

Present Truth

The *Bible alone* as the only rule of faith and practice; *faith alone* as the only means of acceptance with God; and *Christ alone* as the only mediator between God and men.

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Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity in this generation. It is especially committed to upholding the truth of justification by faith in this time when it is being threatened by humanism, emotionalism, and ecumenism. Our publication is based on the principle of *sola Scriptura*—the Bible and the Bible only as a rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:15-17). We desire to give the gospel trumpet a certain sound (1 Cor. 14:7-9), that through words easy to be understood (Hab. 2:2) people may “be established in the present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12) and like Noah be proclaimers of the righteousness of Christ (2 Pet. 2:5).

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The Last Days and the Gospel

Today thousands believe they understand and can explain the end of the world. Religious leaders promote a wide variety of prophetic interpretations. How are we going to know what to believe? Every church and sect promotes a book, video, or seminar about the end times. For some the book of Revelation is their only source. Others seem to grab sections of the Old Testament and jump right over the New in their effort to understand the end time.

The study of the last days is called "eschatology". We all come with our own ideas about eschatology. Many of these ideas are deeply rooted and hard to change. In this issue we examine these views in the light of the gospel. What Christ accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection should shape our explanation of prophecy.

Our view of the last days must be tied to the gospel. If we forget all that happened before John wrote Revelation, we will never have a balanced view of the end time. Jumping from Ezekiel to our day without grasping the gospel can only lead to confusion.

This issue of *Present Truth* begins by reprinting the first and last articles from the September 1974 issue. In all our publications we have emphasized the righteousness of Christ and justification by faith. This emphasis is not changing. The life of Christ, the gospel, is the key to prophecy.

Let's let the gospel determine our eschatology.

Fulfilled Promises

God entered into a covenant with Abraham whereby he promised to do certain things for him and for his posterity. He renewed this covenant to Isaac, Jacob, and Israel (Ex. 2:23, 24; 6:1-8; Ps. 105:8-10). He promised them a great inheritance. He promised to make his people great. He promised them wisdom. He promised them victory over their foes. He promised them peace. In short, he promised them all kinds of blessings (Deut. 28:1-13).

Centuries later (about A.D. 50) a little company of Jews were huddled together on the Sabbath day in a strange city. They were still waiting for God to fulfill his promise (or promises) which he had made to their fathers. They were not a great people. They had no victory over their foes, for the iron heel of Rome was heavy upon them. They had no peace. They had no king and no kingdom. They had none of the things that their Scriptures promised God would do for them.

There were a couple of visitors in the synagogue that day, apparently visitors from the home country who might bring them some encouraging news. When invited to speak, Paul stood up and said... (Are you listening? The news he brought to these people must have been the most astounding thing any congregation had ever heard. Listen!):

“...we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus [from the dead]...” Acts 13:32, 33, RSV

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was declared to be the fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham, Israel, and David. Here were these people still waiting for the fulfillment of

what God had promised Israel, and the apostle came and told them the absolutely startling news that it had already been fulfilled.

Did God promise Israel victory over all her foes? The good news was that Jesus had obtained the victory for them. Did God promise he would give them peace... and wisdom? Jesus was their peace (Eph. 2:15) and their wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30). Did God promise to make Israel great? All power in heaven had been given to the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18). Did God promise them land – an inheritance? Christ had been resurrected and on their behalf had become “heir of the world” and “heir of all things.” Rom. 4:13; Heb. 1:2. God, who fulfills his word in surprising ways, had fulfilled what he had promised to the fathers far abundantly above what any Jew had ever asked or thought.

If those Jews are to be considered backward for not realizing this about twenty years after Calvary, what might be said of Christians who are still waiting for God to fulfill his promises to Israel two thousand years later? Yes, Christians who say they meet once a week in honor of the resurrection are denying what God really did when he raised Jesus from the dead – namely, he fulfilled what he had promised to Israel. It took the Holy Spirit's illumination to see it when Paul preached to the gathering at Antioch, and it takes the Holy Spirit's illumination to see it now! The gift of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead was a finished work. In it God fulfilled what he had promised to the fathers. More than that, Christ was Heaven's gift to the Gentiles – to the whole human race. In Christ, God answered every true prayer, every worthy aspiration of every heart, as it is written, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ...” Eph. 1:3.

Fulfillment Only in Christ

The blessings which God had promised to Israel were all given on condition – the condition of obedience:

“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...” Ex. 19:5.

“And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them...” Deut. 28:13 (see also vs 1 & 2).

“Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.” Ps. 106:3 (cf. Isa. 1:19).

At Sinai Israel had pledged obedience, saying, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” Ex. 19:8. Israel could inherit **all** the promised blessings only if she rendered obedience to **all** the commandments of God. But the history of the nation was one sad record of falling short of the mark. At best she fell far short of perfect obedience, and at worst she fell disgracefully short.

At last the mysterious voice was heard in heaven, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” Heb. 10:7. This was the prophesied “Servant of Yahweh,” the One in whom all Israel was represented. He was the Messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1), the Surety of the covenant (Heb. 7:22), the Mediator of the covenant (Heb. 9:15), the One given “for a covenant of the people.” Isa. 42:6. That is to say, he would not only be the One through whom God would fulfill all his promises to Israel, but he would be *the One through whom Israel could fulfill all her promises to God.*

We will say this again: God had entered into a covenant with Israel – he had promised to do certain things for them. On the other hand, the people had entered into covenant contract with God – they promised to do certain things for him. Now we must see that Christ was not only the means of God fulfilling his word to Israel; he was also the means of Israel fulfilling her contract to God.

