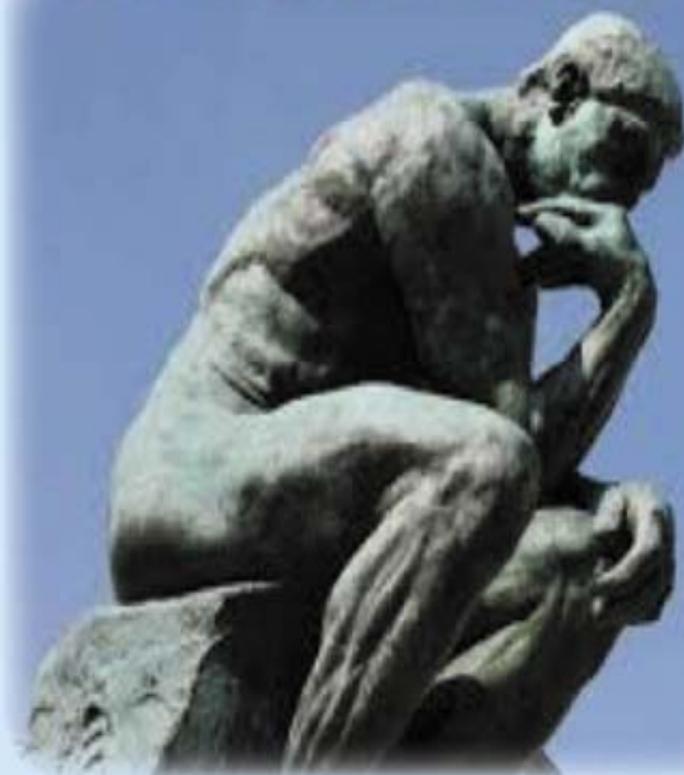


MEANDERING POSTULATIONS



**Rethinking The World
In Which We Live**

DICKSON

Meandering Postulations

Inscriptions VI

Roger E. Dickson

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Preface

As previously published for the Biblical Research Library, this compilation of editorial *Inscriptions* from my Facebook page comes to the readers as a book. As previously stated in the preface of previous books of *Inscriptions* of the same nature, the reader must keep in mind that some of the thoughts of this book are the opinions of the author. The opinions were stimulated by the times in which a particular *Inscription* was written. Therefore, the reader must be cautious to remember in these current times the circumstances that prevailed at the time when the editorials were originally written. Some statements may seem out-of-date, but keep in mind that at the time of writing, there were prevailing circumstances that inspired the writing of the editorials.

As suggested by the *Inscription* that is entitled, *Custodians Of Continued Restoration*, the reader must join with us in this effort to be faithful to the word of God in all matters of faith. We must present a refreshing understanding of the Scriptures in the times in which we currently live lest we be carried away by inventing our own religiosity.

Restoration does not mean that we have the right to change those truths that are eternal. It means that we must continually focus on those truths that are eternal. This focus does allow us the right to apply in our lives in our times those truths that enhance our relationship with our Creator. This is the marvel of the Bible. While other religious catechisms lock people in a time warp from which the adherents' minds and behavior cannot escape, the Bible on the other hand, presents the directions of God that are adaptable for all time. In this way, the word of God is always relevant for life behavior. Only the God of heaven could have revealed such a message.

The world is composed of thousands of cultures, which cultures are defined to be unique among the many thousands of cultures that exist today. And yet, the word of God can come into any culture of the world, and subsequently weed out those moral cultural values that are detrimental to society. At the same time, the word of God can preserve those values that are necessary in order to preserve society. This is the marvel of the Bible.

This also is the revealing difference between the inspired word of God and the religions of men. Only God could have revealed a message to man that is relevant to every culture of the world that lives at any one time in history. Herein is the power of the word of God to be applicable to every human being that has lived on the face of the earth. We thus marvel at the word of God to reveal to us a relevant message from our Creator. It is for this reason that the *Inscriptions* were originally written. They were written to challenge the thinking of the readers concerning what is taught in the word of God for the times in which we now live.

Chapter 1

SPEAKING AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

[Someone recently called me from the other side of the country and said that they were now baptizing people in the name of Jesus for the remission of sin, as opposed to “Holy Spirit baptism.” They studied this matter, and thus, delivered themselves from their own self-deception in the past. The following are the thoughts by which they came to this conclusion.]

During His incarnational earthly ministry, Jesus made a profound statement in reference to the coming work of the Holy Spirit: “*Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him. **But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come***” (Mt 12:32).

This one statement should send shock waves through the world of experiential religions. Unfortunately, it does not because many have failed to understand what Jesus was saying in the context of this statement in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit that was yet to come after the full revelation of the gospel. In fact, **the exact thing about which Jesus was warning His apostles is commonly practiced among many people**. There is, therefore, much “speaking against the Holy Spirit” in the religious world today.

In view of the fact that Jesus knew that there would be many who would self-proclaim their own forgiveness of sins because of some self-hypnotic moment of emotional euphoria, He delivered to His disciples the statement of Matthew 12:32. He prepared them to be on guard against those who would confuse their emotionally excited inner spirit with the Holy Spirit Himself.

Jesus did not want those who claimed to be His disciples to exalt the Holy Spirit over the gospel of forgiveness that was revealed only through Him on the cross. In fact, if the Holy Spirit were to be exalted over Him as the sacrificial Redeemer of the world, then the gospel would be denied, or at least, minimized. For this reason, Jesus pre-

pared His apostles when He said the following words to them in the context of a personal conversation in John 13 – 18:1:

“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you [apostles] into all truth [of the gospel]” (Jn 16:13). This was a promise that was made specifically to the apostles. Only they would be guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth. After Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit would fill in all the details concerning the truth of the gospel (See Jn 14:26).

The apostles had personally experienced the incarnate Son of God, His miracles, and His power over death. However, at the time the incarnate Son personally spoke the preceding words to the apostles while on earth, He said that there was more to come.

It is important to notice how exact Jesus was in defining where the Holy Spirit would source this “truth” that He would reveal to the apostles: *“For He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, that He will speak”* (Jn 16:13). **Therefore, under no circumstances would the Holy Spirit lay original claim to the “truth” that He would reveal to the apostles.** On the contrary, He would only reveal the truth that was first spoken by the Son, which truth was yet to be revealed in actuality on the cross.

Therefore, the promise that Jesus made in John 16:13 to the apostles was expanded by what He said in reference to the coming ministry of the Holy Spirit: *“He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will declare it to you”* (Jn 16:14). We must not miss this critical point. This is a declaration that is directly contrary to what some do today who are proclaiming that they have been saved directly by the Holy Spirit. Making such a claim is “speaking against the Holy Spirit.” It is speaking against His designated ministry about which Jesus spoke in the context of His personal meeting with the apostles on the eve of the crucifixion.

In fact, claiming that one is saved directly by the Holy Spirit is a denial of the gospel that was revealed on the cross. If the Holy Spirit could truly save someone directly, **then there would have been no need for the incarnation and crucifixion.** Therefore, **every time someone says today that they have been saved directly by the Holy Spirit**

coming upon them, they have denied the necessity of the crucifixion of the Son of God for our sins. They have bypassed the gospel in order to give glory to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has subsequently become their redeemer, not the incarnate Redeemer of the cross.

Why would the Father send His only begotten Son to the cross, when He could have simply sent the Holy Spirit to save those who sought to be saved? If the Holy Spirit could save people directly, and apart from obedience to the gospel, then there would have been no need for the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. Claiming that one is saved directly by the Holy Spirit denies the gospel. Since self-declared salvation that is claimed to be direct from the Holy Spirit marginalizes the gospel, then it is a mockery of the gospel. It is mockery of the cross.

The gospel events of the cross and resurrection followed within a few days after Jesus made the preceding statements of John 16:13,14 to the apostles concerning the future work of the Holy Spirit. The gospel events of the ascension and kingdom reign took place within a few weeks after Jesus made the statements to the apostles. The statements were fulfilled when Jesus was eventually taken up out of their sight through the ascension (At 1:9,10). So the truth of the gospel of the death, resurrection and ascension of the Son of God was declared to the apostles who in turn preached this good news on the day of Pentecost (See At 2:22-36). One of the most important truths concerning the gospel in reference to our problem of sin was declared on the day of Pentecost: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you **in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins**”* (At 2:38).

Baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins is contrary to mourning spirits who seek to call on the Holy Spirit to save them directly. Calling for direct salvation from the Holy Spirit would be blasphemy, for it would be an individual calling for some personal “salvational experience,” **and then assigning such an experience to the Holy Spirit.** It would be speaking against what the Holy Spirit says one must do in the Spirit-inspired word of God concerning what is required to receive the remission of sins, that is, baptism in the name of Jesus.

It was never the work of the Holy Spirit to bypass the name (authority) of Jesus, glorify Himself, and then save people directly. Since before the beginning, remission of sins was always within the destiny of the incarnate Son of God (1 Pt 1:18-20). This was Jesus' good news to the world, and thus, the good news that brings glory to Him. The fact that it was planned that the Son of God would be crucified for those whom He would create, reaffirms His justice in creating all things (Cl 1:16).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit glorified Jesus on the cross, not Himself. If we were to glorify the Holy Spirit in reference to any direct work concerning our salvation, then we would be speaking against what the Holy Spirit has already revealed in the inspired word of God that gives all glory to Jesus for our salvation.

Those who claim that the Holy Spirit came upon them in order to save them personally, are speaking against that which the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter on the day of Pentecost, which message we read in Acts 2:38. Because there is so much confusion surrounding this matter, we must connect some dots. We must connect with what Jesus stated in Mark 3:29: *“Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is in danger of an eternal sin.”*

Now consider the “truth” that the apostles proclaimed during their ministry of preaching the following gospel message: *“There is salvation in no other, for there is no other name [authority] under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (At 4:12). One is not saved by the “name” of the Holy Spirit. We are saved by the “name” of the crucified Son of God.

Again, connect the dots! If one claims that he or she has been saved directly by the Holy Spirit, then he or she has blasphemed the Holy Spirit by speaking against what the Spirit proclaimed through Peter and the other apostles. Other than informing us through the Spirit-inspired word of God, there is no direct salvation through the Holy Spirit Himself. This is true simply because salvation is only in the name of Jesus. And when one is baptized in the name of Jesus for remission of sins, then he or she is saved. To assign such salvational work to the Holy Spirit is speaking against the Holy Spirit. It is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

“Blasphemy” is assigning that which is wrong to be from Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. In other words, if one self-proclaims his or her salvation because of some supposed experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit, then one is assigning his or her emotional experience, which is actually from the human spirit, to be the work of the Holy Spirit. This is taking the name of the Holy Spirit and applying it to one’s supposed remission of sins that has supposedly come from an experiential event in one’s life. This is blasphemy. This is speaking against the very words of truth that were given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit. This is doing the exact opposite of what Jesus said would be the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, “He will glorify Me!” (Jn 16:14).

Any theology in reference to salvation that glorifies the Holy Spirit over Jesus, is blasphemy. If one would claim that he or she had an emotional experience, at which time salvation came into their lives, then he or she has blasphemed the Holy Spirit. One has assigned a personal emotional experience to the Holy Spirit, which thing Jesus said the Holy Spirit would never do lest the Spirit glorify Himself over Jesus.

For this blasphemy one “*never has forgiveness*” simply because one has convinced himself that he has been saved directly by the Holy Spirit. He will not respond to the gospel of Jesus because he believes that his sins have already been forgiven directly by the Holy Spirit. Such a person believes that he does not need to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins because the Holy Spirit has already saved him.

Any subjective personal experience that we would declare to be a salvational experience of the Holy Spirit, but is contrary to an objective declaration of the remission of sins by the Holy Spirit in the word of God, is speaking and acting against the Holy Spirit. Any self-declaration of our supposed self-proclaimed salvation is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is speaking against the Holy Spirit who already said in the Spirit-inspired word, that we are baptized for the remission of sin.

