15:12-18).

This is the reason that the Lord took Paul aside shortly after his conversion and provided extensive instruction concerning this whole overall matter, for these things comprised *the heart of the message* which he was to carry to individuals out in the Gentile world.

And this is the reason that Paul's ministry dealt mainly, not with the gospel of the grace of God, but with the gospel of the glory of Christ. And, correspondingly, this is also the reason that the emphasis *in all of his epistles* is, likewise, on the gospel of the glory of Christ rather than the gospel of the grace of God.

2) Paul's Gospel

As stated at the outset, the manner in which Paul used the word "gospel," meaning *good news*, *MUST ALWAYS be understood contextually*. Paul did not use this word as it is used, almost without exception, in theological circles today — as a reference only to the gospel of the grace of God. Rather, Paul used the word,

time after time, as a reference to *the good news* which had been delivered to him by “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” following his conversion (Gal. 1:11, 12).

And, as previously stated, as well, Paul used the word, *FAR MORE OFTEN THAN NOT*, as a reference to the main crux of his ministry — *the good news pertaining to that encompassed within the mystery*, which had been delivered to him, which he, in turn, had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world (Eph. 3:1-11; Col. 1:25-29). And the Christians to whom Paul ministered *would have easily understood his use of the word “gospel” from the context of that which he had either said or written* (for an example of the preceding, refer to the author’s article, “[*Antichrist Cannot Appear, Until...*](#)”).

This central thrust of Paul’s ministry becomes *self-evident* as one reads through the Book of Acts and the Pauline epistles.

Paul proclaimed both the gospel of the grace of God and the gospel of the glory of Christ, but he proclaimed the good news pertaining to *the grace of God* with a view to his then being able to proclaim the good news pertaining to *the glory of Christ*. Paul explained to individuals *HOW they could be saved*, with a view to subsequently being able to explain to them *WHY they had been saved*.

For example, note how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul’s final message to the Christians in Ephesus, through their elders (Acts 20:24-32). Or, for that matter, note also how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul’s epistle to the Christians in Ephesus (1:7ff; 2:1ff; 3:1ff). And a similar structure can be seen in other epistles, not only in the Pauline epistles but in the general epistles as well.

But, because of an existing confusion in the dual nature of I Cor. 15:1-4 in this respect, attention will again be called to this passage in order to illustrate the point. As previously noted, this passage is invariably used erroneously by Christians, not in a dual respect, but in a singular sense — as a reference *only* to the gospel of the grace of God.

This passage though begins with *the gospel of the glory of Christ* (vv. 1, 2), then briefly moves back to *the gospel of the grace of God* (v. 3), and then comes back to where it began, to *the gospel of the glory of Christ* (v. 4) — *providing the complete gospel message, cover-*

ing past, present, and future aspects of salvation.

Paul, in this passage, *began* with the central message which he had been called to proclaim; *then he briefly moved back* to the message of the gospel of the grace of God, which, of necessity, must be proclaimed first to the unsaved; *then he came back* to the message which is to be proclaimed to individuals once they have heard the gospel of the grace of God — *the central message which he had been called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world.*

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:1-4).

The problem emerges when a person attempts to not only make Paul’s reference to “the gospel” in verses one and two a reference to the gospel of the grace of God but make that stated in these verses pertain to his entire statement having to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in verses three and four.

It is the “death” of Christ *ALONE* which pertains to *the gospel of the grace of God*. The “burial” and “resurrection” of Christ *move beyond this* and have to do with things pertaining to *the continuing good news, the gospel of the glory of Christ*.

Note the type beginning in Exodus chapter twelve. “Death” *alone* is seen in this chapter. “Death” had been decreed upon the firstborn, but God provided a way for this death to be carried out in *a vicarious manner*.

And it is exactly the same today. “Death” has been decreed upon the firstborn, but God has provided a way for this death to be carried out in *a vicarious manner* (I Cor. 15:3).

In the type, this was done through the death of paschal lambs and the proper application of the blood from these slain lambs.

In the antitype, this is done exactly the same way. The Paschal

Lamb has died in the stead of the firstborn, but the blood must be applied (through believing [Acts 16:30, 31; Eph. 2:8, 9]).

“Burial” and “resurrection” though move beyond this in the type (the Red Sea passage and emergence from the Sea on the eastern banks [*cf.* I Cor. 10:2; Col. 2:12; 3:1ff]).

And it is exactly the same in the antitype (I Cor. 15:4).

a) *I Corinthians 15:1, 2*

Verses one and two refer to the good news (the gospel) which Paul had previously proclaimed to those in Corinth, which they had accepted and upon which they presently stood. This good news had to do with *present and future* aspects of salvation (not past, as seen in the gospel of the grace of God), it had to do with *holding fast* to that which had been proclaimed (with the possibility that there could be *loss*), and it had to do with Christians in Corinth either *believing* or *not believing* the message with reference to a *purpose* (or *cause*) in view.

The present and future aspects of salvation in this gospel are shown by the words, “By which also ye are saved [*lit.*, ‘...ye are being saved’]”; *holding fast* to the message proclaimed is shown by the words, “if ye keep in memory [*lit.*, ‘if ye hold (are holding) fast’] what I preached unto you”; and *believing* or *not believing* the message with reference to a *purpose* in view is shown by the words, “unless ye have believed in vain [*lit.*, ‘...believed apart from a purpose’ (or, ‘...believed without a cause in view’)].”

The present and future aspects of salvation have to do with *the salvation of the soul* (*cf.* James 1:21; I Peter 1:4-9).

The eternal salvation which we presently possess — *the salvation of the spirit*, wherein man passes “from death unto life” (*cf.* John 5:24; Eph. 2:1, 5) — places man in a position where he can realize *the salvation of his soul*.

And these two aspects of salvation *MUST ALWAYS be kept completely separate, one from the other*.

The thought of Christians *holding fast* to those things in the message being proclaimed can be seen in the second and fourth warnings in the Book of Hebrews. The same word appearing in the Greek text of I Cor. 15:2 appears twice in the second warn-

ing (3:6, 14) and once in the fourth warning (10:23). *Holding fast* in the second warning is with reference to “the heavenly calling” and “the hope” set before Christians (vv. 1, 6); and *holding fast* in the fourth warning is with reference to this same hope — “the profession of our faith [*lit.*, ‘the confession of the hope’]” (vv. 23-25).

Then, the thought of Christians *believing without a purpose (or cause)* is a reference to the fact that a person has been saved *for a revealed purpose* — a purpose seen, in its entirety, in the gospel of the glory of Christ. And that purpose is the same as the purpose pertaining to man’s creation in the beginning — “...let them have dominion” (Gen. 1:26, 28).

Man has been saved with a view to his one day occupying *a position of power and authority with Christ in His kingdom*, which has to do with realizing the present aspect of salvation at a future date — *the salvation of one’s soul*.

Believing without a purpose (or cause) in verse two leads *a person nowhere*. An individual has been saved for a purpose, which can be seen and understood *only through believing the gospel which Paul referred to in the previous verse*; and this is a purpose which can one day be realized *only through presently governing one’s life accordingly, set forth in verse two*.

b) I Corinthians 15:3, 4

Note the way verse three begins. Paul’s statement in verse three is *NOT AT ALL* a continuation of his subject matter from the first two verses. And this is really *self-explanatory*; Paul states this in so many words.

Verse three begins, “For I delivered unto you *FIRST OF ALL* that which *I ALSO received...*” That which he is about to reference is something which he had delivered unto them *FIRST* (prior to delivering the good news which he had previously referenced, in vv. 1, 2), and this is something which *he had ALSO received* (that is to say, *he had received this IN ADDITION to the good news referred to in vv. 1, 2*).

The message which Paul delivered unto those in Corinth *FIRST* can be seen by going back to I Cor. 2:1, 2:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Paul, when he *first* went to Corinth, couldn't begin with a message pertaining to the gospel of the glory of Christ, referred to in I Cor. 15:1, 2 (and also in I Cor. 2:1, preceded, as in I Cor. 15:1, 2, by a proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God [2:2; 15:3]).

When Paul *first* went to Corinth, after being rejected by the Jews and then going to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6), he found a city filled with unsaved Gentiles. And he *had to first* minister to those in Corinth on this basis. He *had to first* proclaim the simple message pertaining to the gospel of the grace of God unto them. He *had to begin* with “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He *couldn't begin* elsewhere.

But, once individuals had believed, once individuals had passed “from death unto life,” *then Paul could move beyond this message.*

And this is exactly what he did. *Paul spent one and one-half years in Corinth “teaching the word of God among them [among those who had been saved under the preaching of the simple message pertaining to the gospel of the grace of God]”* (Acts 18:11; cf. I Cor. 2:3ff).

And this is why Paul, in I Cor. 15:1, 2, could allude to these things through simply calling their attention to “*the gospel [‘the good news’] which I preached unto you...*” They would *know exactly* what he meant, for he had previously spent *an extensive period of time* teaching them things pertaining to this gospel. And they would *also understand* the distinction when he moved back in time and referred to the gospel of the grace of God which he, of necessity, had proclaimed to them *at the very beginning* (v. 3).

And, though moving back in this manner, Paul was then able to easily come back to the place where he had begun — *referencing things pertaining to the central message which he had been called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world* (v. 4).

And this is the reason that Paul's ministry dealt mainly, not with the gospel of the grace of God, but with the gospel of the glory of Christ. And, correspondingly, this is also the reason that

the emphasis *in all of his epistles* is, likewise, on the gospel of the glory of Christ rather than the gospel of the grace of God.

Hebrews and the General Epistles

And exactly the same thing as seen in the Pauline epistles can be seen in Hebrews and the general epistles. The emphasis in any of these epistles, as in the Pauline epistles, is not on the gospel of the grace of God (corresponding to that foreshadowed by God's restorative work on day one in Gen. 1) but on a continuing aspect of salvation (that foreshadowed by God's continued restorative work on days two through six in Gen. 1).

And, whether Pauline, Hebrews, or the general epistles, this is all with a view to God's complete work in man's salvation, with a time of rest following (that foreshadowed by God resting in Gen. 2:1-3 [*cf.* Heb. 4:1-9] following six days of restorative work).

It was all laid out at the beginning, in the opening thirty-four verses of Scripture.

Understand matters correctly at the beginning, and things in subsequent Scripture, in a natural respect, will fall into place.

But misunderstand or ignore the way God laid it all out at the beginning, and you are left without a base for all which follows, providing a main reason, if not the main reason, for much of the error which exists today.

7

A Panoramic View of the Epistles

Continuing from Acts...

The One New Man Now Being Offered the Kingdom

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:1-11).

The mystery revealed to Paul, in conjunction with his gospel, was dealt with in the previous chapter, Chapter VI. And more will be stated about the matter in different parts of this present chapter.

The content of Paul's gospel had to do with that revealed to him in the mystery. And Paul's gospel, separate from the simple gospel of the grace of God (a message for the unsaved), had to do with *a continued message pertaining to the kingdom AFTER it had been taken from Israel.*

And, as in the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel throughout the gospels and Acts, this continued message, seen in Paul's gospel — beginning in Acts but to a fuller extent in the epistles — was *a message SOLELY for the saved.*

This continued message was directed to those comprising an entirely new entity, which had been brought into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected, which had been taken from Israel. And this new entity, occupying this position, would allow for Christ's bride, forming His co-heirs in the kingdom, to be brought into existence.

Christians though seldom view the epistles in this manner, as Scripture moves from the gospels through Acts into the epistles, with a message pertaining to the same kingdom seen throughout. But, nonetheless, that's what the epistles are centrally about, with each occupying its own peculiar place in the message, as each gospel occupied its own peculiar place at the beginning.

The epistles (Pauline, Hebrews, and General) *ALL* have to do with *the continuance of this offer of the kingdom — FROM an offer to Israel TO an offer to the one new man "in Christ" — with each epistle dealing with the subject in its own particular and peculiar way.*

Central Message Throughout the Epistles

The central message seen throughout the four gospels had to do with the offer of the kingdom to Israel by John, Jesus, the Twelve, and then the Seventy; the central message seen through Acts had to do with the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel by *the one new man*, brought into existence to not only make this offer but to be the recipient of the kingdom which Israel had rejected in the

gospels and was about to reject, in a final respect, in the Book of Acts; the central message then seen in the twenty-one epistles is simply the continuance of this offer to *the one new man* "in Christ."

Then, in the Book of Revelation, closing the New Testament, this kingdom is seen becoming "that of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15; cf. Dan. 2:44, 45). And, individuals previously allowed to *bring forth fruit for the kingdom* following Israel's rejection of the offer will be allowed to ascend the throne with Christ as His bride and reign as co-heirs with Him in the kingdom.

But, as in the epistles, so in the gospels and in Acts, Christians seldom see the kingdom as central throughout the New Testament. And the reason for that is easy to understand.

The foundation for properly understanding the epistles lies in having previously properly understood Acts and the gospels, and behind that in having properly understood Moses and the Prophets. In short, *one has to have a properly laid foundation in order to continue with the superstructure, in order to continue from the gospels and Acts into the epistles, then into Revelation.*

In the preceding respect, note a number of observations and comments on the matter, beginning in the gospels, then continuing in Acts, and then in the epistles.

1) Central Message in the Gospels

Each of the four gospels, continuing from the Old Testament, opening the New Testament, presents the message after a different fashion.

The three synoptic gospels are somewhat uniform in this respect, with all using the expression, "the kingdom of God"; but only Matthew uses the expression, "the kingdom of the heavens." All three center around the offer of the kingdom to Israel, with the overall scope of the offer and rejection of this offer perhaps best seen in Matthew.

John though is completely different, presenting the matter in an entirely different fashion. The word "kingdom," referring to that being offered in the other three gospels, only appears three times in the entire gospel (in John 3:3, 5, in Jesus conversation with Nicodemus, and in John 18:36 when Jesus responded to Pilate,

“My kingdom is not of this world [referring to the present world kingdom under Satan]...”

(In the three synoptic gospels, the word “kingdom” is found over one hundred twenty times [over fifty times in Matthew, about twenty times in Mark, and about forty-five times in Luke].)

And the word “gospel” itself, a word used throughout the other three gospels — referring to the good news being proclaimed, the offer of the kingdom — is not even found in John’s gospel.

Beyond the preceding, about ninety percent of the material found in John’s gospel is not found in the other three gospels. And the reverse of that is true when comparing the three synoptics with one another. About ninety percent of that found in one can be found in the other two as well.

Then, beyond that, John’s gospel deals mainly with events during Christ’s ministry in days immediately preceding the Cross. The synoptics cover Christ’s complete ministry, with both Matthew and Luke beginning at a time preceding His birth.

“Signs” are seen throughout all four gospels, but John’s gospel is the only one that has a direct statement connecting these signs with why the gospel was written (20:30, 31). Also, John’s gospel is built around eight specific signs, and five of these are peculiar to John’s gospel.

Then, John’s gospel is the only one of the four which begins with a septenary structure, inseparably connected with the septenary nature of the eight signs around which the gospel is built (1:1-2:11).

In this respect, John’s gospel should begin the New Testament, paralleling Genesis, which begins with a septenary structure as well. Genesis, at the beginning, shows how the Old Testament is structured; and John’s gospel, at the beginning, continues this same unchangeable pattern, showing how the New Testament is structured as well.

And the position which this gospel should occupy in the New Testament is further shown by the fact that the subject matter in the eight signs in John parallels the subject matter in the numerous types in Genesis.

“John,” in reality, is *the Genesis of the New Testament*; and “Genesis,” in this same respect, is *the John of the Old Testament*.

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, “[Moses and John](#).”)

The “signs” in all four gospels have to do with *the message being proclaimed, the offer of the kingdom to Israel*.

And, with that in mind, note *the ONLY subject matter which could possibly be at hand when Nicodemus came to Jesus, as recorded in John 3:1ff*:

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles [Gk. *semeia*, ‘signs’] that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (vv. 1-3).

The issue Nicodemus raised had to do with the “signs” which Christ was performing and His supernatural ability to perform them. And Christ responded, remaining *completely* within the subject of Nicodemus’ statement, by referencing “the kingdom of God” and *the necessity of being brought forth from above (rather than from below) if one would have a part in this kingdom* (vv. 3-7).

There is *NOTHING* in these verses about the message of salvation by grace, though this is the message invariably read into and taught from these verses, which closes the door to the message at hand.

These verses have to do with *signs, Israel, and the proclaimed kingdom, NOT with eternal verities*.

(For information on “born again” and *the salvation message* in these verses in John’s gospel, refer to the Author’s book, [Brought Forth from Above](#).

Also, relative to “signs” and *the salvation message* in John’s gospel, refer to Appendixes II, III in this book, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles” and “Misuse of John 20:30, 31.”)

John chapter three is just one of many places in John's gospel where individuals read a wrong salvation message into the book. Salvation throughout John is *inseparably related to the message being proclaimed, not only in John but in all four gospels, for the message and salvation in relation to the message is THE SAME in all four.*

Again, refer to the previously referenced Appendixes II, III in this book.

The salvation message, in connection with *signs and the professed kingdom*, is *EXACTLY* the same salvation message seen in the other three gospels, which is continued in the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts.

Attempts to see or relate this message to salvation by grace will do more than about any other one thing to do away with any correct understanding of the central message proclaimed to Israel throughout the gospels and continued in Acts. And, as well, using many of these passages, even in a secondary respect to refer to the gospel of grace, can, at times, result in a corruption of the simple salvation message.

If an individual wants to deal with salvation by grace, Moses would be the best place to go, not the gospels, nor Acts or the epistles, for this same message concerning the kingdom is continued through Acts into the epistles. In short, if an individual wants to deal with the simple salvation message, avoiding error, deal with it after *THE SAME MANNER* in which God set it forth and dealt with it in His Word, which is *at the beginning, back in Genesis.*

The simple salvation message is one of *the great constants of Scripture.* The way matters in this respect are set forth in the opening chapters of Genesis *NEVER change.*

Thus, understand salvation by grace after the manner in which God originally set it forth in Genesis, do not deviate from this set way at any time in later Scripture, and *you will NEVER encounter a problem with the subject.*

But, fail to deal with and understand how God originally set salvation by grace forth at the beginning, go wrong at the beginning, or deviate from the beginning, and *matters in later Scripture can ONLY be completely different. You can't help but encounter problems down the way, resulting in error.*

2) Central Message in Acts

The sequence of events showing the kingdom taken from Israel, along with God bringing into existence a completely separate ethnic group, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, to be the recipient of this kingdom, extends from Matt. 12 to Acts 28. Events from Matt. 12 to Christ's announcement in Matt. 21:43 build into the matter and reach a climactic point, prompting Christ's announcement. Then events from Matt. 21:43 to Acts 28:28, concluded the matter, with the different ethnic group to whom the kingdom would be given called into existence during this time.

(The Greek word *ethnos*, from which the English word "ethnic" is derived, is the word translated "nation" in both Matt. 21:43 and I Peter 2:9.)

In this respect, there is a building to an apex (Matt. 21:43) from a beginning point (Matt. 12); and there are then ensuing events from the apex (Matt. 21:43) to an ending point (Acts 28:28). And during the latter, God called into existence *the one new man* "in Christ" — comprised of a completely different ethnic group, neither Jew nor Gentile, though taken from both — to be the recipient of that which would be completely taken from Israel at the ending point.

For all practical purposes, the kingdom was taken from Israel in Matt. 12, when Israel's religious leaders attributed to Satan the power behind the miraculous signs that Christ was performing.

Note Christ's resulting statement to these religious leaders (Matt. 12:31, 32), along with His then going out of the house (referencing *Israel*), down by the seaside (referencing *the Gentiles*), and giving four parables having to do with this new entity about to be brought into existence to bring forth fruit for the kingdom where Israel had failed (Matt. 13:1-33).

Then in Matt. 16 Christ called attention to this new entity, which He was about to bring into existence, the "Church."

And all of this anticipates the announcement in Matt. 21:43.

