

PARADISE RESTORED

PARADISE RESTORED

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF DOMINION

DAVID CHILTON



DOMINION
PRESS

DALLAS, GEORGIA

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To Darlene

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FOREWORD

by Gary North

If someone were to ask me, “What is the best presentation of biblical eschatology that you have ever read?” I would answer, “Chilton’s *Paradise Restored*.” If someone else were to ask me, “What is the best example of biblical expository style that you have ever read?” I would say, “Chilton’s *Paradise Restored*.” Finally, if a third person were to ask me, “What is the most effective use of confrontational rhetoric that you have ever read?” I would say, “Chilton’s *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators*.” In *Paradise Restored*, he is everyone’s Uncle David, the kindly, twinkle-eyed story teller, whose tales, while familiar to his listeners, lead them to conclusions they never imagined before. In short, he understood his multiple audiences, and he wrote accordingly, as every author should, but few do.

Paradise Restored is unique for its combining of clarity, precision of exposition, and text-connection. I do not recall reading any theological treatise that matches it for its combination of these three virtues.

Then there is the issue of style. In the realm of literary fiction, book reviewers refer to such books as “page-turners.” Rare is a theological treatise that is a page-turner. This one is. As you read this book, you may find yourself thinking, “I had never seen this before” or “I have never thought about this before,” as a prelude to: “but it makes a lot of sense.”

David Chilton (1951–1997) was the most gifted writer I have ever worked with. I was privileged to oversee the publication of four of his five books: *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators*, *Paradise Restored*, *The Days of Engeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, and *The Great Tribulation*. I say “oversee.” I do not say “edit.” I gained the reputation of being an editor devoid of empathy, both as a book publisher and as the editor of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* for its first seven years. As far as I recall, I did not blue-pencil anything in Chilton’s four books. His manuscripts needed no editing.

I have lived in the era of schlock prophecy books. Purveyors of paperback prophecy potboilers have become rich with titles like *Oil, Prophecy, and the Middle East* and then, a decade later, *Prophecy, Oil, and the Middle East*. The market is large, the topic is hot, and the readers are duped. “Honk if You’re Duped for Jesus” would make a great bumper sticker, though perhaps a little long.

Paradise Restored is not schlock. It is no longer in paperback. It will not make my wife, who owns the publishing rights, disgustingly rich. But it will de-dupe those who read it. This book is a de-duplicator.

Chilton begins this book with a chapter on “The Hope.” This hope refers to terrestrial and historical hope. Therefore, being terrestrial and historical, it has an inescapable corollary: responsibility. Because the hope is both individual and corporate, so is the accompanying responsibility.

This thought turns off Christian pietists. They have clung to faith in Jesus the way that someone in the midst of a forest fire clings to the rope hanging out the door of a helicopter. He is not thinking about his prior need of wrist exercises. He is thinking only of whether the rope is attached to a winch. Pietists pray for strong ropes and short flights. Fire fighters pray for rain. Chilton’s book is an offense to all those whose earthly hope centers on helicopters with ropes rather than helicopters with water.

If you are a rope Christian, you had better work on your wrist exercises. If you are a water Christian, you had better work on your back exercises. You have a lot of hauling to do. After all, your target is hell. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Chilton’s offense for pietistic Bible expositors was that he refused to re-write Matthew 16:18 to meet their exegetical requirements. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and hell shall not prevail against its gates.”

Paradise Restored correctly identifies which kingdom is on the defensive in time and on earth. It also identifies which strategy is appropriate for which kingdom: offense or defense. This is why pietists regard the book as offensive: it is so utterly *offensive*!

The function of a drawbridge changes when the tide of battle shifts from defense to offense. Israel was the land of the raised drawbridge for 1,400 years. But the tide of cosmic battle shifted with the bodily death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. *Paradise Re-*

stored demonstrates from the Bible that the tide really did change. Therefore, the proper use of a drawbridge today is as a bridge across the moat. It is time to lower it. This message has infuriated legions of professional archers for Jesus, who have spent their careers practicing their trade by shooting down instead of up.

Look up! Your salvation draweth nigh!

Now, lower your eyes just a little. See those fellows on the parapet? You are their problem far more than they are yours. Aim accordingly.

PREFACE

This book was written as a general introduction to both a Biblical eschatology and a way of reading the Bible; the former, I believe, grows naturally out of the latter. It also serves as a prologue to my larger work (in progress), a commentary on the Book of Revelation.

For this reason, the present book does not claim to answer every conceivable question about prophecy. Those who wish to find out more about the perspective presented here should consult the bibliography. In addition to my commentary, several other works on eschatology are in various stages of preparation, most notably by the Rev. James B. Jordan (Matthew 24) and the Rev. Ray Sutton (Daniel).

Many readers will (I hope) find the material on the Garden of Eden fascinating, as I did when I first heard Jim Jordan's lectures on the subject in 1977. They will be happy to hear that his book *Trees and Thorns*, a comprehensive survey of the Edenic patterns, is nearing publication. I highly recommend this work. Another scholar whose studies have influenced mine is Dr. Meredith Kline; his book *Images of the Spirit* is a masterpiece of Biblical Theology. (I hasten to point out, of course, that he should not be held responsible for any of my conclusions.)

The Bible quotations are generally from the New American Standard Version, including its marginal notes; on occasion I have altered the quotations slightly in favor of a more literal rendering.

I am very grateful to a number of good friends who gave me their counsel and assistance during the writing of this book. First among these is my publisher, Dr. Gary North, who originally asked me to write it, and whose suggestions were consistently fruitful and challenging. The manuscript was read by the pastors of Westminster Presbyterian Church (Tyler, Texas): the Rev. Lewis Bulkeley, the Rev. Robert Dwelle, the Rev. James B. Jordan, and the Rev. Ray Sutton; their theological insights have influenced virtually every page of the book.

Others who read the manuscript and gave valuable comments are the Rev. Mark House, pastor of First Presbyterian Church (Manhattan Beach, California); Spencer Roundtree, a ruling elder of the Church of the Redeemer (Placerville, California); James Whitacre, a fellow member of Westminster Presbyterian Church; and the Rev. George Grant, pastor of Believers' Fellowship (Humble, Texas). In addition to his helpful criticisms (which he offered with reckless, prodigal abandon), George designed the book cover; the artwork was done by Randy Rogers, also of Believers' Fellowship. I would also like to thank Oakton Reformed Fellowship (Oakton, Virginia) for their help in the publication of this book.

In ways too numerous to mention, I am indebted to the patient and dedicated work of two efficient secretaries at the Institute for Christian Economics: Mrs. Maureen Peters and Mrs. Brenda West. At every stage of production their aid has been invaluable, and is deeply appreciated.

Finally, I am grateful to my wife, Darlene, who graciously assisted me throughout the project. Because her love is a continuing token of Paradise Restored, this book is dedicated to her.

PART I

AN ESCHATOLOGY OF DOMINION

*Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign
Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,
Anointed universal King; all power
I give thee, reign forever, and assume
Thy merits; under thee as Head Supreme
Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions I reduce:
All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
In Heaven, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell.*

JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost* [3.315–22]

When the sun has come, darkness prevails no longer; any of it that may be left anywhere is driven away. So also, now that the Divine epiphany of the Word of God has taken place, the darkness of idols prevails no more, and all parts of the world in every direction are enlightened by His teaching.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [55]

THE HOPE

This is a book about hope. For too long, Christians have been characterized by despair, defeat, and retreat. For too long, Christians have heeded the false doctrine which teaches that we are doomed to failure, that Christians *cannot* win—the notion that, until Jesus returns, Christians will steadily lose ground to the enemy. The future of the Church, we were told, is to be a steady slide into apostasy. Some of our leaders sadly informed us that we are living in a “Laodicean age” of the Church (a reference to the “lukewarm” church of Laodicea, spoken of in Rev. 3:14–22). Any new outbreak of war, any rise in crime statistics, any new evidence of the breakdown of the family, was often oddly viewed as progress, a step forward toward the expected goal of the total collapse of civilization, a sign that Jesus might come to rescue us at any moment. Social action projects were looked on with skepticism: it was often assumed that anyone who actually tried to improve the world must not really believe the Bible, because the Bible taught that such efforts were bound to be futile; as one famous preacher put it, “You don’t polish brass on a sinking ship.” That slogan was based on two assumptions: first, that the world is nothing more than a “sinking ship”; second, that any organized program of Christian reconstruction would be nothing more than “polishing brass.” Evangelism was an invitation to join the losing side.

This was rooted in two problems. One was a *false view of Spirituality*. The unbiblical idea of “spirituality” is that the truly “spiritual” man is the person who is sort of “non-physical,” who doesn’t get involved in “earthly” things, who doesn’t work very much or think very hard, and who spends most of his time meditating about how he’d rather be in heaven. As long as he’s on earth, though, he has one main

duty in life: Get stepped on for Jesus. The “spiritual” man, in this view, is a wimp. A Loser. But at least he’s a *Good* Loser.

The teaching of the Bible is very different. When the Bible uses the term *Spiritual*, it is generally speaking of *the Holy Spirit* (which is why I use a capital S). To be Spiritual is to be guided and motivated by the Holy Spirit. It means obeying His commands as recorded in the Scriptures. The Spiritual man is not someone who floats in mid-air and hears eerie voices. The Spiritual man is the man who does what the Bible says (Rom. 8:4–8). This means, therefore, that we are supposed to get involved in life. God wants us to apply Christian standards everywhere, in every area. Spirituality does not mean retreat and withdrawal from life; it means *dominion*. The basic Christian confession of faith is that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9–10)—Lord of all things, in heaven and on earth. As Lord, He is to be glorified in every area (Rom. 11:36). In terms of Christian Spirituality, in terms of God’s requirements for Christian action in every area of life, there is no reason for retreat.

The second obstacle to Christian action has been *an eschatology of defeat*. Our eschatology is our “doctrine of last things,” our expectation of the future. And there is no question about the recent expectations of many Christians: we have looked forward to failure. The world, as we noted earlier, was regarded as a sinking ship.

Of course, *no* Christian believes in *ultimate* defeat. All Christians know that God will be victorious over the devil at the end of history. As a young Christian, I remember my Bible teachers informing me that they had “peeked at the last chapter (of the Bible), and the Christians win!” But that is just my point: according to certain popular brands of eschatology, victory takes place *only* in “the last chapter.” In *time*, in *history*, on *earth*, the Christians lose. The world is getting worse and worse. Antichrist is coming. The devil is running the world, and getting more and more powerful all the time. Your work for God in this world will have no lasting effect, except to save a few individuals from hell. But you’d better do it quickly, before the Tribulation hits, so that you can escape in time. Ironically, the unintentional message of this gospel is: *Antichrist is coming!* There is something terribly lopsided about that.

What I am saying is this. *The eschatology of defeat is wrong*. It is no more Biblical than its twin sister, the false view of Spirituality. Instead of a message of defeat, the Bible gives us Hope, both in this world and the next. The Bible gives us *an eschatology of dominion*, an

eschatology of victory. This is not some blind, “everything-will-work-out-somehow” kind of optimism. It is a solid, confident, Bible-based assurance that, before the Second Coming of Christ, *the gospel will be victorious throughout the entire world.*

For many, that will seem incredible. It goes against the whole spirit of the modern age; for years, Christians have been taught to expect defeat. Certainly, it’s a good idea to be careful about “new” doctrines. Everything must be checked by the Scriptures. One thing to consider, however, is that the idea of dominion is not new. In fact, until fairly recently, *most Christians held an eschatology of dominion.* Most Christians throughout the history of the Church regarded the eschatology of defeat as a doctrine of crackpots.

The Hope of worldwide conquest for Christianity has been the traditional faith of the Church through the ages. This fact can easily be demonstrated again and again. We can see it in the words of St. Athanasius, the great Church Father of the fourth century whose classic book *On the Incarnation of the Word of God* reveals his strong eschatology of dominion. He summarized its thesis:

Since the Saviour came to dwell in our midst, not only does idolatry no longer increase, but it is getting less and gradually ceasing to be. Similarly, not only does the wisdom of the Greeks no longer make any progress, but that which used to be is disappearing. And daemons, so far from continuing to impose on people by their deceits and oracle-givings and sorceries, are routed by the sign of the cross if they so much as try. On the other hand, while idolatry and everything else that opposes the faith of Christ is daily dwindling and weakening and falling, the Saviour’s teaching is increasing everywhere! Worship, then, the Saviour “Who is above all” and mighty, even God the Word, and condemn those who are being defeated and made to disappear by Him. When the sun has come, darkness prevails no longer; any of it that may be left anywhere is driven away. So also, now that the Divine epiphany of the Word of God has taken place, the darkness of idols prevails no more, and all parts of the world in every direction are enlightened by His teaching.

You must not suppose that Athanasius was just a positive-thinking optimist, relaxing in quiet, peaceful surroundings. On the contrary: he lived through one of the most severe persecutions the world had ever seen, the Emperor Diocletian’s all-out attempt to stamp out the Christian faith. Later, Athanasius had to stand practically alone for 40 years in his defense of the doctrine of the Trinity against rampant heresy, being exiled by the government on five occasions and sometimes in peril for his life. In fact, his story gave birth to a prov-

erb: *Athanasius contra mundum* (Athanasius against the world). Yet he never lost sight of the basic fact of world history, that the Word had become flesh, conquering the devil, redeeming mankind, flooding the world with Light which the darkness could not overcome.

The Church's eschatology of dominion radically shaped the history of Western civilization. For example, think about the great cathedrals of Europe, and compare them to the church buildings of today. Those old cathedrals, magnificent works of art constructed over decades and sometimes generations, were built to last for centuries—and they have. But modern evangelical churches are usually built to last a generation at most. We don't expect to be around long enough to get much use out of them, and we certainly don't expect our great-grandchildren to worship in them. We don't even expect to *have* great-grandchildren. It is safe to say that the thought of descendants living five hundred years from now has never even entered the minds of most evangelicals today. Yet, for many Christians of previous generations, the idea of future generations benefiting from their labors was not strange in the slightest degree. They built for the ages.

Let's look at a very different field: exploration. Not one historian in a hundred knows what motivated Christopher Columbus to seek a western route to the Indies. Trade? Yes, that was part of the reason. More than this, however, it was *unfulfilled prophecy*. Before he began his expeditions, Columbus crammed his journals with quotations from Isaiah and other Biblical writers, in which he detailed the numerous prophecies that the Great Commission to disciple all nations of the world would be successful (see, for example, Isa. 2:2–5; 9:2–7; 11:1–10; 32:15–17; 40:4–11; 42:1–12; 49:1–26; 56:3–8; 60:1–22; 61:1–11; 62:1–12; 65:1–25; 66:1–24). He figured that if the Indies were to be converted, a sea route would be a much more efficient way to bring them the gospel; and he credited his discoveries not to the use of mathematics or maps, but rather to the Holy Spirit, who was bringing to pass what Isaiah had foretold. We must remember that America had been discovered numerous times, by other cultures; yet successful colonization and development took place only in the age of exploration begun by Columbus. Why? Because these explorers were bearers of the gospel, and their goal was to conquer the world for the kingdom of God. They came *expecting* that the New World would be Christianized. They were certain of victory, and assumed that any obstacles they met had been placed there for the express purpose of being overcome. They knew that Christians are destined for dominion.

Examples could be multiplied, in every field. The whole rise of Western Civilization—science and technology, medicine, the arts, constitutionalism, the jury system, free enterprise, literacy, increasing productivity, a rising standard of living, the high status of women—is attributable to one major fact: *the West has been transformed by Christianity*. True, the transformation is not yet complete. There are many battles ahead. But the point is that, even in what is still largely an early Christian civilization, God has showered us with blessings.

Many Christians do not realize it, but the Hope is the basis for many of the great old hymns of the faith, written before the modern era of evangelical despair and pessimism. Think about that the next time you sing Martin Luther's "A mighty Fortress is our God," Isaac Watts's "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run," or George Duffield's "Stand up, stand up for Jesus." Do you really believe that Jesus is *now* leading us "from victory unto victory . . . till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed"? That is what the Church has historically believed. That is what they sang in their hymns. This can be seen most clearly in the traditional Christmas carols, which, like Athanasius's reflections on the Incarnation, are unabashed expectations of Christ's triumph over the world through the gospel. Carols such as "Come, thou long-expected Jesus," "O come, O come, Emmanuel," "Hark! the herald angels sing," "God rest you merry, gentlemen," and many others are written from the same basic perspective as the present book. The conviction that—as a result of His *first* advent—Christ is now reigning from heaven and conquering the earth underlies the message of "Joy to the world!":

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of his love.

The same is true of that great victory-oriented carol, "It came upon the midnight clear":

For lo, the days are hast'ning on,
By prophet bards foretold,

When with the ever-circling years
 Comes round the age of gold;
 When peace shall over all the earth
 Its ancient splendors fling,
 And the whole world give back the song
 Which now the angels sing.

THE PSALMS: OUR HYMNBOOK OF DOMINION

There is a very important connection between the Church's *worldview* and the Church's *hymns*. If your heart and mouth are filled with songs of victory, you will tend to have an eschatology of dominion; if, instead, your songs are fearful, expressing a longing for escape—or if they are weak, childish ditties—your worldview and expectations will be escapist and childish.

Historically, the *basic* hymnbook for the Church has been the Book of Psalms. The largest book of the Bible is the Book of Psalms, and God providentially placed it right in the middle of the Bible, so that we couldn't miss it! Yet how many churches use the Psalms in musical worship? It is noteworthy that *the Church's abandonment of dominion eschatology coincided with the Church's abandonment of the Psalms*.

The Psalms are inescapably Kingdom-oriented. They are full of conquest, victory, and the dominion of the saints. They remind us constantly of the warfare between God and Satan, they incessantly call us to do battle against the forces of evil, and they promise us that we shall inherit the earth. When the Church sang the Psalms—not just little snatches of them, but *comprehensively*, through the *whole* Psalter—she was strong, healthy, aggressive, and could not be stopped. That is why the devil has sought to keep us from singing the Psalms, to rob us of our inheritance. If we are to recapture the eschatology of dominion, we must reform the Church; and a crucial aspect of that reformation should be a return to the singing of Psalms. Listen to the historic hymns of the victorious Church:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,
 And all the families of the nations will worship before Thee.
 (Ps. 22:27)

For evildoers will be cut off,
 But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the earth.
 Yet a little while, and the wicked man will be no more;
 And you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be.

But the meek will inherit the earth,
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
(Ps. 37:9–11)

Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.
Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.
(Ps. 46:8–10)

O clap your hands, all peoples;
Shout to God with the voice of joy.
For the LORD Most High is to be feared,
A great King over all the earth.
He subdues peoples under us,
And nations under our feet.
(Ps. 47:1–3)

All the earth will worship Thee,
And will sing praises to Thee;
They will sing praises to Thy name.
(Ps. 66:4)

He will rule from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
The nomads of the desert will bow before Him;
And His enemies will lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and of the islands will bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts.
All kings will bow down before Him;
All nations will serve Him.
(Ps. 72:8–11)

All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee,
O LORD;
And they shall glorify Thy name.
(Ps. 86:9)

All the kings of the earth will give thanks to Thee,
O LORD, When they have heard the words of Thy mouth.
And they will sing of the ways of the LORD;
For great is the glory of the LORD.
(Ps. 138:4–5)

Let the godly ones exult in glory;
Let them sing for joy on their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishment on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the judgment written;
This is an honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD!
(Ps. 149:5–9)

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

The eschatological issue centers on one fundamental point: Will the gospel succeed in its mission, or not? Regardless of their numerous individual differences, the various defeatist schools of thought are solidly lined up together on one major point: *The gospel of Jesus Christ will fail*. Christianity will not be successful in its worldwide task. Christ's Great Commission to disciple the nations will not be carried out. Satan and the forces of Antichrist will prevail in history, overcoming the Church and virtually wiping it out—until Christ returns at the last moment, like the cavalry in B-grade westerns, to rescue the ragged little band of survivors.

Does it make a difference? Does your view of prophecy really affect your life? I think we have already seen much of the answer to that question. The basic issue has to do with your attitude toward the future. I recall a "Jesus People" newspaper of the early 1970s which carried an interview with the most popular "prophecy expert" of those days. On the basis of the "fact" that Jesus was going to rapture His Church "at any moment," this man actually counseled his young followers not to marry and raise families. After all, there was no time for that sort of thing. The Rapture was coming, so any work for dominion would be useless. (If *you* were the devil, could you devise a better, more "spiritual-sounding" excuse for Christians to abandon God's plan for victory?) The "Rapture Ethic" of those years led many to leave school, jobs, families, and responsibility in general; flocks of Jesus People wandered aimlessly around the country, with no clear goal beyond the next Christian rock concert. It was years before many of them woke up, and it sometimes took years more to put their lives together again.

The fact is that *you will not work for the transformation of society if you don't believe society can be transformed*. You will not try to build a Christian civilization if you do not believe that a Christian civilization is possible. It was the utter confidence in the victory of the Christian faith that gave courage to the early missionaries, who fearlessly strode into the farthest reaches of pagan Europe as if they were at the head of an army, preaching the gospel, driving out demons, smashing idols, converting whole kingdoms, bringing vast multitudes to their knees at the feet of Christ. They *knew* they would win. They could give up their lives in the struggle, certain that history was on their side, that Satan's domains were being shattered daily, his illegitimate hold weakening and slipping with every advance of the Christian forces. They were not in the least bit pessimistic about the power of the gospel. God honored their faith in His promises, and enabled them to lay the groundwork for a Christendom which will someday embrace the entire world.

When God's people disobey and slip back into unbelief, the Church begins losing battles to Satan. Does this suggest that the Hope is mistaken? Not at all; for the Bible teaches that the Spiritual growth of society is no more "automatic" than the Spiritual growth of the individual Christian. "*This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith*" (1 John 5:4). The Christian does not accept growth as "automatic" in any sphere of life. All growth and development are the sovereign gifts of God's Spirit. Yet the Christian does not say that he can "let go and let God," stop eating and exercising, and expect to grow. We do not assume that we can stop trusting God, stop praying and obeying, and still grow in grace. Nor should we say that some act of disobedience represents a "trend" in our personal eschatology, showing that we are necessarily "destined" to fail in the Christian life. And the same is true for *cultural sanctification*. We do not believe in some kind of "natural" progress in civilization. Our civilization will rise or fall in terms of God's blessing; and God's blessing is His personal and covenantal (not "automatic") response to our covenantal obedience (Deut. 28).

Jesus commanded:

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in

the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:13–16).

This is nothing less than a mandate for the complete social transformation of the entire world. And what Jesus condemns is *ineffectiveness*, failing to change the society around us. We are commanded to live in such a way that someday all men will glorify God—that they will become converted to the Christian faith. The point is that if the Church is obedient, the people and nations of the world will be disciplined to Christianity. We all know that everyone *should* be a Christian, that the laws and institutions of all nations *should* follow the Bible's blueprints. But the Bible tells us more than that. The Bible tells us that these commands are the shape of the future. We *must* change the world; and what is more, we *shall* change the world.

PART II

PARADISE: THE PATTERN FOR PROPHECY

*Southward through Eden went a river large,
Nor changed his course, but through the shaggy hill
Passed underneath ingulfed, for God had thrown
That mountain as his garden-mould high raised
Upon the rapid current, which through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst up drawn,
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill
Watered the garden; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
Which from his darksome passage now appears,
And now divided into four main streams,
Runs diverse, wand'ring many a famous realm
And country whereof here needs no account,
But rather to tell how, if Art could tell,
How from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,
Rowling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
With mazy error under pendent shades
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flow'rs worthy of Paradise which not nice Art
In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon
Poured forth profuse on hill and dale and plain,
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierced shade
Imbrowned the noontide bowers.*

JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost* [4.223–46]

You know how it is when some great king enters a large city and dwells in one of its houses; because of his dwelling in that single house, the whole city is honoured, and enemies and robbers cease to molest it. Even so it is with the King of all; He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many. and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled, and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be. For the human race would have perished utterly had not the Lord and Saviour of all, the Son of God, come among us to put an end to death.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [9]

HOW TO READ PROPHECY

I began my personal journey toward the eschatology of dominion one evening in church, about a dozen years ago. The pastor, a preacher famous for his expository method of Bible teaching, had just begun a series on prophecy. As he eloquently defended his eschatology of defeat, I was struck by the fact that he seemed utterly unable to develop his views *organically* from the Bible. Oh, he quoted some Scripture—a verse here, a verse there. But he was never able to show that his explanation of the future fit in with the overall pattern of the Bible. In other words, he was very adept at *imposing* his views of reality upon the Biblical text, making sure his verses were shuffled together in the proper order. But he could not show how his doctrines *flowed* out of Scripture; his eschatology did not seem to be an organic part of the *Story* which the Bible tells.

What I began to realize that night was that the way to recover the Biblical eschatology must be through an understanding of the Biblical Story. Instead of trying to fit the Bible into a prearranged pattern, we must try to discover the patterns that are already there. We must allow the Bible's own structure to arise from the text itself, to impose itself upon our own understanding. We must become accustomed to the Biblical vocabulary and modes of expression, seeking to shape our own thinking in terms of Scriptural categories.

This perspective sheds valuable light on the old debate about “literal” versus “symbolic” interpretations. To a great degree, that debate is beside the point; for the fact is that all interpreters are “literalists” on some points and “symbolists” on others.

For example, I am looking at a recent commentary on Revelation, written by a well-known evangelical scholar. The back cover boldly proclaims: *This may be the most literal exposition of Revelation you will*

ever read! And yet, upon close inspection, the commentary actually teaches a highly symbolic interpretation of many items in the prophecy. Here are a few of them:

1. The “soiled garments” of the Christians in Sardis (Rev. 3:4);
2. The promise that Christians will become “pillars” in the Temple (3:12);
3. The “lukewarm” temperature of the Laodiceans (3:15–16);
4. Christ’s offer to sell “gold,” “white garments,” and “eye salve” (3:18);
5. Christ’s “knocking” at the “door” (3:20);
6. The “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5);
7. The “Lamb” with “seven eyes” (5:6);
8. The “olive trees” and “lampstands” (11:4);
9. The “woman clothed with the sun” (12:1);
10. The “great red dragon” (12:3);
11. The seven-headed “Beast” (13:1);
12. The “great harlot who sits on many waters” (17:1).