Chapter 2

BLACK CAT THEOLOGY

So it seems that Zeus, the chief god of the Greeks, was guilty of a little hanky panky (“infidelity”). Among the many servants of the heavenly palace, his eye had been lured to one particular young damsel named, Galinthias. All was fine until Hera, the wife of Zeus, discovered the hidden unfaithfulness. Since Hera could not take her anger out on the chief god of Greek mythology, she turned her attention of complaint against Galinthias and cursed her in order to impede the birth of her illegitimate child. Hera turned the servant girl into a black cat. This may have been the beginning of all “black cat theology.”

Nevertheless, the child was born, and thus came into existence in the minds of the Greeks, the god Hercules. But don’t fret concerning the fate of Galinthias. The Greek goddess of witchcraft took in the adulterous servant girl, now a black cat, and employed her as her own servant. Unfortunately, black cats thereafter have had to live with the curse of this superstitious mischief among the gods. “Black cat theology” is still with us today.

In some cultures today, the unfortunate black cat is often considered an omen of evil that is associated with witchcraft. Some have believed that black cats were the very embodiment of witches themselves. And so you might think that you are innocent of all this babble about black cats. If so, then we will pay close attention to your walk along a pathway or sidewalk when a black cat crosses your path. If you waver in your stride, or even have the slightest disturbance in your thoughts, then we will know that you too are still a victim of “black cat theology.”

Superstition is belief that has no evidence. Greek mythology is based on all sorts of superstitions. In fact, mythology itself is founded on vivid imaginations that have run wild in the absence of a knowledge of the one true and living God. It is for this reason that mythology affected the behavior of the Greeks because they had little or no knowledge of the one true and living God. Greek lives were controlled by the gods they

had created after their own imagination. They did this or that in view of pleasing the gods, or escaping some punishment of a mischievous god. It was a society that was ruled by “black cat theology.”

A little over two thousand years ago a representative of the true and living God stepped into a place of religion where “black cat theologians” were gathered to babble about their beliefs and behavior in reference to imaginations. The common subject of debates among these “preachers” from throughout the ancient world was to babble about their “black cat theologies” or some new thing (See At 17:18-21).

Nevertheless, on this particular day, a traveling preacher stood up in the lecture hall of Mars Hill and shouted out with a strong voice, “*Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious [superstitious]. For as I passed by and observed your objects of worship, I found an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown God’*” (At 17:22,23).

For the first time in the history of the Greeks this messenger from the true God established a contrast between the beliefs of the “black cat theologians” and the truth of a God whose gospel to mankind was based on the resurrection of His Son from the dead (See Hb 11:1). It was now time for all “black cat theologians” to step aside and hear a message about a living God who was not the product of vivid imaginations.

You might claim that you are unmoved by some relics of your own beliefs in “black cat theology.” This may be your personal conclusion, but the recent Covid pandemic has rattled the faith of millions of people around the world. It seems that many folks have dipped into their former superstitions in order to blame some “demon” who supposedly causes this or that as people struggle for their last breath in emergency rooms around the world. In fact, in a recent conversation with an elder of the church on the other side of our country, he remarked, “It seems that religious leaders across the country have ascended to their pulpits in order to proclaim some superstitious reason for all this social turmoil.” “Black cat theology.”

In one case it was assumed that if one was injected with the vaccine against Covid, he or she would turn into a horse. In another case, someone contacted us from the other side of the world and asked, “What is the mark of the beast? My friends are telling me that if I am vaccinated

against Covid, I will be receiving the mark of the beast.” “And thus,” she continued, “they said that they could not associate with me.” “Black cat theology.”

Taking medication, receiving vaccinations against diseases as polio, or just eating certain foods is the personal choice of the individual. But when such is either done or shunned for religious reasons, then it becomes “black cat theology.” Nevertheless, until that time when a new convert puts away his “black cat theology” in reference to eating meat, for example, those who are strong in the faith should exercise love and patience (See 1 Co 8). But at the same time, it is assumed in the Holy Spirit’s exhortations on this matter that the “weak brother” who eats meat in respect to some religious superstition, as he previously did in respect to some foods in his former life of superstitious behavior, he must grow out of his “black cat theology.” In fact, the Holy Spirit said on such matters as food, “*For it is a good thing that the heart be established by grace, **not with foods***” (Hb 13:9). “*Therefore,*” continued the Spirit in another context, “*let no one judge you in food or in drink*” (Cl 2:16). Attaching spiritual or religious significance to foods, to idols, or even to vaccines that might prevent us from certain diseases, is “black cat theology.”

An even more subtle belief of “black cat theology” is tempting God with a “faith” that is contrary to science. So against the science of gravity, a foolish man of “faith” preaches from his pulpit to his friends on the top of a one hundred story building, “You must have faith. God will protect you.” So against the science of gravity, he leaps off the building in order to reveal his faith in God to protect him. As he passed floor fifty, it was heard that he yelled out, “So far so good.”

Assuming that God will protect us when we walk in violation of the laws of nature is tempting God to do evil by catching us on the final floor (See Js 1:13). If we willingly walk contrary to that which science provides to protect us, assuming that God will not allow us to fall victim to our own neglect, then we are participating in “black cat theology” in reference to faith. If we knowingly place ourselves and our family in a situation of danger, while knowing that there is an opportunity to avoid that danger, then we are tempting God to do for us that which we should

be doing for ourselves. A faith that is contrary to reason and science is a faith that is based on “black cat theology.”

If we do this or that in our lives on the basis of superstitious beliefs, then we have allowed ourselves to promote “black cat theology.” It is for this reason that Christians grow in their knowledge of the word of God (2 Pt 3:18). They study zealously in order to sift out of their minds those former superstitious beliefs that are associated with “black cat theology.” We do not walk in a manner that tempts God to protect us when we should be protecting ourselves.

So you can judge for yourself on this matter. The next time a black cat crosses your path, take a moment to consider the fact that you may still be subservient to some beliefs of “black cat theology.”

Chapter 3

KEEPING OUR BROTHER

So God interrogated Cain, “*Where is Abel your brother?*” (Gn 4:9). Why would God ask such a question if we are all free from one another and independent? Can we not be free from one another in order to do our own thing, regardless of the interests of our fellow citizens? Would we have any social freedoms if we were continually looking out for the interests of our neighbors? The fact that God asked this question of the murderous Cain infers that we are responsible for the well-being of our fellow citizens, and thus we are our brothers’ keeper. So Cain responded to the inquisition, “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*” (Gn 4:9). Yes you are, Cain!

In the context of the church, the Holy Spirit mandated, “*Let each one not look out merely for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*” (Ph 2:4). In fact, the Spirit had introduced this mandate with the statement, “*In humility of mind let each esteem others better than themselves*” (Ph 2:3). Yes, we are our brother’s keeper if we seek to look out for the interests of others. If we are our brother’s keeper in reference to society in general, then certainly we are in the fellowship of the family of God.

It is today as it was a few decades ago when the American government finally came to the conclusion that it would mandate the law that people wear their seat belts when riding in a moving vehicle. Most countries of the world today have followed after the same mandate. When the law was first established, however, some people grumbled. They complained, “I have the right to make a choice as to whether I will or will not wear a seat belt in my own vehicle.” But they were wrong. Sometimes, dead wrong. Such people were thinking selfishly.

The reason for the law was a matter of protecting and benefitting society as a whole. If one did not wear a seat belt, and was subsequently involved in a moving vehicle accident on the road, then he or she could be thrown from the vehicle and seriously injured. He or she would thus be rushed to a hospital, and nursed back to health, that is, if he or she were not initially killed in the accident.

Now the question is, who pays the hospital bill? Or, who initially paid for the ambulance, the doctors and nurses, or even the hospital in which the anti-seat belt person was nursed back to life? The answer is that society as a whole paid the bill for all the medical services. Society even paid most of the bills for the anti-seat belt victim because he or she could not in a lifetime pay the high cost of hospitalization for his own medical recovery. All of us as a society, therefore, had to subsidize the hospital bill of the anti-seat belt wearer. And for this reason, society as a whole, through the government of society, said that everyone, when in a moving vehicle, must wear a seat belt.

In order to be a member of society as a whole, citizens must be willing to give up some of their personal rights . . . freedoms . . . in order to be a keeper of society as a whole. And when speaking specifically of Christians, it is incumbent upon every member of the body of Christ to “*not look out merely for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*” (Ph 2:4). As members of the body of Christ, we are certainly our brother’s keeper. If we are not looking out for the interests of our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we are behaving selfishly. We are considering our “rights” above the interests of the whole body of Christ.

Smokers have always been very selfish people. They are more

concerned about their right to freely smoke cigarettes over the rights of the people who must breathe in their smoke after they have exhaled. As a smoking father puffs away on a cigarette in his own home, the lungs of his young children are being damaged for life. He is a selfish father.

We have thus been vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus for the benefit of the brothers and sisters into whose presence we come in any formal or non-formal setting. We wear a face mask in one another's presence in order to guard our brother or sister against asymptomatic Covid carriers, one of which we may be. We socially distance ourselves from one another for the interest of one another. And if lockdown is necessary to detour the pandemic, then in our own homes we confine ourselves. We are thus not selfish, trying to exercise some rights or freedoms we think we have that encourage us to ignore the interests of the body of members, and society, as a whole.

On the contrary, we are trying to be our brother's keeper during a pandemic that is ravaging the world. It is thus not a sacrifice of our individual rights or freedoms to be vaccinated, but a manifestation of our love for one another. We vaccinate ourselves for the sake of the community in which we live, but also for the safety of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our vaccination is not a total guarantee from being attacked by the Covid virus, but at least it reveals to others that we are doing the best we can to protect others if we are tested positive.

Chapter 4

COMFORTING WORDS

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

[1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 was first written to people who were no more than six months old as Christians. Consider the following text of Paul's encouragement to Thessalonian disciples, with my added interpretive notes in brackets.]

¹³But I [Paul, by revelation from the Holy Spirit] do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, [of these important end-of-time events] con-

cerning those [Christians] who are [at this time] asleep [in death], so that you do not grieve [sorrow] as others [who do not believe in life after death, and] who have no hope [of living past the grave]. ¹⁴For if we [Christians] believe that Jesus died [on the cross] and rose again [from the dead], even so God [the Son] will bring with Him [the spirits of all] those [Christians] who have fallen asleep in Jesus [before His final coming].

¹⁵For this we say to you by the word [of promise] of the Lord [Jesus], that we [Christians] who are alive *and* remain [alive] unto the [final] coming of the Lord [at the end of time] will not go before [into heaven] those [Christians] who have [previously] fallen asleep [in death in the Lord before the final coming].

¹⁶For the Lord [Jesus] Himself will descend [universally] from [His present realm of dwelling in] heaven with a shout [of attention], with the [commanding] voice of the [leading] archangel, and with the trumpet [declaration] of God. And the dead [Christians who died] in Christ [before the final coming] will rise first [from the grave]. ¹⁷Then we [Christians] who are alive *and* remain [at the time of His coming] will be caught up together [from this earth] with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be [in fellowship] with the Lord [in a state of unending existence]. ¹⁸Therefore, comfort one another with these words [of promise in reference to what will happen to our Christian friends who have already died].

Chapter 5

JOURNEY THROUGH DEATH

Through the apostle Paul the Holy Spirit thus admonished, “*I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, so that you **do not grieve as others who have no hope***” (1 Th 4:13). There . . . the Holy Spirit said it. The grave site scene of a dearly beloved Christian must be far different than the same scene at the burial of an unbeliever. Living Christians “do not grieve as unbelievers” in the death of their loved ones.

Consoling Christians must not be accused of being hard-hearted when they exhort the grieving with these words from the Holy Spirit. If our grief at the death of a Christian brother or sister is no different than that of the unbelievers, then we have a problem with our faith in the fact that the one who went down into the grave will come out again dressed in a glorious body. Our challenge at the death of a disciple, therefore, is how to salt our grief with hope. And in so doing, there is a sense of victory as we lay our loved ones in a tomb that will eventually be broken open.

There will be grief for the moment. The admonition of the Spirit allows for this. A simile is used with a negative concerning the occasion. The phrase reads, “not grieve as.” There is grief, but it is not as those unbelievers who have no hope beyond the grave.