But, following Christ's death, resurrection, and spending forty days instructing His disciples concerning the kingdom, Christ ascended into heaven (Acts 1:1-9). Then, ten days later on the day of

Pentecost, the new entity was called into existence as the one now in possession of the kingdom, beginning a re-offer of the kingdom, which would last for almost the next thirty years (Acts 2:1ff).

And this is what Acts is about. Acts is about a new entity brought into existence on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:2), in possession of the kingdom, and beginning a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 2:4ff).

Acts is centrally about this re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, not about the newly formed Church. In fact, up to the stoning of Stephen and the introduction of Paul (chs. 7, 8), events are entirely about Israel and the re-offer of the kingdom. Though the word for "Church" appears two (possibly three) times during this period (the authenticity of the word "Church" appearing in the text in 2:47 is questionable), the word would have to be used in any appearance in the same sense seen in Acts 7:38, referring to believing Jews relative to the message being proclaimed, relative to the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (the word "Church," a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, means "a called out assembly").

It is only after events covered in these opening seven or eight chapters in Acts (covering several years) that God's dealings with the Church (in the sense of a new entity, a new ethnic group) are also seen in the book. But, even during this time, Israel still held priority in the message throughout the remainder of the book.

The Church did not appear as the lone entity in God's dealing in this respect (relative to the proffered kingdom) until events in Rome at the end of Acts, concluded by Paul's announcement in Acts 28:28.

But, relative to God's dealings with the Church in this same respect (having to do with the offer of the kingdom, in Churches comprised of saved Gentiles), note a couple of verses from Acts 14:

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (vv. 21,22).

Then, to see *Paul's complete ministry* during this time as the

apostle whom God had called to carry this message to the Gentiles (which, of necessity, would have to be the same by any disciple carrying the message to the Gentiles during this time), note several verses from Acts 20 relative to his ministry to the Gentiles in Ephesus.

The orderly sequence of Paul's message, beginning with unsaved Gentiles, has been put in capital letters in the text from Acts.

Paul began with *the gospel of grace* (v. 24), then he continued with a message pertaining to *the kingdom of God* (v. 25), and these two messages together formed *all the council of God* (v. 27).

And Paul proclaimed *the complete gospel message in this manner in order that those saved under his ministry might understand not only why they had been saved but also have the Word of God in their possession, the ONE and ONLY THING which could build them up and give them an inheritance in the proffered kingdom* (v. 32):

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify *THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD*.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching *THE KINGDOM OF GOD*, shall see my face no more.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you *ALL THE COUNCIL OF GOD*...

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, *which is able TO BUILD YOU UP, and TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE among all them which are sanctified*" (vv. 24-27, 32).

Then, in connection with God continuing to deal with Israel during about the first thirty years of the present dispensation, there was the matter of "signs" being manifested in at least one Church comprised of saved Gentiles, the Church in Corinth (possibly others). And "signs," which have *NOTHING* to do with the Church, were being manifested in the Church by saved Gentiles for a revealed reason — to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom. 10:14; 11:11, 14).

This was simply part of the maximum effort being under-

taken during the re-offer of the kingdom to bring about Israel's repentance. As well, this is something which existed *only during the three decades of the re-offer* — from Acts 2:4 to Acts 28:28, from 33 A.D. to about 62 A.D. Beyond this time, “*signs*” would have been completely out of place, whether among the Jews or in the Church.

(For an understanding of “signs” being manifested by saved Gentiles in the Church during this time, then ceasing at the end of this time, refer to Appendix II in this book, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles.”)

3) *Central Message in the Epistles*

Note verses from six different Pauline epistles, all referencing the kingdom after some fashion — *a calling unto, being delivered from evil and preserved unto, realizing an inheritance in, or a ministry work involving THE KINGDOM.*

And each of these verses was taken from epistles which have to do centrally with some facet of the mystery and Paul's gospel — a statement which could be said of any one of the other seven Pauline epistles as well.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9, 10).

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21).

“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5).

“And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto [‘with respect to’] the king-

dom of God, which have been a comfort unto me" (Col. 4:11).

"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:12).

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (II Tim. 4:18).

a) *The Mystery, Paul's Gospel*

The mystery centers around *the new nation* to which Christ referred in Matt. 21:43, a few days prior to His crucifixion. And, after this new nation had been brought into existence, a full revelation of the mystery became necessary.

And to make this mystery known, God had a man at hand — Paul, who had been taught the Old Testament by a leading Rabbi of that day, Gamaliel (Acts 7:58; 8:1ff; 22:3; cf. Acts 5:34).

God took Paul aside, evidently to Arabia, then into His Son's presence in heaven (II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11, 12, 16-18). And over the space of several years, building upon the background which Paul already possessed, the Lord Himself, face-to-face, taught Paul the message which he was to carry into the Gentile world — *a message referred to as "the mystery" (Eph. 3:1-6; 6:19; Col. 1:28, 29), proclaimed by means of what Paul referred to as "my gospel" (Rom. 2:16; 16:25).*

Thus, *Paul's gospel simply has to do with a proclamation of that seen in the mystery.* Only through this means could numerous Old Testament passages be opened up and properly understood and proclaimed to *the one new man* "in Christ."

That which had been committed to Paul's trust had to do with a work begun by the Spirit a few years earlier. It was all part and parcel with the Spirit's work surrounding the reason why He had been sent.

In this respect, the mystery had to do with a work of the Spirit, peculiar to the dispensation in which we live. It had to do with a work surrounding the reason why the Father had sent His Spirit into the world — to search for and to procure a bride for His Son.

And in order for the Spirit to procure a bride for God's Son, He had to begin this work by first bringing into existence a people

separate from either Israel or the Gentile nations. This was necessary for the simple reason that the bride couldn't be taken from any existing nation — Israel, or the Gentile nations.

Aside from Israel being the divorced wife of Jehovah (to one day be restored as His wife, as seen in Gen. 25), that part of the kingdom in which the bride was to rule as consort queen with Christ had been taken from Israel (Matt. 21:43); and the Gentile nations couldn't even come under consideration, for they were "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

The preceding would be to say, apart from God bringing into existence an entirely new entity, an entirely new ethnic group of people, an entirely new and separate nation — which is looked upon in Scripture as *one new man* "in Christ" (Eph. 2:13-15) — *there could be no search for the bride by the Spirit during the present dispensation.*

Thus, the mystery had to do with a new and different work of the Spirit, which involved not only bringing this new nation, *the one new man*, into existence but leading the individuals comprising this *new man* "into all truth." It was a work which began on the day of Pentecost, fifty days following Christ's resurrection; and it was a work which would continue throughout a 2,000-year dispensation.

The one new man "in Christ" is comprised of *new creations* "in Christ" (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:13-15). The key expression is *in Christ*. But the key to the whole of the matter, allowing that seen in the mystery to be realized — which pertains not only to the existence of *the one new man* but to the reason for his existence as well — is twofold:

- 1) *Christ's identity* (a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah).
- 2) *The Spirit's work throughout the dispensation* (in relation to *the one new man*).

b) A New Nation

Because of God's Own previous decrees, this new nation [Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10], brought into existence on the day of Pen-

tecost, had to meet certain criteria. God had previously decreed through Moses — some 1,400 years prior to the time Christ announced that another nation would be accorded opportunity to bring forth fruit for the kingdom — that *all spiritual blessings* were to flow through *Abraham and his seed ALONE* (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17, 18). And it was not just any seed of Abraham. Spiritual blessings of this nature *were limited to Abraham's seed through Isaac*: "...in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12).

That would be to say, none of the Gentile nations could qualify to occupy the position spoken of in Matt. 21:43. And this would include even those Gentile nations which could trace their origin back to Abraham through either Ishmael, one of the six sons of Keturah, or Esau. These descendants of Abraham could be blessed *because they were Abraham's seed* (Gen. 17:20; 21:13), but they could not be *the channel through which these blessings would flow*. A status of this nature was reserved for Abraham's lineage *through Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons* (cf. Gen. 21:12; 26:4; 28:14; 49:1ff).

It was God, in the person of His Son, Who made the announcement in Matt. 21:43. Certain things concerning how matters were to be brought to pass had already been revealed (e.g., Matt. 3:11; 13:1ff; John 16:7-15 [and these could only draw from numerous O.T. types]), but the full revelation of that which had previously been revealed awaited events which occurred on the day of Pentecost, fifty days following Christ's resurrection, as seen in Acts chapter two.

Since all spiritual blessings were to flow through Abraham and a designated seed of Abraham (through Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons), it is clear that the nation of which Christ spoke in Matt. 21:43 had to possess this connection — *i.e.*, not only be Abraham's seed but be within the correct lineage as well.

Then, apart from this dual connection, such a nation *could not* be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected, for *regal blessings* were also involved. That is, individuals comprising this new nation were to one day *hold the heavenly regal positions* promised to Abraham's seed in Gen. 22:17, 18, *reside in heavenly places*, and be *the channel through which blessings would flow out to the Gentile nations of the earth from these heavenly places*.

Then, not only must this new nation possess a connection of this nature with the seed of Abraham, but this new nation *COULD NOT be of Abraham's natural lineage*. The kingdom had been taken from Israel, and any segment of the human race identified with Israel in a racial manner could only be looked upon as being part of Israel, part of the nation from which the kingdom had been taken.

How could such a nation be brought into existence? How could God bring into existence a nation which had the required genealogical connection with Israel, but yet not be a part of that nation?

God's work in this respect is what is seen through the events on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. On this day, in 33 A.D., God, through a work of the Spirit Who had been sent, brought into existence *a nation with the proper Jewish identity, though not Jewish itself*. God, on this day, brought into existence *a nation possessing the proper lineage from Abraham, though separate from Israel*.

How did God do this? It's all very simple.

A group of disciples — those who had believed on Christ, apparently the same one hundred twenty mentioned in Acts 1:15 [*cf.* Acts 2:1]) — were made *one new man* "in Christ" through being immersed in the Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5; 2:2; *cf.* Matt. 3:11).

This new nation, brought into existence in this manner, forming *the one new man* "in Christ" (Eph. 2:12-15), was seen to be comprised of individuals occupying a positional standing "in Christ," constituting Abraham's seed through the correct lineage in this manner (Gal. 3:28, 29). That is, being part of *the one new man, having to do with the mystery*, these Jewish believers would be Abraham's seed, *not through their natural lineage, but through their positional standing "in Christ."* And this, in turn, would allow Gentile believers — *occupying the same positional standing "in Christ"* as Jewish believers — to be Abraham's seed as well, part of *the one new man* with Jewish believers.

Christ is Abraham's greater Son, through Isaac and Jacob (within the lineage wherein *all spiritual blessings lie*); and, through Jacob's son, Judah, Christ is David's greater Son (within the lineage wherein *all regal promises lie*). And the whole of the matter — *blessings and regality* — is seen within the makeup of *the one*

new man, “in Christ,” comprised of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, forming the new nation, the new *ethnos*, which is neither a Jewish nor a Gentile nation.

Thus, this new nation, brought into existence on the day of Pentecost — possessing a positional standing “in Christ” — has the proper connection with Abraham to realize *spiritual blessings*, which extend into *regal promises* through David (with the two being inseparably linked). And this new nation, through being Abraham’s seed in this manner, is not part of the nation of Israel, from which the kingdom of the heavens was taken; nor is this new nation part of any Gentile nation, which can have nothing to do with spiritual blessings or the kingdom of the heavens in this respect.

Rather, this new nation is *one new man*, which is “neither Jew nor Greek.” In fact, within this new nation’s *positional standing* “in Christ,” all distinctions of the human race have ceased to exist. This new nation is also “neither bond nor free,” and “neither male nor female.” And because this new nation is *none of the preceding*, this new nation, “in Christ,” can be *all which God requires*. Because of the nature of this new nation, it can be looked upon as comprised of individuals who are “heirs according to the promise [which would be *heavenly*, not earthly]” (Gal. 3:28, 29).

c) A New Creation

Not only is this new nation described in Scripture as *one new man*, but Scripture further describes those comprising this *one new man* as *new creations* “in Christ.” And, in this respect, it is the existence of *new creations* “in Christ” which makes the existence of *the one new man* possible.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [*lit.*, ‘a new creation’]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17).

The key expression is “in Christ.” It is “in Christ” that old things have passed away. If the individual was a Jew before being immersed in the Spirit, placing him “in Christ,” then he is no longer a Jew. He has become *a new creation* “in Christ.” If the individual was a Gentile before being immersed in the Spirit, placing him “in

Christ," then he is no longer a Gentile. Rather, he (the believing Gentile), as the one who was previously a Jew (the believing Jew), has become *a new creation* "in Christ." And "in Christ" there is "neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile]," but *one new man*.

The words concluding the verse, "all things are become new," should literally read, "behold, he has become new." That is, the individual, through the immersion in the Spirit, has become *a new creation* "in Christ."

(Regardless of the way some English translations read [e.g., in Matt. 3:11; II Cor. 12:13], it is ALWAYS immersion [baptism] in the Spirit, NEVER immersion [baptism] by, or with, the Spirit.

As the "water" is the element into which one is immersed [baptized], so is the "Spirit" the element into which one is immersed [baptized].)

The words "he has become" in the corrected translation of II Cor. 5:16b are a translation of a perfect tense in the Greek text. This points to Divine action occurring during past time relative to the Spirit bringing into existence the new creation, action which exists during present time in *a finished state*. Nothing can be added to or taken from this work of the Spirit effecting *the Christian's positional standing* "in Christ."

It is as the Spirit's work effecting salvation itself — breathing life into the one having no life, on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary. A perfect tense is used relative to Christ's finished work at Calvary (John 19:30), and a perfect tense is used relative to the work of the Spirit in salvation as well (Eph. 2:8).

That is to say, *EVERYTHING surrounding the whole of the matter — one's eternal salvation, and one's positional standing "in Christ" — has to do with past Divine works which presently exist in finished states. NOTHING can be added; NOTHING can be taken away.*

Both a Christian's eternal salvation and his positional standing in Christ are *just as finished and complete* as Christ's finished work at Calvary, making it all possible.

d) *Christ's Body*

Then there is another component to the revelation of the mystery which must be brought to pass within the overall work

of the Spirit during the present dispensation. Those comprising *the one new man* “in Christ” must also comprise *Christ’s body*, of which He is the Head. This must be the case, for the bride — the one for whom the Spirit searches during the present dispensation — *HAS TO BE taken from Christ’s body*.

This is set forth in a foundational type in the second chapter of Genesis. And once God, in the beginning, had established the matter after this fashion through His sovereign control of all things, *no change could ever occur*. According to the type, *the Spirit must acquire the bride FROM Christ’s body*; and further, according to the type, *the bride must be brought into existence from only A PART of the body, not all of the body*.

Adam was a *type* of Christ. Not only is all of the Old Testament about Christ, but Adam is specifically stated to be a *type* of Christ in Rom. 5:14 (where the Greek word *typos* [“type,” translated “figure,” KJV] is used of Adam, in relation to Christ).

Adam, in Genesis, was *the first man, the first Adam*; and Christ, 4,000 years later, was seen as *the second Man, the last Adam* (I Cor. 15:45-48).

Experiences surrounding Adam foreshadowed experiences surrounding Christ. There is an existing type-antitype relationship between the two. And any correct study about Christ *MUST BEGIN where God began, in the opening chapters of Genesis*, not in the Gospel accounts of the New Testament.

To properly understand the antitype, one *MUST* have a proper understanding of the type. The truth of the matter, seen in the antitype, can be fully comprehended *ONLY* through studying the type and the antitype together.

This is the way in which God set matters forth in His Word, and one MUST study this Word after the manner in which it has been structured.

Accordingly, any proper study about the Spirit presently procuring a bride for the second Man, the last Adam, *MUST* begin in Genesis chapter two in order to see how God brought forth a bride for the first man, the first Adam. *ONLY* when this has been seen and understood does a person find himself in a position to properly see and understand things concerning how the bride of the second Man, the last Adam, will be brought into existence.

The first man, the first Adam, was put to sleep, his side was opened, and God removed the part (a rib) from Adam's body which He used to form a bride for Adam (called "Woman" before the fall and "Eve" following the fall [Gen. 2:21-23; 3:20]). And the matter surrounding Adam's creation, with Eve being removed and fashioned from his body in this manner, forms foundational truths which can never change — truths which *MUST* be seen in a parallel fashion in matters surrounding the second Man, the last Adam, and His bride as well.

Eve was created in Adam in the beginning. But it was only later that God put Adam to sleep, removed a part from his body, and formed Eve. Then, after God had formed Eve, He presented Eve back to Adam; and Eve was not only to be a helpmate for Adam, but Eve was to also complete Adam.

Apart from Eve, Adam was *incomplete*, for she was a part of his very being — *bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh* (Gen. 2:23). And when God presented this part of Adam's being back to him, the first man was then, once again, *a complete being*.

(This same relationship between the man and the woman is seen in marriage today, reflecting back on that which occurred relative to Adam and Eve, and looking out ahead to that which is about to occur relative to Christ and His bride [Eph. 5:22-32; I Peter 3:7].)

And this is why God doesn't look lightly upon any form of perversion pertaining to this relationship. A man *CANNOT* complete a man; *NOR* can a woman complete a woman. *Completion is derived ONLY through the union of a man and a woman*, and any deviation from this God-established pattern is *a perversion which reflects negatively upon that which God has to say about Christ and His bride*, which begins in Genesis chapter two.

And the preceding is the central reason why the penalty for this perversion is so severe in Scripture, the same whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament — *Death* [cf. Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:24-32; 8:12, 13; I Cor. 6:9, 10].)

As in the type, so in the antitype. The second Man, the last Adam, was put to sleep (at Calvary), His side was opened, and from this opened side God took the elements (blood and water)

which He is using to form the bride during the time of the Spirit's present search.

(Note, in the Tabernacle, the brazen altar [where the blood was shed] and brazen laver [where water was used for cleansing the hands and feet]; also, in this same respect, note John 13:4-12.)

And, exactly as in the type, once the bride has been formed, the Father will present the bride to His Son for an helpmate (to rule with Him as consort queen, as Eve, in the type, was to have ruled as consort queen with Adam). And the bride, exactly as in the type, will *complete the Son*, for the bride will be a part of His very being (Heb. 2:10).

And as the bride was created in Adam, so the bride of Christ has existed in the Son from eternity. It was only at points in time that the sides of both the first man and the second Man were opened, with the elements being removed, which God used to form Adam's bride and which He is presently using to form His Son's bride.

Thus, *the one new man* "in Christ" must form the body of Christ as well (Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18), for the bride comes from the body in the type, which must hold true in the antitype. *EVERYTHING set forth in the foundational framework in Genesis must hold true in the Spirit's search for the bride throughout the present dispensation.*

And all of the preceding is set forth different places throughout the New Testament epistles, inseparably connected with the present offer of the kingdom to *the one new man* "in Christ."

Two Epistles, the Mystery, Paul's Gospel

Perhaps the best way to illustrate all of the preceding relative to the mystery and Paul's gospel would be to take two Pauline epistles and show proper interpretation in the light of the correct message in this respect. And, to do this, the epistles of I, II Thessalonians will be used, beginning with I Thessalonians and moving through parts of both books in a succinct manner.

1) I Thessalonians

I Thessalonians could be summarized as *a dissertation to those in*

“the church of the Thessalonians” relative to the contents of Paul’s gospel, with the word “gospel” (Gk., *euaggelion*), as it is used throughout the epistle (used seven times), referring to this particular facet of the overall gospel message (1:5; 2:2, 3, 8, 9; 3:2, 6).

Paul’s gospel, having to do with “the mystery” revealed to him at the outset of his ministry (Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6), was a message *to the saved, not the unsaved*. It had to do with the continued good news one was to hear *after* he had heard and responded to the gospel of the grace of God (*e.g.*, the gospel of grace seen in Eph. 2:8, 9, with the continuing aspect of the good news, corresponding to Paul’s gospel, seen in v. 10).