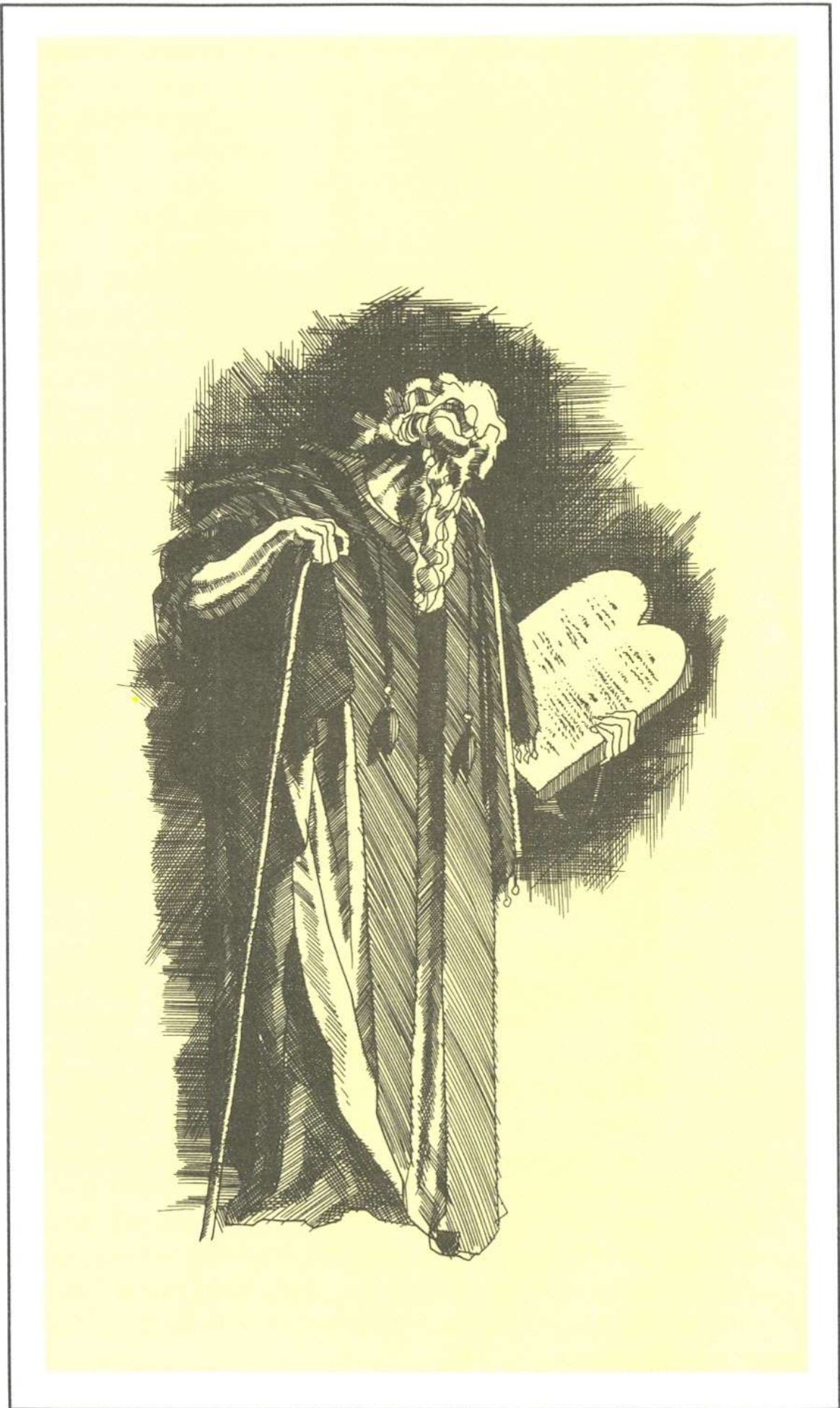
Standing as “a covenant of the people,” Christ fulfilled the promise of the people, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” This obedient, suffering Servant stood before God as Israel. In Israel's name and on Israel's behalf, he would do for Israel that which she was utterly unable to do for herself. “Then said he, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” Heb. 10:9. He did the will of God when it was the delight of his heart, his daily meat and drink. He did the will of God when that will was an exceedingly bitter cup. Though confronted by apparent failure, defeat and, at the end, the darkness

and blackness of eternal night, He plodded on. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2:8. Finally, with the full consciousness that he had drunk the cup of suffering on behalf of his people and had finished his work, he addressed his Father, saying, “It is finished.” He had kept covenant faith. In him Israel had carried out all that the law (the terms of the covenant) demanded. In Christ’s life Israel had kept all the precepts of the law, and in his death Israel had born all the curses of the law (Gal. 3:10-13).

In his life and death, Christ had fulfilled Israel's promises to God. His great work accomplished, he rested in Joseph's tomb, waiting for God to fulfill his side of the covenant. In raising Christ from the dead and giving him power and glory, God fulfilled his covenant promise. To the Jews Paul positively declared “that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” Acts 13:32, 33, RSV. In his great Pentecostal discourse the apostle Peter declared that God raised Christ from the dead and gave to him “the promise of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:33. Just as Jesus gave a life of obedience to God on behalf of his people, so in his resurrection he received the promise of the Holy Spirit on behalf of his people. Peter declared to Israel, “...the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.” Acts 2:39, RSV.

Thus, Christ is the Mediator of the covenant. Through him and in him Israel fulfilled all her promises to God. All this was completed by Christ's death on the cross. Also, through him and in him God fulfilled all his promises to Israel. All this was accomplished in Christ's resurrection from the dead.

God's promise to Abraham not only included Jews of physical descent, for Abraham was plainly told, “...in thy Seed [Christ – Gal. 3:16] shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Gen. 28:14; cf. 12:3. “... Gentiles... being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise... should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel...” Eph. 2:11, 12; 3:6. Thus, Paul declared to the Corinthians, “...all the promises of God find their Yes in him.” 2 Cor. 1:20, RSV. That is to say, when God raised Christ from the dead, he fulfilled not only his promises to Israel but every promise which he ever made to the human family since time began. In Christ he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).



Shadow and Substance

By now it should be very clear that *the substance of every promise was Jesus Christ*. When God promised Abraham a seed, he was really promising him Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). When he promised peace, wisdom, and power, He was really promising Jesus Christ (see Acts 3:25, 26).

Beginning with Abraham, Christ was promised to the Hebrew nation, and it was their great privilege and responsibility to keep that hope alive in the waiting centuries.

Four hundred and thirty years after God confirmed the promise of Christ to Abraham, another great event took place. God gave the Law to Israel. Since it was given through Moses, the Law is sometimes simply called "Moses." Moses (or the Law) embraced the whole body of instruction given for the existence and governance of Israel as God's special nation. It included laws that were ceremonial, judicial, hygienic, and moral.