The burial of a saint is only a temporary transition of the body. The body must transition through the dissipation of the body into dust in expectation of the heavenly body that will eventually dress our souls with a body from God. The body of our flesh will be the seed that will give birth to our “heavenly body.” Therefore, in our hope “*we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our house that is from heaven, if indeed clothed, we [in the state of our disembodied souls] will not be found naked*” (2 Co 5:2,3).

When Jesus comes in the clouds, He will bring with Him all those souls of departed saints who have had the privilege of escaping this world that is infested and infected with sin and sickness (1 Th 4:14). So the Holy Spirit concluded the matter, “*Therefore, comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th 4:18). If we grieve as the rest, then we will keep comforting ourselves with the words of the Holy Spirit that are written here in our Bibles.

Chapter 6

GOSPEL FOUNDATION FOR UNITY

The centrality of the good news (gospel) to the entire existence of the world was revealed from the time a woman cried out in childbirth in a barn in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, to the moment when

that same child, as a grown man with nail holes in His hands, disappeared in a cloud from His apostles' sight somewhere in Palestine. Some have believed in this gospel journey of the Son of God, but they have never taught a lesson on the incarnation of God into the flesh of man. And yet, the incarnation establishes the very heart of what constitutes the mentality and life of a believer (See Ph 2:5-11). It is the central purpose for the creation of the world.

And then there are some who fail to understand the extent of the present kingdom reign of the incarnate Son of God, assuming that He is coming sometime in the future in order to begin His reign as God on this speck of dust that we call the earth. They assume that His present reign is limited to the church of believers whose members are sprinkled throughout the world. Unfortunately, these folks have not understood that the incarnate Son of God now reigns over all things, including the church of believers (1 Pt 3:22). When He comes again, He will relinquish this reign in order that God be all in all.

Religionists who do not preach and teach the incarnation of God, nor believe in the totality of Jesus' present reign over all things, are preaching and teaching a marginalized gospel message. As a result, they often fill in the gaps of their message with religious rites and ceremonies that they assume merit a salvational relationship with God apart from obedience to the gospel. In doing so, they unwittingly establish a self-righteous system of religion to escape the implications of incarnational living after the One in whom they believe was only some good religious teacher who wandered throughout Palestine. But in teaching such a limited understanding of the gospel, they are actually preaching another gospel, that is, fragments of the true gospel that is saturated with meritorious religious rites and ceremonies that one must obey in order to be justified before God.

There can be no unity among such religionists simply because everyone is binding religious rites and ceremonies that are unique with their particular denominated group. They thus believe and teach another gospel that opens the door for self-righteous religiosity that marginalizes the sanctification that was made available by the incarnate Son of God on the cross.

We write in order to call out of the religious world misguided religionists who would seek to come into a unity of faith that is based on the totality of the gospel, the final action of which will be revealed in Jesus' revelation from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. He is coming again in order to take vengeance on all those who refused to respond to His gospel journey to this earth, which journey is reported to us in the Bible. If one does not respond in obedience to the gospel, then there will be some unfortunate consequences when He comes again (See 2 Th 1:6-9).

We can be united on the foundation of the gospel alone, and thus, give one another freedom in those areas that do not infringe on the gospel. The more we agree on and focus on the gospel, many of those points of debate and division that exist among people of faith will simply vanish away.

Chapter 7

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF STRUGGLE

(Romans 8:18-25)

[The words and statements within the brackets of the text below are my own interpretative comments in reference to the text. The biblical text is from the *International King James Version*.]

18 *For I [Paul] consider that the sufferings [in this world] of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory [of eternal life] that will be revealed to us [in the heavenly environment that is yet to come].*

19 *For the earnest [sincere] expectation of the creation [metaphorically] waits for the revealing of the sons of God [when Jesus comes again (1 Th 4:13,14)].*

20 *For the creation was made subject to futility [after the sin of Adam], not willingly [by its own natural processes of physical laws], but because of Him [God] who has subjected [cursed] it in hope [of being made a new heavens and earth when Jesus comes (2 Pt 3:13)],*

21 *because the [physical] creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption [of decay and inflicting diseases] into the glorious liberty [of deliverance] of the children of God [from this perishing physical world of death and disease (Rv 21:4)].*

22 *For we know that the whole [physical] creation [metaphorically] groans and labors [in earthquakes, volcanoes, disease and pandemics], together until now in pains of birth [in order to bring forth a new heavens and a new earth (habitation) in which righteousness dwells (2 Pt 3:13)].*

23 *And not only this, but ourselves also [groan mentally and physically], who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we [Christians] ourselves groan within ourselves [in a mortal body that is cursed with pain, disease and death], waiting for the adoption [out of this flesh (1 Co 15:35-58)], the redemption [deliverance] of our body [out of this physical environment of sickness and death].*

24 *For we are saved by hope [that encourages us to rely on the promises of God, in order that we too will be freed from this physical environment and be delivered into a new habitation]; but hope [of that which is not yet revealed and] that is seen is not hope [for something new], for what a man sees, why does he still hope for it?*

25 *But if we hope for what we do not see, then with perseverance [endurance] we wait for it [to come when Jesus is revealed in His final coming at the end of this present creation].*

Chapter 8

BY GRACE IN RESPONSE TO LAW

“For sin will not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Rm 6:14). This statement, as well as others that are married to this theme of the book of *Romans*, is always perplexing for those who still have an urge to justify themselves through meritorious law-keeping. This was the mental and behavioral challenge of the early Jews. In their faith, they presumed that they could justify themselves before God through their perfect meritorious keep-

ing of law, and all those self-imposed rites that they instituted to surround the law. It was a frustrating system of religion simply because one could never feel that he or she was justified before God.

In order to apply Paul's statement to our relationship with God through law, it must first be noted that in the Greek text the Greek article "the" was intentionally not placed in the text by the Holy Spirit in reference to law. It was not just in case some might conclude that Paul was speaking specifically about "the law," that is, the Sinai law. In reference to his argument against the meritorious keeping of the Sinai law, this was true in reference to the Jews meritoriously keeping that law in order to justify themselves. But this is not Paul's meaning when he simply used the word "law." His point was that Christians in general, regardless of whether they were Jews, are not under any law by which they could justify themselves before God. (This argument is brought out in another verse to which we will refer later. We must be cautious with those translations that insert in the text the definite article "the" when reference, both in *Romans* and *Galatians*, is to "law.")

By the time God's grace was revealed through the incarnate Son of God, the Jews had for centuries lived under the bondage of their own self-imposed religiosity. They supposed that acceptance by God was based on the foundation of how well one performed the statutes of the Sinai law, as well as their added religious rites and ceremonies, which eventually they obeyed to the exclusion of the Sinai law (See Mk 7:1-9). Therefore, when the gospel of the grace of God was finally revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ, most Jews found it very difficult to comprehend grace. The same is true today in a religious world where every imaginable religious order has been invented in order for adherents to self-justify themselves before God.

By the time the incarnate Son of God was revealed in Bethlehem, the religious leaders of the day had "re-scriptured" the Jews' relationship with God. They did so through their interpretations of the Sinai law and added religious traditions.

It was true that the Sinai covenant continued active in Israel through the Israelites' obedience to the accompanying Sinai law. However, and as all those who become ignorant of the law, the urge for self-justifica-

tion became a part of their religiosity once they set aside the purpose for which the Sinai law was given.

For example, the religious leaders sought to guarantee the keeping of the Sabbath law by adding numerous “Sabbath laws” that surrounded the original giving of the Sabbath as a part of the Sinai law. In order to honor the Sabbath, therefore, the religionists of the day imposed on the people their own self-justifying restrictions in order to guarantee that the Sabbath was strictly honored. For example, the “sabbath-day journey,” which journey is found nowhere in the Sinai law, was an imposed “law” that was to be obeyed in order to guarantee that one obeyed the Sabbath.

But in adding and binding self-imposed laws to the original Sinai law, the religious leaders forgot, in reference to the Sabbath, that “*the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*” (Mk 2:27). It is the same with the assortment of religious traditions that we witness today among so many religious groups. It is supposed that obedience to all the religious rites and ceremonies of each particular faith will make the adherents more religious. The rites and ceremonies are perpetuated in order to make the adherents believe that they are religious. However, we must never forget that self-imposed human religious rites and ceremonies can never profit in reference to our salvational relationship with God. Keeping such may present before others and ourselves a facade of religiosity, but they are of no benefit in reference to our salvation.

As all religious leaders who impose obedience to human religious rites and ceremonies, the Jewish religious leaders reversed the order of obedience, and thus contradicted the very purpose of the Sabbath. They made the Sabbath, and the keeping of the assortment of man-made laws associated with it, the means by which one would be justified before God. Instead of a day of rest for the people, it became a show of religiosity through the keeping of all the added traditions. Keeping the Sabbath, therefore, became a means of self-justification before God when combined with all the man-invented religious rites that surrounded the Sabbath.

Whatever understanding the Jews had of grace while living under the Sinai law, was viewed through law-keeping, specifically the keep-

ing of all the traditions of men that surrounded the Sabbath. To many Jews, grace was activated in one's life only if one kept the law perfectly. And to keep the law perfectly, the religious leaders instituted their own assortment of laws (traditions) in order to make sure that the Sinai law of the Sabbath was obeyed.

The statement of Jesus in Mark 2:27 was made in the context of what He and His disciples did on the Sabbath in reference to picking and eating the grain of a field through which they had just walked at the time (Mk 2:23). But in reference to what Jesus and His disciples did in reference to the grain of the field, the Pharisees accused Jesus, "*Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath*" (Mk 2:24).

What the disciples were doing was lawful according to the Sinai law. On a journey, according to the Sinai law, one had a right to eat the grain of a field as he passed through someone's field. But this act is not that which motivated the Pharisees to make an accusation against the disciples. The Pharisees accused Jesus and the disciples of doing the simple work of picking out the grain so they could eat it. Unfortunately, the Pharisees interpreted this to be work on the Sabbath. But it was not.

The Pharisees viewed their relationship with God through the strict obedience of their interpretations of the law, not through grace. Since they had elevated their interpretations of the law to the same authority as God's law, if one disobeyed their interpretations, then it was the same as disobedience to God's law.

So in the immediate context of the situation, Jesus reminded the religious leaders of the example of David when he, in his flight from the murderous hand of Saul, was at the point of starvation. David subsequently went into the tabernacle of God and ate the showbread, which bread under the Sinai law, was to be eaten only by the priests (Mk 2:26). But because David was under grace at the time, he did not sin. He was to be preserved as the future king of Israel. The higher law that he survive released him from the law that only the priests could eat the showbread.

But if we view David sinning on this occasion against law—which thing not even the Pharisees believed—then Jesus' lesson is that **law**

must be viewed through grace. However, if we view grace through law, then we are susceptible to keep adding to our system of law one law after another, precept upon precept, in order that law be obeyed perfectly. And then one day we wake up and find ourselves in a religion that is totally foreign to grace. And thus we and all those who conform to our legal religiosity have brought ourselves into the bondage of self-justification through law-keeping (traditions). It is from this system of religion that only the gospel of grace can set us free.

For Christians who are under grace, Paul made a reassuring statement in Romans 6:14. In view of the religious predicament into which the Jewish religious leaders had brought themselves—idolatrous religions were of the same nature—Paul affirmed that grace delivers us from the presumption that we can justify ourselves before God through law-keeping. Grace delivers us to the point that Paul wrote the following words to the Gentile Christians of Galatia. These Christians were threatened by Jewish Christians to return to meritorious law-keeping in order to be justified before God: “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage*” (Gl 5:1).

Those who approach grace through law cannot understand what the Holy Spirit just said in Galatians 5:1. They cannot understand because they have brought themselves into the bondage of their own self-justifying laws and religious traditions. This performance-oriented religiosity is almost always revealed by the assemblies of each particular religious group. In other words, unless prescribed assembly performances on the first day of the week are carried out according to the “traditions of the fathers,” then the assembled adherents are behaving outside the grace of God. During such assemblies it is stated in a “closing prayer,” “If we have been found faithful,” that is, faithful in obedience to all self-imposed, cult-like assembly performances in order to stand justified before God. This is the prayer of those who view grace through law-keeping, specifically their successful legal performance of assembly rituals and ceremonies.