This aspect of the good news is introduced in I Thess. 1:5 as “our gospel,” setting the stage for the use of the word *gospel* throughout both epistles. And, as Paul referenced this aspect of the good news different ways in Romans chapter one (“gospel of God,” “gospel of his Son,” “gospel of Christ” [vv. 1, 9, 15, 16; *cf.* Rom. 2:16; 16:25]), he does the same thing in I Thessalonians (“gospel of God,” “gospel of Christ,” “good tidings [‘gospel’] of your faith” [2:2, 8, 9, 3:2, 6]).

Note II Thess. 2:14 pertaining to the content of Paul’s gospel:

“Whereunto he called you by *our gospel*, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Then note the crux of the message, emanating from a proclamation of this good news which Paul was writing about to those in this Church, as seen in I Thess. 2:11, 12:

“As ye know *how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you*, as a father doth his children.

That ye walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto [‘with respect to’] his kingdom and glory” (*cf.* I Peter 5:6-10).

This then merges into a section on the rapture and that which lies beyond the rapture relative to the Son’s coming kingdom, seen in the latter part of chapter four and the first part of chapter five (4:13-5:10). Then, the remainder of the book has to do with Paul’s closing remarks.

2) II Thessalonians

The second epistle to the Thessalonians simply continues from where the first left off, beginning with *two types of Christians at Christ's coming*, at the end of the Tribulation. I Thessalonians left off with matters surrounding the rapture and subsequent accounting of Christians, preceding the Tribulation (4:13-5:10), wherein these two types of Christians had been seen — *the faithful, who had heeded Paul's exhortations; the unfaithful, who had failed to heed these exhortations*.

For one (the faithful), removed from Man's Day into the Lord's Day, "salvation" awaited; for the other (the unfaithful), removed from Man's Day into the Lord's Day, "wrath" awaited (5:1-9).

Then II Thessalonians chapter one begins with events occurring at a time at least seven years later, following the Tribulation, following Christ's return. And again, *two types of Christians are seen*.

The faithful are seen realizing an inheritance, realizing the "salvation" of I Thess. 5:9, in "his kingdom and glory" (II Thess. 1:5, 10-2:1); and the unfaithful are seen being denied an inheritance in His kingdom, realizing the "wrath" of I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:6-9).

(To understand the preceding any other way, as so many do, [e.g., seeing I Thess. 5:1-10 and II Thess. 1:5-12 dealing with *the Tribulation and saved-unsaved issues during and following the Tribulation*, or see I Thess. 5:9 and II Thess. 2:1 dealing with *the rapture*], is to throw about any type sound Scriptural interpretation one can think of to the winds — plain reading of the text, contextual, comparing Scripture with Scripture, etc.

When this is done on a scale which encompasses almost the whole of Christendom — which is exactly what is currently happening — is it any wonder that today's Christendom finds itself described in the words of Rev. 3:15-17, because of that seen in Matt. 13:33?)

With the preceding in mind, note how II Thess. 2:2ff continues from the way that the book is introduced, drawing from the whole of Paul's prior message to the Thessalonians in his first epistle.

In the first chapter of II Thessalonians, Paul projects matters, as it relates to Christians, out into the Messianic Era (with the groundwork having been laid in his first epistle to the Thessalonians).

Then moving into the second chapter, someone had evidently

spread false information among the Thessalonians relative to the matter at hand (via “word ” or “letter,” as from Paul), making the Christians in Thessalonica believe that they were presently in the Lord’s Day, leaving them quite confused.

(The Day of the Lord, the Lord’s Day [II Thess. 2:2, “the day of Christ” should be translated, “the Day of the Lord”], has always been in existence, but not on earth. *The Lord’s Day begins on earth only at the end of Man’s Day, at the end of the Tribulation following Christ’s return.* This is the manner in which the matter is set forth anyplace this is dealt with in Scripture [e.g., Joel 2:1ff; 3:1ff; Zeph. 1:7-18].

This is why, in I Thess. 5:2 [continuing from ch. 4] and Rev. 1:10, that Christians removed from the earth in the rapture, removed from Man’s Day, *will find themselves in the Lord’s Day.*

And the widespread, erroneous teaching that the Lord’s Day overlaps the last seven years of Man’s Day is one of the main causes of the numerous false teachings in I, II Thessalonians, among other places.)

Now, with the preceding in mind, note that II Thess. 2:2ff deals with the Lord’s Day *on earth*, not in the heavens. The Thessalonians had evidently been taught by someone that they were now in the Lord’s Day, in the Millennium. *And nothing about existing conditions matched that which was supposed to exist on earth, where they still resided, during that future day.* Understandably, they could only have been confused.

Paul begins straightening matters out by calling attention to two things which must occur before the Lord’s Day could exist on earth — things, with related events, which had not yet occurred.

An apostasy must occur first (“a falling away” [v. 3] KJV, is from *apostasias* in the Greek text, meaning “apostasy”), and the man of sin (*the one who will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*) *must also be revealed first* (v. 4).

Neither of these had occurred.

“The mystery of iniquity” (v. 7), which could only relate to *Christians* (dealt with in the continuing part of this chapter), was already working. *But this must reach a final stage, which, according to related Scriptures, would be complete apostasy* (cf. Matt. 13:33; Luke 18:8; Rev. 3:14-20).

And, as previously stated, *the man of sin must be revealed, along with an outworking of the things stated about him* (vv. 3-12).

Only then could the Lord's Day exist on earth.

Then Paul stated that there was *one thing*, in conjunction with the apostasy, which must occur before the man of sin could be revealed, allowing Man's Day to subsequently end and the Lord's Day to begin on earth.

And that *one thing* is spoken of as something presently in existence *which held back* the appearance of the man of sin (v. 6), something *which had to be removed* before the man of sin could be revealed (v. 7).

But, at what point during the Tribulation will the man of sin be revealed — seen by his actions at the beginning (Rev. 6:1, 2), or seen by his actions starting in the middle (Rev. 6:3, 4)?

Things spoken of in II Thess. 2:3ff about the revelation of the man of sin have to do with events occurring in the middle of the Tribulation and extending throughout the last half (Matt. 24:15ff). But, within the revealed mannerism which he will exhibit in that day (vv. 4a, 9) there appears to be an allusion to his actions throughout the Tribulation.

But all information on a subject is not given one place in Scripture, which is why Scripture must be compared with Scripture in order to begin seeing a more complete picture.

(These and other related things are dealt with in the continuing part of this chapter, which centers on showing that which is preventing any present revelation of this man.)

3) *Central, Overall Message to the Thessalonians*

As previously seen, Paul's first epistle to Christians forming the Church in Thessalonica had to do with *the central message which he had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world*. Paul referred to this message as "my gospel," "our gospel," connecting it with "the mystery" which had been revealed to him at the outset of his ministry. One was part and parcel with the other (I Thess. 1:5; cf. Rom. 2:16; 16:25; Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6; Col. 1:23-28).

In the first three and one-half chapters of I Thessalonians (1:1-4:12), Paul dealt extensively with *things pertaining to this central message which he had been called to proclaim*, which is “Christ proclaimed among you, the hope of glory” (correct textual reading of Col. 1:27b [note an inseparable connection with “the mystery” in vv. 26, 27a]).

Then, beginning toward the end of chapter four and continuing into chapter five (4:13-5:10), Paul dealt with *the rapture and succeeding events* (clearly seen in other related Scriptures to occur *before* the Tribulation) — showing two types of Christians removed from the earth at the end of the dispensation (faithful and unfaithful [those who had heeded his exhortations and warnings, and those who hadn’t heeded these exhortations and warnings, seen in 5:1-9]), with events surrounding the judgment seat in view.

And the remainder of the book simply forms Paul’s closing remarks for his first epistle.

Then, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul began at a time following the Tribulation, continuing from his first epistle.

And the Tribulation is not seen in these events concerning Christians both preceding and following the Tribulation, for Christians *have NOTHING to do with the Tribulation*. Rather, the Tribulation is “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” *with Israel and the nations in view, NOT the Church*.

The thrust of Paul’s opening remarks in his second epistle, covering all twelve verses of the first chapter, has to do with the place which Christians will occupy in the future kingdom of Christ, following Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation.

Some, the faithful, will occupy positions of glory and honor in Christ’s kingdom, seated on the throne with Christ as He exercises power over the nations, realizing the “salvation” spoken of in I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:5, 10-2:1; *cf.* Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21).

Others, the unfaithful, will occupy places of shame and disgrace and have no part in Christ’s kingdom. They will not be privileged to ascend the throne with Him as He exercises power over the nations, realizing instead the “wrath” spoken of in I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:6-9; *cf.* Rev. 3:15-17).

Then chapter two begins with a continuing statement from the

closing verses of chapter one, remaining within the same subject matter — faithful Christians “gathering together unto him” at the time of His return at the end of the Tribulation.

This was Paul’s way of introducing a dissertation to correct erroneous teaching which had found its way into the Church in Thessalonica, purporting to have come from him (vv. 2ff).

(It is commonly taught that the “gathering together unto him” in II Thess. 2:1 has to do with the rapture. And a lesser number of Christians try to see the rapture taught in the third verse of this chapter through a rather strained usage of the Greek word *apostasia*, using the thought of “departure” for the meaning of the word and then trying to apply it to the Church being removed at the end of the dispensation.

Though “departure” is the idea behind the meaning of the word *apostasia* [literal meaning, “to stand away from”], attempting to see this “departure” having to do with Christians, seeing the rapture in either of these opening verses of the second chapter [vv. 1, 3] is clearly both textually and contextually wrong. And this can easily be seen by simply reading both in the light of their contexts.

Again, Scripture must be interpreted in the light of Scripture. A failure to do this, attempting to see the rapture in either of these two verses, has done away with any correct understanding of these verses. And, as a result, interpretation is negatively affected elsewhere in the chapter.

In the preceding respect, along with not understanding the overall picture beginning with chapter one in I Thessalonians, it is little wonder that Bible students have trouble understanding and identifying that which presently exists in II Thess. 2:6, 7, preventing the appearance of the man of sin.)

4) *That Preventing the Appearance of Antichrist*

Aside from the “falling away” (the apostasy), which, contextually, could only be a *concluding work* of “the mystery of iniquity” (vv. 3, 7), the passage centers on *something unnamed that is preventing the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition*. And that being referenced (which, contextually, could only be associated with the apostasy) *must be removed, taken out of the way, before this man can be revealed*.

An interesting feature of the matter is that Paul didn’t need

to identify that being referenced, *for those in Thessalonica could only have already known what he was writing about (v. 6), needing no explanation.*

But the same thing cannot be said of Bible students today. Most of them have trouble with this, and many of them simply leave it alone, not knowing what to do with it.

(Most Bible students today, seeking to explain what Paul was referencing, which the Thessalonians could only have understood, attempt to see *the Holy Spirit* as the restrainer.

They do this, to a large extent, on the basis of the Greek text's usage of both neuter and masculine words to reference the restrainer [neuter in v. 6, masculine in v. 7]. And "Spirit" is a neuter word in the Greek text, though the Spirit, at times, is spoken of in a masculine respect [e.g., John 16:7-11].)

But, is this the way that those in Thessalonica would have understood the matter? If so, Why?

Instead of surmising about the matter though there is *a much better way* to answer these questions, which will, as well, leave us with the same mind-set as those in Thessalonica almost 2,000 years ago.

In this respect, answers are, in reality, quite easy to come by. Those in Thessalonica understood what Paul was teaching (his gospel, having to do with the mystery); but few Bible teachers today do so, which is where the problem lies.

Those in Thessalonica understood the content of Paul's gospel, seeing the message throughout as a message to the saved relative to the coming kingdom of Christ.

But Bible students today, almost without exception, see Paul's gospel as simply another way to reference the gospel of grace, seeing the message throughout I, II Thessalonians as dealing largely with saved-unsaved issues, intermixed with a message to Christians, though not a message in keeping with the content of Paul's gospel at all.

Paul's gospel had to do with a message to those who had already heard and responded to the message of the gospel of the grace of God. It had to do with a message concerning Christian

faithfulness, with a view to the coming kingdom of Christ. It had to do with the purpose for the present dispensation — *the Spirit sent into the world to call out a bride for God's Son, with a view to the bride ascending the throne with Christ during the coming age.*

In the preceding respect, Paul's gospel, as seen dealt with throughout I Thessalonians, had to do with the antitype of Genesis chapter twenty-four (*with I Thessalonians forming a commentary on this chapter*), set between the death of Abraham's wife (ch. 23) and Abraham again taking a wife (ch. 25).

Paul's gospel had to do with God sending His Spirit to the earth to find and procure a bride for His Son, Jesus (as Abraham, in the type, sent his eldest servant into the far country to find and procure a bride for his son, Isaac).

And the whole of the matter in the antitype occurs exactly as in the type. The Spirit's search for and procurement of a bride for God's Son occurs following Israel being set aside (looked upon as dead [John 11:1ff]) but before God restores and remarries the adulterous wife that He divorced.

In the type, following Abraham's servant procuring the bride, the servant removed the bride from the far country (accompanied by maidens, riding on evidently the same ten camels in the servant's possession when he had come into the far country to search for and procure the bride [ten showing *completeness*; *all went forth to meet Isaac, as all Christians will go forth to meet Christ*]).

And in the antitype, following the Spirit's procurement of the bride, the Spirit will remove the bride from the earth (*remove all Christians, with the bride revealed at the judgment seat*).

In the type, Isaac came forth to meet his bride; and, in the antitype, Jesus will come forth to meet His bride.

The preceding is seen in I Thess. 4:13ff and can only be an inseparable part of Paul's gospel. And when God's purpose for the present dispensation has been completed and the Spirit removes the bride, *there will then be NOTHING to prevent the man of sin from being revealed.*

Until this occurs, *he CAN'T be revealed*; after this occurs, *NOTHING will stand in the way of his being revealed.* And since the whole of the matter is seen in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians,

there was no need for any type explanation to those in Thessalonica concerning what Paul meant by something holding back the revelation of this man in II Thess. 2:6, 7. *He had already told them in his first epistle.*

Thus, that which is holding back the revelation of the man of sin is more than just the removal of the Spirit. *It has to do with the Spirit completing His dispensational work and removing the bride (which, as well, clearly shows a pretribulational removal of Christians).*

God works with set times, set ways, particular individuals, nations (Israel, and the nations through Israel) through which His plans and purposes are worked out and brought to pass.

Things referenced in II Thess. 2:1ff have to do with two different set times in this respect — *a removal relative to one, and a revealing relative to the other.*

And until these set times arrive, NEITHER can occur; but when these set times arrive, BOTH must occur.

(The removal of the Spirit at the end of the present dispensation is a removal in the same sense as His being sent at the beginning of the dispensation in Acts 2:2. The Spirit was already here at the time He was sent, and the Spirit will remain here at the time that He is removed.

This has to be the case both past and future, else man could not have been saved in the past or cannot be saved in the future. The Spirit is the One breathing life into the one having no life. This is the way matters are set forth in the foundational type in Genesis, *which can NEVER change* [e.g., Gen. 1:2b; 2:7].

The Spirit being sent on the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D., in fulfillment of the former part of the type in Gen. 24 [Abraham sending his servant into a far country to procure a bride for his son], has to do with the beginning of a new work.

And the Spirit one day being removed, in fulfillment of the latter part of the type in Gen. 24 [Abraham's servant leaving the far country with the procured bride], has to do with the completion of this work.

BEFORE this occurs, Antichrist CANNOT be revealed. AFTER this occurs, there will be NOTHING to prevent his appearance.

EVERYTHING, in this respect, centers around the Spirit completing His present dispensational work.)

8

The Present Kingdom, the Coming Kingdom

Angelic Rule About to End, Man's Rule About to Begin

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” (Heb. 2:1-5).

The preceding five verses from Hebrews chapter two are being used to introduce the final chapter of this book, for a reason. This book has dealt with numerous things pertaining to *man's salvation in relation to the kingdom of this world — the central subject throughout the New Testament*, introduced from the Old Testament — seen throughout the gospels, Acts, the epistles, and concluded in the Book of Revelation, when this kingdom becomes “that of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15; *cf.* Dan. 2:44, 45).

But, Problems

Though the preceding is *the central subject pervading the whole of the New Testament* (actually, the whole of Scripture), Christians

in general seem to grasp or understand very little about *man's salvation in relation to this kingdom, particularly present and/or future aspects of salvation inseparably connected with this kingdom.*

Most either ignore or don't know what is actually stated in Scripture and end up dealing with salvation by grace as the central subject throughout the New Testament — with the goal being man's eternal salvation, assuring him of heaven, as they often state matters — usually centering somewhat on things stated in John's gospel and in the Book of Romans.

1) *Salvation by Grace — Genesis, John, Romans*

Though salvation by grace can be found in both John's gospel and the Book of Romans, *this is simply NOT the central message in either book, or in any other book in Scripture.* The central message in both books is *a message to the saved, NOT a message to the unsaved.*

But, this is either being ignored or not understood, with salvation by grace being read into passages which deal with present and future aspects of salvation, not to the past aspect of salvation. And attempts to read a different message of this nature into parts of Scripture where another message exists *can only serve to destroy the existing message, along with often corrupting the message being read into the passage.*

Scripture deals with the whole panorama of salvation, the whole panorama of the gospel message, beginning with the gospel of grace. But, very little time is spent at any place in Scripture on the gospel of grace. *God's revelation to man is centered around present and future aspects of salvation, present and future aspects of the gospel message, NOT the past aspect.*

Man though has turned it all around, resulting in an existing confusion throughout the complete panorama of the salvation message.

That is to say, using the original type in Genesis pertaining to the complete panorama of the salvation message, man invariably dwells upon and spends most of his time dealing with that foreshadowed by God's restorative activity on day one in Gen. 1 (vv. 2b-5), either ignoring God's restorative activity on the remaining five days or trying to somehow make that foreshadowed by this

subsequent, continuing restorative activity apply to that foreshadowed by His restorative activity back on day one.

Or, to state that another way, man usually spends most of his time on that which Scripture spends very little time dealing with; and he, in turn, usually spends very little time on that where Scripture places the emphasis.

And to add confusion to confusion, man, through the previous, whether he knows it or not, is attempting to do only one thing — circumnavigate that foreshadowed by events on days two through six and move directly *FROM* that foreshadowed by activity on day one *TO* that foreshadowed by the rest awaiting the people of God on the seventh day in Gen. 2:1-3 (*cf.* Heb. 4:9).

This would be comparable to the Israelites under Moses continuing to remain in Egypt and dwell upon the death of the firstborn, then traveling northeast from Egypt, taking the short and more direct route to Kadesh-Barnea rather than first traveling south, going down by and through the Sea, then to Mount Sinai.

God has structured His Word at the beginning in Genesis *after a particular fashion, for a reason.* And He has done *exactly the same* with Books such as John's gospel and Romans.

Man though, far more often than not, seemingly likes to take liberties with this Word. And that is far from a good idea.

2) *The Kingdom — Israel, Christians*

But, returning more to the subject of this book, even among those who see matters in a more correct respect — that *a kingdom* rather than salvation by grace was offered to Israel in the gospels, re-offered to the nation in Acts, and is presently being offered to Christians — a major problem usually exists in the outlook that these individuals have as well. As seen in previous chapters of this book, the vast majority attempt to deal with this kingdom as *an offer of the restoration of the kingdom covenanted to David.*

That though leaves these individuals attempting to deal with an insurmountable problem. It leaves them attempting to deal with Christ's statement in Matt. 21:43 in the light of what Scripture plainly states would subsequently happen, and did happen. It leaves them attempting to deal with *Israel's REJECTION of the*

proffered kingdom, this kingdom TAKEN from Israel, and this kingdom then GIVEN to “a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

Note the problem:

IF the kingdom offered to and rejected by Israel was the kingdom covenanted to David, that which subsequently happened COULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED, for this kingdom CAN NEVER be taken from Israel.

BUT, the proffered kingdom WAS taken from Israel!