There are few “literalists” who would disagree that these pictures in Revelation are meant to be understood symbolically. What we must recognize, however, is that symbols are used throughout the rest of Scripture as well, right alongside very literal language. This is because the Bible is *literature*: it is divinely inspired and inerrant literature, but it is literature all the same. This means that we must *read* it as literature. Some parts are meant to be literally understood, and they are written accordingly—as history, or theological propositions, or whatever. But one would not expect to read the Psalms or the Song of Solomon by the same literary standards used for the Book of Romans. It would be like reading Hamlet’s soliloquy “literally”: “*The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune . . . to take arms against a sea of troubles. . .*”

You see, we cannot understand what the Bible really (literally) means unless we appreciate its use of literary styles. Would we understand the Twenty-third Psalm properly if we were to take it “literally”? Would it not, instead, look somewhat silly? In fact, if taken literally, it would not be *true*: for I daresay that the Lord *doesn’t* make every Christian to lie down in literal, green pastures. But we don’t usually make such crude mistakes in reading Biblical poetry. We know it is written in a style that often makes use of symbolic language. But we must realize that the same is true of the prophets: they, also, spoke in poetry, in figures and symbols, drawing on a rich heritage of Biblical images which, as we shall see, actually began in the original Paradise—the Garden of Eden.

Indeed, that is where prophecy began. And it is worth noting that the very first promise of the coming Redeemer was stated in highly symbolic terms. God said to the Serpent:

I will put enmity
Between you and the woman
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall crush your head,
And you shall strike His heel.
(Gen. 3:15)

The real question to start with, therefore, is not some artificial symbolic-vs.-literal debate, but a much more basic issue: Shall our interpretation be *Biblical* or *speculative*? In other words, when I attempt to understand or explain something in the Bible, should I go to the Bible itself for the answers, or should I come up with something “creative” on my own? To put the question in this way is much more accurate, and will yield more fruitful results.

Let me use an extreme example to make my point clear. The Book of Revelation describes a woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon, and laboring in childbirth while a dragon hovers nearby to devour her child. A radically *speculative* interpreter might turn first to news of the latest genetic experiments, to determine whether a woman’s size and chemical composition might be altered sufficiently for her to be able to wear the sun; he might also check to see if the Loch Ness Monster has surfaced recently. A *Biblical* interpreter, on the other hand, would begin to ask questions: Where in the Bible does this imagery come from? Where does the Bible speak of a woman in labor, and what is its significance in those contexts? Where does the Bible speak of a Dragon? Where does the Bible speak of someone trying to murder an infant? If we are going to understand the message of the Bible, we must acquire the habit of asking questions like this.

Of course, each approach has its drawbacks. The main drawback of the *Biblical* method is that it usually requires more hard work, necessitating a greater familiarity with the Bible. The main drawback of the *speculative* method, for all its sensationalism, is that it just isn’t *Biblical*.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE PROPHETS

As I mentioned above, much of the Bible is written in symbols. A helpful way to understand this, perhaps, would be to speak of these

symbols as a set of *patterns* and *associations*. By this I mean that *Biblical symbolism is not a code*. It is, instead, a way of seeing, a perspective. For example, when Jesus speaks of “living water” (John 4:10), we rightly recognize that He is using water as a symbol. We understand that when He spoke to the woman at the well, He was not merely offering her “water.” He was offering her eternal life. *But He called it “water.”* We should immediately ask: Why did He do that? He could have simply said “eternal life.” Why did He speak in metaphor? Why did He want her to think of water?

Now this is where we can make a big mistake, and this is the primary error of some interpreters who try to take a “symbolic” approach. It is to think that Biblical symbolism is primarily a puzzle for us to solve. We can suddenly decide: “Aha! *Water* is a special code-word which means *eternal life*. That means that whenever the Bible talks about water symbolically, it is *really* talking about eternal life; whenever someone takes a drink, he is *really* becoming a Christian.” It just doesn’t work that way (as you will see if you try to apply it throughout the Bible). Besides, what sense would it make for the Bible simply to put everything in code? The Bible is not a book for spies and secret societies; it is God’s *revelation* of Himself to His covenant people. The puzzle-solving, mystical interpretation tends to be speculative; it does not pay sufficient attention to the way the Bible itself speaks.

When Jesus offered “water” to the woman, He wanted her to think of the multiple imagery connected with water in the Bible. In a general sense, of course, we know that water is associated with the Spiritual refreshment and sustenance of life which comes through salvation. But the Biblical associations with water are much more complex than that. This is because *understanding Biblical symbolism does not mean cracking a code*. It is much more like reading good poetry.

The symbolism of the Bible is not structured in a flat, *this-means-that* style. Instead, it is meant to be read *visually*. We are to see the images rise before us in succession, layer upon layer, allowing them to evoke a response in our minds and hearts. The prophets did not write in order to create stimulating intellectual exercises. They wrote to *teach*. They wrote in visual, dramatic symbols; and if we would fully understand their message we must appreciate their vocabulary. We must read the Bible visually. The visual symbols themselves, and what the Bible says about them, are important aspects of what God wants us to learn; otherwise, He wouldn’t have spoken that way.

So, when the Bible tells us a story about water, it is not “really”

telling us about something else; it is telling us about *water*. But at the same time we are expected to *see* the water, and to think of the *Biblical associations* with regard to water. The system of interpretation offered here is neither “literalistic” nor “symbolic”; it takes the “water” seriously and literally, but it also takes seriously what God’s Word associates with water throughout the history of Biblical revelation.

What are some of the Biblical associations which might have occurred to the woman at the well, and to the disciples? Here are a few of them:

1. The watery, fluid mass that was the original nature of the earth at the creation, and out of which God formed all life (Gen. 1);
2. The great river of Eden that watered the whole earth (Gen. 2);
3. The salvation of Noah and his family by the waters of the Flood, out of which the earth was re-created (Gen. 6–9);
4. God’s gracious revelations to Hagar by a fountain (Gen. 16) and a well (Gen. 21);
5. The well called Rehoboth, where God gave Isaac dominion (Gen. 26);
6. The river out of which the infant Moses, the future Deliverer of Israel, was taken and made a prince (Ex. 2);
7. The redemptive crossing of the Red Sea, where God again saved His people by water (Ex. 14);
8. The water that flowed from the stricken Rock at Sinai, giving life to the people (Ex. 17);
9. The many ritual sprinklings in the Old Testament, signifying the removal of filth, pollution, sickness and death, and the bestowal of the Spirit upon the priests (e.g., Lev. 14; Num. 8);
10. The crossing of the Jordan River (Josh. 3);
11. The sound of rushing waters made by the pillar of cloud (Ezek. 1);
12. The River of Life flowing from the Temple and healing the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47).

Thus, when the Bible speaks of *water*, we are supposed to have in our minds a vast host of associative concepts, a complex of Biblical images that affects our thinking about water. To put it differently, water is supposed to be something like a “buzz-word,” a term that calls up many associations and connotations. When we read the word *water* we should be reminded of God’s saving acts and revelations by water throughout Scripture. The Bible uses many of these “buzz-words,” and increases the number of them as it goes on; until, by the time we get to Revelation (the capstone of Biblical prophecy), they all come rushing toward us at once, in a blizzard of associative references, some of which are obvious, some obscure. To the one who

really knows his Bible and has noted the literary patterns and images, much of the book will look familiar; to the rest of us, it's confusing. In Revelation, we are confronted with all the Biblical connotations of numerous images: not only water, but light, fire, clouds, angels, stars, lamps, food, stones, swords, thrones, rainbows, robes, thunder, voices, animals, wings, scavengers, eyes, keys, trumpets, plagues, mountains, winds, seas, altars, blood, locusts, trees, heads, horns, and crowns.

Revelation also presents us with pictures of a Woman, a Dragon, a wilderness, a mark in the forehead, a sickle, pearls, a winepress, a cup of wine, a Harlot, a river, Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, resurrection, a wedding, a marriage supper, the Bride-groom, and the Bride/City in the shape of a pyramid. And then there's the use of symbolic numbers: two, three, four, seven, ten, twelve, and multiples thereof—24, 42, 144, 666, 1,000, 1,260, 7,000, 12,000, and 144,000.

This is why it's necessary to understand the Bible and its use of symbols and patterns if we are ever to understand the Book of Revelation. The following chapters on the Paradise theme in Scripture are designed to introduce the reader to the Bible's use of imagery. Essentially, this is an exercise in *Biblical Theology*, the technical term for the study of God's progressive revelation of salvation. In principle, the whole Story of redemption is taught in the early chapters of the Bible: the rest is simply built upon the foundation laid there. This is why, as we shall see below, the later revelations depend so heavily on the theme of the Garden of Eden.

As we enter this study of Biblical imagery, let's review the basic rules:

1. *Read visually*; try to *picture* what the Bible is saying.
2. *Read Biblically*; don't speculate or become abstract, but pay close attention to what the Bible itself says about its own symbols.
3. *Read the Story*; try to think about how each element in the Bible contributes to its message of salvation as a whole.

We will begin, then, with the creation of the world and with God its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: *the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning*. There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation; for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it at first.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [1]

THE PARADISE THEME

The story of Eden contains three basic ideas, concepts which confront us repeatedly as we study the Bible: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption in Christ. As these ideas are developed throughout the history of salvation, we see familiar images and actions reappearing and patterns beginning to take shape, until the last book of the Bible finally answers all the questions that began in the first book. God's self-revelation is a coherent, consistent *whole*; and it comes to us in very beautiful literary forms. Our proper understanding of the *message* will be inadequate unless we attempt to understand and appreciate the form in which that message is communicated. By beginning our study where the Bible itself begins, we can more readily understand not only the Book of Revelation, but the Bible itself—*why* the writers of the Bible said *what* they said in the *way* they said it. And our reasons for doing so are that we might more fully trust in God's promises, obey His commands, and inherit His blessings.

THE NATURE OF SALVATION

One of the basic themes of Scripture is that *salvation restores man to his original purpose*. In the beginning God created man in His own image, in order that man would have *dominion* (Gen. 1:26–28). That task of dominion began in the Garden of Eden, but it was not supposed to end there, for man was ordered to have dominion over the whole earth: Adam and Eve (and their children) were to extend the blessings of Paradise throughout the entire world. But when man rebelled, he lost the ability to have godly dominion, because he lost fellowship with his Creator. While fallen man is still the image of God (Gen. 9:6), he is now a *naked* image (Gen. 3:7), for he has lost his original cov-

ering—the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The image of God remains, to some extent, in all men—but the image has become twisted, marred, disfigured, and broken as a result of sin. And the earth, which was planned to become God’s Garden-Temple, has instead become a wilderness of thorns, thistles, sweat, scarcity, pollution, and death (Gen. 3:17–19; Isa. 24:1–6; Rom. 5:12). Man was banished from the Garden, and forbidden to enter it again.

But that isn’t the end of the story. On the very day that God pronounced judgment upon man and the earth, He pronounced a greater judgment upon the Tempter, declaring that the Redeemer would come someday to crush the Serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15). Accordingly, the Apostle John tells us that “*the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8). Christ came as the *Second Adam*, in order to undo the damage brought through the *First Adam* (1 Cor. 15:22,45; Rom. 5:15–19). God had breathed into Adam the breath (in Hebrew, the *Spirit*) of Life, but Adam’s rebellion brought death into the world. In salvation, Christ again breathes into His people the Spirit of Life (John 20:22)—Eternal Life, which sets us free from the Curse of sin and death (Rom. 8:2), and which will ultimately result in the restoration of the entire creation (Rom. 8:19–20). In Christ we really are a *new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17), because we have been *recreated* in God’s image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), and clothed again with the glory of God (Rom. 8:29–30). And, this time, the security of the restored image of God is guaranteed, because our standing is in the Christ who can never fail. In Him we have *Eternal Life*.

This introduces another basic Biblical pattern, a threefold pattern which is assumed throughout much of the material in this book, and we will see it again and again in our studies. Scripture presents salvation in terms of a *definitive-progressive-final* structure, and this is why Biblical prophecies often seem to overlap. Salvation was *definitively* accomplished in the perfect, finished work of Jesus Christ; it is *progressively* and *increasingly* applied during this age, personally and institutionally; and it will be *finally* achieved, in its highest fulfillment, at the end of history on the Last Day. We *have been* saved (2 Tim. 1:9), we *are being* saved now (Phil. 2:12–13), and we *will be* saved in the future (1 Pet. 1:9). To put it another way, we *have been* remade in God’s image (Eph. 4:24), we *are being* progressively remade in His image (2 Cor. 3:18), and we look forward to the day when we *will be* perfectly remade in His image (Phil. 3:20–21).

Salvation, therefore, restores man to his original calling and purpose, and guarantees that man's original mandate—to exercise dominion under God over the whole earth—will be fulfilled. Cornelius Van Til has pointed out that the “redemptive revelation of God had to be as *comprehensive* as the sweep of sin. Redemption must, in the nature of the case, be for the whole world. This does not mean that it must save every individual sinner in the world. It does mean, however, that the created universe which has been created as a unit must also be saved as a unit” (*An Introduction to Systematic Theology* [Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974], p. 133). Ultimately, Biblical salvation turns back the Curse, brings back Edenic conditions, repairs personal and social relationships, and blesses the earth in every area. The whole earth will be saved, and remade into the Garden of God. “For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

In a very real sense, therefore (and progressively as the Gospel conquers the world), God's people have always lived in “the Garden.” For example, the land of Egypt is described in Genesis 13:10 as being “like the Garden of the LORD”—and when the covenant people went there to live, they were given the area of Goshen, which was the *best* in all Egypt (Gen. 45:18; 47:5–6, 11, 27). In this Edenic location they were *fruitful* and *multiplied* (Ex. 1:7)—the same expression as in God's original command to Adam and Eve in the Garden! The Promised Land also, as we would expect, was a land in which much of the Curse had been reversed: it was “like the Garden of Eden” (Joel 2:3), and therefore “flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:8).

As we shall see in the following pages, the restoration of Eden is an essential aspect of the salvation that Christ provides. When the Old Testament foretold the coming of the Christ and the blessings He would bring, they often spoke in the language of Eden-restoration. Isaiah wrote: “Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places. *And her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the LORD*; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and sound of a melody” (Isa. 51:3). And Ezekiel, many years later, prophesied:

Thus says the Lord God, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. And the desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the Garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations that are left round

about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it (Ezek. 36:33–36).

But there is much more in these prophecies (and others) regarding the restoration of Eden than we might notice at first glance. Indeed, there are many, many passages of Scripture which speak in terms of the Edenic *patterns* which do not mention Eden by *name*. The Paradise Theme runs throughout the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation; but in order to recognize it we must first familiarize ourselves with what God’s Word says about the original Garden itself. God has gone to the trouble to tell us some very specific information about the Garden, and the rest of Scripture is built on this foundation, referring back to it regularly. Note well: this study is not merely a collection of trivia, of “strange and interesting facts about the Bible” (*e.g.*, the sort of irrelevant data that is often to be found in the “encyclopedia” sections of big family Bibles). It is, I repeat, a major Biblical theme, dramatically illuminating the message of the Book of Revelation—and, by the way, helping us to understand the message of the Bible as a whole. Thus, in the chapters to follow, we will examine the various characteristics of the Garden of Eden, taking special notice of how each of these becomes a “sub-theme” in itself, in terms of the general theme of Eden-restoration in salvation.

When therefore the servants of the Chief Priests and the Scribes saw these things, and heard from Jesus, “Whosoever is athirst, let him come to Me and drink” [John 7:37]; they perceived that this was not a mere man like themselves, but that this was He Who gave water to the saints, and that it was He Who was announced by the prophet Isaiah. For He was truly the splendour of the light, and the Word of God. And thus as a river from the fountain He gave drink also of old to Paradise; but now to all men He gives the same gift of the Spirit, and says, “If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. Whosoever believeth on Me, as saith the Scripture, rivers of living water shall flow out of his belly” [John 7:37–38]. This was not for man to say, but for the living God, Who truly vouchsafes life, and gives the Holy Spirit.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *Letters* [XLIV]

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

THE LOCATION OF THE GARDEN

Although we commonly use the terms *Eden* and *Garden of Eden* synonymously (as the Bible occasionally does also), Genesis 2:8 tells us that the Garden was planted by God on the *east* side of the area known as Eden—a land which originally lay to the *north* of Palestine (cf. Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13; Ezek. 28:14; and the discussion of the rivers, below). When man lost fellowship with God and was driven out of the Garden, he evidently went out from the *east* side, since that was where God stationed the cherubim who guarded the Garden from intruders (Gen. 3:24). This raises an interesting question: Why were the cherubim placed only on the east? A likely answer is that the Garden was inaccessible on all other sides (cf. Song of Sol. 4:12), and that entrance had to be made through the eastern “gate” (this would agree with the meaning of the ancient word *paradise*, meaning *an enclosed garden*); in Milton’s poem the devil entered the Garden by leaping over the wall (cf. John 10:1):

So clomb this first grand Thief into God’s fold:
So since into his Church lewd hirelings climb. [4.192–93]

Apparently, the godly tended to stay near the eastern entrance of the Garden for some time—perhaps bringing their sacrifices to the “gate”—for when Cain fled from “the presence of the LORD” (a technical term in Scripture for *the official center of worship*), he headed for parts *farther* east (Gen. 4:16), away from God and godly men.

It is thus significant that the entrance to the Tabernacle was from the *east* side (Ex. 27:13–16): to enter God’s presence through redemption is a gracious re-admittance to Eden. Ezekiel’s vision of the uni-

versal triumph of the Gospel shows the healing River of Life flowing out from the doors of the restored Temple (the Church, Eph. 2:19–22) *toward the east* (Ezek. 47:1–12); and, as a precursor of the day when the wealth of all the nations will be brought into the household of God (Isa. 60:4–16; Hab. 2:6–9; Ps. 72:10–11; Rev. 21:24–26), the birth of the King of kings was honored by wise men bringing gifts *from the east* (Matt. 2:1–11).

A major key to the location of the original Garden of Eden is the fact that the four great rivers which watered the earth derived from the one river in Eden (Gen. 2:10–14). The Flood drastically altered the geography of the world, and two of these rivers (the Pishon and the Gihon) no longer exist. The other two rivers are the Tigris (*Hiddekel* in Hebrew) and the Euphrates, which do not now originate from the same source, as they did then. But the Bible does tell us where these rivers were located: the Pishon flowed through the land of Havilah (Arabia); the Gihon flowed through Cush (Ethiopia); the Tigris flowed through Assyria; and the Euphrates flowed through Syria and Babylon (from whence it now meets up with the Tigris, about 40 miles above the Persian Gulf. The common source for these rivers was, of course, north of Palestine, and probably due north, in the area of Armenia and the Black Sea—which is, interestingly, the place where the human race began again after the Flood (Gen. 8:4). Eden, as the source of water, was thus the source of blessing for the world, providing the basis for life, health and prosperity to all God's creatures.

For this reason, *water* becomes an important symbol in Scripture for the blessings of salvation. In the individual believer, salvation is a well of water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14); but, just as the river of Eden was fed by a multitude of *springs* (Gen. 2:6, NIV), the water of life becomes a *river* of living water, flowing out from the Church to all the world (John 7:37–39; Ezek. 47:1–12; Zech. 14:8), healing and restoring the whole earth, so that even the desert lands become transformed into a Garden (Isa. 32:13–17; 35:1–2). As the Spirit is poured out, “Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit” (Isa. 27:6).

Finally, a very important aspect of Eden's location is that it was on a *mountain* (Eden itself was probably a plateau on the mountaintop). This follows from the fact that the source of water for the world was in Eden: the river simply cascaded down the mountain, parting into four heads as it traveled. Furthermore, when God speaks to the king

of Tyre (referring to him as if he were Adam, in terms of Man's original calling) He says: "You were in *Eden, the Garden of God*. . . You were on *the holy mountain of God*" (Ezek. 28:13-14).

That Eden was the original "holy mountain" explains the significance of God's choice of *mountains* as sites for His redemptive acts and revelations. The substitutionary atonement in place of Abraham's seed took place on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2). It was also on Mount Moriah that David saw the Angel of the Lord standing, sword in hand, ready to destroy Jerusalem, until David built an altar there and made atonement through sacrifice (1 Chron. 21:15-17). And on Mount Moriah Solomon built the Temple (2 Chron. 3:1). God's gracious revelation of His presence, His covenant, and His law was made on Mount Sinai. Just as Adam and Eve had been barred from the Garden, the people of Israel were forbidden to approach the holy mountain, on pain of death (Ex. 19:12; cf. Gen. 3:24). But Moses (the Mediator of the Old Covenant, Gal. 3:19), the priests, and the 70 elders of the people were allowed to meet God on the Mountain (after making an atoning sacrifice), and there they ate and drank communion before the Lord (Ex. 24:1-11). It was on Mount Carmel that God brought His straying people back to Himself through sacrifice in the days of Elijah, and from whence the ungodly intruders into His Garden were taken and destroyed (1 Kings 18; interestingly, *carmel* is a Hebrew term for *garden-land*, *plantation*, and *orchard*). Again, on Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) God revealed His saving presence to Elijah, and re-commissioned him as His messenger to the nations (1 Kings 19).

In His first major sermon, the Mediator of the New Covenant delivered the law again, from a mountain (Matt. 5:1ff.). His official appointment of His apostles was made on a mountain (Mark 3:13-19). On a mountain He was transfigured before His disciples in a blinding revelation of His glory (recalling associations with Sinai, Peter calls this "the holy mountain," in 2 Pet. 1:16-18). On a mountain He gave His final announcement of judgment upon the faithless covenant people (Matt. 24). After the Last Supper, He ascended a mountain with His disciples, and proceeded from there to a Garden where, as the Last Adam, He prevailed over temptation (Matt. 26:30; cf. Matt. 4:8-11, at the beginning of His ministry). Finally, He commanded His disciples to meet Him on a mountain, where He commissioned them to conquer the nations with the Gospel, and promised to send them the Holy Spirit; and from there He ascended into the cloud (Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-19; for more on the significance of this cloud, see Chapter 7).

I have by no means exhausted the list that might be given of Biblical references to God's redemptive activities on mountains; but those which have been cited are sufficient to demonstrate the fact that in redemption God is calling us to return to Eden: we have access to the Holy Mountain of God through the shed blood of Christ. We have come to Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22), and may boldly approach the Holy Place (Heb. 10:19), granted by God's grace to partake again of the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7). Christ has built His Church as a City on a Hill, to give light to the world (Matt. 5:14), and has promised that the nations will come to that light (Isa. 60:3). The prophets are full of this mountain-imagery, testifying that the world itself will be transformed into Eden: "In the last days, the mountain of the House of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it" (Isa. 2:2; cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 11:9; 25:6-9; 56:3-8; 65:25; Mic. 4:1-4). Thus the day will come when God's Kingdom, His Holy Mountain, will "fill the whole earth" (see Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45), as God's original dominion mandate is fulfilled by the Last Adam.

MINERALS IN THE GARDEN

The Pishon River, originating in Eden, flowed "around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there" (Gen. 2:11-12). The intent of these verses is clearly to connect in our minds the Garden of Eden with precious stones and minerals; and this point is made in other Biblical references that speak of Eden. The most obvious reference is in God's statement to fallen Adam (part of which was quoted above):

You were in Eden, the Garden of God;
 Every precious stone was your covering:
 The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond;
 The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper;
 The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald;
 And the gold. . .
 (Ezek. 28:13)

In fact, the ground seems to have been fairly littered with sparkling gems of all sorts, according to the next verse: "You walked in the midst of the stones of fire." The abundance of jewelry is regarded here as a *blessing*: fellowship with God in Eden meant being surrounded

with beauty. Moses tells us that the gold of that land was *good* (i.e., *in its native state*, unmixed with other minerals). The fact that gold must now be mined from the earth by costly methods is a result of the Curse, particularly in the judgment of the Flood.

The stone that is called *onyx* in Scripture may be identical to the stone of that name today, but no one knows for sure; and there is even less certainty regarding the nature of *bdellium*. But some very interesting things about these stones appear as we study the Biblical history of salvation. When God redeemed His people from Egypt, He ordered the High Priest to wear special garments. On his shoulders, the High Priest was to wear two *onyx* stones, with the names of the 12 tribes written upon them; and God declares these stones to be “stones of memorial” (Ex. 25:7; 28:9–12). A *memorial* of *what*? The only mention of the *onyx* prior to the Exodus is in Genesis 2:12, with reference to the Garden of Eden! God wanted His people to look at the High Priest—who was in many ways a symbol of man fully restored in God’s image—and thus to *remember* the blessings of the Garden, when man was in communion with God. The stones were to serve as reminders to the people that in saving them God was restoring them to Eden.

An even more striking example of this is in what we are told about God’s provision of manna. In itself, manna was a reminder of Eden: for even while God’s people were in the wilderness (on their way to the Promised Land of abundance), food was plentiful, good-tasting, and easy to find—as, of course, it had been in the Garden. But, just in case they might miss the point, Moses recorded that manna was the color of *bdellium* (Num. 11:7)—the *only* occurrence of that word apart from its original mention in the book of Genesis! And this, by the way, tells us the color of *bdellium*, since we are told elsewhere (Ex. 16:31) that manna was *white*. In our Lord’s messages to the Church in the Book of Revelation, Edenic imagery is used again and again to describe the nature of salvation (see Rev. 2–3), and on one occasion He promises: “To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden *manna*, and I will give him a *white stone*” (Rev. 2:17).