In our self-reliance to stand on our own performances of law, we forget that we stand righteous before God because of our faith in the

gospel of grace that was revealed through Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we have this urge to reassure our relationship with God on the foundation of our own performance of law.

There were those in the church of Rome who were of such thinking. Their misguided faith in themselves to perform law in a manner by which they would justify themselves, nullified their faith in the grace of God. So Paul concluded his argument in *Romans* by stating that we are justified by faith, not our meritorious performance of works of law: “*And if by grace [we are saved], then it is no more by works [of merit or law], otherwise grace is no more grace [in reference to our salvation]”* (Rm 11:6). If we were saved by our perfect performance of works of law, then there would be no need for grace. This was the fatal error of the legal-oriented religious leaders of Jesus’ day.

So in view of the preceding, what part does the law of God play in reference to our salvation? By the time Paul had, in his grace document of *Romans*, arrived at Romans 11, he had already settled this matter. He had previously argued, “*We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of law”* (Rm 3:28). **Our salvation is in our faith in the grace of God**, not in our ability to flawlessly perform law. (We must not miss the point that the Greek article “the” **is not** in the text of Romans 3:28 in reference to law. Therefore, Paul’s argument is that we are justified by our faith in the grace of God apart from any system of law we might invent for ourselves, or even so use the law of Christ.)

In view of the fact that we are not justified by law, Paul then asked, “*Do we then make void law through faith?”* (Rm 8:31). This would be the natural conclusion that self-justifying legalists would make. But Paul concluded, “*Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish law.*” And herein is the serendipity of faith. **We obey our Father because of our faith in His grace, by which grace He has already saved us through the sacrificial offering of His Son. This is good news!**

Our salvation, therefore, can never be by a simple inactive faith, **but by a faith that responds to the grace of God**. We can never be saved by faith alone. James made this perfectly clear when he wrote, “*You see then that a man is justified by works [of faith] and not by faith*

only” (Jn 2:24). Likewise, we can never be saved by grace alone. On the contrary, it is only by our faith in the grace of God that we can be saved, for our faith must be responsive in reference to the gospel of Jesus.

Paul’s argument is based on the fact **that our faith establishes obedience to the law of our Father. Faith in the grace of God inspires obedience.** We must never reverse this order. It can never be that we obey law in hope that we are “found faithful.” The fact is that we are considered faithful by God through His grace, not because of our perfect performance of His law. This is the interpretation of what Paul wrote in reference to the religious leaders of Israel who found assurance in their own meritorious performance of law and their added religious rites and ceremonies. Paul wrote, *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness [grace] and seeking to establish their own righteousness [through the performance of law and their own religious rites and ceremonies], have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God [that was revealed through the gospel of the incarnate Son of God]”* (Rm 10:3).

Jesus was nailed to the cross to destroy the Jews’ order of establishing a self-righteous relationship with God. Christians have been justified fully by the cross. There need be no subsidizing performance of law-keeping in order to supplement this grace. In other words, because Christians have realized the grace that was revealed at the cross, they are motivated to obey their loving Father who offered His only begotten Son for their justification. Christians dare not reverse this order, lest they be, as the Jewish religious leaders, seeking to justify themselves through their own perfect obedience of law, and the added guarantee of religious performances, specifically Sunday morning rituals.

It is upon the foundation of viewing law through grace that statements as the following were made by the Holy Spirit: *“We have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law, **for by works of law no flesh will be justified**”* (Gl 2:16). When the Holy Spirit declared, *“for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared,”* He meant that this grace that was re-

vealed through the crucified Son of God, was the end of any and all attempts on our part to be justified before God through our own meritorious law (Ti 2:11).keeping.

It is in this context that Paul wrote, “*For all things [in reference to salvation] are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may **cause thanksgiving** to abound to the glory of God*” (2 Co 4:15). This is the point. This is the heart of discipleship because it reveals the heart of God. It is the motivating power of grace that causes obedience to God. This is the power of the gospel that drives individuals to the waters of baptism in order to be sanctified of all sins for which atonement was made at the cross.

One is baptized, therefore, but not simply in obedience to law. One is baptized because he or she has been taught the gospel, which is the revelation of the heart of God to humanity. The power of this gospel was subsequently released in the life of the one who was caused, by thanksgiving, to give his or her life in response to the heart of God. It is for this reason that baptism should never be relegated to a simple act of law-keeping. It must always be a response in the life by those who understand the revelation of the heart of God in the sacrificial offering of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary.

We would not, through our own narcissistic performance of law, sacrifice this understanding of God’s grace that was revealed at the cross. We encourage one to be baptized in response to grace, not simply to obey law. Therefore, it is as Paul wrote, “*For the love of Christ [on the cross] **compels** us, because we judge that if one died for all, then all died*” (2 Co 5:14).

If we can understand this concept in reference to grace and law, then it will change our entire perspective of being Christian. Unfortunately, many of the Jews in the first century just “got baptized.” And because they came out of a performance-oriented religion that viewed grace through law-keeping, they sought to also impose law-keeping on the early Gentile disciples. The Holy Spirit saw this as such a grave problem, that He inspired both *Romans* and *Galatians* to be written by a former Jewish religionist who saw the difference between grace and self-justification, and thus made the change in his own relationship

with God. We must do the same. So as soon as we witness those who would bring us into bondage with their own self-imposed religious traditions, we will stand up and confront the same with the statement of the Holy Spirit: “We are not under law, but under grace.”

Chapter 9

REASSURANCE IN TIMES OF TURMOIL

If we view the present pandemic from a biblical point of view, we should find some encouragement in the word of God. However, the pandemic should not be an occasion for Bible believers to take out of historical context specific statements of hope in the Bible that were directed to initial individuals and audiences who needed encouragement in times of local tragedies. Specifically, we must not be prophetic thieves to steal away from local first century Christians those prophecies that were originally spoken and written to encourage local believers directly. Such notes of encouragement apply only to us indirectly.

It is for this reason that Christians must be cautioned about what they encounter on the worldwide social media today, the messaging of which can reach even to the young village dweller in the bush of Africa. Some innocent minds are often in cellphone contact with an encyclopedia of theological nonsense that is spewed around the world by those who would seek to arouse hysteria during a worldwide pandemic in order to grow their church.

The prophecy of Jesus in **Luke 21:23-25** is a commonly misunderstood and misapplied prophetic statement that Jesus made specifically to first century Jewish Christians. He made the prophecy in order to explain to His immediate audience that in the lives of their children and grandchildren in the years to come, God would be working in a local tragedy that they would personally experience.

With this understanding in mind, Luke 21 was originally a message of reassurance to those believers in His audience to whom He initially delivered a prophecy concerning the termination of their Jewish persecutors. Jesus’ message was that in the midst of any tragedy,

the believing Jews must not forget that God is always in control. In their case, He would bring judgment upon national Israel because of the unbelieving Jews' rejection of the Son of Man (See also Mt 24; Mk 13:14-20).

A few extracts from the prophecy of Jesus' message to Jewish Christians at that time is central to our discussion in the context of modern-day prognosticators who misapply the Luke 21 prophecy. Around A.D. 61/62, Luke, the scribe, eventually recorded in writing Jesus' spoken prophecy. This was about a decade before the time of the fulfillment of the prophecy in A.D. 70, but was about thirty years after Jesus originally made the prophecy.

In A.D. 70, the Jewish world was about to come to an end within the Roman Empire. For unbelieving Jews, this end seemed to be the end of the world. Therefore, because the events of A.D. 70 would affect the Jews throughout the world of the Roman Empire, Jesus prophesied during His earthly ministry years before a message of reassurance for believing Jews. His message was in view of the fact that the immediate unbelieving Jews to whom He first prophesied the end of national Israel, who subsequently rejected Him as the Son of Man (the Messiah), would themselves in about four decades meet their judgment. So in order to prepare the Jewish Christians of Palestine for a social trauma that was going to take place in about forty years after the ascension, Jesus embedded a message of hope in His prophecy of the termination of the Jewish State, and specifically, Jerusalem and the temple.

So with the liberty of our following parenthetical interpretive inclusions, notice what Jesus prophesied concerning the children and grandchildren of those Jews who personally rejected Him as the Messiah. Their children and grandchildren would experience the following:

“But woe to those [unbelieving Jewish women in Jerusalem in A.D. 70] who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days [of the Romans besieging of Jerusalem]. For there will be great distress in the land [of Judea] and wrath upon this [Jewish] people. And they [the

future children and grandchildren of Jesus' generation of unbelieving Jews] *will fall by the edge of the sword* [of the Romans]. *And they* [the survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem] *will be led away captive into all nations* [over which the Romans rule]. *And Jerusalem will be trodden down* [with every stone overturned] *by the Gentiles* [Romans] *until the times of the Gentiles* [the Roman Empire] *are fulfilled.*"

We must keep in mind that by the time the preceding events occurred in Judea, Christian Jews had already migrated out of Judea and Jerusalem (Compare At 8:4). The letters of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and Jude were all letters that were written in the middle 60s to warn Christian Jews to stay away from Jerusalem when they began to witness the "signs of the times" surrounding the end of national Israel in A.D. 70.

The preceding calamity that eventually came upon national Israel in A.D. 70 was the end of the Jews' social and political influence within the Roman Empire, though the Jews' religious beliefs carried on, even to this day. However, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 seemed that their world had fallen apart because God allowed such to happen to His supposed chosen people after they rejected and killed His Son (See Mk 12:1-12). They had not accepted the incarnate appearing of the Son of Man. National Israel rejected the Son of Man by not accepting the new nation of Israel, the body of Christ, that had been established on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30.

In the context of the Luke 21 narrative, Luke turned to common metaphors that were used in Old Testament prophecies in reference to kings and kingdoms. His Jewish audience would understand the meaning of these metaphors. The "sun" was commonly used in prophecy to represent the king of a particular kingdom. The minor heavenly lights of the "moon" and "stars" represented tributaries of a kingdom, or the satellite nations that were under the control of the king of the empire. We must keep in mind, therefore, that when such metaphors were used in prophecy, focus was not on the literal sun, moon and stars, but on their dominance of light in the darkness of space.

The metaphorical meaning of the sun, moon and stars of the Luke

21 context were used in reference to the vast network of satellite nations that functioned under the control of the Roman Empire.

At the time of the conclusion of the first century, Rome was continuing to expand throughout the Middle East and into Persia. Regional kingdoms in Europe, the East, and North Africa were likewise succumbing to its military dominance, and subsequently committing “financial fornication” with the Empire (See Rv 18). Therefore, at the time of the fall of national Israel in A.D. 70, the Jewish nation was only one of many social population groups that needed to be subjugated to the control of Rome. So Jesus continued, and Luke thirty years after Jesus in A.D. 61,62, recorded, the following:

“And there will be signs in the sun [regional kings of the Roman Empire], and in the moon [the regents of nations], and in the stars [the generals and governors of Roman dominated nations within the reach of the Roman army]. And on the [inhabited] earth [world] of Rome, there will be distress among nations [that Rome will militarily dominate] and perplexity at the roaring of the sea [populations] and the waves [turmoil among the populations].

John’s metaphorical use of the word “sea” in the visions of Revelation defines that the populations (citizenries) of the nations is intended. There is always sociological movement in the populations of every nation, just as waves and currents of the sea constantly shift and move the waters of the sea. Therefore, when an invading force, as Rome, moved in to conquer, the raging waves of the people reach their climax. It is during these times that *“men’s hearts will be failing them for fear”* (Lk 21:26). In A.D. 70, there was great fear among the Jewish people when Rome launched her war against national Israel. It was the same fear that permeated the hearts of every citizen of every nation at the time Rome launched her military attacks against the Jews.

Of course, the heaven in which God dwells is unshakable. Therefore, Jesus referred in the Luke 21 context to the “heavenly” rule of nations on earth that would be shaken by the invading forces of Rome. It would be at this time that the presence of the Son of Man (Jesus)

would be confirmed to every Christian, for believers would conclude that King Jesus was in control of all these things, just like He said during His earthly ministry (Mt 28:18; see Hb 1:3 that was written just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem). In the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the believing Jew would subsequently conclude that King Jesus had come in judgment of Israel for rejecting Him as the Son of Man, the Messiah and Savior. It was exactly as He prophesied.