It is important that we correctly relate these two great events – the giving of the promise to Abraham and the giving of the Law to Moses. St. Paul says that the Law (Moses) added nothing to the promise (Gal. 3:17). The Law was given "because of transgressions, till the Seed should come." Gal. 3:19. Without the Law, Israel would have degenerated into a pagan state and lost the hope of Christ's coming. The Law was therefore necessary to help Israel nurture and keep alive the hope of the coming Messiah. How did the Law do that? In two ways:

1. Its stern, unbending **moral requirements** served as a constant reminder of sin and kept God's people sensitive to their need of redemption.

2. Its **ceremonial aspects** foreshadowed that needed redemption. Every offering at the tabernacle served to be a shadow of the one great offering of the body of Christ (Heb. 10:10-14). The giving of manna, the water from the rock, the healing by a look at the brazen serpent, and many other things which took place under Moses were a type of the coming Seed. They were a "shadow of good things to come." Heb. 10:1. These shadows and types of the coming Seed were what the writer to the Hebrews calls the "first covenant." The things under the first covenant could not be the reality or the

fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Aaron, the high priest, was only a shadow of Christ. The earthly tabernacle was only a figure of the heavenly reality (Heb. 8:1-5). The land of Canaan was only a type of that “better country, that is, an heavenly,” which true believers looked forward to (Heb. 11:16). Jerusalem and the kingdom of David were at best only a shadow of the “city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” Heb 11:10.

We say again: That which God gave to Israel in the Law and under the Law (tabernacle, Canaan, Jerusalem, kings, etc.) was the first covenant, and at best it could only point to something better. It was not the reality of what God promised Abraham. The Jews in Christ's day tried to turn the shadow into the reality, and many are still trying to do this today. Since the Seed has come, how can we go back to a temple ritual, blood of animals, Palestine or old Jerusalem? These things are no longer any part of reality! Now that the full light of the gospel has come, we must see that real circumcision is of the heart (Rom. 2:29), the real Jerusalem is “above” (Gal. 4:26), the real Mount Zion is heavenly (Heb. 12:22), the real tabernacle is in heaven (Heb. 8:1-5), the real country promised to Abraham is not any part of “this present evil world” (Heb. 11:10-16), and the real children of Abraham (Jews) are those who believe in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 2:28).

In Summary

Christ was the promise given to Abraham. The Law (Moses or first covenant) was given to help Israel keep the hope of Christ's coming alive. The Law was not the fulfillment of the promise but a shadow that pointed forward to its realization. To take anything of the Law (including Jerusalem and the land of Palestine) and call that the promise made to Abraham is to utterly miss the purpose of the Law.

When Christ finally came, the dispensation of the Law (Moses, or the first covenant) had fulfilled its function in history. The blood of animals, feast days, the Jewish temple, Jerusalem and the “holy land” had fulfilled their function, and any return to those things now is a denial of the reality brought to us by Jesus Christ. It is to exchange substance for shadows.

The Israel of God

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” Gal. 6:15, 16.

What is the New Testament view of the Israel of God? What determines whether a man is a real son of Abraham?

To the Jew it was most important that he could prove he was a son of Abraham, for “to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.” Gal. 3:16. The Pharisees were certain of being part of the Israel of God because they could trace their physical descent back to Abraham. John the Baptist declared that they were resting on a false confidence. “...think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father,” he warned them, “for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Matt. 3:9. Mere physical descent would give them no claim on God and no right to be included in the Israel of God.

On another occasion the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Abraham is our father.” John 8:39. But Jesus denied their confident claim, saying, “If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” John 8:39. Jesus categorically denied that they were children of Abraham.

When Zaccheus showed by his works that he had the faith of Abraham, Jesus declared, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.” Luke 19:9, RSV. Jesus was not saying that Zaccheus was saved because he was a physical descendant of Abraham – for there were many Jews in Palestine who were not saved. Jesus was saying that Zaccheus' faith constituted him a real son of Abraham. The Lord could have said to him, as he said to the repentant woman, “Thy faith hath saved thee...” Luke 7:50.

Additionally, Jesus greeted Nathanael with the salutation, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” John 1:47. The word “indeed” signifies a true, or real, Israelite. Jesus therefore

declared that a real Israelite is a man “in whom is no guile.” According to Psalm 32, the guileless man is not a sinless man but the man who honestly continues to confess his sinfulness and who finds forgiveness at the hand of a merciful God. St. Paul cites Psalm 32 and shows that this guileless man (the Israelite “indeed”) is the man who is justified by faith (see Rom. 4:1-8).

The clear teaching of Jesus about the real Israel of God is found also in the Epistles of his great apostle. Could words be clearer than the following?

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Rom. 2:28, 29.

“Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Rom. 9:7, 8.

“...even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham..” Gal. 3:6, 7; Cf. v. 29 & 6:15, 16.

Christ the Seed of Abraham

God made promises to the seed of Abraham. The Jews are still waiting for God to carry out His promises to them, and more amazing, many Christians are now waiting for God to carry out His promises to the Jewish nation as the seed of Abraham. This is what happens when people read the Old Testament without the light and understanding of the New Testament.

Now let us get two simple facts straight once and for all:

1. God made promises to Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:19).
2. Christ is the Seed of Abraham. (“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of One, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.” Gal. 3:16.)

This is why Christ is called the Mediator of the covenant. It is only by him, in him, and through him that God carries out any of his promises to Abraham.

The Seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ. It includes all who are *in Christ* and excludes all outside of Christ. So the apostle affirms,

“...if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Gal. 3:29.

When the apostle declares, “And so all Israel shall be saved...” (Rom. 11:26), he is certainly not teaching us that every member of the Jewish race will be saved. But the seed of Israel shall be saved – that is to say, all those who are in Jesus Christ. And not one shall be lost.

Neither Jesus nor Paul are speaking in mere allegories when they tell us who the children of Abraham are. They are telling us who are *real* children of Abraham. Abraham was justified by faith and therefore became the father of Israel. All who are justified by faith are real children of Abraham (Gal. 3:8). The Seed of Israel is Jesus Christ. He is also the “King of the Jews.” If a man is related to Jesus Christ, who can deny that he is a real Jew according to the Scriptures? (Mk. 3:33, 34). For those who believe in Jesus Christ are born again (1 John 5:1), and they actually partake of the nature of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4).