THE SAME KINGDOM offered to and rejected by Israel, in both the offer and the re-offer, WAS taken from the Jewish people!

And further, that kingdom, throughout the present dispensation, continuing into modern times, HAS BEEN AND IS BEING offered to the one new man “in Christ,” an entirely new ethnic group of people being accorded the privilege of bringing forth fruit for the kingdom.

So, what does a person do with all of this? He does the same thing that anyone studying Scripture should do at any point — always go with that which Scripture has to say, regardless of whether or not it is at variance with popular thought or with what someone else might have said or taught.

If you do this — go with what Scripture has to say, regardless of what man may have to say — you may not always be liked, probably won't be; *BUT you will always be right!*

As has been shown throughout this book, beginning with the introduction, the proffered kingdom seen throughout the gospels, Acts, and the epistles, *WAS NOT the kingdom covenanted to David*. Rather, it was the kingdom introduced and dealt with throughout the first thirty-four verses of Genesis (Gen. 1:1-2:3) and seen being given to the Son, by His Father, 6,000 years later (Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14; Rev. 11:15). It was/is the kingdom in which Christ and His co-heirs will reign during the coming Messianic Era (Rom. 8:15-23; Heb. 2:5).

THE SAME KINGDOM taken from Israel can only be THE SAME KINGDOM presently being offered to Christians, in which Christ and His co-heirs will reign during the Millennium.

And that is what *Heb. 2:1-5* clearly states, which is why these

verses are being dealt with as the main verses in the concluding chapter of this book.

Subject Matter in Hebrews

But first, note what the Book of Hebrews itself is about, as seen in the opening chapter.

The way that a book begins will invariably tell you something about the contents of that book. And some books, such as Hebrews, deal with the matter more in detail at the beginning.

The writer of this epistle begins by referring to Christ as the appointed “heir of all things” (v. 2) prior to recording anything about His *past sufferings* or His *present position at God’s right hand* (v. 3). And he then reflects back upon *Christ’s heirship* which he had mentioned *first* by focusing his readers’ attention *only* upon Old Testament Scriptures which have to do with *that day when Christ will come into possession of this inheritance* (vv. 2, 5-13).

Thus, though there is a reference to Christ’s past sufferings in the first chapter of Hebrews, *this is not what is mentioned first, and this is not what the chapter is about.*

This chapter begins with and centers upon teachings surrounding *the coming glory of Christ, and this is accomplished mainly through reference to the Old Testament Scriptures.* And through this means, the subject matter in Hebrews is introduced through different quotations from the Old Testament.

There are “seven quotations” having to do with *Christ in His coming glory.* “Seven” is a number which refers to *the completion of that which is in view;* and these seven quotations present a complete, composite Messianic portrait of Christ, setting the stage for that which follows, covering the remainder of this book.

Hebrews is built around five major warnings; and to properly understand these warnings and related passages, a person must understand the opening verses of the book in their correct perspective, for these verses can only be looked upon as forming *an introductory key* to the remainder of this book.

The last of the seven quotations (1:13) leads directly into the introductory verse (1:14) for the first of the five major warnings (2:1-4):

“But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of [‘who are about to inherit’] salvation?” (1:13, 14).

The Salvation of Hebrews 2:3

The “salvation” referred to in Heb. 2:3, the inheritance awaiting Christians, spoken of at the end of the previous chapter (v. 14), is specifically said to be a deliverance “that first began to be spoken by the Lord,” continued to be spoken “by them that heard him,” and associated with “signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit” (vv. 3, 4).

Then, continuing in verse five, this salvation is clearly revealed to be associated with realizing, in the world to come, *regal positions presently held by angels*. And this would occur in *the ONLY kingdom which could possibly be in view — the kingdom of this world, presently ruled by Satan and his angels, to be ruled by Christ and His co-heirs*.

Thus, the message in view, associated with “so great salvation,” *could ONLY refer back to the message which Christ proclaimed to Israel following John being imprisoned, beginning in Matt. 4:17*. And this same message, with respect to Israel, continued to be proclaimed for about the next thirty-three years — during time extending from Matt. 4:17 to Acts 28:28.

Though certain differences existed at times (after events in Matt. 12, culminating in Christ’s statement in Matt. 21:43; His forty-day post-resurrection ministry; events on the day of Pentecost), *the SAME message was proclaimed to Israel throughout this time*.

This message, as at the beginning, had to do with an offer of the kingdom to Israel, attended by signs, wonders, and miracles. And this message, in relation to Israel, *continued UNCHANGED in this respect until Paul’s announcement to the religious leaders in Rome in Acts 28:28, marking the full end of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel*.

Only after this does one find Israel completely set aside, *signs no longer in evidence, and the message going SOLELY to the one new man “in Christ,” apart from signs*.

And, the salvation associated with the kingdom offered to Israel is

seen to be EXACTLY THE SAME SALVATION associated with THE SAME KINGDOM offered to Christians from that time down to the present time (Heb. 2:3, 4).

Then, remaining in Hebrews, this salvation, “so great salvation” in Heb. 2:3, would have to refer to *the same salvation previously mentioned in Heb. 1:14 — Christians inheriting as co-heirs with the “heir of all things,” realizing the rights of the firstborn (cf. Rom. 8:12-24; Eph. 1:3-18).* And this leaves NO ROOM WHATSOEVER to question what is meant by “so great salvation” in this continuing verse.

This is the “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time... the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:5, 9), which is *regal* and has to do with “the world to come” (Heb. 2:5).

(Information concerning *Signs, wonders, and miracles*, in the preceding respect, is dealt with in Appendix II in this book.)

So Great Salvation

The Spirit of God in Heb. 2:3 chose to use a qualifying word, setting this salvation apart. The thought is not that of Christians (“we”) *disregarding* “salvation,” but that of Christians *disregarding* “so great salvation.”

The adjective in the Greek text translated “so great [Gk., *telikoutos*]” is only found three other places in the New Testament (II Cor. 1:10; James 3:4; Rev. 16:18); and its full force can be seen in the latter reference, in Rev. 16:18:

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty [*telikoutos*] an earthquake, and so great.”

The earthquake in Rev. 16:18 (Gk., *seismos*, “a shaking”) has to do, contextually, with a complete collapse and disarray in the earth’s government under Antichrist, not with an earthquake per se. And this will occur in connection with the termination of God’s judgments during and immediately following the Tribulation.

The seventh vial, poured out in the preceding verse (v. 17), will complete God’s judgments upon the earth-dwellers at the time of

His Son's return. And the announcement seen in the verse shows how God brings about an end to Gentile world power ruling under Satan and his angels.

All of it will come crashing down and end in this revealed, climactic manner, with *this world kingdom THEN BECOMING "that of our Lord and of his Christ"* (Dan. 2:44, 45; Rev. 11:15).

(For information on how the Greek word *seismos* is used in the New Testament [fourteen times — seven times in the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts, and seven more times in the Book of Revelation], refer to Chapter XV, "The Great Seismos," in the author's book, [The Time of the End](#).

Our English words "seismic," "seismology," "seismograph" and other forms of the same word are all derived [in whole or in part] from the Greek word, *seismos*. Most words in this family of words in the English language are associated with earthquakes; but the words, in and of themselves, as in the Greek, have no relation to *the earth* per se [note a cognate form of *seismos* in Rev. 6:13 (*seio*), translated "shaken"].

In all usages of *seismos* in the N.T., translated "earthquake," "earth" has been added to "*seismos*" [e.g., "earth" prefixed to "quake," *earth-seismic*, "earthquake"]. If an "earthquake" is being referenced through the use of *seismos*, that would have to be seen contextually. It could not be shown by the word itself. And that invariably seen contextually through the use of *seismos* is not an earthquake at all but *a shaking of governmental powers, originating in the heavens and carried out on earth.*)

The words, "It is done," at the end of Rev. 16:17 are the translation of a perfect tense in the Greek text, indicating action completed in past time with the results of this action extending into the present and existing in a finished state. The succeeding four verses (vv. 18-21) simply describe, in brief form, the completion of God's judgments within the seventh vial in verse seventeen. Then chapters seventeen and eighteen elaborate more in detail concerning these judgments — the destruction and end of Israel's harlotry in conjunction with the destruction and end of Gentile world power.

The evident thought incorporated into Heb. 2:3 and Rev. 16:18 through the use of the word *telikoutos* is that, in each instance, *SOMETHING UNEXAMPLED is being dealt with.*

In Revelation it is "so mighty [*telikoutos*] an earthquake [*seis-*

mos, 'shaking']" ("so mighty a shaking," one beyond anything having previously existed, "such as was not since men were upon the earth," dating all the way back to the days of Adam).

And, contextually, this could only have to do with a *shaking of governmental powers*, bringing Gentile world power to this climactic end, with Christ and His co-heirs about to take the kingdom.

And, in Hebrews, the greatness of that day when Christ and His co-heirs take the kingdom is referred to by the same Greek word used for the destruction of Gentile world power — *telikoutos*.

There is the greatness of THE DESTRUCTION of one and the corresponding greatness of THE RISE TO POWER of the other.

Scripture, in Heb. 2:3, refers to *THE RISE of the latter following THE DESTRUCTION of the former* as "so great [*telikoutos*] salvation" (*the GREATEST thing God has ever designed for redeemed man, for it has to do with removing man from the earth and positioning him in the heavens as co-heir with the "heir of all things"*).

It is such a salvation as this — *so great salvation* — that is in view. God is *the designer*, He has declared it to be something *unexampled*, and He is *offering it to redeemed man*.

Resultingly, God is not going to countenance individuals whom He has redeemed through the finished work of His Son *making light of, disregarding this salvation*.

(A tragedy in modern-day Christendom, which can only promote the thought of *disregarding this salvation*, is the teaching that all Christians, simply because they have been saved, will one day come into a realization of this salvation.

If that is true, *why are Christians warned about disregarding this salvation? Or, what are the other four major warnings in Hebrews about? Or, what did Paul mean in verses such as II Tim. 2:10-12, which had to do with his gospel (v. 8 [ref. previous two chapters in this book])?*

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal [Gk., *aiionios*, 'age-lasting'] glory [*cf. Rom. 3:23*].

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead ['if we have died'] with him, we shall also live with him:

If we suffer [Gk., *hupomeno*, 'If we patiently endure'], we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."

Message to Israel, Past Message to Christians, Present

Since *the same kingdom* offered to and rejected by Israel is presently being offered to those comprising the Church, what, if anything, would be the difference in the message previously proclaimed to Israel and the message which is to presently be proclaimed to the Church?

1) The Message Proclaimed to Israel, Past

The message proclaimed to Israel, beginning with John in the offer of the kingdom in the gospels, was:

“Repent ye [a plural pronoun, the entire nation]: for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” (Matt. 3:2).

And this was followed by baptism, with those baptized “confessing their sins” (v. 6).

The message proclaimed to Israel, beginning with Peter in the re-offer of the kingdom in Acts, was:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you [the entire nation] in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Thus, the subsequent message in Acts, though worded slightly different, was *THE SAME*.

The SAME kingdom was in view, *the SAME offer* was being made, and *the SAME message* was being proclaimed — national repentance and baptism. There was absolutely *NO difference*, there couldn’t have been.

National repentance was required because of centuries of disobedience, dating, in one respect, all the way back to the inception of the nation during Moses’ day, over fourteen centuries earlier. And, because of this continued disobedience — which God, in His longsuffering, allowed to continue for centuries — six and seven centuries earlier, God had driven His people out among the nations to effect repentance through Gentile persecution (the Assyrian

and Babylonian captivities, about 722 and 605 B.C. respectively).

But, though a remnant was back in the land, national repentance was still not forthcoming. And this is the “why” of the call for *repentance* both during the offer of the kingdom seen in the gospels and the re-offer seen in Acts.

But Israel didn’t repent. And, as a result, the kingdom was taken from the nation, and the new entity, already on hand, *THEN BECAME THE ONLY ONE accorded opportunity to bring forth fruit for the kingdom.*

Had Israel though repented, note how the things stated in John’s gospel — the one non-synoptic gospel, different in a number of ways from the other three, though *an inseparable part of the message concerning the kingdom* — would have fit into the matter.

The three synoptic gospels center around *repentance*. John’s gospel centers around *things following repentance* — believing (ch. 3ff), eating His flesh, drinking His blood (ch. 6), remaining clean (ch. 13), etc.

Neither the word “gospel” nor the word “repentance” can be found in John’s gospel; and the word “kingdom” is only found three times (3:3, 5; 18:36). And all of this is by Divine design.

The salvation seen throughout John had to do with *salvation in relation to the kingdom*, dealt with in the three synoptic gospels. It had to do with “so great salvation” *BEFORE the kingdom was taken from Israel*, with “so great salvation” and *the kingdom FOLLOWING this time having to do with Christians*, as seen in Heb. 2:1-5.

John’s gospel, built around eight signs, according to the declared purpose for these signs (20:30, 31), was designed to *bring about Israel’s repentance during the re-offer of the kingdom so that the Jewish people could realize “so great salvation” in the proffered kingdom.*

And the contents of the gospel — dealing with faithfulness, eating His flesh, drinking His blood, remaining clean, etc. — would go hand-in-hand with the nation’s repentance in order to bring the Jewish people to this goal.

2) The Message Proclaimed to Christians, Present

The message proclaimed to Israel, as seen when John appeared on the scene, involved *repentance and the kingdom being at hand.*

Neither of these, in the same respect, would be applicable in the message to Christians today. And, actually, the latter — *the kingdom being at hand* — *couldn't be applicable*, for the kingdom was at hand, or had drawn near, when the message was proclaimed in the gospel accounts because the Messianic King was present, with the kingdom in the immediate offing.

“Repentance” means *a change of mind*; and a change of mind may be in order at times as part of the message to Christians today, but not a change of mind in the same respect as seen in the message to Israel, having to do with centuries of disobedience, with the main form of disobedience having to do with harlotry.

But, in general, things having to do with Israel pertaining to this message would be the same in the message proclaimed to Christians.

For example, the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7 is a connected discourse having to do with *entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom of the heavens*. The message was given to and had to do with the Jewish people during the offer and re-offer of the kingdom to Israel.

But, once the new creation “in Christ” had been called into existence (Acts 2), the principles of this message had to do with *those comprising this new creation AS WELL*. And beyond the events in Acts 28, the principles seen in Matt. 5-7 had to do with *those comprising this new man ALONE*.

And other things such as “the children [Gk., *huios*, ‘sons’] of the kingdom” being cast into “outer darkness” in Matt. 8:12 — applicable only to Israel at the time — would, following events of Acts 2, and then Acts 28, become applicable to Christians in the same preceding manner (*cf.* Matt. 25:30).

Note, in this respect, Matt. 8:11, 12 (relative to Israel) and Matt. 13:38 (relative to Christians [Christ had gone out of the house, down by the seaside]):

“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

But the children [Gk., *huios*, ‘sons’] of the kingdom shall be cast

out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (8:11, 12).

“The field is the world; the good seed are the children [Gk., *huios*, ‘sons’] of the kingdom; but the tares are the children [Gk., *huios*, ‘sons’] of the wicked one” (13:38).

Then, the matter of how the contents of John’s gospel can be applicable to Christians can easily be seen. The gospel throughout has to do with *belief*, an exercise of *faith*.

The word for “believe [Gk., *pisteuo*]” is seen throughout John’s gospel, appearing about 100 times, with this word appearing only about 35 times in all three of the synoptic gospels combined.

The noun form of the word for *pisteuo* (“believe”) — *pistis* (“faith”) — appears a scattering of times in each of the three synoptic gospels, but does not appear in John’s gospel at all. John always uses *pisteuo* in either its regular verb form or in a participle form.

(Regardless, both *pistis* and *pisteuo* mean *the same thing*. That’s why the noun form can be used in Eph. 2:8 and the verb form can be used in John 3:15, 16 [as a participle] — both places having to do with faith, belief, one’s trust in Christ.

This is another of the many peculiarities of John’s gospel.)

The word for belief throughout John’s gospel though was used relative to the Jewish people in the offer and re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in a quite different way than people often want to see it used. It was used pertaining to *a people who were already saved, relative to the message being proclaimed — a message concerning the kingdom, having to do with “so great salvation.”*

And the matter could be no different today. Belief throughout John’s gospel would pertain to *a people who are already saved (Christians), relative to the message being proclaimed — a message concerning the kingdom, having to do with “so great salvation.”*

3) A Problem Regarding John’s Gospel

A problem regarding John’s gospel today has to do with an improper use of this gospel, resulting in the door being closed relative to a proper use of the gospel.

John's gospel is often separated from the other three and dealt with in an evangelistic respect, with many verses dealt with in a completely wrong respect (e.g., Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1ff; ref. p. 109 in Chapter VII of this book).

It is sometimes stated that John's gospel is the one gospel among the four written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved. And that could be true, *BUT ONLY IF an individual is talking about present and future aspects of salvation, not past (i.e., talking about salvation/deliverance for those already eternally saved, in line with the continuing thought about "faith" — "from faith to faith" — in Rom. 1:17).*

A person *CAN* use John's gospel to deal with the unsaved, *but ONLY in a secondary respect.* John's gospel, because of the place which it occupies in Scripture, *simply CANNOT be used in a primary sense in this respect, except for an instance, contextually, such as John 3:16.*

John's gospel throughout, whether to Israel past or to Christians present, has to do with *present and future aspects of salvation relative to the kingdom, NOT past.*

But, as previously shown, individuals have turned all of this around and are using this gospel *ONLY IN ONE respect, as a message to reach the unsaved.*

When they do this though, *where is the message in John — THE CORRECT MESSAGE — for the person AFTER he has been saved?*

The correct message is NO LONGER PRESENT, for it has been destroyed through a misuse and misapplication of that seen throughout the book.

(For more information on this whole overall matter, refer to Appendix III in this book, "Misuse of John 20:30, 31.")

4) A Problem Regarding Romans

One of the main reasons people have trouble with Romans has to do with the same reason that people have trouble with a manifestation of signs in the Church in Corinth, or with Galatians. All three of these books were written to Gentile Churches during the Acts period, when the kingdom was being re-offered to Israel.

And this is a difficult period to understand, *providing insurmountable problems unless one deals with events within the period in which*

they occurred (within the Acts period, or outside the Acts period).

During this time, on the one hand, there were believing Jews who were still part of a nation where the old covenant, the Law, was still binding, though the theocracy had long-since ceased to exist (six centuries earlier).

And, on the other hand, there were saved Gentiles, who had nothing to do with the old covenant, the Law.

Then, the believing Jews were still part of the Jewish nation, anticipating the entire nation believing the message pertaining to the proffered kingdom. And continuing to occupy this position, they were not part of *the one new man* "in Christ." Though they had exercised faith in the Messiah, with a view to the kingdom, they were still Jews, though believing Jews.

("Messianic" groups today [saved groups of Jews meeting together, separate from what might be considered a Church setting] usually see themselves somewhat in the preceding respect — a saved part of the nation, but still Jews, not part of *the new creation* "in Christ.")

But this type situation existed *for ONLY about thirty years, at the beginning of the dispensation* [33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.]. Following that time, Jews believing the salvation message [which would be salvation by grace, for the saved generation of Jews having previously made the offer and re-offer of the kingdom possible was rapidly passing off the scene] could no longer be a believing part of the nation but could only become *new creations* "in Christ," where all distinctions of the human race have been blotted out [Gal. 3:28].)

Saved Gentiles during this time though were a different matter. They had nothing to do with the old covenant, with a past theocracy, etc. They had become *new creations* "in Christ," part of an entirely different and distinct ethnic group.

And, as long as the kingdom remained open to Israel in the re-offer of the kingdom (from Acts 2:4 to Acts 28:28), once Gentiles began to be saved (Acts 10), there were then two separate groups to which the offer of the kingdom was being extended — *Israel* on the one hand, and *the new creation* "in Christ" on the other hand.

But once this re-offer to Israel was brought to a close by Paul in Rome (Acts 28:28), Israel was completely set aside and the offer

was extended only to those forming *the new creation* “in Christ,” comprised of both saved Jews and saved Gentiles.