It is noteworthy that these statements regarding *onyx* and *bdellium* were made as Israel was traveling through the land of Havilah! As they journeyed, they could observe the terrible effects of the Curse, which had turned this beautiful and well-watered land into a “waste and howling wilderness”—while they, through grace, were able to enjoy the blessings of the Garden of Eden. This theme of

Eden-restoration was also evident in the abundant use of *gold* for the Tabernacle and Temple furnishings (Ex. 25; 1 Kings 6), and for the garments of the High Priest (Ex. 28). The forfeited privileges of the First Adam are restored to us by the Last Adam, as we once again come into God's presence through our High Priest.

In their prophecies of the coming Messiah and his blessings, the Old Testament prophets concentrated on this Edenic imagery of jewelry, describing salvation in terms of God's adorning of His people:

Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.
Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,
And your gates of crystal,
And your entire wall of precious stones.
(Isa. 54:11–12)

The wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
To you the riches of the nations will come.
Herds of camels will cover your land,
Young camels of Midian and Ephah.
And all from Sheba will come,
Bearing gold and incense
And proclaiming the praise of the LORD....
Surely the islands look to me;
In the lead are the ships of Tarshish,
Bringing your sons from afar,
With their silver and gold,
To the honor of the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel,
For He has endowed you with splendor....
Your gates will always stand open,
They will never be shut, day or night,
So that men may bring you the wealth of the nations...."
(Isa. 60:5–6, 9, 11)

In line with this theme, the Bible describes us (Mal. 3:17) and our work for God's kingdom (1 Cor. 3:11–15) in terms of jewelry; and, at the end of history, the whole City of God is a dazzling, brilliant display of precious stones (Rev. 21:18–20).

The story of Paradise thus gives us important information about the origin and meaning of precious metals and stones, and therefore of money as well. Right from the beginning, God placed value upon gold and gems, having created them as reflections of His own glory and beauty. *The original value of precious metals and stones was therefore*

aesthetic rather than economic; their economic significance grew out of the fact that they were valued for their beauty. *Aesthetics is prior to economics*.

Historically, gold came to serve as a medium of exchange precisely because its value was independent of, and prior to, its monetary function. Gold is not *intrinsically* valuable (only God possesses intrinsic value); instead, it is valuable because man, as God's image, *imputes* value to it. Biblically, a medium of exchange is first a commodity, an item which men value as such. Scripture always measures money by *weight*, by hard currency (Lev. 19:35–37), and condemns all forms of inflation as a debasement of currency (Prov. 11:1; 20:10, 23; Isa. 1:22; Amos 8:5–6; Mic. 6:10–12).

God has placed value upon precious metals and stones, and He has built in us an attraction for them; but He has also made it clear that these things cannot be permanently owned or enjoyed apart from fellowship with Him. The ungodly are allowed to mine for these materials, and to own them for a time, in order that their wealth may ultimately be possessed by the restored people of God:

Though he [the wicked man] piles up silver like dust,
And prepares garments as plentiful as the clay;
He may prepare it,
But the just shall wear it,
And the innocent will divide the silver.
(Job 27:16–17)

To the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that He may give to one who is good in God's sight (Eccl. 2:26).

He who increases his wealth by usury and extortion, gathers it for him who will be kind to the poor (Prov. 28:8).

Indeed, there is a basic principle that is always at work throughout history: "The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous" (Prov. 13:22), "for evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait on the LORD will inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:9). A God-fearing nation will be blessed with abundance, while apostate nations will eventually lose their resources, as God inflicts the Curse upon rebellious people and their culture.

What—or rather *Who* was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing? His part it was, and His alone, both to bring again the corruptible to incorruption and to maintain for the Father His consistency of character with all. For He alone, being Word of the Father and above all, was in consequence both able to re-create all, and worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to be an ambassador for all with the Father.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [7]

THE GARDEN OF THE LORD

ANIMALS IN THE GARDEN

In Eden, before the Fall, there was no death (Rom. 5:12). Animals were not “wild,” and Adam was able to name (i.e., *classify*) the animals without fear (Gen. 2:19–20). But man’s rebellion resulted in terrible changes throughout the world. The nature of animals was altered, so that they became a threat to the peace and safety of man. The dominion over them that Adam had exercised was lost.

In Christ, however, man’s dominion has been restored (Ps. 8:5–8 with Heb. 2:6–9). Thus, when God saved His people, this effect of the Curse began to be reversed. He led them through a dangerous wilderness, protecting them from the snakes and scorpions (Deut. 8:15), and He promised them that their life in the Promised Land would be Eden-like in its freedom from the ravages of wild animals: “I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land” (Lev. 26:6). In fact, this is why God did not allow Israel to exterminate the Canaanites all at once: *the heathen served as a buffer between the covenant people and the wild animals* (Ex. 23:29–30; Deut. 7:22).

Accordingly, when the prophets foretold the coming salvation in Christ, they described it in the same terms of Edenic blessing: “I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods” (Ezek. 34:25). “No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there” (Isa. 35:9). In fact, the Bible goes so far as to say that through the Gospel’s permeation of the world the wild

nature of the animals will be transformed into its original, Edenic condition:

The wolf will dwell with the lamb,
 And the leopard will lie down with the kid,
 And the calf and the young lion and the fading together;
 And a little boy will lead them.
 Also the cow and the bear will graze;
 Their young will lie down together;
 And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
 And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
 And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
 They will not hurt or destroy in all My Holy Mountain,
 For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
 As the waters cover the sea.
 (Isa. 11:6–9; cf. Isa. 65:25)

On the other hand, God warned, the Curse would reappear if the people turned away from God's law: "I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted" (Lev. 26:22; cf. Num. 21:6; Deut. 28:26; 2 Kings 2:24; 17:25; Ezek. 5:17; 14:15; 32:4; Rev. 6:8). When a culture departs from God, He surrenders its people to the dominion of wild animals, in order to prevent them from having ungodly dominion over the earth. But in a godly culture this threat against life and property will progressively disappear; and, ultimately, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, the animals will be tamed, and harnessed again to the service of God's Kingdom.

Finally, in this connection we must consider the dinosaurs, for there is a whole theology built around them in the Bible. While the Bible does speak of land dinosaurs (cf. *behemoth* in Job 40:15–24, which some mistake for a hippopotamus, but which is actually closer to a brontosaurus), our focus here will be on *dragons and sea serpents* (cf. Job 7:12; 41:1–34—the creature mentioned in the latter reference, a huge, fire-breathing dragon called Leviathan, is supposed by some to be a crocodile!). Essentially, as part of God's good creation (Gen. 1:21: *sea monsters*), there is nothing "evil" about these creatures (Gen. 1:31; Ps. 148:7); but, because of man's rebellion, they are used in Scripture to symbolize rebellious man at the height of his power and glory.

Three kinds of dragons are spoken of in Scripture: *Tannin* (Dragon; Ps. 91:13), *Leviathan* (Ps. 104:26), and *Rahab* (Job 26:12–13; in Hebrew,

this is a completely different word from the name of the Canaanite harlot who saved the Hebrew spies in Joshua 2). The Bible relates each of these monsters to *the Serpent*, who stands for the subtle, deceitful enemy of God's people (Gen. 3:1–5, 13–15). Thus, to demonstrate the divine victory and dominion over man's rebellion, God turned Moses' rod into a "serpent" (Ex. 4:1–4), and Aaron's rod into a "dragon" (*tannin*; Ex. 7:8–12). The Dragon/Serpent, therefore, becomes in Scripture a symbol of Satanically inspired, rebellious pagan culture (cf. Jer. 51:34), especially exemplified by Egypt in its war against the covenant people. This is particularly true with regard to the monster Rahab (meaning *the proud one*), which is often a synonym for Egypt (Ps. 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 30:7). God's covenant-making deliverance of His people in the Exodus is described in terms of both the original creation and God's triumph over the Dragon:

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD;
Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.
Was it not Thou who cut Rahab in pieces,
Who pierced the Dragon?
Was it not Thou who dried up the sea,
The waters of the great deep;
Who made the depths of the sea a pathway
For the redeemed to cross over?
(Isa. 51:9–10)

The Bible also speaks of the Exodus as a salvation from Leviathan:

Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength;
Thou didst break the heads of the Dragons in the waters.
Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan;
Thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
(Ps. 74:13–14)

Thus, in provisional fulfillment of the promise in Eden, the Dragon's head was crushed when God saved His people from Egypt. Of course, the head-wound became healed, and the Dragon (accompanied by the Dragon-State in his image) kept coming back to plague and persecute the seed of the woman (cf. Rev. 12–13). This happens again and again throughout the Old Testament, which records numerous temporary head-crushings of the Dragon (Jud. 4:21; 5:26–27; 9:50–57; 1 Sam. 5:1–5; 17:49–51; 2 Sam. 18:9; 20:21–22; Ps. 68:21; Hab. 3:13). In terms of the threefold structure of salvation which we saw in an earlier chapter, the *definitive* conquest of the Dragon took place in

the death and resurrection of Christ, when He defeated the powers of darkness, disarmed the demonic forces, cast out the devil, and rendered him powerless (Ps. 110:6; John 12:31–32; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:5–10; 20:1–3). The prophets looked forward to this:

In that Day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing Serpent
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,
Even Leviathan the twisted Serpent;
And He will kill the Dragon who lives in the sea.
(Isa. 27:1)

Progressively, the implications of Christ's victory are worked out by His people in time and on earth (John 16:33; 1 John 2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5; Rev. 12:11), until the *final* triumph at the consummation of history, when the Dragon is at last destroyed (Rev. 20:7–10). The special point to be grasped for the present age, however, is that we must expect increasing victories over the Serpent, who has been placed under our feet (Rom. 16:20). As the godly steadily reap the blessings of the restored Eden, Satan's dominion will shrink and wither away. This is symbolized by the fact that when all other creatures are restored to their Edenic nature, the condition of the serpent will be unchanged. God warned the Dragon that he would bite the dust under the heels of the righteous, and this aspect of the Curse will reach its full effect:

"The wolf and the lamb shall graze together,
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
And dust shall be the serpent's food.
They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,"
Says the LORD.
(Isa. 65:25; cf. Gen. 3:14)

TREES IN THE GARDEN

It goes without saying, of course, that a fundamental aspect of the Garden of Eden is that it was a *Garden*: every kind of beautiful and fruitbearing tree had been planted there by God (Gen. 2:9). Before the Fall, food was abundant and cheap, and man did not have to spend much time in search of sustenance and refreshment. Instead, his time was spent in scientific, productive, and aesthetic activity (Gen. 2:15, 19–20). Most of his labor involved investigating and beautifying his environment. But when he rebelled, this was changed, and the Curse was inflicted upon his labor and his natural surroundings: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all

the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:17-19). God imposed the Curse of scarcity, and the major part of human labor became a search for food.

But in salvation God restores His people to Eden, and food becomes cheaper and easier to obtain. In turn, more time can be spent in other activities: the growth of culture is possible only when food is relatively abundant. God gives His people food in order to give them dominion. The Biblical history of salvation demonstrates this again and again. In places too numerous to list here completely, godly men are mentioned as living near *trees* (see Gen. 18:4, 8; 30:37; Jud. 3:13; 4:5; 1 Kings 19:5; John 1:48; and, in a modern translation, see Gen. 12:6; 13:18; 14:13; Jud. 4:11). In none of these references is the mention of the trees absolutely essential to the story itself; in a sense, we might think such a detail could have been left out. But God wants us to get the picture in our minds of His people living in the midst of abundance, surrounded by the blessings of the Garden as they are restored in salvation. When Israel is blessed, we find every man sitting under his own vine and fig tree (1 Kings 4:25), and the same is prophesied of all men who live under the blessings of the Christ, when all nations shall flow to the Mountain of the Lord (Mic. 4:1-4; Zech. 3:10).

For this reason the Edenic imagery of *trees*, *planting* and *fruit* is used throughout Scripture to describe God's work of salvation. In singing about God's deliverance of His people into the new Eden, Moses said: "Thou wilt bring them and *plant them in the mountain* of Thine inheritance" (Ex. 15:17). The godly man is "like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" (Ps. 1:3; cf. Jer. 17:7-8). The covenant people are "like gardens beside the river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters" (Num. 24:6). "Israel will blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6).

The lampstand in the Tabernacle was a reminder of Eden: it was actually a stylized *tree*, decked with artificial bulbs and flowers, all made of pure *gold* (Ex. 37:17-24). The Temple also was richly furnished with Edenic-restoration symbolism: the cedar walls displayed carvings of gourds, flowers, palm trees and cherubim, overlaid with gold (1 Kings 6:15-36; cf. the vision of the restored Temple in

Ezek. 41:18–20). The Ark of the Covenant contained not only the Law but also a golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod which was miraculously covered with buds, blossoms and almonds (Heb. 9:4).

The High Priest was a living symbol of man fully restored to fellowship with God in the Garden. His forehead was covered with a gold plate, on which was engraved the phrase, *HOLY TO THE LORD* (Ex. 28:36), as a symbol of the removal of the Curse on Adam's brow. His breastplate was covered with gold and precious stones (Ex. 28:15–30), and the hem of his robe was ringed with pomegranates and golden bells (Ex. 28:33–35). As another symbol of freedom from the Curse, the robe itself was made of *linen* (Ex. 28:6), for while they were ministering, the priests were forbidden to wear any wool at all: "They shall be clothed with linen garments; and wool shall not be on them while they are ministering. . . . *They shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat*" (Ezek. 44:17–18). In Genesis 3:18–19, sweat is an aspect of fallen man's labor under death and the Curse; the priest, as the Restored Man, was required to wear the light material of linen to show the removal of the Curse in salvation.

Edenic symbolism was also in the feasts of Israel, as they celebrated the bounty of God's provision and enjoyed the fullness of life and prosperity under the blessings of the covenant. This is particularly true of the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (also called "Ingathering," in Ex. 23:16). In this feast they were required to leave their homes and live for seven days in little "tabernacles," or booths, made entirely from "the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook" (Lev. 23:40). Israel usually dwelled in walled cities, as a protection against their enemies; yet, at the very time of prosperity (the end of harvest)—when attack would seem most likely—God ordered them to leave the security of their homes and journey to Jerusalem, to live in unprotected booths made of branches, palm fronds, and fruit! God promised, however, that He would keep the heathen from attacking during the festivals (Ex. 34:23–24), and Israel had to trust in His strength.

The feast was, obviously, a reminder of life in Eden, when walled cities were unnecessary; and it looked forward to the day when the world would be turned into Eden, and the nations would beat their swords into plowshares (Mic. 4:3). For this reason they were also commanded to sacrifice 70 bullocks during the feast (Num. 29:12–38). Why? Because the number of the original nations of the earth was 70 (they are listed in Gen. 10), and the feast celebrated the

ingathering of all nations into God's Kingdom; thus atonement was made for all.

It is important to remember that the Jews did not keep this feast—in fact, they forgot it was even in the Bible—until their return from captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 8:13–18). During this period of renewal and restoration, God enlightened the minds of the prophets to understand the significance of this feast as *an acted-out prophecy of the conversion of all nations to the true faith*. On the last day of the feast (Hag. 2:1), God spoke through Haggai: “I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this House [the Temple] with glory. . . . The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” declares the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:7–8). About this same time, Zechariah prophesied about the meaning of the feast in terms of the conversion of all nations and the sanctification of every area of life (Zech. 14:16–20). And hundreds of years later, during the celebration of the same feast, Christ Himself declared its meaning: the outpouring of the Spirit upon the restored believer, so that the Church becomes a means of restoration to the entire world (John 7:37–39; cf. Ezek. 47:1–12).

Israel was to be the means of bringing the blessings of the Garden of Eden to the world: Scripture goes out of its way to portray this symbolically when it tells us (*twice*: Ex. 15:27; Num. 33:9) of Israel camping at Elim, where there were 12 *wells of water* (the 12 tribes of Israel) and 70 *palm trees* (the 70 nations of the world). God thus organized Israel as a small-scale model of the world, giving it 70 elders (Ex. 24:1); and Jesus followed this pattern by sending out 70 disciples (Luke 10:1). God's people are a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6), chosen to bring the light of the Gospel into a world darkened by sin and the Curse. Increasingly, the Hope expressed in the Feast of Tabernacles will be realized, as the whole earth becomes a Garden (Isa. 11:9; Dan. 2:35); as the world is filled with blessing and security, and there is no longer any need for walled cities (Lev. 23:3–6; Isa. 65:17–25; Ezek. 34:25–29). The Garden of Eden, the Mountain of the Lord, will be restored *in history*, before the Second Coming, by the power of the Gospel; and the desert will rejoice, and blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1).

In contrast, the Bible says that God controls the heathen by withholding food and water. To understand the misery of much of the so-called “Third World,” we need to look first at its ungodly religion and culture. The Edenic blessing of abundance will never be theirs until

they repent and believe the Gospel. Christian cultures, on the other hand (especially the countries of the Reformation), are blessed with food that is relatively cheap and abundant. But the Biblical warning is clear: if our nation continues in its apostasy, famine will come, as surely as our rebellious first parents were cast out of Eden. We cannot possess the blessings of the Garden if we live in rebellion against God. The fruitful field will again become a wilderness:

But it will come about, if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out (Deut. 28:15–19).

Upon the land of my people thorns and briars shall come up. . . .
Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field,
And the fertile field is considered as a forest.
(Isa. 32:13–15)

What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could re-create man made after the Image.

In order to effect this re-creation, however, He had first to do away with death and corruption. Therefore He assumed a human body, in order that in it death might once for all be destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [13]

THE GARDEN AND THE HOWLING WILDERNESS

When God created Adam, He placed him into a *land*, and gave him dominion over it. Land is basic to dominion; therefore, salvation involves a restoration to land and property. In announcing His covenant to Abram, the very first sentence God spoke was a promise of land (Gen. 12:1), and He completely fulfilled that promise when He saved Israel (Josh. 21:43–45). This is why Biblical law is filled with references to property, law, and economics; and this is why the Reformation laid such stress on *this* world, as well as the next. Man is not saved by being delivered out of his environment. Salvation does not rescue us from the material world, but from *sin*, and from the effects of the Curse. The Biblical ideal is for every man to own property—a place where he can have dominion and rule under God.

The blessings of the Western world have come because of Christianity and the resultant freedom which men have had in the use and development of property and the fulfillment of their callings under God's dominion mandate. Capitalism—the free market—is a product of Biblical law, in which a high priority is placed upon private property, and which condemns theft of all kinds (including theft by the State).

To unbelieving economists, professors, and government officials, it is a mystery why capitalism cannot be exported. Considering the obvious, proven superiority of the free market in raising the standard of living for all classes of people, why don't pagan nations implement capitalism into their social structures? The reason is this: *Freedom cannot be exported to a nation that has no marketplace for the Gospel*. The blessings of the Garden cannot be obtained apart from Jesus Christ. The Golden Rule—which sums up the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12)—is the inescapable ethical foundation for the free market; and

this ethic is impossible apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to keep the righteous requirements of God's law (Rom. 8:4).

All heathen cultures have been statist and tyrannical, for a people who reject God will surrender themselves and their property to a dictator (1 Sam. 8:7–20). Ungodly men want the blessings of the Garden, but they attempt to possess them by unlawful means, as Ahab did with Naboth's *vineyard* (1 Kings 21:1–16), and the result is, as always, destruction (1 Kings 21:17–24). The genuine, free possession of land is the result of salvation: God brought His people into a land, and divided it among them for an inheritance (Num. 26:52–56); and, as He had done in Eden, He regulated the land (Lev. 25:4) and the trees (Lev. 19:23–25; Deut. 20:19–20).

As we have seen, when God banished Adam and Eve from their land, the world began to become a wilderness (Gen. 3:17–19). From this point the Bible begins to develop a *Land-vs.-Wilderness* theme, in which the redeemed, obedient people of God are seen inheriting a *land* that is secure and bountiful, while the disobedient are cursed by being driven out into a *wilderness*. When Cain was judged by God, he complained: "Today You are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from Your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth" (Gen. 4:14). And he was correct, as Scripture records: "So Cain went out from the Lord's presence, and lived in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (Gen. 4:16). *Nod* means *Wandering*: Cain became the first nomad, a wanderer with no home and no destination.

Similarly, when the whole world became wicked, God said: "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land" (Gen. 6:7), and He did so, by the Flood-leaving only Noah and his household alive in the ark (which God brought to rest, incidentally, on a *mountain*; Gen. 8:4). The ungodly were driven out of the land, and the people of the covenant repopulated it.

Again, the ungodly tried to build their own "Garden," the tower of Babel. They were seeking to make themselves a name—to *define* themselves in terms of their own rebellious standards—and to prevent themselves from being *scattered* from the land (Gen. 11:4). But man cannot build the Garden on his own terms. God is the Definer, and He is the only One who can give us security. The very attempt of the people of Babel to prevent their destruction actually brought it about. God confused their languages—so much for "naming" *anything!*—and *scattered them from their land* (Gen. 11:8–9).

In marked contrast, the very next chapter records God's covenant with Abram, in which He promises to bring Abram into a land, and to make his *name* great (Gen. 12:1–2). As a further guarantee and reminder of His covenant, God even *changed* Abram's name to Abraham, in terms of his predestined calling. *God is our Definer*: He alone gives us our name, and “calls into being that which does not exist” (Rom. 4:17). Thus, as we are baptized into God's Name (Matt. 28:19), we are *redefined* as God's living people, free in Christ from our death in Adam (Rom. 5:12–6:23). Circumcision performed the same function in the Old Testament, which is why children officially received their name when they were circumcised (cf. Luke 2:21). In salvation, God brings us back into Eden and gives us a *new name* (Rev. 2:17; cf. Isa. 65:13–25).

When God's people became disobedient as they were about to enter the Promised Land, God punished them by making them *wander* in the *Wilderness*, until the entire generation of the disobedient was wiped out (Num. 14:26–35). Then God turned and saved His people out of “the howling waste of a wilderness” (Deut. 32:10), and brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey (another subtle reminder of Eden, by the way: milk is a more nourishing form of *water*, and honey comes from *trees*). God's obedient people have never been nomads—instead, they are marked by stability, and have dominion. True, the Bible does call us *pilgrims* (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11), but that is just the point: we are *pilgrims*, not *hobos*. A pilgrim has a home, a destination. In redemption God saves us from our wanderings, and gathers us into a land (Ps. 107:1–9). A scattered, homeless people cannot have dominion. When the Puritans left England, they did not wander over the earth; God brought them into a land and made them rulers, and though the foundation they built has greatly eroded, it is still very much with us after 300 years. (What will people 300 years from now say of the accomplishments of today's shallow, retreatist evangelicalism?)

People become nomads only through disobedience (Deut. 28:65). As the Curse functions in history, as civilization apostatizes, nomadism becomes widespread, and the wilderness increases. And, as the Curse spreads, *the water dries up*. Since the Fall, the ground is no longer watered primarily by springs. God sends us water by rain instead (rain is much easier to turn off and on at a moment's notice than springs and rivers are). The withholding of water—turning the land into a parched wilderness—is very closely related to the Curse

(Deut. 29:22–28). The Curse is also described in terms of the disobedient people being *uprooted* from the land (Deut. 29:28), in contrast to God’s *planting* of His people in the land (Ex. 15:17). God destroys the roots of a land and people by cutting off the water supply: drought is regarded in Scripture as a major (and effective) means of national punishment. When God shuts off the water, He turns the land into the very opposite of Eden.

The history of Sodom and Gomorrah is a sort of capsulized history of the world in this regard. Once described as being like the Garden of Eden in its beauty and abundance (Gen. 13:10), it became through God’s judgment “a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it” (Deut. 29:23). Sodom and Gomorrah were in the area now known as the Dead Sea—and it is called Dead for a very good reason: nothing can live in it. Chemical deposits (salt, potash, magnesium, and others) make up 25 percent of the water as a result of God’s judgment upon the land. Except for where water flows *into* it (and a few isolated springs in the area), the land is completely arid. It is now the furthest thing imaginable from Eden, and it serves as a picture of the world after the Curse: Eden has become Wilderness.

But that is not all we are told about this area. In Ezekiel’s vision of the restored Temple (also on a mountain; Ezek. 40:2), he sees the Water of Life flowing eastward from the threshold toward the Dead Sea and healing its waters, resulting in “a great multitude of fish” and luxuriant growth (Ezek. 47:8–12). We must not look upon the world with eyes that see only the Curse; we must look with the eyes of faith, enlightened by God’s Word to see the world as the arena of His triumph. History does not end with the Wilderness. World history will be, on a massive scale, that of Sodom: first a Garden, lovely and fruitful; then corrupted into a Wilderness of Death through sin; finally, restored by God’s grace to its former Edenic abundance. “The wilderness and the solitary place will be glad; and the desert will rejoice, and blossom as the rose” (Isa. 35:1).

The poor and needy search for water, but there is none;
Their tongues are parched with thirst.
But I the LORD will answer them;
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.
I will make rivers flow on barren heights,
And springs within the valleys.
I will turn the desert into pools of water,

And the parched ground into springs.
I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia,
The myrtle and the olive.
I will set pines in the wasteland,
The fir and the cypress together,
So that people may see and know,
May consider and understand,
That the hand of the LORD has done this,
That the Holy One of Israel has created it.
(Isa. 41:17–20)

This, then, is the direction of history, in what may be called “the First Rapture”—God gradually uprooting unbelievers and unbelieving cultures from the land, and bringing His people into a full inheritance of the earth.

I am not denying, of course, the Biblical teaching that God’s people will someday meet the Lord in the air, at His return (1 Thess. 4:17); but the modern doctrine of the “Rapture” is too often a doctrine of *flight from the world*, in which Christians are taught to long for escape from the world and its problems, rather than for what God’s Word promises us: *Dominion*. How common it is to hear Christians say, when confronted with a problem: “I sure hope the Rapture comes soon!”—rather than: “Let’s get to work on the solution right now!” Even worse is the response that is also too common: “Who cares? We don’t have to do anything about it, because the Rapture is coming soon anyway!” And worst of all is the attitude held by some that all work to make this a better world is absolutely wrong, because “improving the situation will only delay the Second Coming!” A good deal of modern Rapturism should be recognized for what it really is: a dangerous error that is teaching God’s people to expect defeat instead of victory.