The Gentile Church Not a Separate Identity

Some men came to Galatia contending that the Gentiles had to become children of Abraham *by means of* an operation in their flesh. Those who taught that, we call Judaizers because they argued that in order to become a Christian one must first become a Jew. The apostle Paul did not dispute the necessity of Gentiles becoming part of the Israel of God. Indeed, “all Israel shall be saved,” and only Israel – for as Jesus said, “salvation is of the Jews.” John 4:22. The apostle refuted the wrong *method* of trying to incorporate the Gentiles into the Israel of God. His message was clear: Abraham was justified by faith, and every Gentile who is justified by faith becomes a son of Abraham (Gal. 3:8). The promises were made to the seed of Abraham, and Christ is that Seed. Therefore, all who are truly baptized into Christ are in Christ and are part of Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:28, 29). Those who have become new creatures by faith in Jesus and walk according to the rule of faith are “the Israel of God.” Gal. 6:15, 16.

Gentiles who believe the gospel become “fellow heirs” with the faithful Jews. They do not make up a separate body, but they become “fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel...” Eph. 3:6. You Gentiles, “being a

wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them [the Jews], and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree..." Rom. 11:17. Once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," the Gentiles are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:12, 13. Being now children of Abraham, part of the commonwealth of Israel, and partakers of God's promises to Israel, believing Gentiles become part of "the house of Israel" to whom the new covenant promise is given:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people..." Heb. 8:10.

The Israel of God are all those who are in Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, the King of the Jews, the One to whom the promises were made. And in Jesus Christ all national distinctions are broken down. "...there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek..." Rom. 10:12. "...ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism..." Eph. 4:4, 5. Therefore, in the things of the gospel *any national distinctions deny the reality of the atonement of Jesus Christ* (Eph. 2:14-17) and are a Judaizing perversion of the New Testament message.



The New Israel

Just as the Bible presents an old covenant and a new covenant, so it presents an old Israel and a new Israel. The old Israel was constituted under the twelve tribes named after the twelve sons of Jacob. When Jesus chose twelve apostles, He was taking steps to constitute the Christian church. Yet why did he deliberately choose twelve apostles? And why did the apostle James address the church as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”? James 1:1. It was because the New Testament church, comprised of Jews and Gentiles, constituted the new Israel of God (Cf. Ex.19:5,6 & 1 Pet.2:5, 9)

When Christ died on the cross, national distinctions were ended. The old national religious economy was as extinct as the old covenant. Henceforth the Christian church, founded on the teachings of the twelve apostles, would be the new Israel, the inheritor of all the promises and responsibilities of Israel of the Old Testament.

Conclusion

Abraham was justified by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). Just as Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, so there were always two classes of Jews. Not all were true sons of Abraham. The prophets frequently referred to the faithful remnant, who were the real children of Abraham.

Finally, at the time of the apostles there was a saved “remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 9:27; 11:5). This remnant were those who welcomed their Messiah and were justified by faith in Jesus. God's word had not failed (Rom. 9:6). These alone were the lineage of Isaac, and the rest were counted as Ishmaelites – illegitimate children. All Israel, that is all who were justified by faith, would be saved according to God's promise, which could never fail (Rom. 11:26). And all from among the Gentiles who would believe on Christ and be justified by faith would become children of Abraham. There is one way of salvation, one body, one faith, one baptism. Christ is the Seed of Abraham. The promises of God are by him, to him, through him, and in him. He is the Elect One (Isa. 42:1), and the chosen people are those who are chosen in him (Eph. 1:4).

“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” 2 Cor. 1:20.

The Prince of the Covenant

God entered into a covenant with Israel in which both parties made promises. As a bridegroom to his people God had been faithful even when Israel had been untrue. But by Daniel's day it became obvious that Israel could not keep her promises. And God, the wronged and aggrieved suitor, took action.

Speaking to his covenant people he said: "Because you people have brought to mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do – because you have done this, you will be taken captive." Then turning to their representative, God continued: "O profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax, this is what the Sovereign LORD says:" Eze. 21:24-26 NIV.

And what God then said foretold the removal and transfer of the dominion till the coming of Israel's true Prince. For of her profane prince the Lord God said: "Remove the diadem and take off the crown... I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." Eze. 21:26-27.

As a captive in Babylon Daniel prayed for the promised restoration of the lost dominion (Dan. 9:1-19). God had removed the crown from Israel when he sent his people into Babylonian captivity. Their kingdom was defeated, their king a vassal, their sanctuary in ruins, and they were aliens in a foreign land. There in captivity the holy prophet asked for God's favor to be shown towards his sinful people. Daniel wanted God to turn them from iniquity and sin (v. 13); to turn away his anger from Jerusalem and Zion (v. 16); and to look with favor on the sanctuary, then desolate (v. 17). In the vision of the "evenings and mornings" the restoration of God's temple had seemed far distant (Dan. 8:14, 26). Now Daniel sought a speedier, divine solution.



God responded briefly yet clearly to the petitioning prophet. The angel Gabriel came to give Daniel insight and understanding concerning the vision about “the time of the end” that he had previously seen (Dan. 8:17, 19, 26; 9:21-23). While God’s explanation was brief it was not unimportant. Daniel had fainted and become very sick when Gabriel had tried to help him understand the vision a few years earlier. Now the seventy years captivity foretold by Jeremiah was coming to an end. With extreme anguish Daniel prayed for the restoration of God’s people. And Heaven’s most exalted angel was sent with the key for understanding God’s restoration program and the last days.

The restoration Gabriel promised was tied to time and conditions. He explained how and when restoration was to come. He outlined for Daniel the conditions and time schedule that God’s covenant people were to fulfill. Six conditions were listed and a time period of “seventy weeks of years” was allotted for Israel to return to God’s favor:

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

God was forcing Israel to look beyond the agreement she had made at Sinai. There she had promised obedience to all his will. Now God restated the impossible conditions hoping that Israel would grasp the new covenant. In the old she had pledged obedience. The new was based on better promises: those made by her Representative. And when these promises were fulfilled, the vision about “the time of the end” would be “sealed” and Daniel’s time prophecies would be forever fixed.