The preceding is why the Acts period is so difficult to understand. As well, not understanding some fundamental things about this period and not knowing that Paul wrote Romans during a time when conditions of this nature existed, dealing with both saved Jews and saved Gentiles in the book, is why so many people go wrong in Romans.

Romans deals with saved Jews and saved Gentiles in relation to the proffered kingdom (Rom. 2:16; 3:23-25) during that time when the kingdom was not only being re-offered to Israel (Rom. 15:19) but during a time when Israel held preference in this offer (Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10). This is why, for example, that you will find statements in chapter two about Jews associated with the Law and Gentiles being separate from the Law.

There is *NOTHING* in this chapter about teachings pertaining to eternal salvation. Two types of saved individuals are being dealt with during a particular time, which is past.

In fact, the message regarding eternal salvation *CANNOT* even be found in the Book of Romans until chapter five, and very sparingly there and beyond that, though much of what is seen throughout the book is invariably used to teach other than what exists, which does away with that which does exist.

Christians NEED to understand THE COMPLETE panorama of the salvation message, the gospel message, and STOP centering on one part (past), trying to fit the remaining parts (present and future) back into that which is past.

Note again (*ref.* Chapter VII, p. 113, in this book) how Paul put this together in Acts 20:

Christians need to not only understand “the gospel of the grace of God” (v. 24) but the gospel of “the kingdom of God” (v. 25) as well, understanding where God places the emphasis, which is *ALWAYS on the latter*.

ONLY in this manner, through understanding “all the council of God” (v. 27), can Christians be provided with that necessary “to build” them up and give them “an inheritance” in the coming kingdom (v. 32).

Appendix I

AION, AIONIOS

THE TWO MAIN GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED “ETERNAL” IN ENGLISH N.T. TEXTS

(Material in this article has been taken from Marvin R. Vincent’s four-volume set, *Word Studies in the New Testament* [a standard word study which has been in use for well over 100 years].)

Some editing of the originally printed text has been done to produce better clarity and easier reading, though no change alters any meaning in the original text [added paragraph divisions, transliterating Greek words to English lettering, some deletion of unneeded data, etc.].

This material comprises Vincent’s comments on two Greek words, *aion* and *aionios*, which have to do with “time” — one a noun, the other an adjective, both meaning the same thing — often indiscriminately translated “age,” “world,” “forever,” “eternal,” or “everlasting” [depending on the English translation].

There is really no word for “eternal” or “everlasting” in the Greek text of the N.T. [nor is there one in the Hebrew text of the O.T., with *olam* the main word usually translated “eternal” or “everlasting”].

And, as will become evident from a correct understanding of *aion* and *aionios*, these two words have not only often been mistranslated, causing confusion, but a correct translation is, at times, quite difficult. The latter can only be true because there are no words in the English language which exactly correspond to these words in the Greek text.

Context must always be the determining factor in any translation of these words; and, many times in the N.T., since *ages* are often being dealt with, both words can often be understood in this respect.

For example, note the latter part of Luke 18:30 where both *aion* and *aionios* appear and where, contextually [vv. 18-29], an inheritance in the kingdom [to be realized in the coming age] is in view. Thus, this part of the verse should be properly translated, “...and in the age [*aion*] to come age-lasting [*aionios*] life.”

And, in like manner, the question asked in the introductory verse of this passage [v. 18] should be translated, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit age-lasting [*aionios*] life." "Eternal life," often used in translations of this verse, is *not* inherited; it is a *free gift* [Eph. 2:8, 9]. One must be a child of the Owner to be in line for the inheritance [Rom. 8:17].)

The Noun, Aion

Aion, transliterated "aeon," is a *period of time of longer or shorter duration, having a beginning and an end, and complete in itself.*

Aristotle said, "The period which includes the whole time of each one's life is called *the aeon of each one.*" Hence, it often means *the life of a man*, as in Homer, where one's life (*aion*) is said to leave him or to consume away.

It is not, however, limited to human life; it signifies *any period in the course of events*, as the period or age before Christ; the period of the Millennium; the period before the beginning of history.

The word does not have a stationary and mechanical value. It does not mean a period of fixed length for all cases. *There are as many aeons as entities*, the respective durations of which are fixed by the normal conditions of the several entities.

There is one aeon of a human life, another of the life of a nation. *The length of the aeon depends on the subject to which it is attached.*

Aion is sometimes translated "world," with "world" representing *a period or a series of periods of time* (cf. Matt. 12:32; 13:40, 49; I Cor. 1:20; 2:6; Eph. 1:21), having to do with the world's contents which are included in the duration of the world (I Cor. 2:7; 10:11; Heb. 1:2; 9:26; 11:3).

The word *always* carries the notion of *time*, and not of *eternity*. It *always* means a *period of time*. Otherwise, it would be impossible to account for the plural, or for such qualifying expressions as *this age*, or *the age to come*.

It does not mean something endless or everlasting.

To deduce that meaning from its relation to *aei* [a cognate word] is absurd; for, apart from the fact that the meaning of a word is not definitely fixed by its derivation, *aei* [like *aion*] *does*

not signify endless duration.

When the writer of the Pastoral Epistles quotes the saying that "the Cretians are always [*aei*] liars" (Titus 1:12), he surely does not mean that the Cretians will go on lying for all eternity (*cf.* Acts 7:51; II Cor. 4:11; 6:10; Heb. 3:10; I Peter 3:15). *Aei* means "habitually" or "continually" within the limit of the subject's life.

In our colloquial dialect "everlastingly" is used in the same way. "The boy is everlastingly tormenting me to buy him a drum."

In the New Testament, the history of the world is conceived as developed through a succession of aeons. A series of such aeons precedes the introduction of a new series inaugurated by the Christian dispensation, and the end of the world and the second coming of Christ are to mark the beginning of another series (*cf.* Eph. 3:11). Paul contemplates aeons before and after the Christian era (Eph. 1:21; 2:7; 3:9, 21; I Cor. 10:11; *cf.* Heb. 9:26).

He includes the series of aeons in one great aeon: *ho aion ton aionon*, "the aeon of the aeons" (Eph. 3:21); and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes *the throne of God as enduring unto the aeon of the aeons* (Heb. 1:8).

The plural is also used, *aeons of the aeons*, signifying all the successive periods which make up the sum total of the ages collectively (Rom. 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Phil. 4:20, etc.). This plural phrase is applied by Paul to God only.

The Adjective, Aionios

The adjective *aionios*, in like manner, carries the idea of "time." Neither the noun nor the adjective, in themselves, carry the sense of *endless or everlasting*, though they may acquire that sense by their connotation. *Aionios* means "enduring through or pertaining to a period of time." Both the noun and the adjective are applied to limited periods.

Thus the phrase *eis ton aiona* [*lit.*, "with respect to the *aion*," appearing 29 times in the N.T. (*e.g.*, John 4:14; 6:51, 58; Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 25)], habitually rendered "forever," is often used of *duration which is limited in the very nature of the case.*

Note a few out of many instances in the Septuagint [Greek

translation of the O.T.] pertaining to *aion* (Ex. 21:6; 29:9; 32:13; Lev. 25:46; Deut. 15:17; Josh. 14:9; 1 Sam. 8:13; I Chron. 28:4; cf. Matt. 21:19; John 13:8; I Cor. 8:13).

The same is true of *aionios* in the Septuagint. Out of 150 instances in the Septuagint, four-fifths imply *limited duration* (cf. Gen. 48:4; Num. 10:8; 15:15; Prov. 22:28; Jonah 2:6; Hab. 3:6).

Words which are habitually applied to things temporal or material cannot carry, in themselves, the sense of endlessness. Even when applied to God, we are not forced to render *aionios* "everlasting." Of course the life of God is endless; but the question is whether, in describing God as *aionios*, it was intended to describe the duration of His being, or whether some different and larger idea was not contemplated.

That God lives everlastingly, and has lived everlastingly, are, no doubt, great and significant facts; yet they are not the dominant or the most impressive facts in *God's relations to time*. God's eternity does not stand merely or chiefly for a scale of length. It is not primarily a mathematical but a moral fact.

The relations of God to time include and imply far more than the bare fact of endless continuance. They carry with them the fact that *God transcends time*; God works on different principles and on a vaster scale than the wisdom of time provides; God oversteps the conditions and the motives of time; God marshals the successive aeons from a point outside of time, on lines which run out into His own measureless cycles, and for sublime moral ends which the creature of threescore and ten years cannot grasp and does not even suspect.

In Rom. 16:26 Paul speaks of the eternal God (*tou aioniou Theou*); but that he does not mean the everlasting God is perfectly clear from the context. He has said that "the mystery" has been kept in silence in times eternal (*chronois aionious*), which he does not mean everlasting times, but the successive aeons which elapsed before Christ was proclaimed. God therefore is described as *the God of the aeons*, the God who pervaded and controlled those periods before the incarnation.

To the same effect is the title, *ho basileus ton aionion*, "the King of the aeons," applied to God in I Tim. 1:17. The phrase,

pro chronon aionion, “before eternal times” (II Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2), cannot mean before everlasting times. The meaning is of old. The grace and the promise were given in time, but far back in the ages, before the times of reckoning the aeons.

Zoe aionios, “eternal life,” which occurs 42 times in the N. T., but not in the Septuagint, is not endless life, but *life pertaining to a certain age or aeon, or continuing during that aeon*.

I repeat, *life may be endless; the life in union with Christ is endless, but the fact is not expressed by aionios*.

Kolesis aionios, rendered “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46), is the punishment peculiar to an aeon other than that in which Christ is speaking. In some cases, *zoe aionios* does not refer specifically to the life beyond time, but rather to the aeon or dispensation of Messiah, which succeeds the present dispensation (cf. Matt. 19:16; John 5:39).

John says that *zoe aionios* is the present possession of those who believe on the Son of God (3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54). The Father’s commandment is *zoe aionios* (12:50); to know the only true God and Jesus Christ is *zoe aionios* (17:3).

Thus, while *aionios* carries the idea of time, though not of endlessness, there belongs to it also, more or less, a sense of quality. Its character is ethical rather than mathematical. The deepest significance of the life beyond time lies, not in endlessness, but in the moral quality of the aeon into which the life passes.

Other Considerations

It is comparatively unimportant whether or not the rich fool, when his soul was required of him (Luke 12:20), entered upon a state that was endless. The principal, the tremendous fact, as Christ unmistakably puts it, was that, in the new aeon, the motives, the aims, the conditions, the successes and awards of time counted for nothing.

In this life, his barns and their contents were *everything*; the soul was *nothing*. In the new life the soul was *first and everything*; the barns and storehouses were *nothing*.

Note the verb, *apollumi* in a similar respect, meaning “to de-

stroy," "put an end to," or in the middle voice, "to be lost, to perish." Peter says, "the world being deluged with water, perished" (*apollumi* [II Peter 3:6]); but the world did not become extinct, it was renewed.

In Heb. 1:11, 12, quoted from Ps. 102:25-27, we read concerning the heavens and the earth as compared with the eternity of God, "they shall perish" (*apollumi*). But the perishing is only preparatory to change and renewal. "They shall be changed" (*apollumi* [cf. Isa. 51:6, 16; 65:17; 66:22; II Peter 3:13]). Similarly, "the Son of man came to save that which was lost" (*apollumi* [Luke 19:10]). Jesus charged His apostles to go to "the lost [*apollumi*] sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6; cf. Matt. 15:24).

"He that shall lose [*apollumi*] his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25; cf. Luke 15:6, 9, 32).

In this passage the word "destruction" is qualified. It is "destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" (Matt. 16:27-17:5; II Thess. 1:9), *at His second coming, in the new aeon*.

In other words, *it is the severance, at a given point in time, of those who obey not the gospel from the presence and the glory of Christ* (II Thess. 1:5-11).

Aionios may therefore describe this severance as continuing during the millennial aeon between Christ's coming and the final judgment, as being for the wicked prolonged throughout that aeon and characteristic of it.

Or, *aionios* may describe the severance as characteristic of or enduring through a period or aeon succeeding the final judgment, the extent of which period is not defined.

In neither case is *aionios* to be interpreted as "everlasting" or "endless."

Appendix II

SIGNS, WONDERS, MIRACLES

Purpose and Consistency of Usage Seen Throughout Scripture

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30, 31).

History of Signs, Wonders, and Miracles

As will be shown, the manifestation of *signs, wonders, and miracles* in Scripture is inseparably connected with two things:

- 1) *The Nation of Israel.*
- 2) *The Kingdom.*

Both *Israel and the kingdom MUST* be in view *at the same time* for signs, wonders and miracles to exist. If there is an absence of either one (either *Israel, or the kingdom*), a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles — as seen throughout parts of the Old Testament, the gospel accounts, and the Book of Acts — *CANNOT* exist.

In this respect, any purported appearance of signs, wonders, and miracles *apart from Israel and the kingdom being in view can only be false*, for such an appearance would be out of line with the reason for the existence of this supernatural phenomenon in Scripture.

And, in order to properly understand the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles during time covered by the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts, a person must have a correct foundation upon which to build. A person must begin in the Old

Testament and trace the history of this supernatural work into the New Testament. *ONLY THEN* will he be in a position to understand various, necessary things about this supernatural phenomenon.

1) *Signs, Wonders, and Miracles in the Old Testament*

Signs, wonders, and miracles, performed *through individuals*, were manifested only on *two occasions* in all of the Old Testament.

The first manifestation was by Moses, Aaron, and Joshua. They were manifested by Moses and Aaron pertaining to Israel's deliverance from Egypt, with a view to the nation's entrance into the land of Canaan; and they were manifested by Moses' successor, Joshua, pertaining to Israel's subsequent entrance into the land of Canaan (Ex. 4:29-31; 7:10ff; Deut. 6:22, 23; Joshua 3:7ff; 10:12-14).

The second manifestation occurred some five hundred years later. They were manifested by Elijah, then by his successor, Elisha, (I Kings 17:1ff; II Kings 2:13ff).

Outside of these two occasions there is not *a single reference* to an individual being empowered to perform signs, wonders, and miracles throughout all of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Numerous miracles are recorded in these Scriptures (*e.g.*, the burning bush which was not consumed [Ex. 3:2], the sun being moved back ten degrees on the dial [Isa. 38:7, 8], the three Israelites being protected in the fiery furnace [Dan. 3:19-25], or Jonah being raised from the place of death in the sea [Jonah 1:17-2:10]). But these were miraculous works *performed directly by God*, not by individuals whom God had empowered to perform them.

Note that the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles during the days of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua was in relation to *Israel and the kingdom*. Supernatural manifestations of power occurred *relative to Israel being removed from Egypt and being established in the land of Canaan, within a theocracy*.

Thus, *a first-mention principle* was set forth at this point in Scripture, establishing an unchangeable pattern regarding the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles. Any future manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles of the nature seen at the time of the Exodus *must be brought to pass with Israel in view, and*

it must have to do with the kingdom.

During the days of Elijah and Elisha the people of Israel had been established in the land, within a theocracy, for about five hundred years. But, because of continued disobedience on the part of the people, the theocracy never came anywhere close to reaching the heights which God had intended. The theocracy reached its greatest heights during the days of David and his son Solomon (though, again, far from the heights which God had intended). But after that, following the division of the kingdom, things began to go in another direction entirely, moving even farther away from that which God had commanded.

And it was during these days that Elijah was called forth (with Elisha finishing his ministry) to call the nation to repentance. The manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles accompanying their ministry pertained to *Israel and the kingdom*. They had to, for a *first-mention principle* had previously been established; and any future manifestation had to be *exactly in accord with the way matters were set forth at the beginning* (cf. I Kings 18:37; Mal. 4:5, 6).

These signs, wonders, and miracles were simply *the credentials* of those manifesting them in Israel's presence, with the signs themselves, by their very nature, setting forth a message (like Christ using Jonah as a sign, which foreshadowed a miraculous deliverance of God's two firstborn Sons — Christ and Israel — from the place of death [cf. Matt. 12:38-40]).

Through a manifestation of supernatural powers accompanying the message, Israel was to recognize that the messenger had been sent from God; and, accordingly, the people were to heed both the message set forth by the manifested signs and the message proclaimed by the messenger (Ex. 4:1-9, 29-31).

The people of Israel though failed to heed this message; the nation didn't repent. And the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities followed (722 B.C. and 605 B.C. respectively).

"The times of the Gentiles" began with the Babylonian captivity, has lasted to the present day, and will last until the end of the Tribulation. This is simply a prolonged, uninterrupted period of time — lasting about 2,600 years — during which Israel must dwell apart from a theocracy and remain scattered among the

Gentile nations. And the Gentiles, among whom Israel dwells, will hold the sceptre throughout this time.

2) *Signs, Wonders, and Miracles in the New Testament*

After moving through almost 1,500 years of Jewish history and seeing signs, wonders, and miracles manifested during only two different periods by only five different men within these periods (by Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha), things suddenly changed. *Israel's Messiah* (following the ministry of His forerunner, John the Baptist) appeared to Israel with a message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens; and *this message was accompanied by numerous signs, wonders, and miracles* (Matt. 4:17-25; 8:1ff).

Then, in conjunction with and very early in His ministry, Christ called *twelve disciples* to help carry this message; and *they were empowered to perform signs, wonders, and miracles in connection with their ministry as well* (Matt. 10:5-8).

(Also, Christ later “appointed” *seventy others* to go “before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come” — though very little is said about them in the gospel accounts — and *He empowered them to perform signs, wonders, and miracles as well* [Luke 10:1-19].

Thus, at this time, there was a manifestation of supernatural signs in the camp of Israel *UNLIKE ANYTHING* heretofore seen in the history of the nation.)

Christ had been sent *only* to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24), and Christ sent the disciples whom He had called *to Israel alone* (Matt. 10:6). Both Christ and His disciples went to Israel with *the same message and the same accompanying manifestation of supernatural powers*. It was a message pertaining to the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the nation, *attended by a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles of AN UNPRECEDENTED NATURE*.

Whether it was Jesus or His disciples proclaiming the proffered kingdom, *signs, wonders, and miracles accompanied their ministry* and formed the credentials of those carrying the message.

These manifestations of power were *supernatural events which,*

by their very nature, set forth a message themselves; and these signs, as well, authenticated the message being proclaimed by the Messenger as being true and from God (John 3:1, 2; Acts 2:22; cf. Ex. 4:1-9).

The religious leaders in Israel were to see these signs, wonders, and miracles and understand not only the message set forth by the signs but that the Messengers were God-sent, carrying God's message for His people. Then, believing and understanding the message which they had both seen (through the signs) and heard (from the Messengers), they were responsible for carrying this message to the people of Israel (cf. Ex. 4:29-31; Num. 13:1-26).

However, exactly the opposite occurred. The religious leaders *refused to believe* the message, *rejecting both the signs and the Messengers*; and they, in their unbelief, then sought *to subvert the message and discredit the signs and the Messengers* in the presence of the Jewish people (Matt. 12:14-32).

(This is why Christ, near the end of His earthly ministry, in no uncertain terms, condemned the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees — the fundamental religious leaders of that day [Matt. 23:1ff]. They had seen the signs and heard the Messengers; but they *had rejected* the message and had sought to do away with the accompanying supernatural powers, mainly through attacking the central Messenger, through attacking Christ.

The Scribes and Pharisees *had rejected the signs and had sought to discredit Christ in the eyes of the people, bringing about reproach on the Messenger and casting doubt on His message* [e.g., Matt. 9:27-34; 12:22-24; cf. John 12:10, 11]. And, whether by word or deed, this resulted in their bearing *a false witness* to the people of Israel.)

The Scribes and Pharisees, the main body of religious leaders in Israel, controlled, more than any other group (by their very numbers), the religious life of the nation. And these religious leaders had “shut up the kingdom of the heavens against men [*lit.*, ‘...in the presence of men’ — *i.e.*, among those in Israel]” (Matt. 23:13). These religious leaders had no interest in entering the kingdom, and they were doing all within their power to prevent others from entering as well.