Old Testament judgment language is found in Luke 21:27 when the word “coming” was used by Luke in reference to “*the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*” In Matthew 24:27, and in the same prophecy, Matthew used the Greek word *parousia*. This word means “presence.” Therefore, the “coming” of the Lord in time in judgment was a sign of the presence of the Lord.

The “coming of the Lord” in Old Testament prophecies was a sign of judgment upon the nations. In the judgment, the presence of the Lord was revealed. The Lord came in judgment upon nations, and in the context of prophecy, the nation upon which the Son of Man would come in the prophetic judgment of Luke 21 and Matthew 24, was national Israel. This was a coming of the Lord “in time,” whereas there will be another coming of the Lord at “the end of time.” The coming of the Lord in time, therefore, is always prophetic of the coming of the Lord at the end of time. But we must not forget that the coming of the Lord in the context of Luke 21 and Matthew 24 is in reference to judgment in time.

Jesus gave, and Luke, Matthew and Mark recorded, a final and specific note of encouragement for the local Jewish Christians who would suffer at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Unbelieving Jews would persecute Jewish Christians from the time of the cross to the conclusion of national Israel in A.D. 70. However, when the immediate believing Jews’ children and grandchildren, forty years after the initial spoken prophecy of Jesus, saw all these events (“signs”) transpiring in their world, it would be a time to look up and realize that all things were still under the control of the resurrected and ascended King. Great comfort went out to the Jewish Christians of Palestine at the time of fulfillment because Jesus prophesied that the persecuting Jews would in the event eventually be silenced. The Christian Jews at the time of

fulfillment in A.D. 70 were thus “redeemed” from their persecutors.

Unfortunately, during the “time of the Gentiles,” Rome would by the end of the first century, and into the second through the fourth centuries, launch an onslaught of persecution against all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles. This would lead us to the encouraging prophecy of Revelation in order to find hope in the eventual Divine judgment of the Roman Empire. John would prophesy that even Rome’s persecution of Christians throughout the second to the fourth centuries would also come to an end (Rv 17:14). Therefore, in fulfillment of John’s visions, the coming of the Lord as King of kings would again be perceived.

As during the time of all wars and pandemics, it is always time to find hope in the fact that King Jesus still reigns in heaven with all authority. He is still King of kings and Lord of Lords. And Revelation 17:14 is still true:

These will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of Kings. And those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful.

This was true throughout the great influenza pandemic of 1917/1918 when millions died around the world. It was true in the 1300s during the Black Plague pandemic when millions died. Great human tragedies have thus occurred before our present pandemic. However, God does not, and will not, use a pandemic as a sign of the end of the world. He used pandemics in Israel in order to drive people to repentance. He so used such to punish and to turn Israel to repentance (Study Nm 21:4-9; Dt 32:23-27). In the context of these passages, throughout the history of Israel God would and did use suffering and national tragedy to return His people to Him and His word.).

Nevertheless, our hope is in the fact that throughout all human tragedies, some of which were recorded in the Bible, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit remain true to believers. After “experiencing” the visions of Revelation, John responded, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” (Rv 22:20). In view of the present worldwide pandemic, we too, as always, include that request in our prayers.

It is not that any one pandemic, or war, is a sign of the end of the world. Bible students have proclaimed hysteria in the midst of all pandemics of the past, as well as all world wars. Fortunately, the only people who are not frightened are those who believe in the Bible. But most people today do not believe in the Bible. It is only that during a pandemic the thinking of Bible-believing people is driven beyond this disease-cursed world in hope of being in the presence of the Lord where never again a tear will flow from a sorrowful eye (Rv 21:4). But in reference to unbelievers, everything just carries on as though there will be no finality to the things that presently exist. *“But as the days of Noah were, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man”* (Mt 24:36).

In this way, we, as Bible believers, interpret the present pandemic. It would be a judgment of God in time in order to encourage repentance. But only those who believe in God will repent. The rest of the unbelieving world is oblivious to the judgments of God in time. So as God dealt with Israel, so also He would deal with us in an effort to keep us focused on King Jesus. We must connect the dots on this matter. If we do not understand that the present pandemic is just another in-time judgment, then it may be that we need a restoration to the word of God among ourselves (Hs 4:6).

God certainly brought a worldwide judgment on the civilization of Noah’s generation. But since every imagination of humanity then was continually evil, God was justified in the flood to wipe that generation of unrepentant unbelievers from the face of the earth (Gn 6:5). We pray that God will not have to bring the civilization of today to such a climatic conclusion.

Chapter 10

FREEDOM IN TIMES OF WAR

It is true that there never in the history of the world has been a pandemic as the one that the world is experiencing with the Covid 19 outbreak. We read in history that the Black Plague (Bubonic Plague) of the early 1300s took away, in some places of Europe, about one third of

the population. But that plague did not extend globally into every population group of the world. It was not a pandemic as the present Covid pandemic that is now cursing humanity worldwide.

And then there was the “Spanish” flu (Influenza) pandemic of the early 1900s that possibly took the lives of at least fifty million people worldwide. The world at that time was connected globally with travel only on ships that moved slowly around the world. But the Influenza pandemic, as the Black Plague, was also limited, both geographically and in the devastation of humanity.

The impact of the Covid virus, on the other hand, is global. Not one nation of the world is escaping its carnage. The reason for this is quite simple. **We live in a travel-oriented world that is connected by passenger airliners.** Added to this is the fact that there are more people living today than when earlier pandemics swept across the face of the earth. And unfortunately, the majority of the population of the world today lives in clusters of people in large cities. People are clumped up in cities as opposed to the more rural population of the world unto these modern times.

Therefore, we are living in apprehensive times, that on the part of governments, assumes some decisive action. However, it is in times like these that autocratic leaders often arise among us, and subsequently slip in their mandates that often infringe upon the freedom of the individual citizens. Nevertheless, in times of war, society must have decisive leadership. For example, it is often in many countries of the world today as it is with President Museveni, who has been president of Uganda since 1986. In reference to the present pandemic, he stated to the people of Uganda: “We are today in a war against this [Covid] virus. And in a war you have no human rights. Therefore, when the vaccination is available in your area, line up and take the jab.”

And certainly in a global war in which we are now engaged against the Covid virus, the Ugandan president’s words are indicative of those who would use the occasion for their own autocratic adventures in a democratic society. Nevertheless, in times of “war,” leaders must make mandates to protect the people. Without the approval of a legislative congress, Museveni took action as an autocratic leader, though he had

his people foremost in his mind.

When the Covid pandemic began the first of 2020, Uganda shut down all their schools throughout the country. When they recently re-opened after being closed for two years, an interviewed teacher on international news said, “Don’t worry, we will be back to our normal educational level in three years.”

To the Ugandans, the sacrifice of two years of contact spreading of the Covid virus in schools was worth the lives of thousands of parents and grandparents throughout the nation. And when these students grow into adulthood, they will be thankful that class was dismissed for two years for the sake of their parents and grandparents. (Fortunately, these children do not live as Western children. During the two-year school closure, there were gardens to keep and livestock to herd.)

In times of social crisis (war and pandemics), politicians of necessity sometimes become dictators by ignoring legislative control over a people. When politicians ignore, or bypass, an elected congress, it is then that democracy is threatened, if not terminated, as with Nazi Germany of the past. Democracy is threatened because autocratic dictators often change the rules in order to keep their power. True democratic leaders, on the other hand, allow the people to change them when they go wrong.

In times of war we need decisive leaders. But when the war is over, it is often difficult for decisive leaders to relinquish the power that they exercised in order to win the war. This is the reason why leaders of rebellions have a very difficult time being the heads of state in a new democracy after the war has been won. What usually happens in the transition from a dictatorial state to a sought-after democratic state, when the revolution is won, the rebel leaders simply become the new dictators. It is almost impossible for a personality that leads on the streets to be challenged and changed by the votes of the people they led in the streets.

We can see this happening around the world in reference to the present pandemic. We see in the pandemic, not so much the human toll on the population of the world, but the fact that the pandemic has become the opportunity for some elected officials in democratic systems

of government to morph into autocratic leaders. If you question this, check out a book—download—on the Russian Revolution of 1917/18, as well as Hitler’s rise to power during the early 1930s.

Nevertheless, and regardless of the potential rise of dictators among us, we do not have to die as in the days of the Black Plague pandemic, and the Spanish or Asian flu pandemics. When it comes to winning the war against a pandemic virus, who cares who makes money off the vaccines that we are offered to use to arm ourselves against an enemy we cannot see. After all, we won the war against smallpox by choosing to arm ourselves with a vaccine of which some pharmaceutical company produced and made money. We were vaccinated, and the smallpox war was won.

Some people need to reflect on their inconsistent arguments on this matter. We vaccinate our children with the smallpox and measles vaccine to “protect them.” But hang on for a moment. “Protect them” against what and who? The “what” is easy to answer. We seek to protect our children against the smallpox virus. But who carries around in their bodies the smallpox virus? The unvaccinated! The virus is spread through sneezing and coughing droplets of the virus into the air by “other” people who have not been vaccinated. It is carried about by infected individuals who might infect our children.

We protect our children and ourselves, therefore, from others who have not been vaccinated against smallpox. In like manner, we choose to be jabbed with the Covid vaccine in order to “protect ourselves” from others who have Covid, or may be asymptomatic carriers as ourselves, and thus unknowingly infecting others. In other words, if we are concerned about other children, then we will have our own children vaccinated against the smallpox virus. If other parents have little concern for the health of their own children, and possibly allowing their children to be carriers of the virus, they will not have their children vaccinated against smallpox.

Keep in mind that the smallpox virus has been eradicated from the world because of the smallpox vaccine, and the choice of parents to have their children vaccinated. However, the virus can still make a comeback into society if people stop vaccinating their children.

So recently one of the members of our four-teamed evangelistic group here in Cape Town received a call that there was an America missionary family, with the parents of the wife visiting from America. They were passing through our area and wanted to meet with us. We wanted to meet with them. We did not want to be known as the “isolated church.” Unfortunately, in order to meet we had to assemble in an unventilated restaurant.

We are not the most healthy group of evangelists. Three of us have two heart stints each; one has asthma; one struggles with high blood pressure; one’s heart is pumping blood at only 80% efficiency, having a damaged heart valve that is waiting to be replaced; one has already had a heart attack; one had recently had emergency surgery to correct an internal organ dysfunction. All four of us were in the age group of 60 to 74. Would you say that we three have extenuating health conditions, and should be rightly concerned about the Covid virus? Fortunately at the time, all of us had been vaccinated against the Covid virus, but that was about five months before the meeting. Our resistance to Covid at the time was down to about 20% to 30%

Nevertheless, we agreed to meet with the foreign visitors who had flown into South Africa a week before and were touring throughout the country. And since they would be in Cape Town, they wanted to meet with us. However, after the meeting, and after the visitors had left for Johannesburg a day later to return to their homes, we received an urgent call from Johannesburg that three of their group of five tested positive for Covid, and thus were confined to quarantine. They wanted to warn us about their Covid infection in order that we be on guard since they were Covid carriers at the time of our meeting.

Now you can imagine the apprehension of the four of us as we waited out the five-day incubation period of the Covid virus. All four of us had been vaccinated, but still this is not a 100% protection against the Covid virus. You can understand that among ourselves as a fellowship of disciples, we lean on one another to be vaccinated in order to protect one another. This is our choice. We freely choose to vaccinate ourselves in order to protect ourselves as a group from one another, and thus continue to meet together in order to execute the work of the Lord.

Nevertheless, in view of what we experienced, we must not become victims of autocratic leaders who would use our present despair in a time of a pandemic in order to leverage their thirst for power over us. We seek a choice concerning “protecting” ourselves in order that we do not become subjects of a totalitarian state. We are not establishing the “vaccinated church,” as opposed to the “unvaccinated church.” Nevertheless, we choose to be vaccinated against Covid in order to protect others. We look out for the interest of the brotherhood of believers through self-protection against an unseen enemy (See Ph 4:2,3).