The bride was to make herself ready. The details of this preparation were not left in darkness. Six requirements were outlined and the time for their fulfillment was precise. God's people were to:

1. "finish transgression"
2. "put an end to sin"
3. "atone for wickedness"
4. "bring in everlasting righteousness"
5. "seal up vision and prophecy"
6. "anoint the most holy"

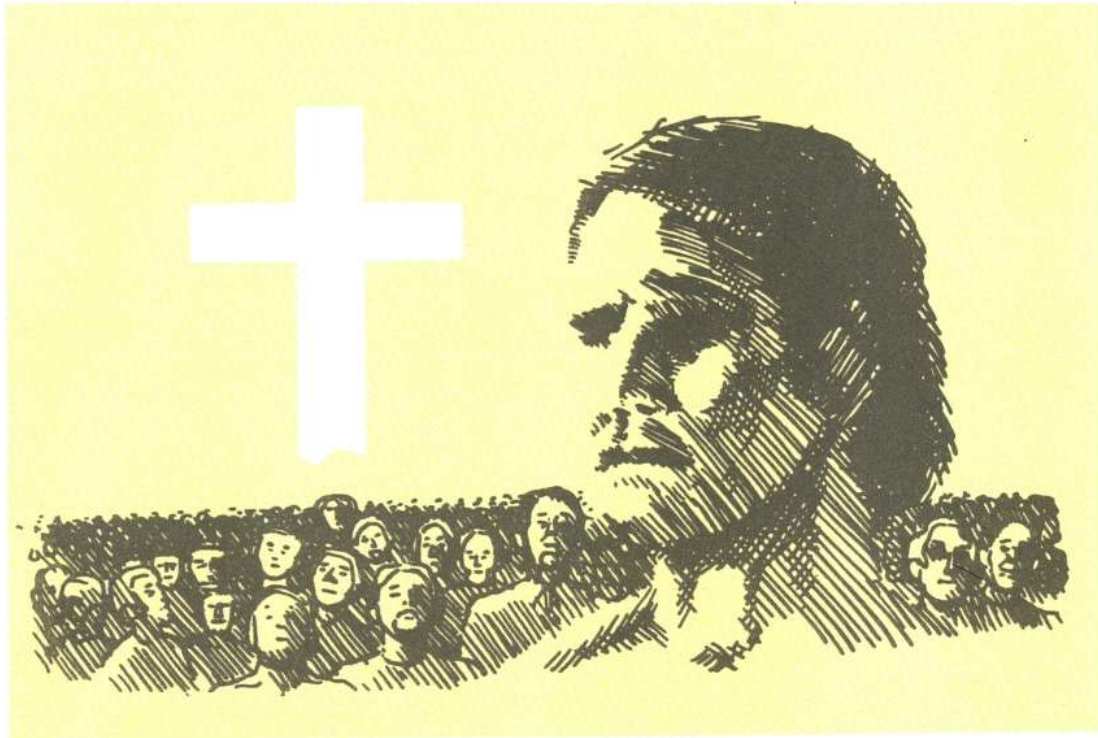
Did they fulfill their duty within the seventy weeks?

It is easy to answer: "Obviously not!" Who could dare say that Israel brought an end to sin, atoned for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness within 490 years? Only those who believe in *federal representation* could make such a statement. Only those who believe that one man could represent the nation and fulfill her obligations in her place can say that Israel accomplished what God had outlined in Daniel 9:24.

Yet that is precisely what God was trying to point out when in the next verse all his attention was turned from the people to their Representative – the Messiah. God's entire answer to Daniel's prayer was the assurance that Israel's Prince would do for her what she was unable to do for herself. Israel had been given matchless responsibilities in verse 24. She had been given an impossible task, humanly speaking. But as soon as Gabriel pointed out the grounds upon which God would favor his people (verse 24) he introduced the Messiah (verses 25 and 26):

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks... And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself..."

The words, "but not for himself" introduce a Messiah who gives his life in another's place. Messiah is prince, the federal representative of his people. The crown is rightfully his. It had passed through Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, and Rome; but now Jesus, Israel's rightful prince, had come. The Sovereign LORD did not reject his people because of their failures. Rather he elected them



in the person of their covenant-fulfilling Representative (Rom. 11:1-7; Heb. 2:9-10).

And as their Representative, Jesus the Christ gave his life a substitutionary ransom for many (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). As their surety the Messiah took on the obligations of his people and fulfilled them in their place. Jesus Christ did all this when he came to earth. Within the allotted 490 years he fulfilled all righteousness (Matt 3:15; 5:17). He, the Prince of the covenant, met all the conditions.

As a delegate for the Israel of God, Christ took on sin, iniquity, and transgression. He became the second Adam, the representative of all those found in him. As man he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He brought an end to sin and introduced eternal righteousness, even the righteousness of God, that in him all Israel might be saved.

An Old Testament Example

Like the boy David, Jesus met the enemy on his own turf. King Saul together with all Israel was terrified by the giant Goliath. But God had chosen another representative for Israel – a new prince. Young David was incensed at the mocking and cursing of Goliath against God's people. Was there not a man in Israel who would

represent the nation in one-on-one combat? The giant threatened their entire existence.

As in that day so when Christ came to earth to meet our adversary the devil: the fate of the nation was to be decided by a single conflict. Goliath outlined the plan of representation:

“... choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, then we will be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us.” 1 Sam. 17:8-9.

“Choose from among you a man.” “Choose a man for you.” God had chosen and anointed David to represent all his people.

When David slung his first stone he struck the giant in the forehead. “And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.”

So also God chose and anointed Jesus to be our representative. Unto us a child was born, unto us a son was given (Isa. 9:6). On his shoulders was placed the federal responsibility of taking on our Goliath. And like ancient Israel who gazed in amazement into the Valley of Elah, we as the Israel of God may look to the cross of Christ and shout: “His victory is our victory.”

Christ bruised the head of Satan and having conquered in our behalf he severed the head of the one to whom Adam the first had sold the dominion. The battle has been won, the covenant ratified and it is left with all who believe to enjoy the benefits and sing the praises of our David.

“Christ has for sin atonement made,
What a wonderful Saviour!
We are redeemed! the price is paid!
What a wonderful Saviour!
What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Jesus!
What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord!
—Elisha A. Hoffman

The Key to Bible Prophecy

When in Daniel 9, the prophet was given a view of Christ as Israel's anointed representative, he was shown a conquering Prince who by the sacrifice of himself would fulfill all that was required of God's people.