And all of this had its end result in Israel's *rejection* of both

the message and the Messenger, *the removal* of the kingdom of the heavens from Israel, *the crucifixion* of Israel's Messiah, and *God bringing into existence* a separate and distinct entity to be the recipient of that which had been offered to and rejected by Israel. Israel had failed to bring forth fruit in relation to the kingdom of the heavens, and *the one new man* "in Christ" was called into existence to be accorded the opportunity to bring forth fruit in this realm (Matt. 21:18, 19, 33-43; cf. I Peter 2:9-11).

But, though the kingdom was taken from Israel and the Church was called into existence to be the recipient of this offer, there was a *re-offer* of the kingdom to Israel, beginning at the time of the inception of the Church (Acts 2:1ff). And, if for no other reason, this is evident because of *the continuance of signs, wonders, and miracles*.

That would be to say, if God had terminated His dealings with Israel relative to the kingdom of the heavens at or before the time that the Church was called into existence, *signs, wonders, and miracles would have ceased to exist at that point in time* (33 A.D.). These supernatural manifestations of power had nothing to do with *the one new man* "in Christ" (who is "neither Jew nor Greek" [Gal. 3:28]). They had to do with *Israel alone* (I Cor. 1:22), and they had to do with *Israel in relation to the kingdom*.

These were *supernatural works, manifested through empowered individuals as they carried the message to Israel* (Acts 2:4; 3:1ff; 4:29-33; 5:12ff; 6:8ff).

Then, when Gentiles began to be added to the body of Christ, they were manifested within Churches comprised mainly of saved Gentiles, such as the Church in Corinth (I Cor. 12-14). And a manifestation of supernatural works in the Church after this fashion could only have been centered around the thought of *provoking Israel* "to jealousy" (Rom. 10:19; 11:11, 14).

That is, God was using those whom Israel considered *Gentile dogs* to manifest supernatural powers which naturally belonged to Israel *in order to provoke the nation to jealousy*.

And, between a segment of *the one new man* "in Christ" carrying the message to Israel and another segment seeking to provoke the nation to jealousy — all being done through a manifestation

of signs, wonders, and miracles — the Jewish people were dealt with in what might be considered *A MAXIMUM MANNER*.

In one respect, God pulled out all stops (*cf.* Luke 10:13-24; 11:29-32); but the religious leaders in Israel would still have nothing to do with the message. Thus, the nation continued in unbelief.

Purpose for Signs, Wonders, and Miracles

Most of the manifestations of supernatural power during the ministry of Christ and the Apostles (during the periods covered by both the gospel accounts and by the Book of Acts) centered around *bodily healings*. This was the manner in which they were introduced during Christ's ministry (Matt. 4:23-25), and this was the manner in which they were brought to a close about three decades later during Paul's ministry (Acts 28:7-9).

(And along with bodily healings, *death* was no longer irreversible [Mark 5:35-43; John 11:1-47; Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-12], *material needs* were miraculously supplied [food, drink, etc. (John 2:1-11; 6:1-14; Acts 5:19-23; 16:26)], there was *deliverance from demonic spirits* [Matt. 12:22; Acts 5:16], and *angelic ministry* was abundantly available [Matt. 4:11; Acts 12:7, 8, 23].)

The signs, centering around bodily healings (though including other related things), reflected on and had to do with a dual aspect of one thing: *the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel, with the kingdom in view*.

- 1) The signs showed *an existing condition (sickness, seen prior to the healings)*.
- 2) The signs also showed *another condition which could exist (restoration of the nation, in a restored kingdom, seen following the healings)*.

And *deliverance for the nation* after the fashion set forth by the signs was contingent on *national repentance, followed by baptism* (*cf.* Matt. 3:1-11; 4:17, 23-25; 10:5-8; Acts 2:37, 38; 3:19-21).

These *signs, wonders, and miracles*, along with being the cre-

dentials of the Messengers of the gospel of the kingdom, were manifestations of supernatural powers (powers necessary to bring the signs to pass) depicting *Israel's present spiritual condition and showing how this condition could change, if...*

These same manifestations of supernatural powers could and would — contingent on Israel's repentance — bring to pass that of which the signs spoke, *i.e., Israel's supernatural healing, accompanied by God's supernatural provision for the nation in all areas of life, dealt with in all the other various signs. And this deliverance, as previously seen, would occur in a restored kingdom.*

1) *Israel's Present Spiritual Condition*

Israel's spiritual condition prior to God's miraculous healing is revealed numerous places in Scripture. But note Isaiah's description of the nation in this respect:

“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Why should ye be stricken anymore? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (1:4-6).

This was the way Isaiah introduced Israel at the very beginning of his prophecy; but he didn't remain at this point, *depicting Israel's spiritual condition during his day (a condition which has continued to the present day)*. Isaiah went on, at the beginning, to relate the main subject matter of his prophecy.

Israel was sick, but Israel could and one day would be cured of this sickness. And the latter is what Isaiah went on to also relate. Israel's condition was *not* permanent. The nation *would* one day be healed.

But this would occur only after *God's conditions* had been met: “If ye be willing and obedient...” (1:19a; cf. v. 18). Only then would

the Lord turn His hand, purge the nation, and restore her rulers (1:25, 26). Only then would redemption occur, and only then would the kingdom with all its glory be restored to Israel (1:27-2:5).

2) *Israel's Future Supernatural Restoration*

But when will Israel repent, allowing *healing* to occur? The answer is provided numerous places in Scripture, but note Hosea's prophecy where the matter is dealt with in so many words.

In Hosea 5:13-6:2, Israel is pictured as *sick*, having a *wound* (near the end of Israel's time of sickness, during the coming Tribulation), with the Assyrian (Antichrist) being unable to provide a cure (5:13). Help though is available, but it *must* come from the same source which Isaiah or any of the other prophets foretold. *It must come from the Lord* (5:14-6:1).

Israel's sickness was brought about by the Lord because of the nation's refusal to obey that which the Lord had commanded. And the same One Who brought about Israel's condition is also the only One Who can effect a change in Israel's condition. And *a reversal of the nation's condition* after this fashion is dependent on *a reversal of the nation's attitude and action* regarding the Lord's commandments (*cf.* Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-12; 4:19, 20).

Israel being positioned in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the head of the nations, within a theocracy, is *conditional*. It was *conditional* in history and *remains so* today. It was/is *conditioned on Israel obeying the Lord's commandments*.

Once the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt and were at Sinai, about to receive the Law (the Magna Charta for the kingdom, the rules and regulations governing the people within the kingdom), the Lord made one thing very clear — *the necessity and importance of the people obeying His commandments*.

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 19:5, 6; *cf.* Lev. 26:1-13; Deut. 28:1-14).

(Note that *obedience to the Lord's commandments follows repentance [a change of mind]* in both the type and the antitype.

In the type, the Israelites changed their minds and received the one whom they had previously rejected [Moses]. In the antitype, the Israelites will change their minds and receive the One Whom they previously rejected [the One greater than Moses, the nation's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Zech. 12:10-14; 13:6)].

It is only after this, in the type or the antitype, that subsequent events leading up to the reception of the Lord's commandments governing the Jewish people in the kingdom occur [in the type, following the Passover, the Exodus from Egypt...; in the antitype, following that foreshadowed by these events].

In the type, the Lord's commandments had to do with the old covenant, the Law received at Sinai; in the antitype these commandments will have to do with the new covenant, the Law placed "in their inward parts," written "in their hearts" [Jer. 31:31-33]. And the new covenant may very well be made with Israel at the same place that the old covenant was made with the nation — at Sinai.)

And it was later clearly revealed *exactly* what would occur if Israel refused to obey the Lord's commandments (Lev. 26:14ff; Deut. 28:15ff). The nation would be punished "seven times [a number signifying *the completeness* of that which was in view, *i.e., a complete punishment at the Lord's hands*]," all types of curses would befall the people, they would be removed from their land and scattered among the nations, and they would find themselves in subjection to the Gentile nations where they had been scattered.

They would find themselves *at the tail* of the nations rather than *at the head*, and their lot in this position would be that of *curses* rather than *blessings*. And, though remnants of those scattered would, at times, leave the Gentile nations and return to their own land (a remnant was present 2,000 years ago, and another is present today), the nation — *the whole nation, including any remnant in the land* (Isa. 1:5-7) — would remain in the same spiritually sick condition, with its land desolate. Only the Lord could bring about healing, but *in His time*.

And that's what Hosea 5:13-6:2 is about — Israel's present

condition and that future time when the nation will repent, resulting in the nation being healed. Note again Hosea 6:1, 2 relative to Israel's repentance and healing:

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

After two days [after 2,000 years] will he revive us: in the third day [the third 1,000-year period] he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”

Then, note the two things revealed immediately before this, in Hosea 5:15, which introduce Israel's future repentance:

1) The two days (the 2,000 years, covering the Jewish dispensation) begin with Israel's “offense” (disobedience over centuries of time, resulting in harlotry and ultimately the crucifixion of the nation's Messiah).

2) The two days (the 2,000 years) come to a close with the Jewish people seeking the Lord's face during a time of “affliction” (during the coming Tribulation), receiving the Lord when He returns.

“The Tribulation” will be *the last seven years of the Jewish dispensation*, a fulfillment of Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy. And when time resumes in Daniel's prophecy, the Jewish people, time-wise, will be placed in *the position of having just crucified their Messiah*. Then, exactly as stated in Hosea's prophecy, healing for the nation will occur immediately following the Tribulation — after two days (after 2,000 years), in the third day (in the third 1,000-year period).

As God worked six days to restore a ruined creation in the beginning and then rested the seventh day (Gen. 1:1-2:3), so is He presently working six more days (6,000 years) to restore a subsequent ruined creation, with a view to resting the seventh day (the seventh 1,000-year period). And all subsequent sections of Scripture, such as Hosea 6:1, 2, merely rest upon and provide additional light for the foundational framework — showing the septenary structure of Scripture — set forth at the very beginning.

Then, with all of the preceding in mind, note Isaiah chapter fifty-three. This chapter outlines Israel's confession in that coming seventh day, *following the healing of the nation*:

“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes *we are healed...*” (vv. 1, 4, 5).

It was this future condition of Israel which Isaiah (along with the other prophets) dealt with so extensively. And it was this future condition of Israel to which the miraculous signs throughout Scripture pointed, whether during Moses and Joshua's day, during Elijah and Elisha's day, or during the days of Christ and the Apostles (both preceding and following the events of Calvary).

The central thought when the Spirit of God closed the Old Testament Canon pertained to *Israel being healed* [Mal. 4:2, 3], and this was likewise *the central thought* when the heavens were once again opened over four centuries later in the New Testament [Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17, 23-25]. The New is simply a continuation and unveiling of that which has lain in the Old *from the beginning*.

Do you want to understand the New? *Then study the Old*. Do you want to see Israel and the Christ of the New? *Then view Israel and the nation's Messiah in the eyes of the Old*.

Cessation of Signs, Wonders, and Miracles

As previously seen, *signs, wonders, and miracles*, manifested during time covered by the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts, were inseparably connected with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel (both in the original offer and in the re-offer).

In the gospel accounts (in the original offer), these manifestations of supernatural power *were more evident* prior to Israel's climactic rejection of the message and Christ's departure from the

house (Matt. 12:22-32; 13:1), *though seen throughout this period.*

And in Acts (in the subsequent re-offer), these manifestations of supernatural power *were more evident* prior to Israel's climactic rejection once again and the introduction of Paul to carry this message to the Gentiles (Acts 7:51-58; 9:1-15), though, as in the original offer, *they were seen throughout this period.*

There was a definite, revealed reason for the particular type manifestations of supernatural power — something which would not be true at all beyond that time when the offer was removed from Israel and the nation set aside, awaiting “the fulness of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:25). These signs, wonders, and miracles were not only inseparably connected with the offer of the kingdom to Israel (a connection established in the Old Testament Scriptures) but they spoke volumes in and of themselves. These manifestations of supernatural power reflected directly *on Israel's spiritual condition, past, present, and future* — something dealt with throughout the Old Testament.

In this respect, before Israel's climactic rejection in both the original offer and the re-offer, it was only natural for these signs, wonders, and miracles *to be very prevalent.*

However, in each instance, once these climactic points had been reached it was also only natural for the signs, wonders, and miracles *to become less prevalent,* though still in evidence because the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel. Then, once the offer had been withdrawn (about 62 A.D.), it was not only natural but absolutely necessary that the signs, wonders, and miracles *cease altogether.*

THEY HAD TO CEASE at this time. They would have been *completely out of place* beyond this point. And this, as previously shown, can be seen from a Scriptural standpoint entirely apart from referencing I Corinthians chapter thirteen — a section of Scripture in which Paul stated that they would cease, giving both *the time and the reason.*

1) I Corinthians 13:8-10

Paul's reference to this matter in his first letter to those in Corinth was made necessary because the Church in Corinth was a

Gentile Church in which signs, wonders, and miracles were being manifested, which, as previously seen, could only have been with a view to provoking Israel to jealousy (Rom. 10:19; 11:11-14; cf. Acts 13:44, 45). And Paul, viewing that which was occurring in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures, called their attention to *the time and the reason* when these manifestations of supernatural power would cease.

In I Cor. 13:8-10, Paul called attention to the fact that the spiritual sign-gifts being manifested in the Church in Corinth were only temporary, for a revealed reason. And it is evident that the whole panorama of spiritual sign-gifts (ch. 12) would be alluded to by the three which Paul singled out — *prophecies, tongues, and knowledge*.

All of the spiritual sign-gifts would have to be looked upon together — as a unit, comprised of different parts — simply because of *their interrelated purpose*. They all existed for *exactly the same purpose*. And when the Lord saw fit to bring His purpose surrounding these gifts to a close, they (all of them together, delineated by the three in I Cor. 13:8) *would no longer exist*.

Actually, from a Scriptural standpoint, *THEY COULDN'T EXIST beyond this time*. Any existence of these gifts beyond this time *would be contrary to the revealed Word of God and, thus, impossible*.

Prior to this time, Paul had the power to effect bodily healings (portending Israel's healing), for the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel (Acts 19:6, 11, 12; 28:8, 9). But after this time, when the offer of the kingdom was no longer open to the nation — when healing for Israel was set aside with the nation, with the corresponding cessation of signs, wonders, and miracles — Paul no longer possessed this power.

After this time, Paul instructed Timothy, "...use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23); and he later left Trophimus "at Miletum sick" (II Tim. 4:20).

In I Cor. 13:8-10, two expressions relative to these sign-gifts are used in opposite senses — "in part," and "perfect":

"Charity [Love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether

there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

In these verses, "in part" has to do with *incompleteness* (from *ek meros*), meaning "out of a part [plural in the Greek text of vv. 9, 10, 'out of parts']," and "perfect" has to do with *completeness* (from *teleios*, meaning "complete," "bringing to an end") Thus, *ek meros* and *teleios* are used in antithetical senses.

And both expressions, since they have to do with either *the continuance* or *the end* of the manifestation of supernatural signs, are inseparably connected with either *the continuance* or *the end of the offer of the kingdom to Israel*. This is a connection which, from a Scriptural standpoint, *MUST BE RECOGNIZED*, for "signs," apart from both Israel and the kingdom being in view, *CANNOT EXIST*. And *THIS MUST BE RECOGNIZED* in order to properly understand that which is being stated in I Cor. 13:8-10.

In this respect, *INCOMPLETENESS* (shown by *ek meros*) *CAN ONLY have to do with that time prior to God finishing His work pertaining to the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (with signs, wonders, and miracles still in evidence)*; and *COMPLETENESS* (shown by *teleios*) *CAN ONLY have to do with that time following God finishing His work pertaining to the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (with signs, wonders, and miracles no longer in evidence)*.

Thus, the thought set forth by Paul in I Cor. 13:9, 10, contextually, is *something quite easy to see and understand* as long as the proper connection with the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles is made. But *remove this key, and the whole matter becomes impossible to properly see and understand*.

Verse nine teaches that Paul and others were exercising *supernatural spiritual gifts*. And they were exercising these gifts during a time of "incompleteness," *i.e.*, they were exercising these gifts during the period *prior to the time* God would "complete" His work with Israel relative to the proffered kingdom.

Verse ten then goes on to state that the time was coming when God would "complete" His work surrounding the re-offer of the

kingdom to Israel. Then, the things being done during the time of “incompleteness” (during the time when the offer/re-offer of the kingdom had previously remained open to Israel, *prior to God completing His work in this respect*) — things pertaining to *Israel and the kingdom* — would “be done away” with.

(Note that to associate *teleios* in I Cor. 13:8-10 with the completion of the canon of Scripture and a corresponding cessation of sign-gifts, as many do, *has NOTHING to do with Israel and the kingdom*. Accordingly, the completion of the Canon of Scripture, *can have NOTHING to do with the matter*.

All of this MUST be kept within context.

“Incompleteness” *MUST be understood in connection with the subject matter at hand — the offer of the kingdom still open to Israel, with signs still in evidence.*

And “completeness” *MUST, correspondingly, be understood in connection with the subject matter at hand as well — the offer of the kingdom no longer open to Israel, with signs no longer in evidence.*)

2) Acts 28:28

Thus, the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles *ceased* when the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn from Israel, with a view to God completing His work of removing from the Gentiles “a people for his name.”

And this was *in complete keeping* with their usage in the Old Testament (pertaining to Israel and the kingdom), *in complete keeping* with their usage during the time covered by both the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts (again, pertaining to Israel and the kingdom), and *in complete keeping* with that which they portended (Israel’s spiritual condition, both present and future).

In Acts 28:28, Paul told the Jews for the third and last time that he was going to the Gentiles with the message which they had rejected.

“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

And when he had said these words, the Jews departed...” (vv. 28, 29a; *cf.* Acts 13:46; 18:6).

At this time, God set Israel aside for the remainder of the dispensation, and, correspondingly, *signs, wonders, and miracles ceased*. With God's termination of His dealings with Israel in relation to the kingdom, *signs, wonders, and miracles HAD TO CEASE*.

For sign-gifts to continue beyond this point *would have been COMPLETELY out of line with Scripture*. And, *remaining in line with Scripture*, these sign-gifts *CANNOT again be in evidence until that future time when God resumes His national dealings with Israel in relation to the kingdom*.

This is a truth drawn from the Old Testament, the gospel accounts, and the Book of Acts *which, from a Biblical standpoint, cannot be denied*.

And that's where we are today — living during a time in which Israel has been set aside awaiting “the fulness of the Gentiles” being brought to pass (Rom. 11:25). We're living during a time when signs, wonders, and miracles *can have no part within the framework of God's plans and purposes*.

And this can be easily understood, for any present manifestation of supernatural powers of this nature would portend God dealing with *Israel* in relation to the nation's spiritual condition and *the theocracy* during the present time; and this is *something which God is not doing*.

Thus, such a manifestation of supernatural powers during the present time, from a Scriptural standpoint, can only be *completely out of place*.

But a time is coming when signs, wonders, and miracles *will once again be in evidence*.

The next and final manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles during Man's Day will occur through Jewish prophets during the coming Tribulation (true and false prophets [Rev. 11:3-6; 13:11-15]).

At this time God will have resumed His dealings with Israel, completing Daniel's full Seventy-Week prophecy. And, during the completion of these final seven years, two things will once again be in view: *Israel, and the kingdom*.

Thus, in that day, signs, wonders, and miracles can and will once again exist in the camp of Israel.

(For information on a present existence of signs, wonders, and miracles seen in Christendom, particularly in the Charismatic Movement, refer to the author's article, "[Matthew 7:21-23.](#)")

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. 122:6).

Appendix III

MISUSE OF JOHN 20:30, 31

PURPOSE FOR THE EIGHT SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30, 31).

All four gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — present the same message to the same recipients. All four present a record of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Jewish people, with each presenting the matter from a different perspective. Each gospel presents different facets of a complete word picture, with the four gospels together forming the complete picture.