Churches do not have the authority to make mandates outside clear Bible teaching on any particular subject. Church leaders can only use Bible principles to love one another as the foundation to establish behavior upon which they as a group can make the best decisions possible. However, we are vaccinated in order to protect one another to the best of our ability. It is first a matter of our mutual concern for one another as fellow citizens of the state, not primarily in obedience to a state mandate that would work against our freedom as citizens of the state. We are free to choose. But our love for one another has moved us to choose to vaccinate in order to protect one another.

We have the freedom not to be vaccinated in times of a pandemic. The church has no authority to bind medical practices on the church. But notice what we have just stated. “We” have the freedom. Individually, there is some self-centeredness in the statement. If we bring ourselves into close fellowship with one another in a confined space during a pandemic, whether seated in a building or passing by one another in the foyer, then can we infringe on one another’s freedoms for a moment in order to conduct a safe assembly? At least this is something about which to think as we tout our antivaccination rights.

So consider that in the heat of a pandemic some churches have called up their elders (usually those about 60 and older), and asked them not to be present in the traditional assembly, but rather electronically Zoom the assembly in the safety of their own homes. If we do this, then something may have gone wrong in our behavior and thinking.

When the Romans were breathing death down upon the first century Christians, did the early Christians resort to Zoom assemblies and

Zoom preaching, just to be “safe” during the “Roman pandemic,” which “pandemic” lasted for at least 150 years? From our historical records, they continued to assemble in small groups. In Rome they assembled in the caves that were beneath the city of Rome.

Chapter 11

SUBMITTING TO GOVERNMENT

We took a picture of a “Covid-19 Occupancy Compliance Certificate” that was posted in one of the restaurants here in South Africa. The local health inspection officer previously visited the restaurant, judged that the total seating capacity of the restaurant was 48. In compliance with the laws of the national health department, the local health inspector calculated that the seating capacity of the restaurant during the pandemic was to be 24.

In a similar manner at the beginning of the pandemic, each food store was given a number of people who could be present in each store at any one time while customers shopped for essential food items for the week. Someone was thus standing at the entrance of each food store handing out numbered tags. Once all the numbered tags were distributed, then no other customers were allowed to enter the store until someone left the store, and handed back his or her numbered tag. The population submitted to these temporary government mandates during the pandemic in order that all of us as a society be where we are today. As Christians, we submitted to government in these matters in order to escape the judgment in time of the Covid-19 virus. (The “judgment” of Romans 13:1,2 is not a reference to the end-of-time judgment.)

Because the population of South Africa collectively submitted to the mandates of the government for the survival of the people, the people of South Africa were essentially delivered from a great number of deaths during the Covid pandemic, for all the citizens willingly submitted to the advice of the government health department during the pandemic. After the pandemic had subsided, the people of the country were well

on their way to some normality, and thus freed from many of the government restrictions that were followed by the people during the pandemic.

Much of the world did not understand how South Africa curbed the last wave of the pandemic when the Covid virus was sweeping around the world. The reason why the pandemic was limited in South Africa will take some explanation on the uniqueness of the South African government and culture. While the American and European West obsessed over being restricted, and thus supposedly losing their freedoms, the populace of South Africa complied with their government for the sake of the collective, a cultural value that is somewhat void in the West. The populace of South Africa agreed to be restricted in order to regain their freedom after the pandemic.

A movie was once produced many years ago that could be somewhat prophetic of the worldwide pandemic scenario. The setting of the movie was based on a supposed third world war that had transpired in the world, which war almost wiped out mankind on earth. It was concluded, by the survivors of the war that human emotions had driven the people of the world to go to war with one another in order to settle a dispute.

Therefore, in order not to go to war again, a powerful psychological drug was developed to suppress all human emotions. The state mandated that the drug had to be taken every day by every citizen. If one missed a day in taking his medication, the emotional part of the brain would start to arise again within the human mind. According to the autocratic leaders of the surviving city-state, that would not be good in order to prevent a future war. Therefore, the leaders who had survived the war judged that human emotions would lead to another world war where the existence of all humanity would again be endangered. But in actuality, the leaders had gained power during the war, and subsequently, they did not want to relinquish that power after the war. War is always the breeding ground for new dictators.

In order to prevent another world war, the autocratic leaders of the now totalitarian city-state, convinced the people to take their daily emotion-suppression medication. As a result, there was an “equilibrium”

of emotionality among the people. The movie was subsequently entitled, *Equilibrium*.

The problem was that one day one of the law-enforcement officers of the state forgot to take his daily medication, and subsequently, he started to experience some emotions. And then he missed another day. To him, and all those who had refused the medication—and were now living underground—it was a decision between making a choice and enjoying freedom, or submitting to a totalitarian state whose citizens walked around like emotionless zombies doing their commanded duties.

The movie *Equilibrium* was first released in 2002. That was twenty years before the Covid pandemic! In many ways, the movie may have been prophetic of our times. Therefore, when vaccinations are available for a population to escape a pandemic war, the vaccination must still remain in the freedom of individual choice. Governments may mandate vaccination standards, but this is not within the realm of Divine authority, lest we create the “vaccinated church” and the “unvaccinated church.”

However, in reference to the authority of the state to mandate that which is good for the whole of society, in a democracy we the people often relinquish into the hands of our government the power to determine that which is good for the whole. If we do not do this, then we have no democracy. But in relinquishing our choice in a particular matter, we must still remain a government **by** the people. We will lose our freedom of choice in a society of totalitarian rule. Nevertheless, if we would be citizens of a healthy society in a democracy, we as a collective of society must relinquish some of our personal freedoms for the sake of the survival of society as a whole.

However, when our freedoms are slowly eroded away by state coercion, the story never ends well. In a democracy, the state is composed of politicians, and with politicians, remaining in power is often more important than the individual freedoms of the individual citizens. In fact, this thirst for power corrupts the morals of the politicians. It is for this reason that politicians in a democratic state are often known for being liars. They are such people in order to stay in power. It is just an

inherent flaw of democracy. It is for this reason that the politicians of a democratic state must regularly be changed through the voting of the people.

Moral decisions are the responsibility of Bible-obedient children of God. Unfortunately, we have too many autocratic politicians in the state who thirst only for power, regardless of the freedoms of the individual citizens of the state. Sir William Wallace (portrayed by Mel Gibson) in the 1995 released movie, *Braveheart*, is still right when he cried out at the end of the movie before his execution, “FREEDOM!”

OK, so you would like an example of the leadership of South Africa as to why the fourth wave of the Covid pandemic was closing, and at the same time, the rest of the world was still struggling in the midst of this wave. Here is one reason why: A great political meeting of people was recently scheduled for a visit of the President of South Africa. The mass gathering was composed of those of the President’s constituency who had voted him into office.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa subsequently arrived at the place of assembly. Before he was allowed out of his vehicle, his security personnel, as usual, first entered into the assembly hall where all the people had gathered. However, the security personnel returned to the vehicle in which the President was seated, and informed him, “This is not a legal assembly. There are too many people who have gathered. There is no social distancing because of the mass number of people, and many are not wearing face masks.”

President Ramaphosa replied, “We cannot attend this illegal assembly,” and thus his motorcade moved on. This is leadership, not a thirst for power that would violate the very mandate of the South African Health Department that put restrictions on the number of people who could gather in assembly halls of various sizes. Ramaphosa simply obeyed the mandates that he had ordered for the people. This example is one of those reasons why South Africa rapidly moved out of the fourth wave of the pandemic and on to some normality. It is a matter of leadership, not playing politics by narcissistic political figures who are looking for opportunities to exert power, and remain in power. It is leadership of a population of people who are willing to

forego some of their freedoms for a period of time in order to eventually be set free from an unseen enemy.

(Boris Johnson of Britain should have called up Cyril Ramaphosa before he accepted invitations to all those parties when Covid restrictions were placed on the people, which restrictions he and others violated.)

Chapter 12

CUSTODIANS OF CONTINUED RESTORATION

If in one's personal study of the word of God he discovers truth that is contrary to the accepted theology of his present religious heritage, then it is incumbent upon him to teach what he has learned through his studies. If he does not do this, then the blood of those whom he would teach is on his shoulders (Ez 3:18,19). This responsibility is the inspiration for restoration, and thus the heart of our continued call for a restoration to the authority of God's word.

However, we must regularly remind ourselves that the curse of any restoration "movement"—we do not really like the word "movement" in reference to faith—is that such movements seem to always circle around. They circle around and become the very form of religion that the fathers of the "restoration" originally fled.

We would judge the Pharisees on this point. Centuries before the coming of the incarnate Son into this world, Israel turned from the word of God in order to create religious beliefs and behavior after the religions around them. By forgetting what their Bibles taught, they established their own idolatrous faith (Hs 4:6). As a result of their apostate deed of turning from the word of God, they were subsequently scattered by God throughout conquering nations, first by the Assyrians (722/21 B.C.), and then by the Babylonians (586 B.C.).

Nevertheless, God promised to the scattered that a repentant remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel would eventually be restored to the land of Palestine, though the land of their fathers to which they would be restored would be governed by foreign empires. Regardless of this,

however, they would be blessed in the land if they restored themselves to the word of God (See Dt 30:1-10; Ez 6:8; 14:22).

From the time of their last return to Palestine in 444 B.C., it was four centuries before the incarnate Son of God arrived on the scene. By the time of His arrival, the religious leaders of Israel, however, had again hijacked the faith of the people. They were so effective in this that the Holy Spirit revealed through Paul that the religious leaders had created the “Jews’ religion,” which we commonly refer to as Judaism (Gl 1:13,14). This was a legal-oriented religion that was based on the authority of traditional interpretations of the Sinai law, with the added religious rites and ceremonies the Jews had accumulated over the centuries. Except for references to the Sinai law, Judaism was a compilation of a host of religious traditions that the Jewish leadership considered to be binding as law, and thus, the identity of Judaism (See Mk 7:1-9).

Judaism took centuries to develop into a religious system that even opposed the incarnate Son of God. The Jewish restoration movement of the remnant of Israel eventually turned against the God who had brought the captives out of the bondage of foreign nations. And finally, after four centuries of religious heritage building, the restored remnant even crucified the One for whom they were restored to receive as the Messiah and Savior of the world.

(Legalized restoration movements will usually crucify those who call for a restoration to the authority of the word of God within the confines of an established religion. The leaders of the movement will often adopt a catechism of theology that should not be questioned or attacked by anyone who might have Bible questions about certain beliefs or behavior.)

Israel’s legalization of their restoration after their return to Palestine was no different than all legal restorations since that time. Restoration movements are often stimulated by sincere Bible students who renew continually their desire for Bible authority in all matters of faith. In their studies, sincere Ezras and Nehemiahs of the restoration will discover points of truth that have been ignored or violated by the religion in which they find themselves. And herein is embedded a danger.

In the early years of a restoration focus is usually on **legal points**

of difference between the existing theology of a religion and Bible truth. What the early restorationists often do not understand is that in their legal opposition to erroneous theology, they invariably establish a legal road map to direct sincere people out of the quagmire of past ritualistic religion. But in establishing a legal system to escape legalized religiosity, a canonized legal theology often comes out on the other side of the movement. The movement subsequently becomes just another legal religion. The zealous followers of the movement thus circle around from one legally defined religion to establish their own legally defined religion.

Essentially, the justification for the fathers' flight from traditionally defined religion was usually based on establishing Bible authority in all matters of faith. The fathers of the restoration movement discovered points of difference between the Bible and the unbiblical traditions that were bound on adherents. They discovered that what was bound was nothing other than matters of opinion and tradition, with an assortment of religious rites and ceremonies mingled in with the religious behavior of loyal adherents.

Unfortunately, as stated before, the fathers' original restoration was often based on a legally defined road map of proof texts that moved them and their followers to establish another legally defined religion. Instead of founding their "movement" on the gospel in order to establish unity among believers, they established a systematic legal theology to which all adherents of the movement must confirm in order to be considered faithful. The restoration, therefore, was established on law, not gospel. Legal restorationists often forget that we "*are not under law, but under grace*" (Rm 6:14).