Indeed, a very common evangelical worldview is that “the earth is the *devil’s*, and the fulness thereof”—that the world belongs to Satan, and that Christians can expect only defeat until the Lord returns. And that is exactly the lie that Satan wants Christians to believe. If God’s people think the devil is winning, it makes his job just that much easier. What would he do if Christians stopped retreating and started advancing against him? James 4:7 tells us what he would do: he would flee from us! So why isn’t the devil fleeing from us in this age? Why are Christians at the mercy of Satan and his servants? Why aren’t Christians conquering kingdoms with the Gospel, as they did in times past? *Because Christians are not resisting the devil!* Worse yet,

they're being told by their pastors and leaders not to resist, but to retreat instead! Christian leaders have turned James 4:7 inside out, and are really *giving aid and comfort to the enemy*—because they are, in effect, saying to the devil: “Resist the Church, and we will flee from you!” And Satan is taking them at their word. So then, when Christians see themselves losing on every front, they take it as “proof” that God has not promised to give dominion to His people. But the only thing it proves is that James 4:7 is true, after all, including its “flip side”—that is, if you *don't* resist the devil, he *won't* flee from you.

What we must remember is that God doesn't “rapture” Christians out of the world in order to escape conflict—He “raptures” non-Christians! The Lord Jesus prayed, in fact, that we would not be “raptured”: “My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15). And this is the constant message of Scripture. God's people will inherit all things, and the ungodly will be disinherited and driven out of the land. “For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be uprooted from it” (Prov. 2:21–22). “The righteous will never be uprooted, but the wicked will not remain in the land” (Prov. 10:30). God described the land of Canaan as having been “defiled” by the abominable sins of its heathen population, saying that the land itself “vomited out its inhabitants”; and He warned His people not to imitate those heathen abominations, “so that the land may not vomit you out also” (Lev. 18:24–28; 20:22). Using the same Edenic language, the Lord warns the church of Laodicea against sin, and threatens: “I will vomit you out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16). In His parable of the wheat (the godly) and the tares (the ungodly)—and note the Edenic imagery even in His choice of illustrations—Christ declares that He will gather *first* the *tares* for destruction; the wheat is “raptured” later (Matt. 13:30).

“The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the just” (Prov. 13:22). That is the basic pattern of history as God saves His people and gives them dominion. This is what God did with Israel: in saving them, He brought them into *already-settled lands*, and they inherited cities that had already been built (Ps. 105:43–45). God *does* bless the heathen, in a sense—just so they can work out their own damnation, in the meantime building up an inheritance for the godly (cf. Gen. 15:16; Ex. 4:21; Josh. 11:19–20). Then God smashes them and gives the fruit of their labor to His people. This is why we need not fret over evildoers, for

we shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37). The Hebrew word for *salvation* is *yasha*, meaning *to bring into a large, wide, open space*—and in salvation God does just that: He gives us the world, and turns it into the Garden of Eden.

He it is Who won victory from His daemon foes and trophies from the idolaters even before His bodily appearing—namely, all the heathen who from every region have abjured the tradition of their fathers and the false worship of idols and are now placing their hope in Christ and transferring their allegiance to Him. The thing is happening before our very eyes, here in Egypt; and thereby another prophecy is fulfilled, for at no other time have the Egyptians ceased from their false worship save when the Lord of all, riding as on a cloud, came down here in the body and brought the error of idols to nothing and won over everybody to Himself and through Himself to the Father. He it is Who was crucified with the sun and moon as witnesses; and by His death salvation has come to all men, and all creation has been redeemed.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [37]

THE FIERY CLOUD

What was most important about the Garden—indeed, that which made it a Garden at all—was God’s presence with His people. In order to understand this properly, we will begin our study in this chapter with the revelation of God’s presence to the covenant people of Israel, and then work both *backward* to Eden and *forward* to the Church.

God revealed His presence to His people in the Cloud of Glory. The Cloud functioned as a sort of “mobile home” for God—His fiery chariot by which He made His presence known to His people. The Cloud served as a guide for Israel, giving light in the darkness and shade from the heat (Ex. 13:21–22; Ps. 105:39), but bringing judgment to the wicked (Ex. 14:19–25). On Sinai, the Cloud was accompanied by thunder, light, fire, smoke and an earthquake (Ex. 19:16–20), and was filled with innumerable angels (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17). The Cloud is nothing less than a revelation of the invisible Heaven, where God is seated on His throne of glory, surrounded by His heavenly court and council (Ex. 24:9–15; Isa. 6:1–4), and from which He spoke to Moses (Ex. 33:9; Ps. 99:7).

When the Tabernacle was completed, the Cloud entered it and filled it with the glory of God (Ex. 40:34–38; cf. 2 Chron. 5:13–14), and fire issued forth from it to consume the sacrifices (Lev. 9:23–24). The prophet Ezekiel looked up through the Cloud (Ezek. 1) and saw fire, lightning and winged creatures flying below a “firmament”—the “pavement” or “sea of glass” that is around the base of God’s throne (Ex. 24:10; Rev. 4:6)—and around the throne was the Glory in the form of a rainbow (Ezek. 1:28; cf. Gen. 9:12–17; Rev. 4:3; 10:1).

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

While there are many phenomena associated with the Cloud (most are listed in Ps. 18:6–15), perhaps the most striking characteristic is the peculiar, unmistakable *noise* or *voice*: virtually every account mentions it. Depending on the situation, it can sound like wind, thunder, rushing water, a shout, a trumpet (or many trumpets), a marching army, the rumbling of chariot wheels across the heavens, or the fluttering and beating of wings (see the passages already cited; also Ezek. 3:12–13; 10:1–5; 2 Sam. 5:24; 2 Kings 7:5–7); and Ezekiel tells us that the sound, in fact, has its origin in the beating of the *wings* of the myriads of angels (Ezek. 1:24; 3:12–13). Consider the following description of the sevenfold *Voice* from the Cloud:

The Voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
 The God of glory thunders,
 The LORD is over many waters.
 The Voice of the LORD is powerful,
 The Voice of the LORD is majestic.
 The Voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
 Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
 And He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
 And Sirion like a young wild ox.
 The Voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.
 The Voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
 The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh [cf. Num. 16:19–33].
 The Voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve,
 And strips the forests bare.
 And in His Temple everything says, “Glory!”
 (Ps. 29:3–9)

It was this *Voice*—an ear-splitting, earth-shattering *roar*—that Adam and Eve heard on their last day in the Garden: “And they heard the *Voice* of the LORD God traversing the Garden...and they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the Garden” (Gen. 3:8; this is an important text, and we will have to consider it in more detail in a later chapter).

THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY

It is important to recognize that the Cloud was a *theophany*, a visible manifestation of the enthroned presence of God to His covenant people. Indeed, the Old Testament often uses the term *Spirit* as a synonym for the *Cloud*, ascribing the same functions to both (Neh.

9:19–20; Isa. 4:4–5; Joel 2:28–31; Hag. 2:5). The most revealing instance of this equation of God and the Cloud is where Moses describes God’s salvation of Israel in the wilderness in terms of an eagle *hovering* or *fluttering* over her young (Deut. 32:11). How did God “flutter” over Israel? Why does the Psalmist continually seek refuge in the shelter of God’s “wings” (e.g., Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4)? Certainly, God Himself does not have wings. But His angels do—and the special revelation of God’s saving, judging and protecting presence was by the Glory-Cloud, which contains “many thousands of angels” (Ps. 68:17; cf. 2 Kings 6:17): “He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge...for He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways” (Ps. 91:4, 11).

Now, the fascinating thing about Moses’ statement in Deuteronomy 32:11—God’s “fluttering” over His people by means of the Cloud—is that Moses uses that Hebrew word only one other time in the entire Pentateuch, when he tells us that “the earth was without form, and void;...and the Spirit of God *was moving* upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2).

Nor is that the only parallel between these two passages; for in Deuteronomy 32:10 Moses describes the wilderness through which the people were traveling as a *waste*—the same word translated *without form* in Genesis 1:2 (and, again, these are the only two occurrences of the word in the Pentateuch). What Moses is saying, then—and this fact was surely understood by his Hebrew readers—is that *God’s saving of His people through the Exodus was a re-enactment of the history of the Creation: In saving Israel God was constituting them a New Creation*. As in the beginning, the Spirit-Cloud hovered over the creation, bringing light in the darkness (Gen. 1:3; Ex. 14:20; John 1:3–5), and leading on to the Sabbath-rest in the Promised Land, the New Eden (Gen. 2:2–3; cf. Deut. 12:9–10 and Ps. 95:11, where the land is called a *rest*).

Thus, God’s re-creation of His people in order to bring them into fellowship with Him in the Holy Mountain was witnessed by the same manifestation of His creative presence that was there at the original Creation, when the Spirit gloriously arched His canopy over the earth. The bright radiance of the Cloud-canopy was also the basis for the sign of the rainbow that Noah saw on Mount Ararat, assuring him of the faithfulness of God’s covenant (Gen. 9:13–17). The glory of God’s Cloud-canopy, arched over a mountain, is a repeated sign in Scripture that God is with His people, creating them anew, restoring

His handiwork to its original Edenic state, and bringing the creation forward to His appointed goal.

A basic promise of salvation is given in Isaiah 4:4–5: “When the LORD has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, *by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning*, then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her *assemblies* [the official gatherings for worship] a Cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a *canopy*.” This Cloud-canopy of God’s presence, full of angels’ wings, is called a pavilion, a *covering* (2 Sam. 22:12; Ps. 18:11; Lam. 3:44; Ps. 91:4). And *that* is why the word *covering* is used to describe the position of the carved cherubim that were placed hovering over the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:20). It is therefore significant that this Hebrew word is the term translated *booths* and *tabernacles* when God commands His people to erect booths of leafy branches to dwell in during the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34, 42–43); as we have seen, this feast was a reminder of Eden, a symbolic representation of the fact that salvation restores us to Edenic blessings.

The Garden of Eden thus served as a Tabernacle-Temple, a small replica of God’s larger Temple and Palace in which the “heavens” are His throne and the “earth” is His footstool (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 66:1)—the invisible heavens together with the visible universe making up His great cosmic Temple. Close attention to the architecture of the Tabernacle and the Temple will reveal that they were modeled as copies, not only of the Garden of Eden, but of the original heavenly Temple: the Cloud-canopy (cf. Heb. 8:5; 9:11, 23–24).

Under the protection of the winged Cloud-canopy, man’s responsibility was to fulfill the “cultural mandate,” to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). In obedient imitation of his Heavenly Father, man was to reshape, understand, interpret, and rule the world for God’s glory—in short, *to build the City of God*.

Simple *restoration* to Eden is never all that is involved in salvation, just as it was not God’s plan for Adam and his posterity simply to remain in the Garden. They were to go into all the world, bring the created potentiality of earth to full fruition. The Garden of Eden was a headquarters, a place to start. But godly rule by King Adam was to encompass the entire world. Thus, the Second Adam’s work is not only restorative (bringing back Eden) but *consummative*: He brings the world into the New Jerusalem.

PARADISE: RESTORED AND CONSUMMATED

Throughout redemptive history, as God called His people to the restored Paradise, he brought them into His City. We can see this in the contrast between the rebellious, autonomous city-builders of Genesis 11 and Abraham, who journeyed to the Promised Land “looking for the City which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10); and Scripture assures the Covenant community that we “have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22).

In the final vision of the Revelation, John is shown the fulfillment of the cultural mandate, the full restoration and consummation of Eden: “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a *great and high mountain*, and showed me *the holy city, Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Rev. 21:10–11). Like the Holy of Holies, the City’s length, width, and height are equal (Rev. 21:16; 1Kings 6:20): there is no Temple within the City, for the City itself is the inner sanctuary (cf. Eph. 2:19–22); and, at the same time, “the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its Temple” (Rev. 21:22). The City is ablaze with the brilliant glory of God, enlightening the nations (Rev. 21:11–27), and through its main street flows the River of Life, as it flowed originally from the Garden of Eden (Rev. 22:1–2); “and there shall no longer be any Curse” (Rev. 22:3). Moreover, we are not to regard this vision as wholly future, for our Lord has said much the same about us in this age: “You are *the light* of the world. *A City set on a Hill* cannot be hidden. . . . *Let your light shine* before men. . . .” (Matt. 5:14–16).

In many more ways, Edenic imagery is taken up and expanded in the Testament, which records the fulfillment of the promises of the New Creation in Christ. An obvious passage, of course, is John’s prologue (John 1:1–18), which begins where Genesis does: “In the beginning.” We see the same concepts—the Word, creation, life, the light shining in darkness and overcoming it; and John says of Christ that He *dwelt* (literally, *tabernacled*) among us, and we beheld His *glory*” (John 1:14; cf. Ex. 40:34). John’s point here is to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God’s presence with His people (cf. Matt. 1:23).

But John’s entire Gospel is built on Old Testament imagery. For example, the passage following his Prologue (John 1:19–2:11) contains a subtle, seven-day structure that is meant to remind us of the

original seven days of creation (as well as numerous other Old Testament parallels). On the first day, John the Baptist appears as “a *voice of one crying in the wilderness*” (1:23; cf. Gen. 1:2–3). The next day, as Jesus is baptized (baptism is a recapitulation of two Old Testament re-creation events: the Flood [1 Pet. 3:20–21] and the Red Sea crossing [1 Cor. 10:1–2]), the Spirit descends with *wings, hovering and fluttering over the waters of the New Creation*—and He comes as a dove, the winged messenger that announced to Noah the re-creation of the world (1:32–33; cf. Gen. 8:11). The passage continues with other creation-images, and ends on the *seventh day* with Jesus attending a wedding, and turning the *water* (cf. Gen. 1:2ff.) into wine—the *best wine* (John 2:1–11). The blessing is superabundant, more than is necessary (about 150 gallons), as a forerunner of the promised blessings of the Garden which would come through Him (Gen. 49:10–12; Isa. 25:6; Amos 9:13–14; Jer. 33:10–11). Just before He does this, He mentions the hour of His death—for it is His shed blood, the wine of communion, that provides the blessings: Eden is inaccessible apart from the Atonement. And thus, by this miracle on the Seventh Day, Jesus “manifested His glory” (John 2:11)—just as God had done by His enthronement in the Cloud on the first Sabbath.

But when God is seated at rest upon His throne, He sits as Judge, examining His Creation-Temple; and when He first found wickedness therein, He cleansed it, banishing the offenders (Gen. 3:24). Similarly, the next event in John’s Gospel shows the Lord assessing the Temple and coming in Judgment against those who defiled it (John 2:12–22). (The Sabbath is when we appear before God’s throne of judgment to be examined; and if we are approved, we enter into His Rest [Heb. 3–4]). The people in the Temple on this Sabbath were guilty, and He banished them in a terrifying—and noisy—manifestation of judgment: an image of the first and final Days of the Lord (see below, Chapter 15). He then declared His body—Himself personally and His Body the Church—to be the true Temple (John 2:18–22), for the physical resurrection of Christ’s body is the foundation for His people’s being constituted as the Temple (Eph. 1:20; 2:5–6, 19–22; 1 Cor. 3:10–11, 16–17).

As God’s Temple, the Church is re-admitted to Eden and filled with the Spirit and the glory of God (Ex. 40:34; Num. 9:15; Joel 2:28–31; Acts 2:1–4, 16–20. The Church is God’s new Garden-Temple, restored to God’s original mandate for man: to have dominion over the earth, expanding the Garden until it covers the whole world. In

remaking us in His image, God has given us His presence. He has taken up residence in His Temple, and has promised to be with us as we fulfill His command to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:18–20).

There is a River whose streams make glad the City of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
(Ps. 46:4–5)

Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the River flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the River flows everything will live. . . . Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the River. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing (Ezek. 47:9–12).

PART III

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

*Southward through Eden went a river large,
Then to the Heav'n of Heav'ns he shall ascend
With victory, triumphing through the air
Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise
The Serpent, Prince of Air, and drag in chains
Through all his realm, and there confounded leave;
Then enter into glory, and resume
His seat at God's right hand, exalted high
Above all names in Heav'n.*

JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost* [4.223–46]

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who took upon Him to die for all, stretched forth His hands, not somewhere on the earth beneath, but in the air itself, in order that the Salvation effected by the cross might be shown to all men everywhere: destroying the devil who was working in the air: and that He might consecrate our road up to Heaven, and make it free.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *Letters* [XXII]

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

Adam was created a king. He was to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. His kingship, however, was not absolute; Adam was a subordinate ruler, a king (prince) under God. He was a king only because God had *created* him as such and *ordered* him to rule. God's plan was for His image to rule the world under His law and oversight. As long as Adam was faithful to his commission, he was able to have dominion over the earth.

But Adam was unfaithful. Unsatisfied with being a subordinate ruler in God's image, applying God's law to creation, he wanted autonomy. He wanted to be his own god, making up his own law. For this crime of rebellion he was cast out of the Garden. But, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, this incident did not abort God's plan for dominion through His image. The Second Adam, Jesus Christ, came to accomplish the task which the First Adam had failed to do.

Throughout the Old Testament the prophets increasingly looked forward to a time when God's appointed King would come to sit on the throne. One of the Psalms most often quoted by New Testament authors shows God the Father telling His Son, the King:

Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Yourpossession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
(Ps. 2:8-9)

The prophets made it clear that, like Adam, the coming King was to rule over the entire world (not only over Israel):

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him,
 And His enemies shall lick the dust. . . .
 Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
 All nations shall serve Him.
 (Ps. 72:8–11)

God showed Daniel an outline of history in which a towering statue (representing the four empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) is struck down and crushed by a stone; “and the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:35). The meaning of this vision is the restoration of Eden under the King, as Daniel explained: “In the days of those kings [i.e., during the period of the Roman Empire] the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom which will never be destroyed; and that Kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan. 2:44). Christ, the Second Adam, will perform the task assigned to the First Adam, causing the Holy Mountain to grow and encompass the entire world.

ASCENDING TO THE THRONE

In a later vision Daniel actually foresaw Christ’s enthronement as the promised King:

I kept looking in the night visions,
 And behold, with the clouds of heaven
 One like a Son of Man was coming,
 And He came up to the Ancient of Days
 And was presented before Him.
 And to Him was given dominion,
 Glory and a Kingdom,
 That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language
 Might serve Him.
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 Which will not pass away;
 And His Kingdom is one
 Which will not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13–14)

It is commonly assumed today that this text describes the Second Coming, and thus that Christ’s Kingdom (often called the Millennium) begins only after His Return. Of course, this ignores the fact that Daniel had already prophesied the Kingdom beginning in the days of the Roman Empire. But notice exactly what Daniel says: Christ is seen going *up*, not *down*! The Son of man is going *to* the

Ancient of Days, not coming *from* Him! He is not *descending* in clouds to the earth, but *ascending* in clouds to His Father! Daniel was not predicting the Second Coming of Christ, but rather the climax of the First Advent, in which, after atoning for sins and defeating death and Satan, the Lord ascended on the clouds of heaven to be seated on His glorious throne at His Father's right hand. It is noteworthy too that Daniel used the term *Son of Man*, the expression Jesus later adopted to describe Himself. Clearly, we should understand *Son of Man* to mean simply *Son of Adam*—in other words, *the Second Adam*. Christ came as the Son of Man, the Second Man (1 Cor. 15:47), to accomplish the task assigned to the First Man. He came to be the King.

This is the constant message of the Gospels. Matthew's account of the Nativity records the story of the magi from the east coming to worship the King, and Herod's jealous attempt to destroy Him as a rival to his own unjust dominion. Instead, Christ escapes and it is Herod who dies (Matt. 2). Immediately, Matthew's history jumps 30 years ahead to clinch his point:

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1–2).

Matthew then turns to the ministry of Jesus, giving us a summary of His basic message to Israel: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). "And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people" (Matt. 4:23). A simple glance at a concordance will reveal how central the gospel of the Kingdom was to Jesus' program. And note well that the Kingdom was not some far-off millennium thousands of years in the future, after the Second Coming. Jesus announced: "*The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel*" (Mark 1:15). Jesus clearly told Israel to repent *now*, because the Kingdom was coming *soon*. The Kingdom was *at hand*. He was bringing it in right before their eyes (see Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:9–11; 17:21), and soon would ascend to the Father to sit on the throne of the Kingdom. This is why He told His disciples:

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom (Matt. 16:28).

Was Jesus right or wrong? In terms of some modern teachers, Jesus was mistaken. And this was no slight miscalculation: Jesus missed

the mark by thousands of years! Can we trust Him as Lord and Savior, and still hold that he was wrong, or that somehow His prophecy got derailed? Jesus was not just a man, like the First Adam. He is God, the Lord of heaven and earth; and if He sets out to bring in the Kingdom, can anything stop Him? Even the crucifixion was not a setback, for it was a crucial aspect of His plan. That is why he said, “I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself” (John 10:17–18). We must believe what Jesus said: within the lifetime of those who were listening to Him, He would come in His Kingdom. And that is exactly what He did, culminating in His ascension to His heavenly throne.

Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem, Matthew says, specifically fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of the Kingdom’s inauguration:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
 Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
 Behold, your King is coming to you;
 He is just and endowed with salvation,
 Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
 Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,
 And the horse from Jerusalem;
 And the bow of war will be cut off.
 And He will speak peace to the nations;
 And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
 And from the River to the ends of the earth.
 (Zech. 9:9–10; cf. Matt. 21:5)

The Apostle Peter understood that the meaning of the Ascension was Christ’s enthronement in heaven. Citing a prophecy of King David, Peter said:

And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, *He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne*; he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore *being exalted to the right hand of God*, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘*Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.*’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:30–36).

It is crucial to understand the Bible's own interpretation of the throne of Christ. According to the inspired Apostle Peter, David's prophecy of Christ being seated on a throne was not a prophecy of some earthly throne in Jerusalem (as some today mistakenly insist). *David was prophesying about Christ's throne in heaven.* It is the *heavenly* enthronement that King David foretold, Peter told his audience on the Day of Pentecost. From His throne in heaven, Christ is already ruling the world.

The Apostle Paul agreed: at Christ's Ascension, he wrote, God "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet" (Eph. 1:20–22). Now, if Christ is seated *now* above *all* rule and authority and power and dominion, if *all* things are *now* under His feet, *why are some Christians waiting for His Kingdom to begin?* According to Paul, God "*delivered* us from the domain of darkness, and *transferred* us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). The Bible says the Kingdom *has* arrived; some modern theologians say it *hasn't*. Is there really any question about whom we should believe?

THE BINDING OF SATAN

The original promise of the Gospel was contained in God's curse upon the serpent, that the Seed of the Woman would crush his head (Gen. 3:15). Accordingly, when Jesus came He immediately began winning victories over Satan and his demonic legions, singlehandedly engaging them in combat and effectively banishing them from the land, along with disease and death. An all-out warfare was waged during Christ's ministry, with Satan continually losing ground and running for cover. After observing His disciples on a successful mission, Jesus exulted: "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you" (Luke 10:18–19). He explained His victories over the demons by telling His audience that "the Kingdom of God has come upon you." He continued: "How can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Matt. 12:28–29). That is exactly what Jesus was doing in the world. He was binding Satan, the "strong

man,” in order to “plunder his house,” to steal men back from the devil.

The definitive defeat of Satan occurred in Christ’s death and resurrection. Again and again the apostles assured the early Christians of the fact of Christ’s victory over the devil. Through His finished work, Paul said, the Lord Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities”; “He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them” (Col. 2:15). The New Testament unquestionably teaches that through Christ’s bursting the bonds of death Satan was rendered powerless (Heb. 2:14). John wrote that “the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the work of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Again, we must note that this is in the past tense. It is an accomplished fact. This is not a prophecy about the Second Coming. It is a statement of fact about Christ’s First Advent. Christ came to bind and disarm Satan, to render him powerless, to destroy his works, and to establish His own rule as universal King, as God had intended from the beginning. According to the Bible, Christ actually fulfilled what He had set out to do; Scripture regards Satan as a defeated enemy, one who must flee when Christians oppose him, one who is unable to resist the victorious onslaught of Christ’s army. The gates of his city are doomed to collapse before the relentless attacks of the Church (Matt. 16:18).

THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM

At this point some will object: “If Jesus is King now, why aren’t all the nations converted? Why is there so much ungodliness? Why isn’t everything perfect?” In the first place, there’s no *if* about it. Jesus *is* the King, and His Kingdom *has* arrived. The Bible says so. In the second place, things will never be “perfect” before the Last Judgment, and even the millennium described by certain popular writers is far from perfect (in fact, theirs is far worse; for they teach that the nations will *never* truly be converted, but will only feign conversion while waiting for their chance to rebel).

Third, although the Kingdom was established *definitively* in the finished work of Christ, it is established *progressively* throughout history (until it is established *finally* on the Last Day). On the one hand, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is now ruling the nations with a rod of iron; He is now seated in power above all other rulers in heaven and earth, possessing all authority. On the other hand, the Bible also teaches that the Kingdom develops progressively, growing stronger

and more powerful as time goes on. The same letter to the Ephesians that tells us of Christ's absolute rule over creation (1:20–22), assuring us that we are reigning with Him (2:6), *also* commands us to put on armor for battle against the devil (6:10–17). There is no contradiction here—just two aspects of the same reality. And the fact that Jesus is now ruling as King of kings is precisely the reason why we can have confidence of victory in our conflict with evil. We can experience *progressive* triumph *now*, because Jesus Christ *definitively* triumphed over Satan in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Jesus told two parables which illustrate the Kingdom's growth. Matthew tells us:

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

He spoke another parable to them, "The Kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened" (Matt. 13:31–33).

The Kingdom was established when Christ came. But it has not yet reached its full development. Like the mustard tree, it started out small, but will grow to enormous size (just as the stone Daniel saw became a mountain and filled the whole earth). The Kingdom will grow in size, spreading everywhere, until the knowledge of God covers the earth, as the waters cover the sea. The Kingdom's growth will be *extensive*.