The Gospel of John though can only be considered *unique* among the other three gospels, *particularly in one central respect*. It is the only one of the four gospels which provides *a specifically stated purpose for particular events which the Spirit of God moved John to record several decades after these events occurred*.

The Gospel of John is built around eight signs depicting events which occurred during Christ's earthly ministry to the Jewish people. These signs were *Divinely designed to effect belief among the Jewish people*. And, though many Jews believed, the nation at large remained *in unbelief, climaxing this unbelief by rejecting the proffered kingdom, crucifying their Messiah, and pledging their allegiance to a pagan Gentile king*.

Then several decades later — during the period covered by the Book of Acts, during the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Jewish people (which lasted from 33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.) — the Spirit of God singled out eight signs (from among all the signs which Jesus had performed) and moved John to record them in his gospel. And the purpose for the Spirit moving John

to record these eight particular signs is given near the conclusion of his gospel, in John 20:30, 31.

These eight signs, forming a framework around which John's gospel is built, were recorded for *exactly the same purpose that they were originally performed*:

These signs were originally performed *to effect belief among the Jewish people during the offer of the kingdom of the heavens*, during Christ's earthly ministry, as recorded in the gospel accounts.

They were then recorded in John's gospel *to effect belief among the Jewish people during the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens*, during the ministry of the apostles, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

This is the reason why, in the Book of Acts — in line with Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10 — the apostles and others always, without exception, went "to the Jew first" in every locality where the message was proclaimed. It was only after the message had been proclaimed to the Jews in a particular locality (invariably followed by rejection) that those proclaiming the message were free to go to the Gentiles in that same locality with the same message concerning the kingdom, though "an offer" of the kingdom, not "a re-offer" (which, of necessity, because of the message, could only have been "an offer" of the kingdom to *saved Gentiles*).

This is also the reason why one can know that the Gospel of John — recorded *to effect belief among the Jewish people relative to Christ and the proffered kingdom* — was written at a time *before* the close of the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, sometime before about 62 A.D. (much earlier than many claim). The Jewish people simply *could not* have been singled out in the specific manner seen in John 20:30, 31 — concerning "signs" in relation to *the Messianic King and His Kingdom* — had the gospel been recorded following the time of the re-offer of the kingdom to the Jewish people.

As previously seen, these two verses in John chapter twenty refer back to eight signs, among numerous other signs, performed *for a particular, revealed purpose during the original offer of the kingdom*;

and, as also previously seen, they could only have been singled out and recorded *for exactly the same purpose during the re-offer of the kingdom.*

(For additional information concerning “signs” manifested during and following Christ’s earthly ministry, seen during the period covered by the four gospels and the Book of Acts, refer to Appendix II in this book, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles.”)

“That Ye Might Believe That Jesus Is the Christ, the Son of God”

The key words in the first part of verse thirty-one are “believe,” “Christ,” and “Son.” And the manner in which all three words are used *MUST be understood in the light of the introductory reference to “signs” in the previous verse*, which reflects back on all the signs which Jesus performed (“And many other signs...” [v. 30a]), whether recorded or not recorded in the other three gospels.

Then, remaining within the context, the manner in which all three words are used *can only have to do with the Son’s previous ministry to the Jewish people in relation to His kingship and the proffered kingdom.*

1) “That Ye Might Believe”

Belief among the Jewish people during both the original offer of the kingdom (recorded in the gospel accounts) and the re-offer of the kingdom (recorded in the Book of Acts) had to do with *exactly the same thing*. It had to do with *the One born King, Jesus the Christ, God’s Son*; and it had to do with *the message being proclaimed, the proffered kingdom of the heavens* (Matt. 2:1, 2; 3:1, 2; 4:17).

Belief during the original offer of the kingdom had *nothing* to do with eternal salvation, for Christ came to *a people who were already saved*. They, as their ancestors, going all the way back to Moses (throughout thirty-five generations, covering over fourteen centuries), had sacrificed paschal lambs year after year (though breaks in the offering of sacrifices would have occurred at times during Gentile dominance [during the time of the Judges] or during Gentile captivity [the subsequent Assyrian and Babylonian

captivities]). And, as during Moses' day (as also before or after that time) there was *death and shed blood, that which God has required for man's salvation since Adam sinned in Eden.*

And, when Christ came to Israel four millenniums following man's creation and subsequent fall, God could only have looked upon the matter in exactly the same manner as He had previously looked upon it during Adam's day, or later during Moses' day. The statement from Ex. 12:13, "...when I see the blood, I will pass over you...", *must remain true throughout all time.*

The regenerate state of the Jewish people at Christ's first coming allowed that seen in the gospel accounts to occur — an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Jewish people. Otherwise, there could not have been an offer. The kingdom COULD NOT THEN and it CANNOT TODAY be offered to unregenerate individuals. A person MUST first possess spiritual life before spiritual values of this nature can enter into the picture.

And, as well, this is *THE ONLY REASON* that there could have been a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, which, of necessity, had to be limited to about thirty years.

The same saved generation of Jews living before Calvary remained on the scene following Calvary. But when this generation began to pass off the scene via death some three decades later (replaced by Jews refusing to avail themselves of the blood of the Paschal Lamb slain in 33 A.D., which fulfilled the O.T. type introduced in Exodus chapter twelve, rendering any future slaying of paschal lambs on the Passover by the Jewish people non-efficacious), the re-offer of the kingdom, of necessity, could no longer continue.

A saved generation of Jews, to whom an offer of the kingdom could be extended, *no longer existed beyond about 62 A.D. when the re-offer of the kingdom, of necessity, came to a close.*

Thus, contextually in John 20:31, *belief involves the Jewish Messiah in relation to the kingdom, not eternal life. And this is evident from not only that which precedes (signs) but that which the verse goes on to state ("that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God").*

2) "That Jesus Is the Christ"

The name "Jesus" means *salvation* (Matt. 1:21). The Greek word

translated “Jesus,” *Iesous*, is the equivalent of the Hebrew words *Yeshuah* (meaning “salvation”) or *Jehoshua* (“Joshua,” a cognate form of *Yeshuah*, meaning exactly the same — “salvation”).

The word *Yeshuah* is used about eighty times in the Old Testament, it is always used in the sense of “deliverance,” and it is usually translated “salvation” (e.g., Gen. 49:18; II Chron. 20:17; Isa. 12:2).

Then the name “Joshua,” appearing numerous times in the Old Testament, appears in the New Testament twice, in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8. “Joshua” in the Greek text, as previously noted, is *Iesous*, distinguished from the name “Jesus” only through the context. And a failure to take the context into consideration apparently caused the KJV translators to erroneously translate the word as “Jesus” in both Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8.

“Deliverance” or “salvation” in Scripture though (both Old and New Testaments), as the use of the name *Iesous* in the New Testament (meaning “salvation”), must be viewed contextually to determine what type *deliverance* or *salvation* is in view.

In the preceding respect, most of the references to “salvation” in the New Testament actually relate either directly or indirectly to *the Messianic Era*, not to eternal life. And the thought of *salvation* (“life”) through the use of the name “Jesus” in John 20:31, both textually and contextually, is used in exactly this same sense.

3) “The Son of God”

“Sonship” in Scripture implies *rulership*, for sonship is centrally *for regal purposes* in the governmental structure of God’s kingdom.

“Sons of God” (angels) presently rule throughout God’s kingdom, whether on this earth, other provinces throughout the galaxy, or provinces throughout all the galaxies forming the universal kingdom of God. All angels, whether fallen (as Satan and his angels) or unfallen (all the other angels) are *sons of God*, else angels (fallen or unfallen) could not rule.

Angels are *sons* because of *creation*. Unlike that which occurs in the human realm, there is no procreation in the angelic world. Each angel is a special, individual creation, providing the status of *sonship* (which has to do with “creation,” not *salvation*).

Adam, because of *creation*, was a *son of God* both before and following the fall (Luke 3:38), which was completely in line with the reason for his creation, given in the opening chapter of Genesis:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion... [Heb., *radah*, ‘rule’; *i.e.*, ‘...and let them rule...’]” (Gen. 1:26a; *cf.* vv. 27, 28).

Then, when the Redeemer appeared, He appeared as *God’s Son* (via “birth,” not *creation*), *the second Man*, *the last Adam* (Matt. 2:15; 3:17; I Cor. 15:45-47). He, like the first Adam, was tested. But, rather than being overcome by Satan, He overcame Satan, showing that He was fully qualified to take the sceptre (Matt. 4:1-11).

Thus, through the second Man, the last Adam, the purpose for man’s creation and redemption (following his fall) will ultimately be realized.

“And That Believing Ye Might Have Life through His Name”

The key words in the second part of verse thirty-one are “believing” and “life.” And, as in the first part of the verse, both words *must* be understood in the light of the introductory reference to “signs” in the previous verse, which reflects back not only on the previous eight signs in John’s gospel but upon all the signs which Jesus had performed, whether recorded or not recorded in the other three gospels.

Then also, as in the first part of the verse, remaining within context, both words *can only have to do with the Son’s previous ministry to the Jewish people in relation to His kingship and the proffered kingdom*.

The key words throughout Scripture are “believe” and “faith”; and both, in reality, are the same word. One is a verb (Gk., *pisteuo*; “believe”), and the other is a noun (Gk., *pistis*; “faith”).

And faith (or belief) is connected with the whole of man’s salvation, whether that of the spirit, the soul, or the body (*cf.* John 3:16; Rom. 1:17; 8:13-23; Eph. 2:8, 9; Heb. 10:35-39; I Peter 1:3-9).

The reference to *believing* in the latter part of John 20:31 has to do with “life” which the Jewish people could have realized dur-

ing either the offer or the re-offer of the kingdom. Thus, *believing*, with a view to “life” in this verse, has to do with *the saved and that which lay ahead for those among the saved who exercised faith*.

This verse has *NOTHING* to do with the unsaved, in that past day, or today.

And because *signs (v. 30) and the offer or re-offer of the kingdom* are in view, using this verse relative to the gospel of grace and the unsaved today completely removes the verse from its contextual setting, doing away with the subject and teaching at hand (much like trying to use II Chron. 7:14 relative to the Church today).

As well, attempting to use this verse in the preceding manner *can only corrupt the simple gospel of grace, for signs and a message to the Jewish people relative to the kingdom have NOTHING to do with the gospel of grace*.

Then one final problem exists through misusing John 20:31 in the preceding manner. John’s gospel is often said to be the one gospel among the four written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved. Such though places *A COMPLETELY WRONG PERSPECTIVE on the overall message of this gospel*, essentially removing John’s gospel from its correct contextual setting among the other three.

(For material on the simplicity of the gospel of grace [past aspect of the salvation message] or material on the overall gospel message [past, present, and future aspects of the salvation message], one *should begin at Moses, not John or anywhere else in the New Testament*. And, as well, that would be true when dealing with any Biblical doctrine.

Everything has been set forth in its pristine, unchangeable form in Moses [Genesis-Deuteronomy]. Then, all else which follows Moses [Joshua-Revelation] is commentary.

Or, viewing different parts of the preceding, the whole of the matter is initially set forth in the opening thirty-four verses of Moses, with commentary following. Then, moving beyond this, filling in details at stages... The whole of the matter is again set forth in the opening eleven chapters of Moses, with commentary following; the whole of the matter is again set forth in the opening first book of Moses, with commentary following; the whole of the matter is again set forth in the five books of Moses, with commentary following; the whole of the matter is again set forth in the whole of the Old Testament, with commentary following [the New Testament].

In this respect, *there is NOTHING in the New Testament that is not seen after some fashion in the Old Testament. And that thought can be carried back through each of the sections that have been mentioned in the preceding paragraph — NOTHING in the latter that is not set forth in the former.* This is simply one of the ways that God has structured His Word, and *this Word MUST be studied and dealt with accordingly, always comparing Scripture with Scripture.*

Thus, John's gospel is not really the proper place to begin when dealing with salvation by grace or any other facet of the gospel message. Beginning with John, a person is starting in the middle of the Book.

[There would be a sense in which John's gospel could be a correct beginning place, as Genesis. But that's *only if this gospel is understood in a correct respect, which can be seen and understood ONLY through drawing from Genesis.* John's gospel, paralleling Genesis, *should begin the New Testament, not Matthew.* John is the Genesis of the New Testament, as Genesis is the John of the Old Testament.

For information on John's gospel opening the New Testament instead of Matthew's gospel, refer to the author's article, "Genesis and John".

The opening five verses of Genesis [for salvation by grace] or the opening thirty-four verses [for the complete gospel message] is where this message first begins to be revealed and developed in Scripture.

Should a person dealing with the salvation message — either in part or the whole — begin elsewhere?

After all, *God began in Genesis and structured matters after a particular fashion for a reason, which could only say, in no uncertain terms, that an individual needs the background in Genesis to properly deal with material following Genesis [e.g., with John].* As well, this will provide the evident reason why so many in Christian circles today deal improperly with John.

And, as should be evident from the preceding several paragraphs, or the preceding part of this article as a whole, John's gospel, because of its overall message, *CANNOT* be the place to begin. This gospel deals *far more with present and future aspects of salvation than with the past aspect [salvation by grace],* necessitating an understanding, from previous revelation, particularly from Genesis, concerning the overall gospel message.

Then there is the matter of John's gospel being very Jewish in nature, dealing with "signs" and the Jews of another time relative to a proffered kingdom [dealt with in the preceding part of this article].

Seeing John's gospel in its complete, overall setting among the other three gospels and occupying its proper place in Scripture as a whole is something which goes almost complete unrecognized by Christians today. And, as previously alluded to, this can only account, in no small part, for the present wide misuse of this gospel, which often results in a corruption of the simple message of the gospel of grace on the one hand [e.g., seeing "signs" connected with this message] and a doing away with the correct message set forth in John's gospel on the other hand.)

The End, the Means

Question: Is it ever right to do wrong to do or be right? Or, another way of asking the same question, Does the end ever justify the means?

The preceding is what all individuals misusing John 20:30, 31 should ask themselves.

Is it all right to misuse these two verses (lift them from their context, make the verses say or teach something other than what they actually do say and teach [which is what is being done]) to arrive at what would be considered a *positive "end"*? And if actions of this nature, to reach a *positive "end,"* are all right, then maybe it is all right to do wrong to do right. Maybe the end does justify the means. At least many, by their actions, appear to think so.

But, if it is not right to do this, then the entire approach to this matter regarding John 20:30, 31 needs to be re-examined.

A proclamation of salvation by grace, to follow Biblical guidelines, *MUST* be presented as *the beginning point* (a passing from death unto life), for *A PURPOSE*, which will ultimately be realized in *the future Messianic Kingdom*, with all things involved therein (inheritance, rulership, etc).

When salvation by grace is dealt with outside its Biblical context, apart from present and future aspects of salvation, for a purpose, the message simply cannot be dealt with in its pristine clarity. Scripture *NEVER* presents salvation by grace as standing *alone* in this respect, apart from a reason/purpose for being saved (which, from a Scriptural standpoint, is *NEVER* seen as having an ultimate outcome of going to

Heaven instead of Hell, etc.). Doing something of this nature is left for man to foul up. And “foul up” in this realm seems to be what he often does best today.

If an individual wants to begin aright, which could only be *beginning where God began, laying a proper foundation*, he *MUST* begin in the opening two chapters of Genesis, beginning the Old Testament; or *the same thing* can be seen by beginning in the opening two chapters of John, but *ONLY* when seeing John *beginning the New Testament, as the Genesis of the New Testament, occupying its proper place among the four gospels*.

Now, with the preceding as *foundational*, note the thought of “belief” in John 20:31.

Those in view in this verse (“ye,” a *plural* pronoun) — “that ye might believe” — can only refer back to *unbelieving Israel, the signs, and the proffered kingdom (first the offer, then the re-offer)*. And the “life” being offered has to do with *life in the kingdom, not with eternal life*.

The two verses together (vv. 30, 31) are dealing with a people already beyond that foreshadowed by events on day one in Genesis chapter one. They are dealing with a people in that foreshadowed by events on days two through six (vv. 6-28), with a view *to the seventh day, foreshadowing the Messianic Kingdom (2:1-3)*.

And if that seen in Genesis is referenced in the Gospel of John, the same thing is seen in the opening two chapters, ending at exactly the same place, *in the Messianic Kingdom, to be realized during the same seventh day (1:1-2:11)*.

Genesis has to do with God’s pattern showing the restoration of a ruined creation, foreshadowing the restoration of ruined man. John has to do centrally with the restoration of ruined man, as foreshadowed in Genesis (*cf.* John 1:29, 35, 36).

Man’s creation in Genesis is seen having to do with *regality*, which is seen in connection with *the seventh day*. And this restoration in John is seen not only in connection with *regality on the seventh day* but having to do centrally with *Israel*, along with the fact that *salvation is of the Jews*, as seen in the same gospel (John 4:22).

As previously seen, the salvation message throughout John’s gospel is *inseparably connected with the eight signs, having to do*

with Israel. But, though this is the case, that's not to say that the salvation message would be any different for unsaved man today, for it wouldn't be, though "signs" have *nothing* to do with the gospel of grace.

"Jesus" is the *Saviour*, regardless of whether it was deliverance for Israel in the past relative to one thing (life in the kingdom for individuals already possessing eternal life, with the signs pointing to this life in the kingdom) or for unsaved man today (eternal salvation, completely apart from signs, with the kingdom ultimately in view). *Believing in Jesus Who can save is the issue for both*, though for different reasons, but with *the same ultimate end result* (life in the kingdom).

Thus, many salvation verses in John's gospel can be used either way, for the same thing said to the Jews regarding salvation can only be the same as that said to unsaved man today (though the salvation/deliverance from "what" is different in each case, it's still *believe in the Saviour*).

Note, for example, in this same respect, verses such as Acts 4:12 or I John 5:11-13. These verses, contextually, have nothing to do with the unsaved. The verse in Acts has to do with belief regarding Israel during the re-offer of the kingdom (4:10-14); and the verses in I John have to do with Christians, exercising faith, being brought forth from above rather than from below (5:1-4, 18).

But these verses carry the same message that would be used when dealing with the unsaved, for the same Saviour is being referenced, though certain things regarding salvation (Israel 2,000 years ago, Christians today, unsaved man today) would not be the same at all. And this same thing can be seen numerous other places in Scripture.

So, in light of the preceding, What's wrong with numerous groups and individuals treating John 20:30, 31 after the fashion seen in this article (as a reference to signs performed to show the unsaved, whether Jew or Gentile, how to be saved)?

Note what John 20:31 actually states, reflecting back on *Israel and the signs* (which can only have to do with *Israel in relation to the proffered kingdom*) — "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The word "Christ" (Gk.) or "Messiah" (Heb.) is associated with *Israel*, and, contextually, has reference to *the One*

Who will rule and reign. And, as previously seen, this has to do with *salvation/deliverance for Israel in relation to the kingdom*. Then, in connection with this, “sonship” (“God’s Son”) implies *rulership*.

Wording for the unsaved today would be more along the lines, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the One Who can and will save,” with eternal salvation in view, not with the King and His kingdom in immediate view, as with Israel.

But John 20:30, 31 has been removed from its context, with little attention paid to the exact wording of the two verses as well. The “ye” in v. 31, inseparably connected with the Jewish people and the reference to signs in v. 30, is said to be a reference to the unsaved, with the signs having been performed to depict a salvation message for them (with those advocating this referring to the Gospel of John as the one book in Scripture that has been written to the unsaved, telling them how to be saved). And this has been done by continuing with wording that should not even be in view when dealing with the unsaved today (this wording could actually confuse them) — “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

If an individual wants to use different verses from John’s gospel when dealing with the unsaved, there is nothing wrong with that. But when an individual comes up with a misleading schematic to get to these verses, that is a completely different story.

Doing this reflects negatively on numerous things about John’s gospel as a whole. Such may result in seeing individuals saved, but with a message of this nature about John’s gospel, these same individuals may become so confused about why they have been saved, where to go from here, etc., that they may never get straightened out.