In these two millennia since the cross, grace and gospel in religious restoration movements are often minimized in religious debates in order to establish points of doctrine to which adherents can come together to produce some sense of unity within any particular movement. And because of this, the supposed restoration movement to a gospel-oriented church eventually circles around to become just another denominational church that is validated by a legal catechism of doctrine, rather than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The hermeneutic, or system of Bible study in legal restorations, is often a misguided effort to establish a doctrinal outline by which the adherents of a particular movement can be identified. But in reality, legal hermeneutics are more often an effort to establish some system of theology to produce an “intellectual unity” that is based more on the mental skills of noted interpreters, than the simple gospel. If our faith is established in this manner, then we will end up in a movement that is quite denominational. The hermeneutic is inherently divisive because in the theology of the movement, religious rites, rituals and ceremonies slip into the behavior of the people as law, and thus, divide believers in the gospel from one another. This is what happened among the Christians in Galatia who ended up biting and devouring one another because some were preaching “another gospel” (See Gl 1:6-9).

The preceding happens when the gospel alone is not established as the foundation upon which the church is built and united (See Mt 16:16-18). We must remember that we are one man IN CHRIST, not one man in doctrine (See Gl 3:26-29). We are reconciled in one body by the cross, not by a common belief in a catechism of doctrine (See Ep 2:14-16).

Unfortunately, if there are any gospel-oriented prophets who would rise up to continue a valid restoration among the people, and by doing so, inherently contravene some point of the legal catechism of the heritage of the now denominated religion, these prophets are often nailed to crosses in order to preserve the movement and keep the theology of the movement pure of “false doctrine.”

True leaders must look in their own hands and find a Bible, not a hammer and nails. If our gospel is to defend the heritage of the fathers, then we know that the original fathers of the movement have been betrayed.

In the final years of a restoration movement, the “hammer-and-nail” defenders are actually promoting a heritage that has digressed into just another religion. The failure of a restoration is identified by the efforts of “hammer-and-nail” crusaders who seek to defend a legalized theology, and not the gospel, which gospel foundation has long been forgotten within the movement. As in the final years of Israel’s

apostasy, the religious leaders put to death those prophets who spoke out against the established religion of the day (See Hb 11:32-39). They eventually put to death the One who came to reveal the gospel to the world.

People of faith know that they are a part of a failed restoration movement when they no longer subject themselves to the final authority of the word of God in all matters of faith. They know that they have failed when the gospel is not the foundation of their faith.

If we are not motivated primarily by the truth of the gospel of the incarnate, crucified, resurrected and reigning Son of God, then our attempts to restore the body of Christ that is founded on the gospel will fail. We must not forget that it is the gospel that is the power of God in our lives (Rm 1:16). When we search for this gospel in our Bibles, the more we learn about the gospel, the more God's power is released to continue the restoration of the Son of God in the lives of people.

Crosses are often reserved for those who would question the heritage of any particular religious group. When there are those with hammers and nails among the leaders of any restoration movement, then we know that that "restoration movement" has gone astray. Just ask Jesus about this matter. It is for this reason that we would exhort the reader to read again 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

[Download Book 34, *A Call For Restoration*]

Chapter 13

WE BEG OF YOU!

Raj (Kunal Nayyar), on the Big Bang Theory TV series, once said to someone during one episode from whom he had asked something, "Please, don't make me beg. I grew up in _____, and I know how to beg." (You can guess the country.)

As a world evangelist for several decades, we also could say the same. We grew up as evangelists, and we too know how to beg, for there is a little begging in every evangelist.

It seems that in the past we were always asking (begging) someone for something to support somewhere. But those days are long gone for us. We terminated “most” of our begging, finally concluding that if the Lord wanted it done, then He would provide the funds. Nevertheless, we still have a little begging left in us. We cannot help but beg on behalf of so many lost souls throughout the world.

Therefore, we continue to beg the Lord on behalf of others, especially those evangelists—we really do not care what the nationality of their passport is—who are worthy of our support (1 Tm 5:18). Since we have wandered the world for fifty years, we would consider ourselves “foreigners” in reference to our origins in America. Only our passports indicate that we are “American.” But in reference to culture, we are as mongrel dogs straight off the world streets.

Unfortunately, it is the culture of the world to ask. Local poverty-stricken folks have a hard time supporting their evangelists, both in reality, and in mentality. There is a historical reason for this. In the nineteenth century, the colonial nations of Europe ventured throughout the world and built schools, hospitals, roads, and then supported for almost two centuries the administration of the government networks that they had set up in their various colonial “possessions.”

For example, in the scramble for African territory during the nineteenth century there developed a sociological culture that did not exist before the coming of all the well-meaning humanitarian western folks. Most of the colonial arrivals had forgotten that for centuries Africans had existed, doing their own thing and presiding over their own survival. Unfortunately, the colonialist moved independent thinking locals aside in order to teach a “civilization” that would make them dependent on foreign support and control. The self-confidence, or arrogance, of the foreign visitor sometimes moved him to assume control of the local situation.

Of course all the do-goodness of the colonials would filter into the church. The building of schools, hospitals, church buildings, and the supporting of national preachers who lectured western sermons to an assembly of western-nurtured dependents, produced a dependent thinking in the minds and behavior of local folks.

We may have been innocently naive in our desire to clone the “Western Christian.” In doing so, we lost our independent thinking and behavior. As a result, we seem to have never weaned ourselves off the western source of financial benefits. And now, it is unfortunate that local evangelists often have to “beg” local members for support, though the local evangelists continue to faithfully sow the seed of the word freely for the local church. Too many of our faithful preachers have turned into “church thieves” because local brethren have not taken ownership of their responsibility to support them (Study 2 Co 11:7-11). The local church has forgotten that those who preach the gospel have a right to live off the gospel (1 Co 9:14).

We could conclude from the secular society that was groomed after colonialism that it would produce a “colonial church,” which church lives on today in many areas of the world. In other words, if something is needed, or to be done, then we lead ourselves to believe that we can look to an endless financial resource from the colonials in order to fulfill all our local needs, including the support of our preachers.

Since colonialism occurred over a period of centuries, we even now question why the colonial source would refuse our humble pleas (begging). Nevertheless, we continue to ask, though we often do not receive. But we want you (the West) to understand that we do not beg for ourselves, but for the ability to go forth in all our nation, paying bus bills, in order to evangelize our own people. So we beg in the name of Jesus for the mission of Jesus.

A good example is here in order to highlight some problems that have developed throughout the centuries. In our area, the church in America built a particular local church building. After thirty-five years, the roof of the building completely collapsed. (Thankfully, no one was in the building at the time of the fateful event.) Immediately after the collapse, however, the leaders of the small group of about twenty-five members met in order to determine how they would rebuild the roof.

The members met with one particular church leader who had contacts in America, but had never lost his independence. They were about to ask this one wise old member, “Could you go to America and raise funds for this building that the Americans built for us thirty-five years

ago?” The wise brother abruptly interjected, “Don’t even think about asking me to do that. After all these years, we must ourselves take ownership of this building.” The wise brother was right. Unfortunately, since the local brethren refused to take ownership of the building over the thirty-five years of their “use” of the building, the building has remained a heap of rubble after all these years since the calamity of the collapse.

Social media now plays the role of making possible sources only a click away from what is believed to be a bottomless pit of money in the West. Whenever a church building is to be constructed—or repaired—emails, Facebook and Whatsapp accounts often light up. One of the most interesting pleas we received was from one good brother who emailed, “Because of the Covid pandemic, the government will not allow us to meet in the local government school. Therefore, it is necessary that we build our own building. Can you help?”

If we constructed a church building with funds that were contributed mostly by colonial sources, then it may be that the constructed building will never become “our own building,” even after having the keys to the building for thirty-five years. In these matters, it is best that the local folks and foreign folks go into some kind of percentage agreement where everyone is investing in the construction and support.

Nevertheless, we will continue to “beg,” especially for those evangelists of the world who must be supported full-time for the sake of the preaching of the gospel. It is simply right to support such men because they often live in very financially depressed economical environments. They are goodly men who should be supported in order that the gospel of the kingdom be preached in other areas. At least this was what the apostle Paul did in order to prepare the Roman disciples to support him when he passed by them on his way to Spain: “*Whenever I make my journey into Spain, I hope to see you in my journey and to be [financially] supported on my way there by you*” (See Rm 15:24). In other words, if you support a worthy evangelist, it makes little difference what the nationality of his passport indicates, as long as he has a passport and is on his journey, as Paul, somewhere to preach the gospel. The following statement is still a command of the Lord: “*Even so the*

Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Co 9:14).

Our purpose for writing the preceding is based on changes that are rapidly taking place in our world. Consider the fact that the pandemic has greatly minimized church budgets, particularly in the West. Inflation around the world is devastating the contributed dollar, that is, people have less to contribute. As inflation bites into the income of every Christian in the world, especially the West, contribution coffers are being greatly diminished.

Also consider the fact that the West is religiously changing into a nonreligious culture, just as Europe. Subsequently, the Western church is essentially minimizing the number of evangelists that is sent forth into all the world. Missionaries are becoming a rare breed.

Nevertheless, God’s work of gospel preaching should never be confined to contributions. We see contributions as a serendipity in reference to world evangelism. Therefore, we will be content with the widow’s mite that is given out of a dedicated heart. We will continue to beg of you, but we will preach the gospel regardless of whether we are supported.

Chapter 14

JUDGMENT OF EVIL EMPIRES

The visions of Revelation were written with cryptic symbols in order to figuratively communicate a message of judgment against an evil empire, specifically the Roman Empire (See Rv 1:1; 22:6). The city of Rome representatively stood for the evil of the Empire, and thus the visions of Revelation undoubtedly focus on Rome. By the time John received the message of Revelation 18, all the judgment visions had been revealed through cryptically written judgments. It was now time in the revelation for the messenger from heaven to focus on the evil behavior that Rome had exerted throughout the satellite states of the Empire.

John wrote in the latter part of the first century, but the finality of

the Empire would be symbolized by the eventual burning of the city of Rome in A.D. 476. From the time of the close of the first century, until the time of the fulfillment of the Revelation 18 prophecy, Christians would suffer persecution from Rome for about 150 years until Constantine signed the Edict of Toleration in A.D. 311. Regardless of the cessation of persecution, however, Rome still had to pay the price for unleashing persecution against the people of God. The beast (Roman state government) and the false prophet (Roman state religion) had to be judged. History needed a graphic picture of judgment of all those empires that negatively affected the people of God.

For this reason, the book of Revelation is in the New Testament. Though Rome is the primary focus of the book, the judgment of Rome could be metaphorically applied to any evil empire that would bring harm to the people of God. As in the case of Rome, judgment might take a great deal of time to come upon an evil empire, but certainly it will eventually come.

We study Revelation, therefore, in order to receive comfort from God's eventual judgment of evil empires. Though God will work out His judgment over decades, judgment will eventually come upon any empire that has brought harm to His people. At the time Christians are directly suffering as a result of the behavior of an evil empire, they must remember the following words of encouragement that the messenger of God gave to those who were the first recipients of the book of Revelation, which words introduce us to the eventual in-time judgment of Rome in Revelation 18:

These [evil empires] will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful [and will be delivered] (Rv 17:14).

[The text is from the International King James Version, with my interpretive comments in brackets.]

JUDGMENT WITHIN HISTORY

Now after these things [of judgment in chapters 4-17], I saw an-

other angel [messenger] come down from heaven, having great power. And the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried out with a strong voice, saying, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She [Rome] has become the habitation of demons and a prison [internment] for every unclean spirit, and a prison for every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations [under her military and economic influence] have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings [nations] of the earth have committed [economic and cultural] fornication with her. The merchants [oligarchs] of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her affluence."