But the Kingdom will also grow *intensively*. Like leaven in bread, it will transform the world, as surely as it transforms individual lives. Christ has planted into the world His gospel, the power of God unto salvation. Like yeast, the power of the Kingdom will continue to work "until *all* is leavened."

After looking at this parable, you might wonder how in the world anyone could deny a dominion eschatology. How can you get around the force of this verse? Here's how: the defeatist simply explains that the "leaven" is *not* the *Kingdom*, but is instead a picture of how *evil heresies* are planted into the Church by the devil! Incredibly, his case is so desperate that he will resort to sleight-of-hand tricks, turning a promise of the Kingdom's *victory* into a promise of the Church's *defeat*. Note well that *all* is leavened; the verse is teaching *total conquest*, by one side or the other.

According to Jesus, therefore, which side will win? Contrary to pessimists, Jesus did not say that the Kingdom is like *dough*, into which someone sneaks destructive, evil leaven. He said that *the Kingdom is like leaven*. The Kingdom started small, and its growth has often been unobtrusive and sometimes virtually invisible; yet it continues to ferment and transform the world. Where was Christianity 2000 years ago? It consisted of a mere handful of people who had been commissioned to disciple the nations—a small group who would be persecuted by their own countrymen and opposed by the armed might of the most powerful empire in history. What chance would you have given for their survival? Yet the Church came out of the conflict victoriously, the clear winner by a mile; Rome and Jerusalem didn't get past the starting gate. The last twenty centuries have witnessed progress that only the willfully blind could deny. Has the yeast of the Kingdom spread everywhere? Of course not; not *yet*. But it will. God has predestined us for victory.

He was like those sent by the householder to receive the fruits of the vineyard from the husband men; for he exhorted all men to render a return. But Israel despised and would not render, for their will was not right, nay moreover they killed those that were sent, and not even before the Lord of the vineyard were they ashamed, but even He was slain by them. Verily, when He came and found no fruit in them, He cursed them through the fig-tree, saying, "Let there be henceforth no fruit from thee" [Matt. 21:19]; and the fig-tree was dead and fruitless, so that even the disciples wondered when it withered away.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet: "I will take away from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the scent of myrrh, and the light of a lamp, and the whole land shall be destroyed" [Jer. 25:10]. For the whole service of the law has been abolished from them, and henceforth and forever they remain without a feast.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *Letters* [VI]

THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL

Reading the Bible in terms of the Paradise theme can deepen our understanding of even the most familiar passages of Scripture. Suddenly we can understand why Psalm 80 and Isaiah 5, for example, describe the covenant people as “the Lord’s vineyard.” As we have seen, this was a reminder of man’s original state of communion with God in the Garden. It was also a reminder that when God saves His people, He constitutes them a renewed Garden (or Vineyard), and thus the Biblical writers used the imagery of planting, trees, vines, and fruit again and again to describe salvation in its various aspects (John 15 is a well-known example). It is important to recognize also, however, that Garden-imagery can be used to describe apostasy and the Curse, for the very first breaking of the covenant took place in the Garden. God had given Adam a commission to cultivate and guard His “vineyard”; instead, Adam had rebelled against the Landowner, and was cursed and cast out, forfeiting his inheritance. This twin image of the vineyard, as the place of both blessing and cursing, is an important concept in the Bible, and became the setting for one of Jesus’ most striking parables, the story of the Wicked Vinegrowers (Psalm 80 and Isaiah 5 should be read along with this).

There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. He then leased it to vinegrowers and went into a far country. Now when harvest time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinegrowers, that they might receive its fruit. But the vinegrowers took his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did the same thing to them. The last of all he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the vinegrowers saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize

his inheritance.” And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him (Matt. 21:33–39).

In His grace, God had sent prophets to Israel throughout her history, and always the men of God had been treated viciously. “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheep skins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground” (Heb. 11:37–38). The fact is that Israel had consistently rejected God’s word and mistreated the prophets, right from the beginning. As Stephen accused them (just before *he* was murdered by Jewish leaders): “You men who are stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become” (Acts 7:51–52).

Israel’s wicked treatment of the prophets reached its zenith in the murder of God’s Son, as Jesus foretold in His parable. He then asked his hearers, “When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinegrowers?”

They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and will lease his vineyard to other vinegrowers, who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.” Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore, I say to you, *the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it*” (Matt. 21:40–43).

The Jews had spoken their own sentence of condemnation. Indeed, the vineyard would be taken from them; the Lord would come and destroy them, and give the vineyard to obedient workmen who would render to Him the fruit He desired. *The Kingdom was to be taken from the Jews and given to a new “nation.”* Who would this nation be? The Apostle Peter (after citing the same Old Testament text Jesus used) gave the definitive answer, writing to the Church: “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, *a holy nation*, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who were once not a people, but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy,

but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9–10). The clincher is that God had used this identical language in speaking to the covenant people of Israel at Mount Sinai: “You shall be My own possession among all the peoples . . . and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5–6). What once had been true of Israel, Peter says, is now and forever true of the Church.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE

Israel was a garden, a vineyard, in rebellion against its owner; or, to change the metaphor, it was a tree without fruit, as Jesus said in another parable:

A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, “Look, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?” But he answered and said to him, “Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it; and if it bears fruit, fine. But if not, after that you can cut it down” (Luke 13:6–9).

Jesus, the Lord of the Vineyard, spent the three years of His ministry traveling through Israel seeking fruit. Now it was time to “cut it down.” John the Baptist had warned the Jews, even before Jesus began His office, that the vineyard of Israel was running out of time:

Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. And do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father,” for I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Matt. 3:8–10).

This was the problem with Israel. Even though the Jews welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem waving palm branches in recognition of His coming restoration of Eden (Matt. 21:8–9), *the branches had no fruit*. Interestingly, the same passage goes on to show what happened after Jesus left Jerusalem. As He walked, He came upon a fig tree and looked for fruit, but found none. So He cursed the fig tree, saying, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” And immediately the fig tree withered away (Matt. 21:18–19). The same would be true of barren, unrepentant Israel.

THE TERMINAL GENERATION

Primarily, of course, the fault lay with the leaders of Israel, the blind leaders of the blind, who were leading the entire nation into the ditch (Matt. 15:14). Thus Jesus particularly directed His wrathful denunciations toward them (cf. Matt. 23). Yet He included the people as a whole in His condemnation as well, as we can see from the closing words of His last public message:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets and wise men and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly I say to you, *all these things will come upon this generation* (Matt. 23:29-36).

The sins of Israel, its rebellions and apostasies, had been accumulating for centuries, filling up to overflowing. The point of crisis was reached when the Son came. Their rejection of Him sealed their fate, and they were in turn rejected by God. The generation that crucified the Lord and persecuted His apostles was the true "terminal generation." Israel, as the Covenant People, was to be destroyed, finally and irrevocably. They had received the final warning. Years later, shortly before the holocaust of A.D. 70 descended upon Israel, the Apostle Paul wrote that "the Jews...killed both the Lord and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but *wrath has come upon them to the uttermost*" (1 Thess. 2:14-16).

As a nation, Israel had become apostate, a spiritual harlot in rebellion against her Husband (cf. Ezek. 16). The fearful words of Hebrews 6:4-8 were literally applicable to the covenant nation, which had forfeited its birthright:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify for

themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

The same multitude which welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with hosannas was screaming for His blood in less than a week. Like all slaves, their attitude was fickle; but ultimately, their attitude was summed up in another of Jesus' parables: "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" (Luke 19:14). The chief priests revealed the faith of the nation when they vehemently denied the lordship of Christ and affirmed, "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15).

So the covenant people inherited the Curse. They had waved their branches toward the Owner's Son when he entered their vineyard, seeming to welcome Him to His rightful property; but when He came closer and inspected the branches, He found no fruit—just leaves. In keeping with the pattern we have seen in our study of the Garden of Eden, Israel was ripe for becoming judged, disinherited, and cast out of the Vineyard.

But they had not only the examples of Eden, the Flood, Babel, and other historical judgments as warnings. God had specifically stated, through Moses, that the Curse would fall upon them if they apostatized from the true faith. We would do well to remind ourselves of the warnings of Deuteronomy 28, where God threatens the loss of family and possessions, becoming ravaged by numerous diseases, suffering from warfare and the oppression of a victorious pagan nation, turning to cannibalism on account of famine, being sold into slavery and scattered over the face of the earth:

And it shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it.

Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.

So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, "Would that it were evening!" And at evening you shall say,

“Would that it were morning!” because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see (Deut. 28:63–67).

Because Israel committed the supreme act of covenant breaking when she rejected Christ, Israel herself was rejected by God. The awesome curses pronounced by Jesus, Moses, and the prophets were fulfilled in the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, with the desolation of the Temple and the obliteration of the covenant nation in A.D. 70. (See Appendix B for Josephus’ description of this event, and compare the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28.) As God had promised, the Kingdom was in deed established when Christ came. But instead of embracing and assimilating old Israel into its structure, the Kingdom came and ground Israel to powder. God’s new Temple, the Church, was established as the old Temple was torn down and reduced to rubble.

And when He Who spake unto Moses, the Word of the Father, appeared in the end of the world, He also gave this commandment, saying, “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another” [Matt. 10:23]; and shortly after He says, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand); then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes” [Matt. 24:15]. Knowing these things, the Saints regulated their conduct accordingly.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *Defence of His Flight* [11]

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

One of the most basic principles for an accurate understanding of the Bible's message is that *Scripture interprets Scripture*. The Bible is God's holy, infallible, inerrant Word. It is our highest authority. This means that we cannot seek for an authoritative interpretation of Scripture's meaning anywhere out side of the Bible itself. It also means that we must not interpret the Bible as if it dropped out of the sky in the twentieth century. The New Testament was written in the first century, and so we must try to understand it in terms of its first-century readers. For example, when John called Jesus "the Lamb of God," neither he nor his hearers had in mind anything remotely similar to what the average, modern man-on-the-street might think of if he heard someone called a "lamb." John did not mean Jesus was sweet, cuddly, nice, or cute. In fact, John wasn't referring to Jesus' *personality* at all. He meant that Jesus was the sinless Sacrifice for the world. How do we know this? *Because the Bible tells us so.*

This is the method we must use in solving every problem of interpretation in the Bible—including the prophetic passages. That is to say, when we read a chapter in Ezekiel, our first reaction must not be to scan the pages of the New York *Times* in a frantic search for clues to its meaning. The newspaper does not interpret Scripture, in any primary sense. The newspaper should not decide for us *when* certain prophetic events are to be fulfilled. Scripture interprets Scripture.

THIS GENERATION

In Matthew 24 (and Mark 13 and Luke 21) Jesus spoke to His disciples about a "great tribulation" which would come upon Jerusalem. It has become fashionable over the past 100 years or so to teach that

He was speaking about the end of the “Church Age” and the time of His Second Coming. But is this what He meant? We should note carefully that Jesus Himself gave the (approximate) date of the coming Tribulation, leaving no room for doubt after any careful examination of the Biblical text. He said:

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place (Matt. 24:34).

This means that *everything* Jesus spoke of in this passage, at least up to verse 34, *took place before the generation then living passed away*. “Wait a minute,” you say. “Everything? The witnessing to all nations, the Tribulation, the coming of Christ on the clouds, the stars falling . . . *everything*?” Yes—and, incidentally, this point is a very good test of your commitment to the principle we began with in this chapter. *Scripture interprets Scripture*, I said; and you nodded your head and yawned, thinking: “Sure, I know all that. Get to the point. Where do the atomic blasts and Killer Bees come in?” The Lord Jesus declared that “*this* generation”—people *then living*—would not pass away before the things He prophesied took place. The question is, do you believe Him?

Some have sought to get around the force of this text by saying that the word *generation* here really means *race*, and that Jesus was simply saying that the Jewish race would not die out until all these things took place. Is that true? I challenge you: Get out your concordance and look up every New Testament occurrence of the word *generation* (in Greek, *genea*) and see if it *ever* means “race” in any other context. Here are all the references for the Gospels: Matthew 1:17; 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34; Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19; 13:30; Luke 1:48, 50; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29, 30, 31, 32, 50, 51; 16:8; 17:25; 21:32. *Not one* of these references is speaking of the entire Jewish race over thousands of years; *all* use the word in its normal sense of *the sum total of those living at the same time*. It always refers to *contemporaries*. (In fact, those who say it means “race” tend to acknowledge this fact, but explain that the word suddenly *changes* its meaning when Jesus uses it in Matthew 24! We can smile at such a transparent error, but we should also remember that this is very serious. We are dealing with the Word of the living God.)

The conclusion, therefore—before we even begin to investigate the passage as a whole—is that *the events prophesied in Matthew 24 took place within the lifetime of the generation which was then living*. It was *this* generation which Jesus called “wicked and perverse” (Matt. 12:39, 45; 16:4;

17:17); it was *this* “terminal generation” which crucified the Lord; and it was *this* generation, Jesus said, upon which would come the punishment for “all the righteous blood shed on the earth” (Matt. 23:35).

ALL THESE THINGS

“Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!” (Matt. 23:36–38).

Jesus’ statement in Matthew 23 sets the stage for His teaching in Matthew 24. Jesus clearly told of an imminent judgment on Israel for rejecting the Word of God, and for the final apostasy of rejecting God’s Son. The disciples were so upset by His prophecy of doom upon the present generation and the “desolation” of the Jewish “house” (the Temple) that, when they were alone with Him, they could not help but ask for an explanation.

And Jesus came out of the Temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the Temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.” And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:1–3).

Again, we must take careful note that *Jesus was not speaking of something that would happen thousands of years later, to some future temple*. He was prophesying about “all *these* things,” saying that “not one stone *here* shall be left upon another.” This becomes even clearer if we consult the parallel passages:

And as He was going out of the Temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” And Jesus said to him, “Do you see *these great buildings*? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down” (Mark 13:1–2).

And while some were talking about the Temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, “*As for these things which you are looking at*, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down” (Luke 21:5–6).

The only possible interpretation of Jesus’ words which He Himself allows, therefore, is that He was speaking of the destruction of the

Temple which *then* stood in Jerusalem, the very buildings which the disciples beheld at that moment in history. The Temple of which Jesus spoke was destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman armies in A.D. 70. This is the only possible interpretation of Jesus' prophecy in this chapter. *The Great Tribulation ended with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70*. Even in the (unlikely) event that another temple should be built sometime in the future, Jesus' words in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 have nothing to say about it. He was talking solely about the Temple of that generation. There is no Scriptural basis for asserting that any other temple is meant. Jesus confirmed His disciples' fears: Jerusalem's beautiful Temple would be destroyed within that generation; her house would be left desolate.

The disciples understood the significance of this. They knew that Christ's coming in judgment to destroy the Temple would mean the utter dissolution of Israel as the covenant nation. It would be the sign that God had divorced Israel, removing Him self from her midst, taking the kingdom from her and giving it to another nation (Matt. 21:43). It would signal the end of the age, and the coming of an entirely new era in world history—*Jesus Christ's New World Order*. From the beginning of creation until A.D. 70, the world was organized around one central Sanctuary, one single House of God. Now, in the New Covenant order, sanctuaries are established wherever true worship exists, where the sacraments are observed and Christ's special Presence is manifested. Earlier in His ministry Jesus had said: "An hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. . . . But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth" (John 4:21–23). Now Jesus was making it clear that the new age was about to be permanently established upon the ashes of the old. The disciples urgently asked: "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Some have attempted to read this as two or three entirely separate questions, so that the disciples would be asking *first* about the destruction of the Temple, and *then* about the signs of the end of the world. This hardly seems credible. The concern of the immediate context (Jesus' recent sermon) is on the fate of *this* generation. The disciples, in consternation, had pointed out the beauties of the Temple, as if to argue that such a magnificent spectacle should not be ruined; they had just been silenced with Jesus' categorical declaration that not one stone there would be left upon another. There

is nothing whatsoever to indicate that they should suddenly change subjects and ask about the end of the material universe. (The translation “end of the world” in the King James Version is misleading, for the meaning of the English word *world* has changed in the last few centuries. The Greek word here is not *cosmos* [*world*], but *aion*, meaning *eon* or *age*.) The disciples had *one* concern, and their questions revolved around one single issue: the fact that their own generation would witness the close of the pre-Christian era and the coming of the new age promised by the prophets. All they wanted to know was *when* it would come, and *what signs* they should look for, in order to be fully prepared.

SIGNS OF THE END

Jesus responded by giving the disciples not one, but *seven* signs of the end. (We must remember that “the end” in this passage is *not* the end of the world, but rather *the end of the age*, the end of the Temple, the sacrificial system, the covenant nation of Israel, and the last remnants of the pre-Christian era). It is notable that there is a progression in this list: the signs seem to become more specific and pronounced until we reach the final, immediate precursor of the end. The list begins with certain events which would occur merely as “the beginning of birth pangs” (Matt. 24:8). In themselves, Jesus warned, they were not to be taken as signals of an imminent end; thus the disciples should guard against being misled on this point (v. 4). These “beginning” events, marking the period between Christ’s resurrection and the Temple’s destruction in A.D. 70, were as follows:

1. *False Messiahs*. “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many” (v. 5).
2. *Wars*. “And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (v. 6–7a).
3. *Natural disasters*. “And in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs” (v. 7b–8).

Any one of these occurrences might have caused Christians to feel that the end was immediately upon them, had not Jesus warned them that such events were merely *general tendencies* characterizing the final generation, and not precise signs of the end. The next two signs,

while they still characterize the period as a whole, do bring us up to a point near the end of the age:

4. *Persecution*. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name" (v. 9).
5. *Apostasy*. "And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved" (v. 10–13).

The last two items on the list are much more specific and identifiable than the preceding signs. These would be the final, definitive signs of the end—one the fulfillment of a process, and the other a decisive event:

6. *Worldwide evangelization*. "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come" (v. 14).

At first glance, this seems incredible. Could the gospel have been preached to the whole world within a generation of these words? The testimony of Scripture is clear. Not only *could* it have happened, but *it actually did*. Proof? A few years before the destruction of Jerusalem, Paul wrote to Christians in Colossae of "the gospel which has come to you, just as *in all the world also* it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing" (Col. 1:5–6), and exhorted them not to depart "from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, *which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven*" (Col. 1:23). To the church at Rome, Paul announced that "your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8), for the voice of gospel preachers "has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). According to the infallible Word of God, the gospel was indeed preached to the whole world, well before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. This crucial sign of the end was fulfilled, as Jesus had said. All that was left was the seventh, final sign; and when this event occurred, any Christians remaining in or near Jerusalem were instructed to escape at once:

7. *The Abomination of Desolation*. "Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop

not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak" (v. 15–18).

The Old Testament text Christ referred to is in Daniel 9:26–27, which prophesies the coming of armies to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple: "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; *desolations* are determined...and on the wing of *abominations* will come one who makes *desolate*, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out upon the *desolate*." The Hebrew word for *abomination* is used throughout the Old Testament to indicate *idols* and *filthy, idolatrous practices*, especially of the enemies of Israel (see, e.g., Deut. 29:17; 1 Kings 11:5, 7; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Chron. 15:8; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 4:1; 7:30; 13:27; 32:34; Ezek. 5:11; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 20:7–8, 30). The meaning of both Daniel and Matthew is made clear by the parallel reference in Luke. Instead of "abomination of desolation," Luke reads:

But when you see *Jerusalem surrounded by armies*, then recognize that her *desolation* is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are the days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled (Luke 21:20–22).

The "abomination of desolation," therefore, was to be *the armed invasion of Jerusalem*. During the period of the Jewish Wars, Jerusalem was surrounded by heathen armies several times. But the specific event denoted by Jesus as "the abomination of desolation" seems to be the occasion when the Edomites (Idumeans), the agelong enemies of Israel, attacked Jerusalem. Several times in Israel's history, as she was being attacked by her heathen enemies, the Edomites had broken in to ravage and desolate the city, thus adding greatly to Israel's misery (2 Chron. 20:2; 28:17; Ps. 137:7; Ezek. 35:5–15; Amos 1:9, 11; Obad. 10–16).

The Edomites remained true to form, and their characteristic pattern was repeated during the Great Tribulation. One evening in A.D. 68 the Edomites surrounded the holy city with 20,000 soldiers. As they lay outside the wall, Josephus wrote, "there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system

of the world was put into this disorder; and any one would guess that these wonders foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming.”

This was the last opportunity to escape from the doomed city of Jerusalem. Anyone who wished to flee had to do so immediately, without delay. The Edomites broke into the city and went directly to the Temple, where they slaughtered 8,500 people by slitting their throats. As the Temple overflowed with blood, the Edomites rushed madly through the city streets, plundering houses and murdering everyone they met, including the high priest. According to the historian Josephus, this event marked “the beginning of the destruction of the city . . . from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs.”

THE TRIBULATION

But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall (Matthew 24:19–20).

Luke’s account gives additional details:

Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:23–24).

As is pointed out in Matthew, the Great Tribulation was to take place, not at the *end* of history, but in the *middle*, for nothing similar had occurred “from the beginning of the world until now, *nor ever shall*.” Thus the prophecy of the Tribulation refers to the destruction of the Temple in that generation (A.D. 70) *alone*. It cannot be made to fit into some “double-fulfillment” scheme of interpretation; the Great Tribulation of A.D. 70 was an absolutely unique event, never to be repeated.

Josephus has left us an eyewitness record of much of the horror of those years, and especially of the final days in Jerusalem. It was a time when “the day-time was spent in the shedding of blood, and the night in fear”; when it was “common to see cities filled with dead bodies”; when Jews panicked and began indiscriminately killing each other; when fathers tearfully slaughtered their entire families, in order to prevent them from receiving worse treatment from the Romans;

when, in the midst of terrible famine, mothers killed, roasted, and ate their own children (cf. Deut. 28:53); when the whole land “was all over filled with fire and blood”; when the lakes and seas turned red, dead bodies floating everywhere, littering the shores, bloating in the sun, rotting and splitting apart; when the Roman soldiers captured people attempting to escape and then crucified them—at the rate of 500 per day.

“Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified! *His blood be on us, and on our children!*” the apostates had cried forty years earlier (Matt. 27:22–25); and when it was all over, more than a million Jews had been killed in the siege of Jerusalem; close to a million more were sold into slavery throughout the empire, and the whole of Judea lay smoldering in ruins, virtually depopulated. The days of vengeance had come with horrifying, unpitying intensity. In breaking her covenant, the holy city had become the Babylonish whore; and now she was a desert, “the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev. 18:2).

If He did not rise, but is still dead, how is it that He routs and persecutes and overthrows the false gods, whom unbelievers think to be alive, and the evil spirits whom they worship? For where Christ is named, idolatry is destroyed and the fraud of evil spirits is exposed; indeed, no such spirit can endure that Name, but takes to flight on sound of it. This is the work of One Who lives, not of one dead; and, more than that, it is the work of God.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [30]

COMING ON THE CLOUDS

We have seen that Christ's discourse on the Mount of Olives, recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, deals with "the end"—not of the world, but of Jerusalem and the Temple; it has exclusive reference to the "last days" of the Old Covenant era. Jesus clearly spoke of His own contemporaries when He said that "this generation" would see "all these things." The "Great Tribulation" took place during the terrible time of suffering, warfare, famine, and mass murder leading up to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. What appears to pose a problem for this interpretation, however, is what Jesus says next:

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and all of the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to another (Matt. 24:29–31).

Jesus seems to be saying that the Second Coming will occur immediately after the Tribulation. Did the Second Coming occur in A.D. 70? Have we missed it? First, let us be clear about one thing at the outset: there is just no getting around that word *immediately*. It means *immediately*. Acknowledging that the tribulation took place during the then-living generation, we must also face the clear teaching of Scripture that whatever Jesus is talking about in these verses happened *immediately* afterward. In other words, these verses describe what is to take place *at the end* of the Tribulation—what forms its climax.

In order to understand the meaning of Jesus' expressions in this passage, we need to understand the Old Testament much more than most people do today. Jesus was speaking to an audience that was intimately familiar with the most obscure details of Old Testament literature. They had heard the Old Testament read and expounded countless times throughout their lives, and had memorized lengthy passages. Biblical imagery and forms of expression had formed their culture, environment, and vocabulary from earliest infancy, and this had been true for generations. The difference between their outlook and ours can be illustrated by the fact that while much of the present book's discussion of the Paradise theme was probably very new to you, it would have been old hat for the disciples.

The fact is that when Jesus spoke to His disciples about the fall of Jerusalem, *He used prophetic vocabulary*. There was a "language" of prophecy, instantly recognizable to those familiar with the Old Testament (some of which we have covered already in our study of the Garden). As Jesus foretold the complete end of the Old Covenant system—which was, in a sense, the end of a whole world—He spoke of it as any of the prophets would have, in the stirring language of covenantal judgment. We will consider each element in the prophecy, seeing how its previous use in the Old Testament prophets determined its meaning in the context of Jesus' discourse on the fall of Jerusalem. Remember that our ultimate standard of truth is the Bible, and the Bible alone.

THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus said, the universe will collapse: the light of the sun and the moon will be extinguished, the stars will fall, the powers of the heavens will be shaken. The basis for this symbolism is in Genesis 1:14–16, where the sun, moon, and stars ("the powers of the heavens") are spoken of as "signs" which "govern" the world. Later in Scripture, these heavenly lights are used to speak of earthly authorities and governors; and when God threatens to come against them in judgment, the same collapsing-universe terminology is used to describe it. Prophesying the fall of Babylon to the Medes in 539 B.C., Isaiah wrote:

Behold, the Day of the LORD is coming,
Cruel, with fury and burning anger,
To make the land a desolation;

And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
 For the stars of heaven and their constellations
 Will not flash forth with their light;
 The sun will be dark when it rises,
 And the moon will not shed its light.
 (Isa. 13:9–10)

Significantly, Isaiah later prophesied the fall of Edom in terms of *de-creation*:

And all the host of heaven will wear away,
 And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
 All their hosts will also wither away
 As a leaf withers from the vine,
 Or as one withers from the fig tree.
 (Isa. 34:4)

Isaiah's contemporary, the prophet Amos, foretold the doom of Samaria (722 B.C.) in much the same way:

"And it will come about in that day,"
 Declares the Lord GOD,
 "That I shall make the sun go down at noon
 And make the earth dark in broad daylight."
 (Amos 8:9)

Another example is from the prophet Ezekiel, who predicted the destruction of Egypt. God said this through Ezekiel:

"And when I extinguish you,
 I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars;
 I will cover the sun with a cloud,
 And the moon shall not give its light.
 All the shining lights in the heavens
 I will darken over you
 And will set darkness on your land,"
 Declares the Lord GOD.
 (Ezek. 32:7–8)

It must be stressed that *none* of these events literally took place. God did not intend anyone to place a literalist construction on these statements. *Poetically*, however, all these things *did* happen: as far as these wicked nations were concerned, "the lights went out." This is simply figurative language, which would not surprise us at all if we were more familiar with the Bible and appreciative of its literary character.