Misusing John 20:30, 31 in the manner seen may produce a lot of positive results in the short term, with many thinking that such results are wonderful. But, because of *how* this is being done — ignoring the exact wording of these two verses and the corresponding central message of John’s gospel, doing it other than God’s way (the only way that it could possibly be done through the means used) — in the long term, there, as well, can only be a lot of shipwreck strewn along the path that these same individuals have traveled.

Appendix IV

REWARDS AND/OR LOSS

For 1,000 Years, or for Eternity?

Proffered “rewards,” “crowns” (or, on the other hand, “loss”), have to do with *the exercise of governmental power and authority in Christ’s coming kingdom* (cf. Matt. 25:14-20; Luke 19:11-27; Rev. 2:26, 27).

But *how long* will this exercise of power and authority last? Will it be restricted to “time,” the millennial age? Or, are “the eternal ages” beyond the Millennium also in view?

On the one hand, *Scripture teaches that the exercise of governmental power and authority by Christ and His co-heirs WILL NOT end when the 1,000-year millennial day has run its course.* Rather, the exercise of such power and authority will extend into and last throughout the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.

BUT, on the other hand, *Scripture DOES NOT teach that this exercise of power and authority will continue unchanged into these eternal ages.* To the contrary, Scripture teaches just the opposite. The rule by Christ and His co-heirs during the ages beyond the Millennium *will be quite different* than their rule during the Millennium.

In this respect, among other respects, *a sharp distinction MUST be made between the millennial age and the subsequent ages, comprising eternity.*

The millennial age, as some suggest, is *NOT the first of the eternal ages.* Rather, the millennial age comprises *the last 1,000 years of a septenary arrangement of millenniums*, introduced and dealt with in the opening thirty-four verses of Genesis, establishing an unchangeable pattern, at the outset, concerning *events occurring during time, dealt with in all subsequent Scripture.*

But, again, are rewards, crowns, or loss Millennial alone? Or, do they also include the ages beyond, comprising eternity?

And, with the preceding in mind, note a number of different things about the matter at hand — “time” associated with rewards, crowns, or loss.

First, there is the matter of Christ's throne. His throne is *eternal*, but not as a separate entity from the Father's throne. Conditions of this nature are *millennial ONLY* (Heb. 1:8; Rev. 3:21; 22:3). Christ, with His co-heirs, will reign from His Own throne *UNTIL* He has "put down all rule and all authority and power."

Then, when "all things" have been subjected unto Christ, the kingdom will be delivered up "to God, even the Father," in order that "God may be all in all [*lit.*, 'all things in all of these things']" (I Cor. 15:24-28). This will occur at the end of the Millennium, and Christ will then assume a position on a central throne with His Father called, "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1, 3).

Second, there is the matter of the location of Christ's throne.

During the Millennium, Christ's throne will be in the new Jerusalem positioned in the heavens above the present earth (from whence a rule from the heavens over the earth will ensue).

During the eternal ages, "the throne of God and of the Lamb" will, likewise, be in the new Jerusalem; but the location of the new Jerusalem will be quite different. The present heavens and earth will be destroyed at the end of the Millennium, and a new heavens and a new earth will be brought into existence.

The new Jerusalem will rest upon the new earth (evidently a much larger earth to accommodate a city this size [about 1,500 miles in length, breadth, and height]), and God Himself will reside therein, seated on a throne, with His Son alongside.

A rule from the heavens over the earth (millennial) will be a thing of the past, and "the throne of God and of the Lamb" will become the central point in the heavens of an eternal rule extending throughout the universe (*cf.* II Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1ff).

Third, there is the matter of the manner in which Christ will rule.

During the Millennium, Christ and His co-heirs will rule the nations with "a rod of iron"; but a rule after this fashion would be *out of place* during the eternal ages.

During the Millennium, *absolute force* will be used to bring and keep the nations under subjection; but such will be unnecessary during the eternal ages.

Conditions on the new earth will be *quite different* than millen-

nial conditions on the present earth. There will be no more sin, death, etc. (Rev. 21:3, 4); and this will allow for numerous changes in the manner of the administration of governmental affairs.

Satan will be bound in the abyss during the Millennium, but at the conclusion of the Millennium he will be loosed for “a little season [‘a short time’].” The rebellion evident among nations during the Millennium, necessitating the rule with “a rod of iron,” will then be brought to a head. The rebel nations will ally with Satan and under his banner march against Christ and His co-heirs in one final, vain, climactic thrust. But, the entire matter will be speedily brought to an end through *fire* “from God out of heaven” (cf. Ezek. 28:18b, 19).

Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire, the judgment of the unsaved dead from throughout Man’s Day will occur, and the time for major changes will be at hand.

At this time, the kingdom will be delivered up to the Father, the present heavens and earth will pass out of existence, the new heavens and the new earth will come into existence, the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven to rest upon the new earth, and the throne of God and the throne of Christ will become *one throne*.

The nations will then dwell upon the new earth, with God Himself dwelling in their midst. And, as previously stated, universal rule will issue forth from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” on the new earth.

(God presently rules from a place in the heavens over the entire universe. Then, provinces throughout His universe are governed by appointed rulers [angels] who evidently exercise their delegated power and authority from places in the heavens in relation to the provinces being ruled [e.g., Satan and his angels presently rule from a place in the heavens in relation to the earth, one province in God’s kingdom (cf. Dan. 10:13-20; Eph. 2:2; 6:11, 20), and this structured rule would evidently be the same relative to provinces ruled by angels elsewhere in the universe [*i.e.*, ruled from places in the heavens in relation to the different provinces].

It is in this manner that “the heavens do rule” [beginning with God, the supreme Ruler over all].

[Refer back to the introduction of this book for more information on this subject].

During the Messianic Era, Christ and His co-heirs will exercise delegated power and authority *over the earth* from the same sphere in which Satan and His angels presently rule [cf. Job 16:15; Rev. 12:7-12].

Then, during the eternal ages, the new earth will be the place in the heavens from whence *universal rule* will emanate [in the heavens in relation to the entire universe, as God's present dwelling place is in the heavens in relation to the entire universe].)

Crowns, Rewards — Millennial, or Eternal?

Promises to Christians concerning crowns, rewards, etc. are to be realized during *the millennial age ALONE, NOT also during the eternal ages*. And that is a simple matter to show from Scripture.

As noted in previous comments concerning differences in Christ's reign during the Millennium and during the ages beyond, many conditions surrounding proffered positions with Christ will not exist during the eternal ages.

Then, in line with the preceding, Scripture plainly states, in a direct manner, that crowns, rewards, or loss have to do with *the millennial age ALONE, NOT with the eternal ages*.

Then, beyond that, there is the matter of the different things of this nature being dealt with *within the confines of the way Scripture is structured, within the confines of events occurring during time seen in the septenary structure of Scripture*.

1) Conditions Surrounding Proffered Positions

On *conditions* surrounding proffered positions in the kingdom, note the overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three. That these promises, referencing rewards and/or loss, are *MILLENNIAL ONLY* in nature is made plain by several of the promises.

In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Smyrna, it is evident that "death" will exist during the Millennium (Rev. 2:11; cf. Rom. 8:13); but this will *NOT* be the case beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages (Rev. 21:4).

In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Thyatira, ruling with "a rod of iron" is in view (2:26-28). And a scene of this nature

CANNOT exist either during the present dispensation or during the eternal ages. A rule of this nature, by Christ and His co-heirs, *can exist ONLY during the Millennium, NOT before, NOT after.*

Then, in the overcomer's promise to the Church in Laodicea, Christ's throne, "my throne," is in view. *Christ is NOT seated on His Own throne today; nor will this throne exist separate from the Father's throne beyond the Millennium (cf. Heb. 1:13; Rev. 3:21; 22:1, 3).*

Again, the scene can ONLY be Millennial, NOT before, NOT after.

And, continuing with the other four overcomer's promises would be unnecessary, for *ALL of the overcomer's promises have to do with different facets of the same thing pertaining to the same time.*

Thus, it is plain that the things seen in the overcomer's promises in these two chapters *can be realized during the Millennial Era ALONE.* They can have *NOTHING* to do with time and events preceding the Millennium, nor can they have *ANYTHING* to do with time and events during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.

2) *The Plain Statements of Scripture*

Scripture plainly states, in a direct manner, that rewards or loss will be *MILLENNIAL ONLY*, something which can be seen in several passages.

In this respect, note the parable of the fig tree in Matt. 21:19, 20.

Christ, enroute to Jerusalem a few days before His crucifixion, coming to a fig tree, seeking fruit, found none. And he cursed the fig tree, saying, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever [*lit.*, 'henceforward with respect to the age']."

The Greek expression used here, translated "with respect to the age," is *eis ton aiona* (refer to Appendix I in this book, where *aion* and this expression are dealt with; also, see pp. 12, 13 in Chapter I of this book).

Christ was using "the fig tree" to represent *fruitless Israel in relation to the message being proclaimed* — the proffered kingdom of the heavens.

The word for "age" (*aiona*) in the expression *eis ton aiona* is singular, referring to *ONE AGE, the Messianic Era.* And Israel, through Christ cursing the fig tree, was being cursed for *ONE AGE relative to bearing fruit for the kingdom of the heavens.*

That being offered to and rejected by Israel had to do with *exercising rulership from the heavenly part of the kingdom, lasting for ONE AGE, not many ages.*

Later in the chapter (v. 43), this kingdom was taken from Israel, to be offered to a “nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, which can easily be identified in Scripture as *the one new man* “in Christ,” comprised of *new creations* “in Christ,” Christians (ref. the introduction to and Chs. VI, VII in this book).

And the length of time that this kingdom will last — ruled by Christ and His co-heirs — is seen in the cursing of the fig tree. *ONE AGE is in view, with rewards or loss having to do with this kingdom and lasting the same length of time that this kingdom would last — for ONE AGE, the Messianic Era.*

Then, the same thing is seen from another vantage point where the expression *eis ton aiona* is used in John 4:14; 6:52, 58; 10:26, or the adjective *aionios* (‘age-lasting’) is used in John 6:40, 47, 54, 68 (again, refer to Appendix I in this book).

Or, note the reference to *two ages* in Matt. 12:31, 32 (*aion* [“age”] has been mistranslated, “world” [KJV]). These two ages are clearly *the present age* (Man’s 6,000-year Day) and *the coming age* (the 1,000-year Messianic Era). The reference can be to none other.

ONE FUTURE AGE, not many future ages, is being referenced in *ALL* of these verses. And the reference in *ALL* of the verses is clearly to *the age out ahead, the Messianic Era.*

Scripture simply CANNOT be extended beyond the time clearly stated and/or being dealt with.

3) *But, a Continuing Reign*

The preceding, however, does not at all teach that the reign of Christ and Christians will end at the conclusion of the Millennium. This only shows that *their reign during the eternal ages will be OUTSIDE the scope of the overcomer’s promises and QUITE DIFFERENT than their reign during the preceding Millennium.*

God’s revelation to man concerns itself with “time” — *seven thousand years of time* — from the creation of Adam to the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Very little is revealed about that which occurred before the creation of Adam, and very little is revealed

about that which will occur beyond the Millennium. Scripture does reveal though that the reign of Christ and Christians will continue, and the length of this continuing reign is specifically stated to be “forever and ever [Gk., *eis tous aionas ton aionon*, ‘with respect to the ages of the ages,’ i.e., ‘throughout the endless ages’]” (Rev. 11:15; 22:3-5).

The activity of Christ and Christians in this continuing reign is not revealed in so many words, but Scripture does present enough information that several observations can be made.

4) *Extent of Christ's Rule*

The rule of Christ itself during the eternal ages will no longer be limited to the earth. Rather, this rule will extend beyond the earth (the new earth), out into the universe.

Christ will be seated upon a throne from which administrative power and authority will extend throughout the universe (“the throne of God and of the Lamb” [Rev. 22:3]). The center of the universe in that day will evidently be the new earth, upon which God, His Son, and redeemed mankind will dwell.

And the Christians’ continuing rule “with Christ” (Rev. 22:5) would have to be of a like nature, for the power will no longer emanate from *Christ's throne*, but from *the throne of God and of the Lamb*. In this respect, the rule by Christ and His co-heirs *over the earth* during the Millennium can only be extended to a rule *over worlds throughout the universe* following the Millennium, with completely different existing conditions and circumstances.

5) *Millennial and Eternal Blessings*

To what extent though, if any, will rewards realized by overcoming Christians during the Millennium carry over into the eternal ages beyond? The question is really unanswerable.

The wiping away of all tears at the conclusion of the Millennium and the fact that the overcomer’s promises are *MILLENNIAL ONLY in nature would clearly indicate that distinctions which existed during the millennial age between overcoming and nonovercoming Christians will not exist during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium*. But, to take matters beyond this point and say that *no rewards exercised*

by overcoming Christians during the millennial age will extend over into the eternal ages beyond the Millennium, or have any bearing on the place which they will occupy beyond the Millennium, would be carrying matters beyond Scriptural grounds. Scripture simply does not deal with the matter.

All Things New

The Millennium will not, as many envision, be a time of perfection. Such a state awaits the first of many ages beyond the Millennium. *The restoration of all things* will occur before the Millennium, at the end of 6,000 years of time; but *the making of all things new* awaits the completion of the Millennium, at the end of 7,000 years of time (*cf.* Acts 3:21; Rev. 21:5). Only then will a *perfect order* in all of God's creation exist.

As the present age (Man's Day) has a purpose, so will the millennial age (the Lord's Day); and the ultimate goal of *all* will be realized in the ages beyond (in the Day of God).

The rulers for the millennial age are being acquired during the present age; and during the millennial age these rulers will, as co-heirs with Christ, participate in the age-long work of bringing all things under subjection to Christ. Such a work, brought to pass through a rule with "a rod of iron," anticipates the ages beyond the Millennium, in which a rule with "a rod of iron" will no longer be necessary; and the reason for man's creation will then be realized in its fullest sense.

Very little information is given relative to man and regality beyond the Millennium, but enough is given that matters can be pieced together. And this is seen mainly in properly understanding the purpose for the tree of life and what is stated in Rev. 22:1-5.

(Man today talks about one day going to heaven and spending eternity with God in heaven. In a respect that is true, *but not at all in the same way and sense that man, far more often than not, envisions matters.*

Man's ultimate destiny is to exercise regality out in the heavens, out among the billions of planets in the estimated billions of galaxies, with the power emanating from "the throne of God and of the Lamb" on the new earth.)

The Tree of Life

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:1-5).

“The tree of life” is mentioned nine times in Scripture, in three different books — three times in Genesis (2:9; 3:22, 24), four times in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), and twice in the Book of Revelation (2:7; 22:2).

But what was *the original purpose* for the tree of life (seen in Genesis), which will be realized yet future (seen in the Book of Revelation)?

The tree of life was one of the numerous trees in the garden in Eden. And Adam, with Eve, was commanded to eat of all these trees, with the exception of one — “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9, 16, 17).

Adam, the first man, had been created for the specific purpose of assuming *the rulership over the earth*, and the fruit of the tree of life was singled out as *a specific provision* for man as he exercised this rule.

1) An Evident Connection

An evident connection between man’s rule and his partaking of the tree of life can be seen by noting *the appearance of this tree* in the beginning when man was in a position to rule, *the absence of this tree* during the entire period when man is not in a position to rule (aside from the tree being referenced in Proverbs), and *the reappearance of this tree* in the Book of Revelation when man is

brought back into a position to rule (*cf.* Gen. 1:26-28; Rev. 2:26,27).

The period during which man has been barred from eating of the tree of life *began* following Adam's fall, resulting in his disqualification to rule; and this period will *end* following the issues of the judgment seat, at which time man will once again find himself in a position to rule.

Adam, following the fall, was driven from the garden to prevent his partaking of the tree of life. Adam could not be permitted to eat of this tree in a fallen condition, for had such occurred, Adam, in a fallen state, would have realized that which fruit from this tree was meant to provide.

Thus, not only did God remove Adam from the garden, but "Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way," were placed at "the east of the garden...to keep the way of the tree of life [to prevent fallen man from re-entering the garden and partaking of this tree]" (Gen. 3:22-24).

Studying Gen. 3:22-24 apart from the context and related Scripture could lead one to believe that the purpose for the tree of life in the beginning, in Genesis, was to provide perpetuity of life for Adam in his unfallen state. However, such could not have been the case at all. "Death" *did not* enter into the picture until *after* Adam's sin (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6ff; *cf.* Rom. 6:23), at which time he was barred from the tree of life.

Adam had lived in an *undying state* prior to his sin, as he continued to live in an antithetical *dying state* following his sin; and to say that the tree of life was given to Adam in his unfallen state to provide perpetuity of life, preventing death, cannot possibly be correct.

Nor could it possibly be correct to say that the tree of life would have had anything to do with providing *physical life* (*keeping Adam alive physically*) following the fall. A tree can produce *only* "after his kind" (Gen. 1:11, 12). In this respect, *fruit* from the tree of life simply *could not have produced one result before man's fall and another following man's fall*.

In Rev. 2:7, partaking of the tree of life has been promised to the overcomers from among those *already possessing eternal life*. Consequently, in this passage, the tree of life can have nothing

whatsoever to do with perpetuity of life; and it is the same in the Genesis account when man was first brought upon the scene to rule and to reign.

The tree of life in both Genesis chapters two and three and Revelation chapter two appears in a different setting entirely. The tree of life reserved for Christians in Rev. 2:7 is associated peculiarly with a provision *for those who will rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ*; and viewing Adam's position in the Genesis account — created *to rule and reign*, in possession of an unending life, with the fruit of the tree of life at his disposal — the same thought concerning *regality in connection with the tree of life* would hold true.

Thus, Adam in a fallen state, *no longer in a position to rule*, *COULD NOT* be allowed to eat of the tree of life, for fruit from this tree would provide "life" in relation to *regality*.

This whole overall thought concerning the tree of life in Scripture *would have to hold true*, for that seen relative to this tree *in Revelation chapter two* is drawn from that which was *first* seen relative to this tree *in Genesis chapters two and three*. The fruit of the tree of life *was in the past* (seen in the Book of Genesis) and *will be in the future* (seen in the Book of Revelation) *a provision for the rulers in the kingdom*.

This is an evident fact which must be recognized (ref. indented data in parenthesis at the end of the next page).

2) Millennial and Eternal Conditions

In that coming day following the Millennium, the tree of life will be for "the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2). The Greek word translated "healing" is *therapeia*, from which the English word "therapy" is derived. This is a medical term which has to do with *restorative healing*. In that day, God will *restore all of saved mankind to the original place which man occupied at the time of his creation*. And, consequently, *the whole of saved mankind, with regality in view, will have access to the tree of life*.

During the preceding Messianic Era, the tree of life will have been made available to overcoming Christians (Rev. 2:7), those ruling and reigning as co-heirs with Christ. And this tree will probably be made available to certain others at this time as well,

others occupying regal positions with Christ in His reign from the heavens over the earth (*e.g.*, certain Old Testament saints, Tribulation martyrs [Matt. 8:11, 12; Rev. 20:4-6]).

But following the Messianic Era, in the eternal ages, this tree is seen being made available to the nations of the earth, something which would have been completely out of place during the Millennium. And this will be an apparent end result of Israel's evangelistic endeavors during the Millennium, along with Christ's rule with a rod of iron during this time.

Man was created in the beginning to *rule and to reign* (Gen. 1:26-28). And though only a part of saved mankind will have been brought back into a position to occupy the throne at the beginning of the Millennium (with the tree of life made available to them at this time), at the end of the Millennium the whole of saved mankind will be brought back into this position (with the tree of life made available to them at this time).

(For additional information on *the tree of life* in the preceding respect, refer to the appendix in the author's book, [*The Bride in Genesis*](#). Material in this appendix shows how the tree of life would have provided in the past [preceding man's fall] and will provide yet future [following God's redemptive work lasting six days, 6,000 years] the necessary *wisdom and knowledge* for man to rule and reign.)

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