At his first advent Jesus visited and redeemed his people. He saved his people from their sins. In their place he fulfilled all righteousness. By one offering he "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Jesus put away sin; abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. *This is the gospel.*

All who believe this gospel of the kingdom find in Jesus the fulfillment of all that God required in Daniel 9:24.

Jesus did:

1. "finish transgression"
2. "put an end to sin"
3. "atone for wickedness"
4. "bring in everlasting righteousness"
5. "seal up vision and prophecy"
6. "anoint the most holy."

Christ the Messiah took upon his shoulders the responsibilities given to God's people and perfectly fulfilled them. This fulfillment took place within the allotted time and left nothing unfinished. Thus the gospel becomes the key that unlocks Daniel 9:24.

And Daniel 9:24 is the key that unlocks eschatology. All Bible prophecy finds its key in the words of Daniel 9:24. Christ fulfilled the six things listed! The New Testament confirms that each of these requirements was met by Christ prior to the Pentecostal outpouring mentioned in the second chapter of Acts.

From Gethsemane to the cross Christ carried the curse of our rebellious nature in order to “finish transgression.” We are all born rebellious (Ps. 51:5; 58:3) but he was born holy, with no inclination towards perversity or rebellion. Like his life, so also his nature was free from sin (Lk. 1:35; John 14:30). Yet he bore “our griefs and carried our sorrows.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, [*pasha*] he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Isa. 53:4-5. The **first** requirement of Daniel 9:24 was to “*finish transgression (pasha=rebellion)*”. Jesus did this by being wounded for our transgressions.

In Christ God put an end to sin. From the cradle to the cross Christ’s life was free from sin (Lk. 23:41; John 8:46). Although he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet he never once yielded to sin (Heb. 4:15). But he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us and “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” 1 Pet. 2:24 (2 Cor. 5:21). The **second** requirement of Daniel 9:24 was to “*put an end to sin (chattath=failure)*”. This Jesus did by bearing our sins to Calvary.

Reconciliation for iniquity was accomplished by Christ in his death on the cross (Rom. 5:18). “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2. This atonement was accomplished before Christ took his place at the Father’s right hand in heaven (Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 5:14-19; Rom. 5:10). The **third** requirement of Daniel 9:24 was to “*make reconciliation for iniquity (avon=perversity)*” On the cross this atonement was complete.

By his sinless, obedient life, Jesus Christ brought in everlasting righteousness. On the mount of blessing Jesus affirmed that he had come to fulfill the Law (Matt. 5:17). At his baptism he told John that it was necessary for him to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:17). Christ became “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Rom. 10:4 NASB. Before the foundation of the world he had pledged himself as the surety for the race (Heb. 10:7). On earth he lived to do God’s will. The **fourth** requirement of Daniel 9:24 was to “*bring in everlasting righteousness (tsedeq)*”. Christ accomplished this by living, in our place, a life of perfect obedience to the will of God.

Before the stoning of Stephen, Jesus Christ sealed forever the time prophecies of Daniel (Mark 1:15; Acts 7:55; Heb. 9:12).

The timing of the vision of Daniel 8 was forever fixed by the events that took place on Calvary. The final restoration of God's sanctuary was tied to the events of passion week. When from the cross Christ cried "It is finished," he had fulfilled all the demands of the covenant and was worthy to claim his inheritance (John 19:30; Rev. 5:5-9). The book of Revelation must be understood as flowing out from Christ's victory. The **fifth** requirement of Daniel 9:24 was to "*Seal up the vision (chazon) and prophecy (nabi)*". At the cross Jesus drove a dividing stake in history. First covenant symbols forever passed away, the visions and time prophecies of Daniel found their center in the cross, and any return to Jewish fables deserves no attention.

As the new Moses Christ anointed heaven's Most Holy Place, and as the new Aaron he was seated in his high priestly office (Acts 2:33-35; Heb. 3:1-6; 5:1-6; 9:16-24). Having provided in his body (life) the efficacious offering and in his blood (death) the true sacrifice, he ascended to the true tabernacle in heaven. There he dedicated the temple where he now presents his body and blood in the presence of God for us (Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 8:1-6; 9:24; Psalm 110:1-4). The **sixth** requirement of Daniel 9:24 was to "*anoint the Most Holy (qodesh haq-qodashim=Holy of holies)*" This Christ did when he ascended to the right hand of his Father in heaven.

At his first advent Christ finished man's rebellion; put an end to human failure; made atonement for our perversity; brought in everlasting righteousness; forever fixed the time prophecies of Daniel; and anointed heaven's Most Holy Place where he now intercedes for us. All heaven swells the anthem: "Worthy... worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Rev. 5:9, 12.

Using the Key

The gospel is the key to Daniel 9:24. With this key we are able to understand the verses that follow.

Not only was a covenant-fulfilling Messiah promised but the exact time of his coming was given. The angel told Daniel that it would be 69 weeks until the Messiah, the Anointed One (Dan. 9:24-25). In other words the 69 "sevens," or 483 years ended at Christ's anointing. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." Acts 10:38. After being anointed at his baptism Jesus

proclaimed that the 69 weeks of Daniel's prophecy had been fulfilled and that the Messiah had come to establish his kingdom:

"After that John [the Baptist] was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.'" Mark 1:14.

The anointed Prince devoted one week to confirming the covenant. During the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy Christ confirmed the covenant with many; and in the midst of that week he terminated the Jewish sacrifice and offering (Dan. 9:27, Matt. 27:51). These ceremonies which pointed forward to his death were all nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-18).

When in the days of Pontius Pilate Christ planted his cross at the center of Daniel's 70th week, he anchored forever the center of our redemption. The cross became the key to understanding Daniel 9 and Daniel 9 became the key to understanding eschatology. The timing of prophecy was fixed by the events of the gospel. How a person understands Daniel 9:24, determines their understanding of the last days.

But many reject the idea that Christ's work on earth fulfilled Daniel 9:24. For them this key text points to some future fulfillment. Thousands view Christ's work on earth as only a godly example unrelated to the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24. Others see Christ as an "Initiator" and not as a "Consummator". For them the covenant remains unconfirmed. And in an effort to explain Gabriel's words, "the prince" becomes the antichrist and "the covenant" a farce. They are left understanding that "the Israel of God" is only an ethnic community, that Jerusalem is only a city in the Middle East, and that Mount Zion is nothing more than earth's most precious real estate.