What Jesus is saying in Matthew 24, therefore, in prophetic terminology immediately recognizable by his disciples, is that the light of Israel is going to be extinguished; the covenant nation will cease to exist. When the Tribulation is over, old Israel will be gone.

THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

Most modern translations of Matthew 24:30 read something like this: "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. . . ." That is a mistranslation, based not on the Greek text but on the translators' own misguided assumptions about the subject of this passage (thinking it is speaking about the Second Coming). A word-for-word rendering from the Greek actually reads:

And then will appear the sign of *the Son of Man in heaven*. . . .

As you can see, two important differences come to light in the correct translation: first, the location spoken of is *heaven*, not just the *sky*; second, it is not the *sign* which is in heaven, but *the Son of Man* who is in heaven. The point is simply that this great judgment upon Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, will be the sign that *Jesus Christ is enthroned in heaven at the Father's right hand, ruling over the nations and bringing vengeance upon His enemies*. The divinely ordained cataclysm of A.D. 70 revealed that Christ had taken the Kingdom from Israel and given it to the Church; the desolation of the old Temple was the final sign that God had deserted it and was now dwelling in a new Temple, the Church. These were all aspects of the First Advent of Christ, crucial parts of the work He came to accomplish by His death, resurrection, and ascension to the throne. This is why the Bible speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and the destruction of Israel as being *the same event*, for they were intimately connected theologically. The prophet Joel foretold both the Day of Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem in one breath:

And it will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
And even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
And I will display wonders in the heaven and on the earth:
Blood, fire, and pillars of smoke.

The sun will be turned into darkness
 And the moon into blood,
 Before the great and awesome Day of the LORD comes.
 And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD
 Will be delivered;
 For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
 There will be those who escape,
 As the LORD has said,
 Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.
 (Joel 2:28–31)

As we will see in Chapter 13, Peter's inspired interpretation of this text in Acts 2 determines the fact that Joel is speaking of the period from the initial outpouring of the Spirit to the destruction of Jerusalem, from Pentecost to Holocaust. It is enough for us to note here that the same language of judgment is used in this passage. The common dime-store interpretation that the "pillars of smoke" are mushroom clouds from nuclear explosions is a radical twisting of the text, and a complete misunderstanding of Biblical prophetic language. It would make just as much sense to say that the pillar of fire and smoke during the Exodus was the result of an atomic blast.

THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

That, appropriately, brings us to the next element in Jesus' prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction: "and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The word *tribes* here has primary reference to *the tribes of the land of Israel*; and the "mourning" is probably meant in two senses. First, they would mourn in sorrow over their suffering and the loss of their land; second, they would ultimately mourn in repentance for their sins, when they are converted from their apostasy (see Chapter 14).

But how is it that they would see Christ coming on the clouds? Those who have read Chapters 7 and 8 of this book should have little trouble answering that question. In the first place, all through the Old Testament God was coming "on clouds," in salvation of His people and destruction of His enemies: "He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind" (Ps. 104:3). When Isaiah prophesied God's judgment on Egypt, he wrote: "Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt; the idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence" (Isa. 19:1). The prophet Nahum

spoke similarly of God's destruction of Nineveh: "In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet" (Nah. 1:3). God's "coming on the clouds of heaven" is an almost commonplace Scriptural symbol for His presence, judgment, and salvation.

More than this, however, is the fact that Jesus is referring to a specific event connected with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Old Covenant. He spoke of it again at His trial, when the High Priest asked Him if He was the Christ, and Jesus replied:

I AM; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62; cf. Matt. 26:64).

Obviously, Jesus was not referring to an event thousands of years in the future. He was speaking of something that His contemporaries—"this generation"—would see in their lifetime. The Bible tells us exactly when Jesus came with the clouds of heaven:

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9).

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

We noted in Chapter 8 that it was this event, the Ascension to the right hand of God, which Daniel had foreseen:

I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, *with the clouds of heaven*
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a Kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His Kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.
(Dan. 7:13-14)

The destruction of Jerusalem was the sign that the Son of Man, the Second Adam, was in heaven, ruling over the world and disposing it for His own purposes. At His ascension, He had come on the clouds of heaven to receive the Kingdom from His Father; the destruction of Jerusalem was the revelation of this fact. In Matthew 24, therefore,

Jesus was not prophesying that He would literally come on the clouds in A.D. 70 (although it was *figuratively* true). His literal “coming on the clouds,” in fulfillment of Daniel 7, had taken place about 40 years earlier. But in A.D. 70 the tribes of Israel would see the destruction of the nation as the result of His having ascended to the throne of heaven, to receive His Kingdom.

THE GATHERING OF THE ELECT

Finally, the result of Jerusalem’s destruction will be Christ’s sending forth of his “angels” to gather the elect. Isn’t this the Rapture? No. The word *angels* simply means *messengers* (cf. James 2:25), regardless of whether their origin is heavenly or earthly; it is the *context* which determines whether these are heavenly creatures being spoken of. The word often means *preachers of the gospel* (see Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:24; 9:52; Rev. 1–3). In context, there is every reason to assume that Jesus is speaking of the worldwide evangelism and conversion of the nations which will follow upon the destruction of Israel.

Christ’s use of the word *gather* is significant in this regard. The word, literally, is a verb meaning *to synagogue*; the meaning is that with the destruction of the Temple and of the Old Covenant system, the Lord sends out His messengers to gather His elect people into His New Synagogue. Jesus is actually quoting from Moses, who had promised: “If your outcasts are at the ends of heaven, from there the LORD your God will *synagogue* you, and from there he will take you” (Deut. 30:4, Septuagint). Neither text has anything to do with the Rapture; both are concerned with the restoration and establishment of God’s House, the organized congregation of His covenant people. This becomes even more pointed when we remember what Jesus had said just before this discourse:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted *to synagogue* your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your House is being left to you desolate! (Matt. 23:37–38).

Because Jerusalem apostatised and refused to be synagogued under Christ, her Temple would be destroyed, and a New Synagogue and Temple would be formed: the Church. The New Temple was created, of course, on the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came to indwell the Church. But the fact of the new Temple’s existence would only be made obvious when the scaffolding of the Old Temple

and the Old Covenant system was taken away. The Christian congregations immediately began calling themselves “synagogues” (that is the word used in James 2:2), while calling the Jewish gatherings “synagogues of Satan” (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Yet they lived in anticipation of the Day of Judgment upon Jerusalem and the Old Temple, when the Church would be revealed as the true Temple and Synagogue of God. Because the Old Covenant system was “obsolete” and “ready to disappear” (Heb. 8:13), the writer to the Hebrews urged them to have hope, “not forsaking the *synagoguing* of ourselves together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25; cf. 2 Thess. 2:1–2).

The Old Testament promise that God would “synagogue” His people undergoes one major change in the New Testament. Instead of the simple form of the word, the term used by Jesus has the Greek preposition *epi* prefixed to it. This is a favorite New Covenant expression, which *intensifies* the original word. What Jesus is saying, therefore, is that the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 will reveal Himself as having come with clouds to receive His Kingdom; and it will display His Church before the world as the full, the true, the *super-Synagogue*.

The plain fact is, as I say, that there is no longer any king or prophet nor Jerusalem nor sacrifice nor vision among them; yet the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of God, and the Gentiles, forsaking atheism, are now taking refuge with the God of Abraham through the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [40]

THE RISE OF ANTICHRIST

According to Jesus' words in Matthew 24, one of the increasing characteristics of the age preceding the overthrow of Israel was to be *apostasy within the Christian Church*. This was mentioned earlier, but a more concentrated study at this point will shed much light on a number of related issues in the New Testament—issues which have often been misunderstood.

We generally think of the apostolic period as a time of tremendously explosive evangelism and church growth, a "golden age" when astounding miracles took place every day. This common image is substantially correct, but it is flawed by one glaring omission. We tend to neglect the fact that the early Church was the scene of *the most dramatic outbreak of heresy in world history*.

THE GREAT APOSTASY

The Church began to be infiltrated by heresy fairly early in its development. Acts 15 records the meeting of the first Church Council, which was convened in order to render an authoritative ruling on the issue of justification by faith (some teachers had been advocating the false doctrine that one must keep the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament in order to be justified). The problem did not die down, however; years later, Paul had to deal with it again, in his letter to the churches of Galatia. As Paul told them, this doctrinal aberration was no minor matter, but affected their very salvation: it was a "different gospel," an utter distortion of the truth, and amounted to a repudiation of Jesus Christ Himself. Using some of the most severe terminology of his career, Paul pronounced damnation upon the "false brethren" who taught the heresy (see Gal. 1:6–9; 2:5, 11–21; 3:1–3; 5:1–12).

Paul also foresaw that heresy would infect the churches of Asia Minor. Calling together the elders of Ephesus, he exhorted them to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock,” because “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:28–30). Just as Paul predicted, false doctrine became an issue of enormous proportions in these churches. By the time the Book of Revelation was written, some of them had become almost completely ruined through the progress of heretical teachings and the resulting apostasy (Rev. 2:2, 6, 14–16, 20–24; 3:1–4, 15–18).

But the problem of heresy was not limited to any geographical or cultural area. It was widespread, and became an increasing subject of apostolic counsel and pastoral oversight as the age progressed. Some heretics taught that the final Resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:18), while others claimed that resurrection was impossible (1 Cor. 15:12); some taught strange doctrines of asceticism and angel-worship (Col. 2:8, 18–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–3), while others advocated all kinds of immorality and rebellion in the name of “liberty” (2 Pet. 2:1–3, 10–22; Jude 4, 8, 10–13, 16). Again and again the apostles found themselves issuing stern warnings against tolerating false teachers and “false apostles” (Rom. 16:17–18; 2 Cor. 11:3–4, 12–15; Phil. 3:18–19; 1 Tim. 1:3–7; 2 Tim. 4:2–5), for these had been the cause of massive departures from the faith, and the extent of apostasy was increasing as the era progressed (1 Tim. 1:19–20; 6:20–21; 2 Tim. 2:16–18; 3:1–9, 13; 4:10, 14–16). One of the last letters of the New Testament, the Book of Hebrews, was written to an entire Christian community on the very brink of wholesale abandonment of Christianity. The Christian church of the first generation was not only characterized by faith and miracles; it was also characterized by increasing lawlessness, rebellion, and heresy from within the Christian community itself—just as Jesus had foretold in Matthew 24.

THE ANTICHRIST

The Christians had a specific term for this apostasy. They called it *antichrist*. Many popular writers have speculated about this term, usually failing to regard its usage in Scripture. In the first place, consider a fact which will undoubtedly shock some people: *the word “antichrist” never occurs in the Book of Revelation*. Not once. Yet the term is rou-

tinely used by Christian teachers as a synonym for “the Beast” of Revelation 13. Obviously, there is no question that the Beast is an enemy of Christ, and is thus “anti” Christ in that sense; my point, however, is that the term *antichrist* is used in a very specific sense, and is essentially unrelated to the figure known as “the Beast” and “666.”

A further error teaches that “the Antichrist” is a specific individual; connected to this is the notion that “he” is someone who will make his appearance toward the end of the world. Both of these ideas, like the first, are contradicted by the New Testament.

In fact, the *only* occurrences of the term *antichrist* are in the following verses from the letters of the Apostle John:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it may be shown that they all are not of us. . . .

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. . . .

These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. (1 John 2:18–19, 22–23, 26).

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:1–6).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that we might not lose what we have accomplished, but that we may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds (2 John 7–11).

The texts quoted above comprise all the Bible passages that mention the word *antichrist*, and from them we can draw several important conclusions:

First, *the Christians had already been warned* about the coming of antichrist (1 John 2:18; 4:3).

Second, there was not just one, but “*many antichrists*” (1 John 2:18). The term *antichrist*, therefore, cannot be simply a designation of one individual.

Third, antichrist was *already working* as John wrote: “even now many antichrists have arisen” (1 John 2:18); “I have written to you concerning *those who are trying to deceive you*” (1 John 2:26); “you have heard that it is coming, and *now it is already in the world*” (1 John 4:3); “many deceivers have gone out into the world. . . . *This is the deceiver and the antichrist*” (2 John 7). Obviously, if the antichrist was already present in the first century, he was not some figure who would arise at the end of the world.

Fourth, antichrist was a *system of unbelief*, particularly *the heresy of denying the person and work of Jesus Christ*. Although the antichrists apparently claimed to belong to the Father, they taught that Jesus was not the Christ (1 John 2:22); in union with the false prophets (1 John 4:1), they denied the Incarnation (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7, 9); and they rejected apostolic doctrine (1 John 4:6).

Fifth, the antichrists had been members of the Christian Church, but had apostatized (1 John 2:19). Now these apostates were attempting to deceive other Christians, in order to sway the Church as a whole away from Jesus Christ (1 John 2:26; 4:1; 2 John 7, 10).

Putting all this together, we can see that *antichrist* is a description of both *the system of apostasy* and *individual apostates*. In other words, antichrist was the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy that a time of great apostasy would come, when “many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many” (Matt. 24:10–11). As John said, the Christians had been warned of the coming of antichrist; and, sure enough, “many antichrists” had arisen. For a time, they had believed the gospel; later they had forsaken the faith, and then went about trying to deceive others, either starting new cults or, more likely, seeking to draw Christians into Judaism—the false religion which claimed to worship the

Father while denying the Son. When the doctrine of antichrist is understood, it fits in perfectly with what the rest of the New Testament tells us about the age of the “terminal generation.”

One of the antichrists who afflicted the early church was Cerinthus, the leader of a first-century Judaistic cult. Regarded by the Church Fathers as “the Arch-heretic,” and identified as one of the “false apostles” who opposed Paul, Cerinthus was a Jew who joined the Church and began drawing Christians away from the orthodox faith. He taught that a lesser deity, and not the true God, had created the world (holding, with the Gnostics, that God was much too “spiritual” to be concerned with material reality). Logically, this meant also a denial of the Incarnation, since God would not take to Himself a physical body and truly human personality. And Cerinthus was consistent: he declared that Jesus had merely been an ordinary man, not born of a virgin; that “the Christ” (a heavenly spirit) had descended upon the man Jesus at His baptism (enabling Him to perform miracles), but then left Him again at the crucifixion. Cerinthus also advocated a doctrine of justification by works—in particular, the absolute necessity of observing the ceremonial ordinances of the Old Covenant in order to be saved.

Furthermore, Cerinthus was apparently the first to teach that the Second Coming would usher in a literal reign of Christ in Jerusalem for a thousand years. Although this was contrary to the apostolic teaching of the Kingdom, Cerinthus claimed that an angel had revealed this doctrine to him (much like Joseph Smith, a 19th-century antichrist, would later claim to receive angelic revelation).

The true apostles sternly opposed the Cerinthian heresy. Paul admonished the churches: “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed!” (Gal. 1:8), and went on in the same letter to refute the legalistic heresies held by Cerinthus. According to tradition, the Apostle John wrote his Gospel and his letters with Cerinthus especially in mind. (We are also told that as John entered the public bathhouse he spotted this antichrist ahead of him. The apostle immediately turned around and ran back out, crying: “Let us flee, lest the building fall down; for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is inside!”)

Returning to John’s statements about the spirit of antichrist, we should note that he stresses one further, very significant point: as Jesus foretold in Matthew 24, the coming of antichrist is a sign of “the

End”: “Children, *it is the last hour*; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; *from this we know that it is the last hour*” (1 John 2:18). The connection people often make between the antichrist and “the last days” is correct enough; but what is often missed is the fact that the expression *the last days*, and similar terms, are used in the Bible to refer, *not* to the end of the physical world, but to *the last days of the nation of Israel*, the “last days” which *ended with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70*. This, too, will come to many as a surprise; but we must accept the clear teaching of Scripture. The New Testament authors unquestionably used “end-times” language when speaking of the period they were living in, before the fall of Jerusalem. As we have seen, the Apostle John said two things on this point: first, that *antichrist had already come*; and, second, that *the presence of the antichrist was proof that he and his readers were living in “the last hour.”* In one of his earlier letters, Paul had had to correct a mistaken impression regarding the coming judgment on Israel. False teachers had been frightening the believers by saying that the day of judgment was already upon them. Paul reminded the Christians of what he had explained before:

Let no one deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first. . . . (2 Thess. 2:3).

By the end of the age, however, as John was writing his letters, the Great Apostasy—the spirit of antichrist, of which the Lord had foretold—was a reality.

Jude, who wrote one of the very last New Testament books, leaves us in no doubt about this issue. Issuing strong condemnations of the heretics who had invaded the church and were attempting to draw Christians away from the orthodox faith (Jude 1–16), he reminds his readers that they had been warned of this very thing:

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, “*In the last time there shall be mockers*, following after their own ungodly lusts.” *These are the ones* who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit (Jude 17–19).

Jude clearly regards the warnings about the “mockers” as referring to the heretics of his own day—meaning that his own day was the period of “the last time.” Like John, he knew that the rapid multiplying of these false brethren was a sign of the End. Antichrist had arrived, and it was now the Last Hour.

When did people begin to abandon the worship of idols, unless it were since the very Word of God came among men? When have oracles ceased and become void of meaning, among the Greeks and everywhere, except since the Saviour has revealed Himself on earth? When did those whom the poets call gods and heroes begin to be adjudged as mere mortals, except when the Lord took the spoils of death and preserved incorruptible the body He had taken, raising it from among the dead? Or when did the deceitfulness and madness of daemons fall under contempt, save when the Word, the Power of God, the Master of all these as well, condescended on account of the weakness of mankind and appeared on earth? When did the practice and theory of magic begin to be spurned under foot, if not at the manifestation of the Divine Word to men? In a word, when did the wisdom of the Greeks become foolish, save when the true Wisdom of God revealed Himself on earth? In old times the whole world and every place in it was led astray by the worship of idols, and men thought the idols were the only gods that were. But now all over the world men are forsaking the fear of idols and taking refuge with Christ; and by worshipping Him as God, they come through Him to know the Father also, Whom formerly they did not know.

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THE LAST DAYS

As we began to see in the preceding chapter, the period spoken of in the Bible as “the last days” (or “last times” or “last hour”) is *the period between Christ’s birth and the destruction of Jerusalem*. The early church was living at the end of the old age and the beginning of the new. This whole period must be considered as the time of Christ’s First Advent. In both the Old and New Testament, the promised destruction of Jerusalem is considered to be an aspect of the work of Christ, intimately connected to His work of redemption. His life, death, resurrection, ascension, outpouring of the Spirit, and judgment on Jerusalem are all parts of His one work of bringing in His Kingdom and creating His new Temple (see, for example, how Daniel 9:24–27 connects the atonement with the destruction of the Temple).

Let’s consider how the Bible itself uses these expressions about the end of the age. In 1 Timothy 4:1–3, Paul warned:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Was Paul talking about “latter times” which would happen thousands of years later? Why should he warn Timothy of events which Timothy, and Timothy’s great-great-grandchildren, and fifty or more *generations* of descendants, would never live to see? In fact, Paul tells Timothy, “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 4:6). The members of Timothy’s congregation needed to know about what would take place in

the “latter days,” because they would be personally affected by those events. In particular, they needed the assurance that the coming apostasy was part of the overall pattern of events leading up to the end of the old order and the full establishing of Christ’s Kingdom. As we can see from passages such as Colossians 2:18–23, the “doctrines of demons” Paul warned of were current during the first century. The “latter times” were already taking place. This is quite clear in Paul’s later statement to Timothy:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come; for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. *And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so also do these resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith* (2 Tim. 3:1–8).

The very things Paul said would happen in “the last days” were happening as he wrote, and he was simply warning Timothy about what to expect as the age wore on to its climax. Antichrist was beginning to rear its head.

Other New Testament writers shared this perspective with Paul. The letter to the Hebrews begins by saying that God “has *in these last days* spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:2); the writer goes on to show that “now once *at the end of the ages* He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26). Peter wrote that Christ “was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared *in these last times* for you who through Him are believers in God” (1 Pet. 1:20–21). Apostolic testimony is unmistakably clear: when Christ came, the “last days” arrived with Him. He came to bring in the new age of the Kingdom of God. The old age was winding down, and would be thoroughly abolished when God destroyed the Temple.

FROM PENTECOST TO HOLOCAUST

On the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit had been poured out and the Christian community spoke with other tongues, Peter declared the Biblical interpretation of the event:

This is that which was spoken of through the prophet Joel: "And it shall be *in the last days*," God says, "that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on My men-servants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord. And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:16–21)

We have already seen how the "blood and fire and vapor of smoke" and the signs in the sun and the moon were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem (see pp. 96f.). What is crucial to notice at this point is Peter's precise statement that *the last days had arrived*. Contrary to some modern expositions of this text, Peter did not say that the miracles of Pentecost were like what Joel prophesied, or that they were some sort of "*proto-fulfillments*" of Joel's prophecy; he said that this was *the* fulfillment: "*This is that* which was spoken of through the prophet Joel." The last days were here: the Spirit had been poured out, God's people were prophesying and speaking in tongues, and Jerusalem would be destroyed with fire. The ancient prophecies were unfolding, and this generation would not pass until "all these things" were fulfilled. Therefore, Peter urged his listeners, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (Acts 2:40).

In this connection, we should note the eschatological significance of the gift of tongues. 81. Paul showed, in 1 Corinthians 14:21–22, that the miracle of tongues was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy against rebellious Israel. Because the covenant people were rejecting His clear revelation, God warned that His prophets would speak to them with foreign tongues, for the express purpose of rendering a final witness to unbelieving Israel during the last days preceding her judgment:

Indeed, He will speak to this people
Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue. . . .
That they may go and stumble backward, and be broken
And snared and taken captive.
Therefore, hear the Word of the LORD, O scoffers,
Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,
Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death,
And with Sheol we have made a pact.
When the overwhelming scourge passes through,

It will not reach us,
 For we have made falsehood our refuge
 And we have concealed ourselves with deception.”
 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:
 “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
 A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed;
 He who believes in it will not be in a hurry.
 And I will make justice the measuring line,
 And righteousness the level;
 Then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,
 And the waters shall overflow the secret place.
 And your covenant with death shall be canceled,
 And your pact with Sheol shall not stand;
 When the overwhelming scourge passes through,
 Then you become its trampling place.
 As often as it passes through, it will seize you.
 For morning after morning it will pass through,
 And by day and by night.
 And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means.”
 (Isa. 28:11–19)

The miracle of Pentecost was a shocking message to Israel. They knew what this meant. It was the sign from God that the Chief Cornerstone had come, and that Israel had rejected Him to its own damnation (Matt. 21:42–44; 1 Pet. 2:6–8). It was the sign of judgment and reprobation, the signal that the apostates of Jerusalem were about to “stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive.” The Last Days of Israel had come: the old age was at an end, and Jerusalem would be swept away in a new flood, to make way for God’s New Creation. As Paul said, tongues was “for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14:22) a sign to the unbelieving Jews of their approaching doom.

The early Church looked forward to the coming of the new age. They knew that, with the visible end of the Old Covenant system, the Church would be revealed as the new, true Temple; and the work Christ came to perform would be accomplished. This was an important aspect of redemption, and the first-generation Christians looked forward to this event *in their own lifetime*. During this period of waiting and severe trial, the Apostle Peter assured them that they were “protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5). They were on the very threshold of the new world.

EXPECTING THE END

The Apostles and first-generation Christians knew they were living in the last days of the Old Covenant age. They looked forward anxiously to its consummation and the full ushering in of the new era. As the age progressed and the “signs of the end” increased and intensified, the Church could see that the Day of Judgment was fast approaching; a crisis was looming in the near future, when Christ would deliver them “from this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). The statements of the apostles are full of this expectant attitude, the certain knowledge that this momentous event was upon them. The sword of God’s wrath was poised over Jerusalem, ready to strike at any time. But the Christians were not to be afraid, for the coming wrath was not aimed at them, but at the enemies of the Gospel. Paul urged the Thessalonians to “wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10). Echoing Jesus’ words in Matthew 23–24, Paul emphasized that the imminent judgment would be poured out upon “the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess. 2:14–16). The Christians had been forewarned and were therefore prepared, but unbelieving Israel would be caught off-guard:

Now as to the times and epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. . . . For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:1–5, 9).

Paul expanded upon this in his second letter to the same church:

For after all it is a righteous thing for God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give relief to you who are troubled and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire dealing out vengeance to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be

glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed (2 Thess. 1:6–10).

Clearly, Paul is not talking about Christ's final coming at the end of the world, for the coming "tribulation" and "vengeance" were specifically aimed at those who were persecuting the Thessalonian Christians of the first generation. The coming day of judgment was not something thousands of years away. It was near—so near that they could see it coming. Most of the "signs of the end" were in existence already, and the inspired apostles encouraged the Church to expect the End at any moment. Paul urged the Christians in Rome to persevere in godly living, "knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:11–12). As the old age had been characterized by sin, despair, and bondage to Satan, the new age would be increasingly characterized by righteousness and the universal reign of the Kingdom. For the period of the "last days" was also the time when the Kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth, when the "Holy Mountain" began its dynamic growth and all nations began to flow into the Christian faith, as the prophets foretold (see Isa. 2:2–4; Mic. 4:1–4). Obviously, there is still a great deal of ungodliness in the world today. But Christianity has been gradually and steadily winning battles since the days of the early church; and as Christians continue to make war on the enemy, the time will come when the saints possess the Kingdom (Dan. 7:22, 27).