Then I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come [migrate] out of her, my people, so that you do not partake of her sins and that you do not receive [the judgment of] her plagues. For her sins have been heaped up to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities [as an ungodly empire]. Render to her just as she has rendered [to others], and give back to her double according to her [evil] works. In the cup [portion] that she has mixed [for other people], mix twice as much [judgment] for her. To the measure she has glorified herself [among the nations] and lived affluently [on her wealth], in the same measure give her torment and sorrow, for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen [to be honored], and I am not a widow and will not see sorrow.' Therefore, her plagues [of judgment] will come in one day [of retribution]; death and mourning and famine [will come upon her as a city]. And she will [eventually] be utterly burned with [destructive] fire, for strong [certain] is [the judgment of] the Lord God who has judged."

"And the kings [nations] of the earth who have committed [economic and cultural] fornication and lived luxuriously with her, will weep and lament for her when they see the smoke of her burning [in destruction]. [They will be] standing at a distance [throughout the Roman Empire] because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon [Rome], that mighty city! For in one hour [in reference to your existence] your judgment has come.' The merchants [oligarchs] of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchan-

dise anymore—the merchandise of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and all citron wood and every article of ivory and every article of precious wood and of brass and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep and horses and chariots and bondservants and souls [patriotism] of men. The fruit [profit] that you long for has departed from you. And all things that were luxurious and splendid have vanished from you. And you will no longer find them [in an Empire that has collapsed]. The merchants [oligarchs] of these things who became rich from her will stand at a distance for the fear of her torment [that might spill over upon them], weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city [in which we trusted] that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls [as a royal city]! For in one hour such great riches have been laid waste?’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as trade by sea, stood at a distance [in astonishment]. And they cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning [in destruction], saying, ‘What city is like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads [in disillusionment] and cried out, weeping and wailing, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city [of Rome] in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets [who suffered from her persecution], for God has avenged you on her.”

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence will that great city Babylon [Rome] be thrown down and will not be found anymore [as the seat of an empire]. And the voice of harpers and musicians and pipers and trumpeters [for entertainment] will no longer be heard in you. No craftsman of any craft will be found in you. And the sound of a millstone [grinding grain into flour] will no longer be heard in you. The light of a candle will no longer shine in you [to illuminate you before the world]. And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride [in marriage] will no longer be heard in you. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by

your sorceries all nations were deceived [into thinking that you would never come to an end]. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”

Now after these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to our God!”

Chapter 15

WHY THE BOOK OF REVELATION

We are sure that everyone has asked the question as to why the book of Revelation is a part of the New Testament canon of Scriptures. The answer to the question is somewhat simple, but maybe needs to be occasionally reconsidered, especially when people lose hope during chaotic times.

Revelation has for many been considered an anomaly in reference to the other books of the New Testament. And indeed it is in reference to how it is written. However, when considering the fact that God would not continually send prophets among His people as He did throughout the history of Israel, He knew that His people needed encouragement in times of extreme social chaos and war. So instead of sending a prophet as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, or Ezekiel to remind His people to remain faithful and not lose hope, He had the Holy Spirit write one book of encouragement for Christians that would stay with them until the final coming of King Jesus and the end of all things.

God subsequently commissioned the Spirit that one apocalyptic message be written with cryptic symbols that would be a message of continual encouragement for Christians until the final coming of His Son. This one book—Revelation—would remind Christians that as long as they remained faithful to the victorious King Jesus, everything would turn out for good in the end. They too, as those first recipients to whom the book was written, would join in Jesus’ victory over death.

The Old Testament faithfuls had the privilege—if indeed we would

use the word “privilege”—of having inspired prophets to remind the people in the midst of kingdom conflicts that their King in heaven was still in charge of all things. They could personally receive the encouragement of the prophets if they had the privilege of being within hearing distance of the prophets’ messages.

Christians today, however, have something that is far better than the occasional prophet who might pass through the village. Every evening the Christian today can sit down in his or her living room, and in the midst of social turmoil and war, be within reading distance of the same message of encouragement that the Old Testament faithfuls received only if they had the opportunity of being within hearing distance of a prophet. The Christian’s blessing over the Old Testament faithfuls, therefore, is tremendous. While bombs may be exploding around us, we can read in the book of Revelation that King Jesus is still “*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Tm 6:15).

God the Father “*raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come*” (Ep 1:20,21). The kingly function of the resurrected Son of God is sprinkled throughout the New Testament letters. But it is revealed in visionary pictures throughout the book of Revelation.

So why would we have a written visionary picture of our King in action at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places? If we take time to think about this for a moment, the answer is quite obvious. Throughout the epistles the fact that King Jesus ascended to reign with all authority is stated as a matter of fact. But in the book of Revelation the Holy Spirit wanted to give the people of God, until the final coming of the King, something on which they could rely for hope in the midst of tremendous social or political conflict, especially in times of war.

Throughout the centuries, Christians would not read Revelation as if its prophecies were taking place in their present time of social chaos. On the contrary, they would read with hope, knowing that those first Christians to whom the message of the book was originally writ-

ten, personally survived the fulfillment of the conflicts that were prophesied to take place in their century.

In order for the Holy Spirit to give the people of God for all time a document of encouragement, He needed to use an in-time example of deliverance from hostile forces that had set themselves against the people of God in the historical context when Revelation was written. Or, if the hardships were not direct upon Christians, the Holy Spirit needed to give hope to the people of God who had to suffer indirectly from hostilities that may be occurring around them. The message of Revelation, therefore, is that we, regardless of any present hostilities that may affect us, will survive as did the early Christians who suffered through the hostilities that are recorded in the visions of Revelation. And since those Christians survived, we too, will be survivors.

Regardless of whether direct or indirect, the Holy Spirit wanted to use some early historical conflict as an example through which the people of God prevailed with their faith, regardless of the political and social conflicts in which they had to live until King Jesus finally came in the end to end all worldly confusion. Therefore, the Spirit recorded an example of an in-time victory of the saints who lived in the midst of persecution or war in order to give Christians for at least two thousand years, a reminder that they too in any century will likewise pass through any social turmoil of the times. Regardless of where they would be in the world in a time of war or social chaos, those Christians who maintained their faith and hope in King Jesus, would be survivors, whether in death, or in actually surviving some social turmoil.

Throughout Revelation, therefore, the Spirit constantly reminded the original readers, as well as Christian readers from the time the book was originally inscribed by John, that times of turmoil would pass, but the body of Christ would survive. This message is sprinkled throughout the New Testament, but consummated in the book of Revelation. Notice in the midst of the book of Revelation the consummation of this message of encouragement: “... *from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth*” (Rv 1:5). He “*made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and **dominion** forever and ever. Amen*” (Rv 1:6). “All

the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Amen” (Rv 1:7). “*I [King Jesus] am the Alpha and the Omega ... the Almighty*” (Rv 1:8). “***Do not fear. I [King Jesus] am the first and the last. I am He who lives. And I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and of Hades***” (Rv 1:17,18). “*The living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever*” (Rv 4:9). “*You [King Jesus] are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for **You created all things**, and because of Your will they were created and **have their existence***” (Rv 4:11). “*Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever*” (Rv 5:13).

To add to John’s redundancy on this theme throughout Revelation, consider the theme verse of the entire book: *These will make war with the Lamb and **the Lamb will overcome them**, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful*” (Rv 17:14).

The theme of the book is obvious. The Holy Spirit needed an in-time example of the faithful overcoming those earthly powers who ignored the kingship of Jesus, and thus assaulted Christians directly. He needed a historical message of victory for those who would have to endure wars between earthly states from which they, too, would indirectly suffer hardship until the final coming of King Jesus.

There are two possible in-time conflicts through which the original recipients of Revelation had to remain faithful in the first and second centuries. The reader can make his choice as to which conflict John referred directly, whether Jewish or Roman persecution. But we must be very clear on one point here in making a choice concerning what modern-day self-appointed false prophets have harped for years concerning their twisted interpretation of the book of Revelation. These “theologians” have assumed that the book of Revelation was a prophecy of events that would transpire at the end of time. By twisting the prophecies of Revelation to make them refer specifically to present events, they have stolen the message of Revelation from the original recipients to whom John wrote.

Such “prophetic thieves” have likewise stolen a message of hope in Revelation from centuries of faithful Christians who needed a Spirit-inspired historical record of faithfulness during persecution. But modern-day prophets have stolen away the purpose of Revelation from being an encouraging message to those who had to endure the traumatic experience of social chaos and war when Revelation was first written. For this reason, a great number of discouraged Christians today have simply stayed away from reading the book, even though they are in the midst of great suffering.

Christians throughout the centuries have endured many of the same hardships that the early recipients of Revelation suffered. Christians throughout the years have endured by reading a Book of encouragement that was written in the first century who suffered and survived great social turmoil. We today have been encouraged by the examples of faithfulness of those early Christians who were suffering in the first century when the book of Revelation was first written.

Unfortunately, too many modern-day prognosticators have accused the Holy Spirit of missing the date for the fulfillment of the encouraging prophecies of Revelation by almost two thousand years. When John wrote that the prophecies of the book would shortly come to pass, modern-day prophets assume that “shortly come to pass” means at least two thousand years (See Rv 1:1; 22:6).

The early Christians suffered dismay and death as they struggled through persecution. They did so in hope of deliverance in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. The modern-day prognosticators have likewise accused the Holy Spirit of missing the time for an encouraging prophetic message that was written to those who initially experienced—even being fed to lions in the Roman Coliseum—of the Roman Empire. This persecution was not terminated until the rise of Caesar Constantine and his signing of the Edit of Toleration in A.D. 311. But at the time, the persecuted needed to know that the Holy Spirit had not gone wrong in reference to the fulfillment of the encouraging message of Revelation that God would bring vengeance on their persecutors in their time.

Modern-day prophetic speculators should be concerned about their

stealing an encouraging message of hope away from every Christian who has lived in the last two thousand years. Thousands of first century Christians personally endured harsh persecution from Jewish persecutors, and later the Roman state psychopaths who sought to produce entertainment in the Roman Coliseum by throwing Christians to starved lions. By faith these persecuted Christians remained faithful unto death because they believed that King Jesus was King of kings and Lord of Lords (See Rv 2:10). The twisting of these precious words of encouragement for Christians since that first disciple was thrown to a salivating lion will certainly lead to destruction of those who misapply the prophecies of the book of Revelation (2 Tm 4:3,4; 2 Pt 3:16).

As stated previously, we read the book of Revelation to receive hope from the example of the faithful. We do not read the book with fear of some impending prophecy of dread that is about to come upon us in our time. We read the book and glean great encouragement in the fact that since God took the early Christians through great turmoil, He will likewise do the same for us.

Now the in-time chaos through which the early Christians would be victorious could be either the destruction of the Jewish state that ended in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, or the termination of Roman state persecution that ended the first of the fourth century with Constantine's signing of the Edict of Toleration. If the "beast" and "false prophet" of Revelation refer to the finalization of the Jewish state, then John would have received the prophetic visions before A.D. 70. If the "beast" and "false prophet" refer to the Roman state and state religion, then John could have received and written the prophetic visions before A.D. 97/98 when it is believed that he was eventually martyred by Roman.

Regardless of the immediate historical enemy of those to whom the book was written, the Spirit wanted the book to be written as a prophetic history book for all Christians who lived thereafter. The message of the book was prophetic to the immediate recipients, but now it is a history book of encouragement for every Christian since the prophecies of the book were fulfilled in the first and second centuries. As a history book of conquests, the message of the book is thus quite

clear. As our Savior overcame, we too will be victorious in the midst of any social chaos or war in which we might presently be engulfed. As the early Christians overcame when the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled, we have an example of their victory that we too can overcome.

While the reader makes up his or her mind concerning the date when John received the visions, and when he wrote the book, one must not miss the point of why the book of Revelation is in our New Testament. When considering the theme of the book—the victory of the saints because of the victory of King Jesus—**we come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit wanted to record for posterity an example of Christians overcoming any social chaos and persecution in which they would find themselves until the final coming of Jesus.**

If we steal the fulfillment of John's prophetic visions away from the early Christians who first received the book of Revelation, then we have stolen more than words away from two thousand years of Christians who have read the book in order to receive hope in times of turmoil. We have stolen away from the New Testament a living testimony of Christians who endured far greater hardships than most Christians have endured since then.

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**