To view Daniel 9:24 as unfulfilled or as only partially fulfilled is to throw away the key that God has placed in our hands. Why settle for prophetic speculation about the last days when God has given us the key. At the cross Christ finished fulfilling Israel's covenant obligations, and in Christ's resurrection God fulfilled his promises to Israel. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost" he poured it out on those that believed.

When we believe in what Christ accomplished at his first advent, the door for understanding his second advent is open before us. The gospel becomes the key that unlocks Bible prophecy.

The Unveiling

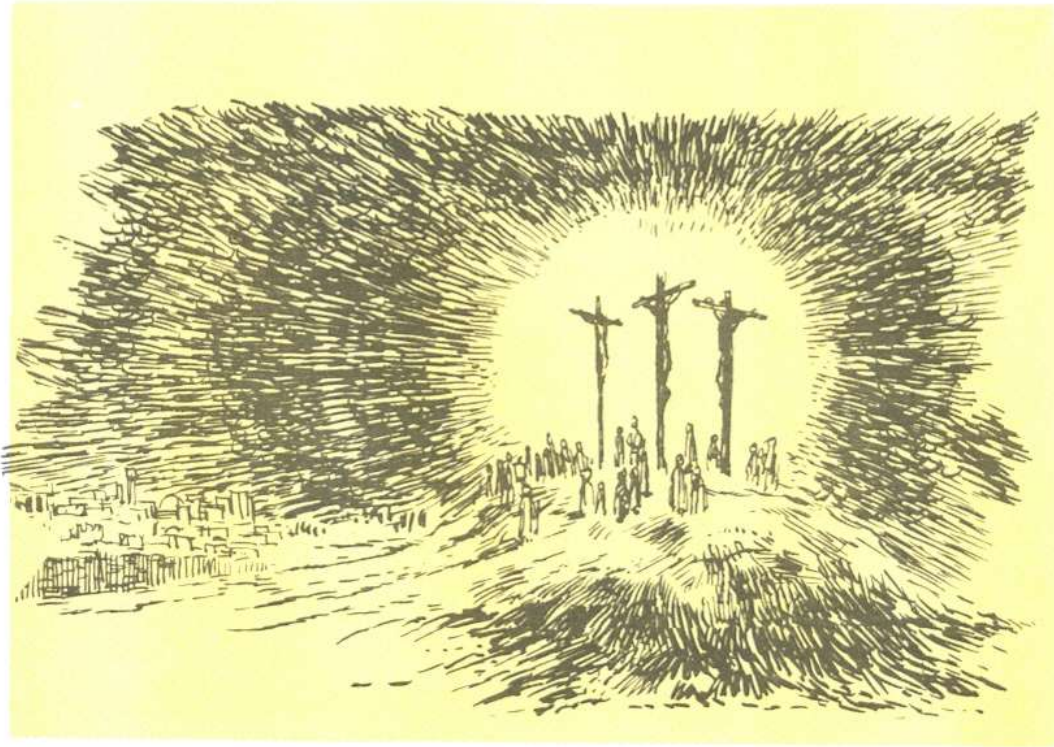
The second advent of Christ is but an unveiling of what he already accomplished in his first advent.

Correctly relating the gospel and the end times means correctly relating the first and second advents of Jesus Christ. When we place these two advents side by side, we discover a remarkable parallel:

First Advent. At His first coming Jesus "visited and *redeemed* his people." Luke 1:68. He *saved* his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). He fulfilled all *righteousness* (Matt. 3:15), and by one offering *perfected* forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). He put away sin (Heb. 9:26), "abolished death, and...brought life and *immortality* to light." 2 Tim. 1:10. Thus, through his redemptive act in Christ, God has given to his people redemption, salvation, righteousness, and perfection. In Christ he has already done away with sin, abolished death, and given to his people the gift of life and immortality. All this is plainly stated by the apostles' proclamation of the gospel.

Second Advent. Now let us look at what the apostles tell us about the second advent. It is called the day of *redemption* (Eph. 4:30; cf. Rom. 8:23). "...so Christ...will appear a second time...to bring *salvation* to those who are watching for Him." Heb. 9:28, NEB. Then Paul and all who love His appearing will receive their "crown of *righteousness*." 2 Tim. 4:8; cf. Gal. 5:5. Then believers of past ages together with those of the present age will be made *perfect* (Heb. 11:40; Phil. 3:10, 12). When Christ comes, God's people will put off the sinful, mortal state; the last enemy, death, will be swallowed up in victory; and God's people will put on *immortality* (1 Cor. 15:50-56). All this will take place when "Christ, who is our life, shall appear." Col. 3:4. Thus, the very things that Christ did for us at his first advent (gospel) are said to be brought to us at the second advent (eschatology).

The eschaton is simply an unveiling of what has already taken place. This unveiling will overtake the unbelieving world as a thief in the night. It will come to them as an overwhelming surprise. But it will



be no thief in the night and no overwhelming surprise to the children of light (1 Thess. 5:1-4). They know that these things have already taken place in Jesus Christ. They have already had all these blessings reserved for them in heaven in the person of Christ (Col. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:4). And by the gift of the Spirit they now have a token of their inheritance, a taste of the powers of the world to come (Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 6:5).

Since the eschaton (last things) is an unveiling of what has already taken place (gospel), the gospel should determine our view of eschatology. And if it does, there will be no place for carnal speculations about things unrelated to the finished work of Jesus Christ. God completed his redemptive work in Jesus Christ by raising him from the dead. At Christ's second advent God will make a cosmic disclosure of what he has done.

We now live in the time between the Christ event and the eschaton. The apostles refer to the period between the advents as the "last days" or "the last time." Heb. 1:2; 1 John 2:18. God has given us every blessing in Christ: redemption, salvation, justification, perfection, life and immortality, etc. But we possess these things *only by faith*. This means that we do not possess these things as qualities within ourselves, but they stand outside of us in the person of Christ. Christ Himself is our redemption, salvation, righteousness, and life. He is in heaven at the right hand of God, and that is where this inheritance is reserved for us (Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:4).