This is why Paul could comfort believers by assuring them that "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). Indeed, the watchword of the early Church (1 Cor. 16:22) was *Maranatha! The Lord comes!* Looking forward to the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the writer to the Hebrews warned those tempted to "draw back" to apostate Judaism that apostasy would only bring them "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27).

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.... For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no

pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:30–31, 36–39).

The other New Testament authors wrote in similar terms. After James warned the wealthy unbelievers who oppressed the Christians of the miseries about to descend upon them, charging that they had fraudulently “heaped up treasure in the last days” (James 5:1–6), he encouraged the suffering Christians:

Therefore be patient, brethren, *until the coming of the Lord*. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord is at hand*. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be judged. Behold, *the Judge is standing at the door!* (James 5:7–9).

The Apostle Peter, too, warned the Church that “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pet. 4:7), and encouraged them to live in the daily expectation of the judgment that would come in their generation:

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy... For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:12–13, 17).

The early Christians had to endure both severe persecution at the hands of apostate Israel, and betrayal by antichrists from their own midst who sought to steer the Church into the Judaistic cult. But this time of fiery tribulation and suffering was working for the Christians’ own blessing and sanctification (Rom. 8:28–39); and in the meantime God’s wrath against the persecutors was building up. Finally, the End came, and God’s anger was unleashed. Those who had brought tribulation upon the Church were cast into the greatest Tribulation of all time. The Church’s greatest enemy was destroyed, and would never again pose a threat to her ultimate victory.

The objects of worship formerly were varied and countless; each place had its own idol and the so-called god of one place could not pass over to another in order to persuade the people there to worship him, but was barely revered even by his own. Indeed no! Nobody worshipped his neighbour's god, but every man had his own idol and thought that it was lord of all. But now Christ alone is worshipped, as One and the Same among all peoples everywhere; and what the feebleness of idols could not do, namely, convince even those dwelling close at hand, He has effected. He has persuaded not only those close at hand, but literally the entire world to worship one and the same Lord and through Him the Father.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [46]

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Old Israel has been excommunicated, cut off from the covenant by the righteous judgment of God. On the surface, this presents a serious problem: What about God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? God had sworn that He would be the God of Abraham's seed, that the covenant would be established with Abraham's seed "throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:7). If salvation has gone from the Jews to the Gentiles, what does that say about God's faithfulness to His word? Is there a place for ethnic Israel in prophecy?

These questions are answered most directly in Scripture by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11.

ISRAEL'S REJECTION IS NOT TOTAL

God never *totally* rejected ethnic Israel, Paul points out. After all, Paul himself was "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (v. 1). And Paul is not an isolated case. In fact, as he shows, it is consistent with the history of Israel that only a few were truly believers in the Biblical faith. As an example, he cites the story of Elijah (1 Kings 19), who complained to God that he was the only faithful Israelite left. God reproved Elijah with the declaration that He had reserved seven thousand faithful in Israel for Himself, men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Similarly, says Paul, "there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (v. 5). In His sovereign grace God has chosen to save some out of Israel, even as He has condemned Israel as a whole, so that "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened" in their unbelief, like the ungodly Pharaoh of

Egypt (v. 7; cf. 9:14–18). For the majority of ethnic Israel, “God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day” (v. 8; cf. Acts 28:25–28). Upon those excommunicated from the covenant will come the curses of the Old Testament: “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them; let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bend their backs forever” (v. 9–10). Nevertheless, God still had His elect among ethnic Israel. Like Paul, they would be saved. God’s rejection of Israel was not total.

ISRAEL’S REJECTION IS NOT FINAL

Not only is it true that there will always be a faithful *minority* among Israel, but God’s word also teaches that someday a *majority* among ethnic Israel will be saved. The people of Israel, as a whole, will turn back to the faith of their fathers and will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Their fall into apostasy is not permanent, says Paul. For just as their excommunication resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles, the salvation of the Gentiles will someday result in the restoration of Israel: “Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous. Now if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much more riches will their fullness be! . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” (v. 11–15).

The order of events thus seems to be as follows:

1. The Jewish apostasy resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles;
2. The salvation of the Gentiles will someday bring about the restoration of ethnic Israel; and, finally,
3. 3. The restoration of Israel will cause an even greater revival among the Gentiles, which (compared to everything earlier) will be much greater “riches” (v. 12), like “life from the dead” (v. 15).

THE OLIVE TREE

From the beginning, God has always had His one covenant people. The New Testament church is simply the continuation of the true “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), after the false Israel had been cut off. Paul shows how this took place by using an illustration: believing Gentiles were “grafted” into the stock of the people of God, while Israelite branches were being broken off.

And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off (Rom. 11:17–22).

Those who are faithless and disobedient to the covenant are cut off, regardless of their previous standing or genetic heritage, while those who believe are grafted in. This contains an important warning to all who profess the Christian religion, to continue in the faith. The Jews who forsook their Lord could not lay claim to God's blessing and favor; and, as Paul points out, the same is true for Gentile Christians. God requires obedience and perseverance—as Calvin said, a life of continual repentance. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast until the end" (Heb. 3:12–14).

But Israel's rejection is not to be the final chapter of its history. Although the body of Israel was excommunicated for unbelief, restoration to the covenant will come about through repentance and faith: "And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more will these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (v. 23–24). Note carefully that the text not only says that God *can* restore "natural" Israel, but that He *will* do so. This point is reinforced in the following verses:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (v. 25–27).

As we saw above, God hardened the people of Israel in unbelief (v. 7–10). But this hardening was only temporary, for Israel as a whole will turn back to the Lord, as Paul states elsewhere:

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day the same veil remains unlifted during the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart; nevertheless, whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor. 3:14–16).

The judicial hardening and rejection of Israel will not last forever. Someday the veil will be lifted, and the people as a whole will be converted back to the true faith. But Israel will not return *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*—in other words, *until the Gentiles as a whole have been converted to Christ* (compare the usage of the word “fullness” in verses 12 and 25). And thus, after the conversion of the mass of the Gentiles, *all Israel will be saved*, in fulfillment of God’s promises to His ancient people. Even though Israel has been unfaithful, God remains true to His covenant. Israel is now an enemy of the gospel, yet God still loves them for the sake of their fathers. The privileges He bestowed upon them have not been withdrawn forever, and because of His promises, Israel’s calling in the covenant is ultimately irrevocable (v. 28–29). Paul repeats the basic lesson: “For just as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown to you they also may obtain mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all” (v. 30–32).

SUMMARY

Our study of Romans 11 has been necessarily brief. Those who desire a more in-depth treatment should consult the commentaries of Robert Haldane, Matthew Henry, Charles Hodge, and John Murray, as well as the lengthy exegesis in Iain Murray’s important work, *The Puritan Hope*. The following points, however, have clearly emerged from our examination of the text.

1. *The entire Gentile world will be converted to faith in Jesus Christ.* The mass of the Gentiles will come into the covenant, until the conversion of the Gentiles reaches the point of “fullness” (a word meaning completeness or totality, v. 25).

2. *Genetic Israel will be converted to faith in Jesus Christ.* While there will always be some Hebrews who become Christians, the Jewish peo-

ple as a whole will only be converted after the conversion of the Gentiles (v. 11–12, 15, 23–27). This means that the key to the conversion of Israel is the *prior* accomplishment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20), the salvation of the nations.

3. *Not every individual Gentile or Jew will be converted.* The conversion of both Israel and the Gentiles will be analogous to the rejection of Israel. Even though Israel *as a whole* was cut off from the covenant, some Jews have continued in the true faith (v. 1–7). Even so, when the Gentiles and Israel are converted *as a whole*, this does not mean or require that every last individual in either group will become a Christian. There will always be exceptions. But just as the overwhelming majority of Jews rejected Christ when He came, so the overwhelming majority of both Jews and Gentiles will be grafted into the stock of the faithful people of God.

4. *The conversion of both Jews and Gentiles will take place through the normal means of evangelism in this age.* Nothing is said here of any cataclysmic event—such as the Second Coming—which will result in mass conversions. The large-scale conversion of the world will occur as the gospel is preached to the nations; in fact, this very passage categorically denies any other means of conversion (10:14–17). The insertion of the Second Coming into this passage by some writers is completely speculative and misleading. The entire context demands that the conversion of the world take place as the normal continuation of processes already at work, as a simple reading of v. 11–32 plainly indicates. As Charles Spurgeon said: “I myself believe that King Jesus will reign, and the idols be utterly abolished; but I expect the same power which turned the world upside down once will still continue to do it. The Holy Ghost would never suffer the imputation to rest upon His holy name that He was not able to convert the world.”

5. *The motive for the conversion of Israel will be jealousy.* The Jews will see all the Gentile nations around them, happily enjoying the covenant blessings promised to God’s people of old; they will see that God’s mercy has been extended throughout the world; and they will become jealous (v. 11, 31; cf. 10:19). Again, this will not be the result of any cataclysmic event (such as the Rapture), for it is the continuation of a *process already at work in Paul’s day* (v. 14). Jews (such as Paul himself) were already becoming converted through this holy jealousy, and Paul hoped to restore others by the same means. But he points to a day in the future when this will happen on a grand scale, and the Jews as a people will return to the faith.

6. *Converted Jews, in every age, belong to the Church of Jesus Christ; they are not a distinct group.* There is, properly, no such thing as a “Hebrew Christian,” any more than there are separate Biblical categories of “Indian Christians,” “Irish Christians,” “Chinese Christians,” or “American Christians.” The only way for Gentiles to be saved is by becoming grafted into the one “olive tree,” the faithful covenant people (v. 17–22). And the only way for a Jew to be saved is by becoming a member of God’s people (v. 23–24). *There is no difference.* By His finished work Christ “made both groups into one” (Eph. 2:14). Believing Jews and Gentiles have been united “in one body,” the Church (Eph. 2:16). There is one salvation and one Church, in which all believers, regardless of ethnic heritage, become children of God and heirs of the promises to Abraham (Gal. 3:26–29). The creation of a special Jew-Gentile distinction within the body of Christ is ultimately a denial of the gospel.

7. *Israel will not be restored as the Kingdom* (Matt. 21:43; 1 Pet. 2:9). The Bible promises the restoration of Israel as a *people*, but not necessarily as a *State*; nothing requires that the two must go together. Even assuming, however, that there is still a State of Israel when the Jews are converted, Israel would simply be one Christian nation among many, with no special standing. The people of genetic Israel will be part of the covenantal tree of life, but there is no longer any religious significance belonging to Palestine. The whole world will become the Kingdom of God, with all nations standing on an equal footing within that Kingdom.

In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, “Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance” (Isa. 19:24–25).

8. *The conversion of Israel will result in an era of great blessings for the entire world.* There will be even greater fulfillments of the covenantal promises, an overflowing abundance of Spiritual riches, so much so that, compared to the previous state of the world, it will be like life from the dead (v. 12, 15). This is when the Biblical promises of the Kingdom’s earthly blessings will reach their highest and most complete fulfillment. God’s Holy Mountain will have encompassed the world, and “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

Who, then, is this Christ and how great is He, Who by His Name and presence overshadows and confounds all things on every side, Who alone is strong against all and has filled the whole world with His teaching? Let the Greeks tell us, who mock at Him without stint or shame. If He is a man, how is it that one man has proved stronger than all those whom they themselves regard as gods, and by His own power has shown them to be nothing? If they call Him a magician, how is it that by a magician all magic is destroyed, instead of being rendered strong? Had He conquered certain magicians or proved Himself superior to one of them only, they might reasonably think that He excelled the rest only by His greater skill. But the fact is that His cross has vanquished all magic entirely and has conquered the very name of it.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [48]

THE DAY OF THE LORD

One of the greatest interpretive mistakes made by Bible students is the assumption that the Bible cannot use the same expression, such as “Coming,” in different senses. Much of the present book has been written to refute that basic error. As we have seen, God “came in the clouds” on numerous occasions in Scripture, and collapsing-universe terminology is used to describe several different historical events. Once we understand this, however, we seem to be presented with a different problem: What about the Second Coming of Christ? Since so many prophecies turn out to be references to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, how can we be sure that *any* prophecy refers to a future, literal return of Jesus Christ?

There are several ways to approach this question. One fruitful method is to examine a common Biblical expression for “Judgment Day”: *the Day of the Lord*. Now, don’t misunderstand me—I am not suggesting that “the Day of the Lord” only refers to the end of the world and the Last Judgment. Far from it. Nevertheless, a solid grasp of this Biblical concept will provide us with an interpretive key, a method for arriving at an accurate, Scripture-based understanding of the Second Coming.

The first Biblical use of the term *Day of the Lord* was by the prophet Amos, in a very strange reference. Speaking to the rebellious Israelites who were soon to be destroyed by the Assyrians, Amos said: “Alas, you who are longing for the Day of the LORD, for what purpose will the Day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light . . .” (Amos 5:19). The important thing for us to notice at the beginning is that *this expression had never been used before*, at least not in Scripture. Yet it seems to have been a rather common, familiar idea in the Israel of the eighth century B.C. Amos did not question its validity: “the Day

of the Lord” was coming. What Amos sought to correct was Israel’s erroneous *expectation* of that Day’s outcome for themselves.

The interesting point (to begin with) is this. Here we find Amos simply adopting an already understood, full-blown, highly developed theological concept. The expression itself did not (apparently) originate from direct revelation, yet the prophets took it up unquestioningly as part of their vocabulary. This indicates that the term must be based on some Biblical concept which was so well-known in Israel that the undisputed expression *Day of the Lord* almost spontaneously arose to describe it. How can we account for this? Our answer to this question will bring us to some surprising conclusions in several areas. Moreover, it will provide us with firm Biblical data about the Second Coming of Christ—the *final* Judgment Day.

JUDGMENT DAY IN EDEN

The Biblical imagery for the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, begins (as we should naturally assume) in Genesis. Right at the beginning of the creation account we are told that God created light and named it *Day* (Gen. 1:2–5). We must recognize just what happened at that moment. As we saw in Chapter 7, God was hovering over the creation, robed in the glorious light of the Cloud, shining as the original Light (cf. John 1:4–5). This means that when He *created* light, it was as a mirror-image, a sort of “clone,” of Himself. From the start, therefore, we are taught to associate *Day* and *Light* with God. This basic association is developed and carried through the rest of the creation week, as the first of two concepts which are important for our understanding of the Biblical idea of the Day: *Day is in the image of God*. The light of day is a reminder of God’s bright, unapproachable Light (1 Tim. 6:16). For this reason the sun and the dawning of the day are used in the Bible as symbols of God and His coming (Ps. 84:11; Isa. 30:26; 60:1; Mal. 4:2; Luke 1:78–79; Eph. 5:14; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:16).

The second concept is that *Day is the time of God’s judicial assessment of His creatures*, when all things are judged by Him. Here Moses records seven acts of seeing (assessment) and declaration: “God *saw* that it was *good*” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), climaxing with the seventh declaration: “And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was *very good*” (Gen. 1:31). This statement leads right into the summary and conclusion:

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven (Gen. 2:1-4).

God's "resting" on the seventh day is an important part of the judgment theme of the Day, for it actually speaks of His enthronement in heaven, surveying and judging His creation from His seat in the Glory-Cloud. In fact, His sitting on the throne is often termed a "rest" in Scripture (1 Chron. 28:2; Ps. 132:7-8, 13-14; Isa. 11:10; 66:1).

Thus, when we think of the *Day*, we are to think first of God's light on the world; second, we are to think of God's *judgment* of the world. In other words, the very first "Day of the Lord" was also the very first *Day*. It is easier for us to see all this when we read Genesis 1 in the light of other Scripture passages, but we should also remember that it was implicit in the text from the beginning.

There is one other early passage in Genesis which informs our understanding of the content of the "Day of the Lord." We saw in an earlier chapter that when Adam and Eve sinned, they heard the characteristic sound of the Glory-Cloud blasting its way like an express train through the Garden: the thundering *Voice* of the Lord caused by the beating of angels' wings. The literal translation of that verse reads:

And they heard the Voice of the LORD God traversing the Garden *as the Spirit of the Day*, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the Garden" (Gen. 3:8).

In other words, Adam and Eve heard the sound the Cloud makes when God comes as "the Spirit of the Day," when He comes as He did at the Beginning, as *Judgment*. Admittedly, this view of the text spells doom for that old pietistic-evangelical hymn favorite, "In the Garden" (that fact alone makes this interpretation especially attractive). God did not take evening strolls through the Garden, contrary to the sentimental reflections of third-rate evangelical poets. When Judgment came to Adam and Eve, it came in the form of the Glory-Cloud: with blinding light, scorching heat, and deafening noise—the Spirit of the Day.

The Day of the Lord, therefore, is *defined by Scripture in terms of the Glory-Cloud*: "For the Day is near, the Day of the LORD is near; it will

be a *Day of Clouds*, a time of doom for the nations” (Ezek. 30:3; cf. Joel 2:1–2; Zeph. 1:14–15). Where the Cloud is, there is the Day of the Lord, when God is manifesting His judgment.

This makes our understanding of the Day of the Lord take a quantum leap forward. More than merely a reference to the end of the world, it should rather be understood in the same terms as so many other concepts in Scripture: definitively, progressively, and finally. The *definitive* Day occurred at the beginning, on the first day (it might be more precise to say that the entire week was the definitive Day, in seven stages). But we also see the Day revealed *progressively*, in God’s historical judgments. In a *final*, ultimate sense, we are told that the Last Day will come, when God will render His final judgment of all things.

A DAY OF CLOUDS

As soon as we see the connection between the Cloud and the Day of the Lord—that the Day of the Lord *is* the Glory-Cloud coming in judgment, and the Cloud *is* the Day of the Lord in action—a great number of Biblical ideas begin to fall into place. For example, the Israelites experienced the Day of the Lord at the edge of the Red Sea, when the Cloud descended (Ex. 13:21–22) and stood between them and the Egyptians. For the covenant people, the Cloud was Light and salvation, but for the Egyptians, it was Darkness (Ex. 14:19–20), bringing utter destruction (Ex. 14:24–25). The coming of the Cloud was the coming of the Lord as “the Spirit of the Day” in judgment. And judgment, like the Cloud, has two aspects: vindication and protection of the faithful on the one hand, and destruction of God’s enemies on the other. In judgment God brings both salvation and wrath, darkness and light. This is what Amos meant when he addressed the apostate covenant people of his age, who were expecting that the coming Day of the Lord would protect them from their enemies. The problem was, as Amos pointed out, that the *people* of God had become the *enemies* of God:

Alas, you who are longing for the Day of the LORD, for what purpose will the Day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; as when a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him; or goes home, leans upon a wall, and a snake bites him. Will not the Day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it? (Amos 5:18–20).

The Biblical prophets saw the Day of the Lord to be fulfilled in all of God’s redemptive judgments in history against disobedient na-

tions: it was the divine “day of reckoning” against Judah, when the wicked would be annihilated and the righteous saved and blessed (Isa. 2–5; Joel 1–3); for Babylon it was the day of destruction, fire, and the collapse of the universe (Isa. 13:6–13); it was also the day when Edom would suffer God’s vengeance in bloody slaughter, in fire and brimstone, and in desolation, while God’s people are safely “gathered” to Him (Isa. 34); the day when God’s great sword would drink its fill of the blood of the Egyptians (Jer. 46); indeed, “the Day of the LORD draws near on *all* the nations” (Obad. 15). When we place these passages together, along with texts such as Zephaniah 1 and Psalm 18, it becomes strikingly clear that the prophetic term *Day of the Lord* means *Judgment*—a judgment issuing in both destruction of the wicked and salvation of the righteous.

This is why it is also used to describe the First Advent of the Savior. In His last revelation of the Old Testament, God said: “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of the LORD. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse” (Mal. 4:5–6). Both the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:17) and the Lord Jesus (Matt. 11:14) cite this verse as being fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. “In the Spirit and power of Elijah,” John was to engage in the restorative ministry of *bringing the rebellious children of Israel back to the godliness of their fathers*, turning “the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, in order to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). But if the people were not turned from their apostasy by the time of “the great and terrible Day of the LORD,” God warned, He would “come and smite the land with a *curse*.” This word *curse* (or *ban*) was a technical term in Scripture, used to denote certain objects and even whole cities which were so abhorrent to God that they must be put “under the ban,” to be utterly destroyed by fire from God’s altar—offered up as a “whole burnt sacrifice” (cf. Deut. 13:16). That is exactly what happened in the first century. “Elijah” came, but the people did not repent; so when the great Day of the Lord arrived, the whole land was placed under the ban, completely devoted to destruction.

THE FINAL DAY OF THE LORD

Since the “Day of the Lord” references cannot all be taken to mean the same event, Christians can easily become perplexed. How can

we tell *which* Day is meant in any particular passage of Scripture? Does this render our interpretation completely arbitrary? Not at all. As with everything else in Scripture, *its precise meaning depends on the context*. It *always* carries the general idea of God coming in judgment and salvation; but its meaning in any single verse must be discerned by examining the larger setting.

Thus we return to the question with which we began this chapter: How can we be certain that *any* reference to “the Day of the Lord,” the “judgment,” or Christ’s “coming” is speaking about the end of the world and Christ’s Second Coming? Since collapsing-universe terminology is used for the judgment of A.D. 70, and because of the tremendous theological significance of that judgment, some have supposed that *all* eschatological events must have been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the Second Coming took place *then*. According to this interpretation (which might be called post-everythingism), we are now living in a neverending limbo era, with literally no prophecies left to be fulfilled. The world will just go on and on, and on and on, until . . . ?

Is such an interpretation valid? We should note, at least in passing, that the Church through all the ages has never allowed for such a view. All the creeds have declared the *future* coming of Christ, the resurrection of all men, and the general judgment to be fundamental, non-negotiable articles of the Christian faith. The closing words of the Athanasian Creed (one of the three universal creeds of the faith) underscore the importance of these truths:

He ascended into heaven; He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies and shall give an account of their own works.

And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

This basic tenet of the Church Universal is solidly based on Scripture. While there have been many “Days of the Lord” in history, the Bible assures us that there is a “Last Day” which is to come, the Final Judgment, when all accounts will be settled and both just and unjust receive their eternal rewards. Each time He used the term, Jesus inseparably connected “the Last Day” with another event:

I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but *raise it up on the Last Day*. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and *I Myself will raise him up on the Last Day* (John 6:38–40).

No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and *I will raise him up on the Last Day* (John 6:44).

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and *I will raise him up on the Last Day* (John 6:54).

The Resurrection, therefore, is an event inextricably bound up in the events of the Last Day, the final Day when the judgment of the Spirit in the Cloud will be absolutely comprehensive and complete, when God's final and ultimate verdict is pronounced upon all creation. That is the Day when the dead will be raised: "those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29).

The Resurrection is the interpretive key. Because Jesus connected the Resurrection to the Last Day, we can use it as a "control" in examining eschatological passages. While the Day of the Lord/collapsing universe motif runs throughout the Biblical texts on judgment, the distinguishing mark of the Last Day is that the dead will be raised. The Resurrection of all men is, in the nature of the case, unrepeatable. It is not a continuing motif, but rather a part of the final eschatological event. Therefore, *wherever the Bible mentions the Resurrection, it is speaking of the Last Day*—the final Judgment, the ultimate Day of the Lord.

Death has become like a tyrant who has been completely conquered by the legitimate monarch; bound hand and foot as he now is, the passersby jeer at him, hitting him and abusing him, no longer afraid of his cruelty and rage, because of the king who has conquered him. So has death been conquered and branded for what it is by the Saviour on the cross. It is bound hand and foot, all who are in Christ trample it as they pass and as witnesses to Him deride it, scoffing and saying, "O Death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?"

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [27]

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM

We can now begin to draw some very significant overall conclusions from our study so far. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Last Day is a synonym for the Last Judgment, at the end of the world. Moreover, Jesus declared that those who believe in Him will be resurrected at the Last Day (John 6:39–40, 44, 54). This means that Judgment Day is also Resurrection Day; both occur together, at the close of history.

We can add to this what the Apostle Paul tells us about the Resurrection: it will coincide with the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture of living believers (1 Thess. 4:16–17). Some have tried to evade the force of this text by suggesting a series of Resurrections—one at the Rapture, another at the Second Coming (perhaps some years later), and at least one more at the consummation of the Kingdom, the end of history (where it belongs). This does not by any means solve the problem, however. For Jesus specifically said that *whoever believes in Him will be raised “at the Last Day.”* That means that *all* Christians will be resurrected at the Last Day. Again, 1 Thessalonians 4 says that *all believers* will be raised at the Rapture. Obviously, in terms of these texts, there can be only *one* Resurrection of believers. And this Resurrection, which coincides with the Rapture, will take place on the *Last Day*.

ONE RESURRECTION

Before we can consider these points in greater detail, we need to be clear on one issue which was stated, but somewhat underplayed, in the preceding chapter. One of my most crucial assumptions is that *there is one Resurrection, of both the righteous and the wicked.* To many,

of course, that will seem obvious. But it needs to be stated explicitly because there is much confusion on this point in some circles, led by teachers who assert not only multiple Resurrections, but that the Resurrection(s) of believers and unbelievers will take place on completely different occasions! There is no Biblical basis for such a position. The Scriptures plainly teach *one* Resurrection, at the Last Day; and the orthodox Christian Church, as reflected in her historic creeds, has always and everywhere affirmed this truth. The Bible says:

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:26–29).

There shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (Acts 24:15).

And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose face earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from those things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, everyone of them, according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the Second Death, the Lake of Fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11–15).