When Christ shall come again, God's people will no longer possess these blessings by faith alone. They will have them by empirical reality. They will then be redeemed, saved, perfected, righteous, secure, and immortal. But they will possess these blessings in a different way than they possess them now. Let us not confuse the "now" and the "not yet." God's people are righteous before God now, and they will be righteous before God then – but not in the same way. Now they are fully righteous by imputation. Then they will be fully righteous inherently. Now their perfection and glory is hidden. Then it will be disclosed (Rom. 8:18). Now it is by faith. Then it will be by sight. Meanwhile, "The just shall live by faith" – which is to say, they must live in the tension of having and not having, of believing they are righteous yet confessing themselves sinners, of possessing all things yet having nothing (2 Cor. 6:10).

Through the Holy Spirit's imparted presence and power believers here and now begin to be actually righteous, they press toward perfection, but hampered by the wretched body of this death (Rom. 7:24) and having tasted of the powers of the world to come, they long for the consummation at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Says the apostle:

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Rom. 8:23.

Seven Points of Pre-millennial Agreement

Today everyone is concerned about the future. World events point to an impending crisis. Something great and decisive is about to take place and only the Bible can guide us through these events.

Tim Lahaye and the “Left Behind” videos have brought pre-millennial eschatology to the forefront. The idea that the church will be taken to heaven before the terrors of the last days is popular in evangelical circles. The view that Christ’s second coming precedes the thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20, numbers its adherents in the tens of millions.

Only in the last couple hundred years has the church seriously grappled with a theology of the end times. The word “eschatology” was coined in the mid 1800s, and until then Protestants had not agreed upon a doctrine of the last days. Luther placed the Day of Judgment 300 years in the future. And only today have all sectors of the church agreed that the end is upon us.

The doctrines of God, Holy Scripture, man, Christ, salvation, and the church have all been debated and settled in past centuries. The doctrine of the end time is all that is left. Our generation must unravel it or be in danger of worshiping the antichrist.

Three Principles for Understanding Revelation

Three things can guide us into a proper understanding of the end time: 1) the ministry of Christ on earth, 2) the ministry of Christ in heaven, and 3) using Scripture alone as its own interpreter. These same principles are listed in our masthead: faith alone, Christ alone, and the Bible alone.

1. A knowledge of the life and ministry of Christ on earth will open up our understanding of the book of Revelation. We saw how the gospel is the key to understanding Daniel 9:24. The first five obligations listed there point to Christ's life and ministry on earth. And his life is a pattern for the life of the church in the last days. The book of Revelation pictures God's people living out what Christ already experienced in a concentrated form. Jesus said: "he who has faith in me will do what I am doing; and he will do greater things still because I am going to my Father." John 14:12 NEB. The church's experience reflects events in Christ's life. Jesus added, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." John 15:20. Christ's life, especially the closing scenes, are a pattern of what we can expect in the last days (John 16:15).

2. An understanding of the ministry of Christ in heaven is also essential for comprehending the book of Revelation. The last item in Daniel 9:24 points to Christ's heavenly ministry. Just as Jesus' baptismal anointing marked the commencement of his earthly ministry so the anointing of heaven's Most Holy Place marks the commencement of his heavenly ministry (See Heb. 9:18-24). Christ's ministry in heaven becomes the outline of the book of Revelation. The tabernacle constructed by Moses in the wilderness gives us a glimpse into heaven's design (Heb. 8:5; 9:23). And the vision given to John on Patmos follows that design. Just as there were three articles of furniture in the Holy Place so Revelation begins with these representations: the candlestick (Rev. 1:12), the table of shewbread (Rev. 4:2-6; 5:1; cf. Eze. 3:1-3), and the altar of incense (Rev. 8:3). From there the scene passes to the Most Holy Place (Rev. 11:19) where the marriage of the Lamb will occur (Rev. 19:7). A description of the bride, the groom, and each of the attendants is given (Rev. 12:1 – 18:20). After the marriage and Christ's second coming the picture turns to the binding of Satan for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3) followed by a final judgment (Rev. 20:7-15) and eternal bliss (Rev. 21:1-22:5).

3. The Bible, and the Bible only, as its own interpreter must also govern our understanding of the book of Revelation. To be on God's side during the final scenes of earth's history our lives and faith must be based on Scripture alone. The Bible interprets its own symbols! This is especially true in the book of Revelation. We must

not let our imagination or the daily news determine the meaning of a passage or decode its symbols. Take for example Revelation 8:5, where it says that an “angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” The book of Acts gives the meaning of “voices,” “thunderings,” and “lightnings”. Luke describes the Pentecostal outpouring of God’s Spirit with the same symbols: “there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind... and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire... and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:2-4.

The book of Revelation employs symbols to show Jesus Christ taking back the lost inheritance. This he does through his Spirit-filled people. At the cross Jesus conquered our Goliath and now works through the lives, witness, and prayers of his people to usher in his eternal kingdom. Yet, his people’s attention is not on themselves. Rather, their focus is on Christ and his heavenly intercession (Col. 3:1, 2; Heb. 3:1; 12:2). Jesus, while in heaven, is still closely involved with the life of his church. God’s people on earth are constantly bombarded with the devil’s deceptions. Scripture alone keeps them from being deceived by enemy forces that seek to divert their gaze (1 John 4:1-3).

Seven points of agreement

Scripture supports some of what is popularly taught by pre-millennialism. Here are seven points on which we agree with pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture eschatology:

1. The new earth will be the eternal home of the saved.
2. There will be a second resurrection of the wicked and final judgment at the end of the millennium.
3. There will be a real, thousand-year millennium.
4. The second advent of Jesus to the earth will be literal and prior to the beginning of the millennium.
5. The second advent of Christ will be preceded by a short period of catastrophic stress and persecution.

6. There will be some sort of separation of the righteous and wicked just before this great trouble.

7. The judgment of (for) the church will take place before God's throne prior to the second advent.

By listing these seven points on which we agree with pre-millennial eschatology we hope to encourage dialogue and further study that will result in a unified Protestant eschatology, one that finds its key in the gospel, its hope in the intercession of Christ, and its sole basis the Bible. Such an understanding of the last days will inspire faith in God and protect against deceptions.

We are living in the last days! Christ has made atonement for sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. If this gospel of the kingdom is allowed to unlock the last days we may look with confidence to Christ's soon return.

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