The Bible is abundantly clear: the Resurrection of all men, the just and the unjust, takes place on the same Day, to be followed immediately by the Judgment. Why, then, has there been so much confusion on this point? Part of the answer is that the *emphasis* in Scripture is on the Resurrection of the *righteous*, which is radically different in nature and outcome from that of the wicked. The Resurrection of the people of God is intimately connected to their present indwelling by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11); thus the very foundation of the raising of the just, its essential principle, is of an altogether Spiritual quality. Christians will be raised to Life by the Spirit, whereas the wicked will be resurrected to Death. In absolute contrast to the revived corpses

of the damned, the renewed bodies of the saints will be like Christ's own glorious body (1 Cor. 15:42–55; Phil. 3:21). Our Resurrection is the fruit of Christ's Resurrection, and is really an extension of His (1 Cor. 6:13–20; 15:20).

To the Christian, therefore, the Resurrection is something to look forward to with hope and excited anticipation (2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 3:10–11): Scripture sees it as the final “redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:18–23). For this reason the destiny of the righteous is always in the foreground when the Bible speaks of the Resurrection. The problem is that a superficial approach to Scripture has left people with the impression that there are two separate Resurrections, one of the righteous and the other of the wicked. In a *qualitative* sense, of course, you could say that there *are* two Resurrections; but they happen on the same Day!

THE KINGDOM AND THE RESURRECTION

The most detailed Biblical teaching on the Resurrection is found toward the close of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. The heart of that chapter reads:

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; after that, those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the End, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death (1 Cor. 15:20–26).

This text gives us a great deal of information about the Resurrection. In the first place, we are assured of the inseparable connection between Christ's Resurrection and ours. The Resurrection takes place in *two stages*: first Christ is raised, and then we are resurrected—first-fruits, then harvest. (Note well: no other stages are mentioned.)

Second, we are told *when* the Resurrection takes place: “at His coming.” Since we already knew that the Resurrection coincides with the Last Judgment, we now know that Christ's Second Coming will be on the Last Day, at the Judgment.

Third, the text also informs us that these events occur at “the *End*.” The end of what? Much needless debate has focused on this phrase.

Paul goes on to tell us that the End comes “when He shall have delivered the kingdom to the God and Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power.” The End here is, simply, *the* End—the end of time, of history, and of the world. This follows, of course, from the fact that this is the *last* Day; moreover, this is the end of Christ’s conquest of the earth, when He shall have established His total rule over all things, destroying all His enemies. It is the end of the “Millennium,” the consummation of the Kingdom—the precise moment when the Book of Revelation, in complete harmony with 1 Corinthians, places the Resurrection and the Last Judgment (Rev. 20:11–15).

Fourth, Christ’s present reign, began at His Resurrection and ascension, continues “until He has put all His enemies under His feet.” This statement comes from Psalm 110:1, where God the Father says to the Son: “Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.” We know that at Christ’s ascension He *did* sit at the Father’s right hand (Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:55–56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20–22; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). According to Scripture, therefore, Jesus Christ is now ruling from His heavenly throne, while all His enemies are being made into a footstool for His feet. The implications of these texts are inescapable: Christ has ascended to the throne, and *He will not return until the last enemy has been defeated*, at the Resurrection on the Last Day. “For He must reign, until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”

We must remember that the Bible speaks of salvation in terms of the definitive-progressive-final pattern which we noted before. *Definitively*, all things were placed under Christ’s feet at His ascension to His heavenly throne; in principle, He rules the world now as the Second Adam. *Progressively*, He is now engaged in conquering the nations by the gospel, extending His rule to the farthest corners of the earth. *Finally*, the Day will come when Christ’s actual conquest of the world is complete, when all enemies have been abolished. This will be the End, when “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11).

Fifth, underscoring the fact that the Resurrection occurs at the end of the Millennium, Paul says that “the last enemy that will be abolished is death.” Christ’s present reign will witness the gradual abolition of all enemies, the progressive defeat of every remnant of Adam’s rebellion, until only one thing remains to be destroyed: Death.

At that moment Christ will return in glory to raise the dead and to transform the bodies of His people into the perfection of the completed new Creation. Later in this passage, Paul elaborates on this fact:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:51–54).

This is paralleled by Paul’s other great statement on the Resurrection:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:14–17).

As Paul’s words so clearly state, the events of the Last Day include the Second Coming, the Resurrection, and the “Rapture” (the “catching up” of the living saints “to meet the Lord in the air”). The Bible does not teach any separation between the Second Coming and the Rapture; they are simply different aspects of the Last Day. And the fact is that throughout the entire history of the Church no one ever heard of the (so-called) “pretribulation Rapture” until the nineteenth century; it did not become widespread until a few decades ago. Recently, as younger generations have begun to recognize the lack of Scriptural foundation for this novel view, a move toward a more Biblically grounded eschatology has started to take place. The eschatology of dominion, the historic Hope of the Church, is again on the rise. Because of the renewed interest in developing a Biblical worldview and applying Biblical standards to every area of life, dominion eschatology is increasingly being discussed and accepted. And, because it is the truth, its establishment as the dominant eschatology is inevitable.

CONCLUSION

The Biblical doctrine of the Second Coming is relatively uncomplicated and straightforward. We can summarize our findings from the last several chapters as follows:

1. The reign of Jesus Christ began at His Resurrection and Ascension, as the prophets had promised. His Kingdom ("the Millennium") is now in force and will continue until He is universally acknowledged as Lord. By means of the gospel, His people are extending His rule over the face of the earth, until all nations are disciplined and Paradise comes to its most complete earthly fulfillment.

2. On the Last Day, at the end of the world, Jesus Christ will return to resurrect all men for the Judgment, both the righteous and the wicked. Those Christians who are still living at the Second Coming will be raptured to join the Lord and the resurrected saints in the Glory-Cloud, where they will be transformed, fully restored into the image of God.

3. The doctrine that Christ's Kingdom will begin only after His Second Coming is utterly contradicted by Holy Scripture. The Bible teaches that the Second Coming of Christ, coinciding with the Rapture and the Resurrection, will take place *at the end* of the Millennium, when history is sealed at the Judgment. Until then, Christ and His people are marching forth from strength to strength, from victory to victory. *We shall overcome.*

PART IV

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

*Forth rushed with whirlwind sound
The chariot of Paternal Deity,
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,
Itself instinct with spirit, but convoyed
By four Cherubic shapes, four faces each
Had wondrous, as with stars their bodies all
And wings were set with eyes, with eyes the wheels
Of beryl, and careering fires between;
Over their heads a crystal firmament,
Whereon a sapphire throne, inlaid with pure
Amber, and colours of the show'ry arch.
He in celestial panoply all armed
Of radiant Urim, work divinely wrought,
Ascended, at his right hand Victory
Sat eagle-winged, beside him hung his bow
And quiver with three-bolted thunder stored,
And from about him fierce effusion roiled
Of smoke and bickering flame, and sparkles dire.*

JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost* [6.749–66]

The Saviour is working mightily among men, every day He is invisibly persuading numbers of people all over the world, both within and beyond the Greek-speaking world, to accept His faith and be obedient to His teaching. Can anyone, in the face of all this, still doubt that He has risen and lives, or rather that He is Himself the Life?

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [30]

INTERPRETING REVELATION

From the outset, two problems confront us when we attempt to study the Book of Revelation. First is the question of ensuring that our interpretation is correct—placing checks on our imagination, so that we do not force God’s holy Word into a mold of our own inventions. We must let the Book of Revelation say what God intended it to say. The second problem is the issue of ethics—what to do with what we’ve learned.

THE BIBLICAL STANDARD FOR INTERPRETATION

In the very first verse of Revelation, John provides us with an important interpretive key: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must shortly take place; and He sent and *signified* it by His angel to His servant John” (Rev. 1:1). The use of the term *signify* tells us that the prophecy is not simply to be taken as “history written in advance.” Instead, it is a book of *signs: symbolic representations of the coming events*. The symbols are not to be understood in a literal manner. We can see this by John’s use of the term in his Gospel (see John 12:33; 18:32; 21:19). In each case, it is used of Christ *signifying* a future event by a more or less symbolic indication, rather than by a clear and literal description. And this is generally the form of the prophecies in the Revelation. This does not mean the symbols are unintelligible; the interpretation is not up for grabs. On the other hand, I am not saying that the symbols are in some kind of code, so that all we need is a dictionary or grammar of symbolism to “translate” the symbols into English. Prophecy is poetry, not naive or static allegory. The only way to understand its symbolism is to become familiar with the Bible. The Biblical standard for interpretation is the Bible itself.

We have already taken note of the fallacies and inconsistencies involved in the so-called “literalist” school of Biblical interpretation. Another problem, which is especially severe among certain “pop” theologians, is their arbitrary understanding of prophetic symbols. I have heard preachers speak of the locusts in Rev. 9:3–11 as showing forth a bewildering variety of horrors: bombers, ballistic missiles, Cobra helicopters, and even the dreaded “killer bees” of South America. Which of these do the locusts represent? Without a *standard* of interpretation, there is no objective way to tell—and thus the Book of Revelation becomes in practice what its very title insists it *isn't*: an unintelligible hodgepodge of “apocalyptic” fire and wind, signifying nothing.

Actually, John tells us hundreds of times throughout the Book of Revelation exactly what the standard of interpretation is, for the book is positively crammed with quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament. *The Book of Revelation depends on the Old Testament much more than does any other New Testament book.* This fact alone should warn us that we cannot begin to fathom its meaning apart from a solid grasp of the Bible as a whole—which is why I wrote Part Two of this book, and why I am harping on the subject again. The early churches had such an understanding. The Gospel had been preached first to the Jews and Gentile proselytes; often churches had been formed by worshipers at synagogues, and this was true even of the churches of Asia Minor (Acts 2:9; 13:14; 14:1; 16:4; 17:1–4, 10–12, 17; 18:4, 8, 19, 24–28; 19:1–10, 17). Moreover, it is clear from Galatians 2:9 that the Apostle John’s ministry was to Jews in particular. Therefore, the first readers of the Revelation were steeped in the Old Testament to a degree that most of us today are not. The symbolism of the Revelation is saturated with Biblical allusions which were commonly understood by the early Church. Even in those rare congregations that did not have *some* Hebrew members, the Scriptures used in teaching and worship were primarily from the Old Testament. The early Christians possessed the authoritative and infallible key to the meaning of John’s prophecies. Our modern failure to appreciate this crucial fact is the main cause of our inability to understand what John was talking about.

For instance, let’s take a much-abused symbol from Revelation and apply this principle. In Revelation 7, 9, 14 and 22, John sees God’s people sealed on their foreheads with His name; and in Revelation 13:16 he writes of the worshipers of the Beast, who are designated on their right

hands and foreheads with his mark. (By the way: Doesn't it strike you as strange that everybody is so excited about "the Mark of the Beast," when the clear emphasis in Revelation is on the Seal of *God* in the foreheads of *believers*?) Many fanciful interpretations have been made regarding these marks—ranging from tattoos and amusement-park validations to credit cards and Social Security numbers— and all without the slightest notice of the clear Biblical allusions. But what would the first readers of these passages have thought? The symbols would have made them think immediately of several Biblical references: the "mark" of sweat on Adam's forehead, signifying God's Curse on his disobedience (Gen. 3:19); the forehead of the High Priest, marked with gold letters proclaiming that he was now *HOLY TO THE LORD* (Ex. 28:36); Deuteronomy 6:6–8 and Ezekiel 9:4–6, in which the servants of God are "marked" on the hand and forehead with the law of God, and thus receive blessing and protection in His name. The followers of the Beast, on the other hand, receive *his* mark of ownership: submission to ungodly, statist, antichristian law. The mark in Revelation is not meant to be taken literally. It is an allusion to an Old Testament symbol which spoke of a man's total obedience to God, and it stands as a warning that a society's god—whether it be the true god or the self-deified State—demands complete obedience to his lordship.

That will be the principle of interpretation followed in this book. The Revelation is a *revelation*: it was meant to be understood. It will not, however, be understood by lazy-minded and undisciplined thrill-seekers, who are in such a hurry that they have no time to study the Bible. Many rush from their first profession of faith to the last book in the Bible, treating it as little more than a book of hallucinations, hastily disdaining a sober-minded attempt to allow the Bible to interpret itself—and finding, ultimately, only a reflection of their own prejudices. But for those who give their attention to the Word of God as a whole, the message is clear. Benjamin Warfield wrote: "John's Apocalypse need not be other than easy: all its symbols are either obvious natural ones, or else have their roots planted in the Old Testament poets and prophets and the figurative language of Jesus and his apostles. No one who knows his Bible need despair of reading this book with profit. Above all, he who can understand our Lord's great discourse concerning the last things (Matt. 24), cannot fail to understand the Apocalypse, which is founded on that discourse and scarcely advances beyond it" (*Selected Shorter Writings* [Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973], vol. 2, pp. 652f.).

PROPHECY AND ETHICS

The Book of Revelation is often treated as an example of the “apocalyptic” genre of writings which flourished among the Jews between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. There is no basis for this opinion whatsoever, and it is unfortunate that the word *apocalyptic* is used at all to describe this literature. (The writers of “apocalyptic” themselves never used the term in this sense; rather, scholars have stolen the term from John, who called his book “The *Apocalypse* [Revelation] of Jesus Christ.”) There are, in fact, many major differences between the “apocalyptic” writings and the Book of Revelation.

The “apocalyptists” expressed themselves in unexplained and unintelligible symbols, and generally had no intention of making themselves really understood. Their writings abound in pessimism: no real progress is possible, nor will there be any victory for God and His people in history. We cannot even see God acting in history. All we know is that the world is getting worse and worse. The best we can do is hope for the End—soon. But for now, the forces of evil are in control. (Sound familiar?) The practical result was that the apocalyptists rarely concerned themselves with ethical behavior. They weren’t much interested in how to live in the present (and actually taking dominion would be unthinkable); they just wanted to speculate about the coming cataclysms.

John’s approach in the Revelation is vastly different. His symbols are not obscure ravings hatched from a fevered imagination; they are rooted firmly in the Old Testament (and the reason for their *seeming* obscurity is that very fact: we have trouble understanding them only because we don’t know our Bibles). In contrast to the apocalyptists, who had given up on history, John presents history as the scene of redemption: God saves His people *in* their environment, not *out* of it; *and He saves the environment*.

Leon Morris, in his important study of *Apocalyptic* (Eerdmans, 1972), describes John’s worldview: “For him history is the sphere in which God has wrought out redemption. The really critical thing in the history of mankind has already taken place, and it took place here, on this earth, in the affairs of men. The Lamb ‘as it had been slain’ dominates the entire book. John sees Christ as victorious and as having won the victory through His death, an event in history. His people share in His triumph, but they have conquered Satan ‘by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony’ (Rev. 12:11). The pessimism which

defers God's saving activity until the End is absent. Though John depicts evil realistically, his book is fundamentally optimistic" (p. 79).

The apocalyptists said, *The world is coming to an end: Give up!* The Biblical prophets said, *The world is coming to a beginning: Get to work!*

Thus, the Book of Revelation is not an apocalyptic tract; it is, instead, as John himself reminds us repeatedly, *a prophecy* (1:3; 10:11; 22:7, 10, 18–19), completely in keeping with the writings of the other Biblical prophets. And—again in stark contrast to the apocalyptists—if there was one major concern among the Biblical prophets, it was ethical conduct. No Biblical writer ever revealed the future merely for the sake of satisfying curiosity: the goal was always to direct God's people toward right action in the present. The overwhelming majority of Biblical prophecy had nothing to do with the common misconception of "prophecy" as foretelling the future. The prophets told of the future in order to stimulate godly living. *The purpose of prophecy is ethical.*

The fact that many who study the prophetic writings today are more interested in finding possible references to space travel and nuclear weapons than in discovering God's commandments for living, is a sickening tribute to modern apostasy. "The testimony of *Jesus* is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10); to ignore Jesus in favor of atomic blasts is a perversion of Scripture, a preposterous twisting of God's holy Word. From beginning to end, John is intensely interested in the ethical conduct of those who read the Book of Revelation:

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written in it (1:3).

Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his garments (16:15).

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (22:7).

Blessed are those who do His commandments (22:14).

I must emphasize that in arguing for the eschatology of dominion I am not simply handing out an alternate program guide for the future. Biblical eschatology is not just a schedule of special events. The fundamental meaning of the Hope is *the Lordship of Jesus Christ*. The goal of eschatology is to lead men to worship and serve their Creator. Prophecy is never merely an academic exercise. All the prophets pointed to Jesus Christ, and they all demanded an ethical response. God's Word demands total transformation of our lives, at every point. If that is not the goal, and result, of our study of Scripture, it will profit us nothing.

When did prophet and vision cease from Israel? Was it not when Christ came, the Holy One of holies? It is, in fact, a sign and notable proof of the coming of the Word that Jerusalem no longer stands, neither is prophet raised up nor vision revealed among them. And it is natural that it should be so, for when He that was signified had come, what need was there any longer of any to signify Him? And when the truth had come, what further need was there of the shadow? On His account only they prophesied continually, until such time as Essential Righteousness had come, Who was made the ransom for the sins of all. For the same reason Jerusalem stood until the same time, in order that there men might premeditate the types before the Truth was known. So, of course, once the Holy One of holies had come, both vision and prophecy were sealed. And the kingdom of Jerusalem ceased at the same time, because kings were to be anointed among them only until the Holy of holies had been anointed. Moses also prophesies that the kingdom of the Jews shall stand until His time, saying, "A ruler shall not fail from Judah nor a prince from his loins, until the things laid up for him shall come and the Expectation of the nations Himself" [Gen. 49:10]. And that is why the Saviour Himself was always proclaiming "The law and the prophets prophesied until John" [Matt. 11:13]. So if there is still king or prophet or vision among the Jews, they do well to deny that Christ is come; but if there is neither king nor vision, and since that time all prophecy has been sealed and city and temple taken, how can they be so irreligious, how can they so flaunt the facts, as to deny Christ Who has brought it all about?

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [40]

THE TIME IS AT HAND

The question of the date of the Book of Revelation is significant for its proper interpretation. Scholars often have accepted the statement of Irenaeus (A.D. 120–202) that the prophecy appeared “toward the end of Domitian’s reign” (i.e., around A.D. 96). There is, however, considerable doubt about what Irenaeus meant by this (he may have meant that the Apostle John *himself* “was seen” by others). The language of Irenaeus is ambiguous; and, regardless of what he was talking about, he could have been wrong. (Irenaeus, incidentally, is the *only* source for this late dating of Revelation; all other “sources” are based on Irenaeus). Certainly, there are other early writers whose statements indicate that John wrote the Revelation much earlier, under Nero’s persecution. Our safest course, therefore, is to study the Revelation itself to see what *internal* evidence it presents regarding its date—evidence which indicates that it was written sometime before or around A.D. 68. Briefly, this proof hangs on two points: (1) Jerusalem is spoken of as still standing, and much of the book prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; (2) the Emperor Nero is mentioned as still being alive—and Nero died in June 68. (These points and others will be demonstrated in the following chapters.)

Much more than this, however, we have *a priori* teaching from Scripture itself that *all special revelation ended* by A.D. 70. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the “seventy weeks” were to end with the destruction of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24–27); and that period would also serve to “seal up the vision and prophecy” (Dan. 9:24). In other words, special revelation would stop—be “sealed up”—by the time Jerusalem was destroyed. *The Canon of Holy Scripture was entirely completed before Jerusalem fell.*

The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ marked the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New; the apostles were commissioned to deliver Christ's message in the form of the New Testament; and when they were finished, God sent the Edomites and the Roman armies to destroy utterly the last remaining symbols of the Old Covenant: the Temple and the Holy City. This fact alone is sufficient to establish the writing of the Revelation as taking place before A.D. 70. The book itself—as we shall see—gives abundant testimony regarding its date; but, even more, the nature of the New Testament as God's Final Word tells us this. Christ's death at the hands of apostate Israel sealed their fate: the Kingdom would be taken from them (Matt. 21:33–43). While wrath built up "to the utmost" (1 Thess. 2:16), God stayed His hand of judgment until the writing of the New Covenant document was accomplished. With that done, He dramatically terminated the kingdom of Israel, wiping out the persecuting generation (Matt. 23:34–36; 24:34; Luke 11:49–51). Jerusalem's destruction (Rev. 11) was the last blast of the trumpet, signaling that the "mystery of God" was *finished* (Rev. 10:7). There would be no further special revelation once Israel was gone. To return to the point: the Book of Revelation definitely was written before A.D. 70, and probably before A.D. 68.

DESTINATION

John addressed the Revelation to the seven important churches in Asia Minor, and from these it received a wide distribution. Asia Minor was significant because the cult of Caesar-worship is dealt with at length in the prophecy—and Asia Minor was a major center of Caesar-worship. "Inscription after inscription testifies to the loyalty of the cities towards the Empire. At Ephesus, at Smyrna, at Pergamum, and indeed throughout the province the Church was confronted by an imperialism which was popular and patriotic, and bore the character of a religion. Nowhere was the Caesar-cult more popular than in Asia" (H. B. Swete, *Commentary on Revelation* [Kregel, 1977], lxxxix).

After Julius Caesar died (29 B.C.), a temple honoring him as *divus* (god) was built in Ephesus. The Caesars who followed him didn't wait for death to provide such honors, and, beginning with Octavian, they asserted their own divinity, displaying their titles of deity in temples and on coins, particularly in the cities of Asia. Octavian changed his name to *Augustus*, a title of supreme majesty, dignity and reverence. He was called *the Son of God*, and as the divine-human mediator between

heaven and earth he offered sacrifices to the gods. He was widely proclaimed as the Savior of the world, and the inscriptions on his coins were quite frankly messianic—their message declaring, as Ethelbert Stauffer has written, that “salvation is to be found in none other save Augustus, and there is no other name given to men in which they can be saved” (*Christ and the Caesars* [Westminster, 1955], 88).

This pose was common to all the Caesars. Caesar was God; Caesar was Savior; Caesar was the only Lord. And they claimed not only the titles but the rights of deity as well. They taxed and confiscated property at will, took citizens’ wives (and husbands) for their own pleasure, caused food shortages, exercised the power of life and death over their subjects, and generally attempted to rule every aspect of reality throughout the Empire. The philosophy of the Caesars can be summed up in one phrase which was used increasingly as the age progressed: *Caesar is Lord!*

This was the main issue between Rome and the Christians: Who is Lord? Francis Schaeffer pointed out: “Let us not forget why the Christians were killed. They were *not* killed because they worshiped Jesus....nobody cared who worshiped whom so long as the worshiper did not disrupt the unity of the state, centered in the formal worship of Caesar. The reason the Christians were killed was because they were rebels...they worshiped Jesus as God and they worshiped the infinite-personal God only. The Caesars would not tolerate this worshiping of the one God only. It was counted as treason” (*How Shall We Then Live?* [Revell, 1976], 24).

For Rome, the goal of any true morality and piety was the subordination of all things to the State; the religious, pious man was the one who recognized, at every point in life, the centrality of Rome. R. J. Rushdoony observes that “the framework for the religious and familial acts of piety was Rome itself, the central and most sacred community. Rome strictly controlled all rights of corporation, assembly, religious meetings, clubs, and street gatherings, and it brooked no possible rivalry to its centrality....The state alone could organize; short of conspiracy, the citizens could not. On this ground alone, the highly organized Christian Church was an offense and an affront to the state, and an illegal organization readily suspected of conspiracy” (*The One and the Many* [Thoburn Press, 1978], 92f.).

The witness of the apostles and the early Church was nothing less than a declaration of war against the pretensions of the Roman State. John asserted that Jesus is the *only-begotten* Son of God (John 3:16);

that He is, in fact, “the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20–21). The Apostle Peter declared, shortly after Pentecost: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “The conflict of Christianity with Rome was thus political from the Roman perspective, although religious from the Christian perspective. The Christians were never asked to worship Rome’s pagan gods; they were merely asked to recognize the religious primacy of the state. . . . The issue, then, was this: should the emperor’s law, state law, govern both the state and the church, or were both state and church, emperor and bishop alike, under God’s law? Who represented true and ultimate order, God or Rome, eternity or time? The Roman answer was Rome and time, and hence Christianity constituted a treasonable faith and a menace to political order” (Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, 93).

The charge brought by the prosecution in one first-century trial of Christians was that “they are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus” (Acts 17:7). This was the fundamental accusation against all the Christians of the Empire. The captain of police pleaded with the aged Bishop Polycarp to renounce this extreme position: “What harm is there in saying *Caesar is Lord?*” Polycarp refused, and was burned at the stake. Thousands suffered martyrdom on just this issue. For them, Jesus was not “God” in some upper-story, irrelevant sense; He was the only God, complete Sovereign in every area. No aspect of reality could be exempt from His demands. Nothing was neutral. The Church confronted Rome with the inflexible claim of Christ’s imperial authority: Jesus is the only-begotten Son; Jesus is God; Jesus is King; Jesus is Savior; Jesus is Lord. Here were two Empires, both attempting absolute world domination; and they were implacably at war.

It was necessary for the churches of Asia to recognize this fully, with all its implications. Faith in Jesus Christ requires absolute submission to His Lordship, at every point, with no compromise. The confession of Christ meant conflict with statism, particularly in the provinces where official worship of Caesar was required for the transaction of everyday affairs. Failure to acknowledge the claims of the State would result in economic hardship and ruin, and often imprisonment, torture and death.

Some Christians compromised: “Sure, Jesus is God. I worship Him at church and in private devotions. But I can still keep my job and my union status, even though they require me to give technical

homage to pagan deities. It's a mere detail: after all, I still believe in Jesus *in my heart*. . . ." But Christ's Lordship is *universal*, and the Bible makes no distinction between heart and conduct. Jesus is Lord of all. To acknowledge Him truly as Lord, we must serve Him everywhere. This is the primary message of the Revelation, and that which the Christians in Asia desperately needed to hear. They lived in the very heart of Satan's throne, the seat of Emperor-worship; John wrote to remind them of their true King, of their position with Him as kings and priests, and of the necessity to persevere in terms of His sovereign Word.

SUBJECT

The purpose of the Revelation was to reveal Christ as Lord to a suffering Church. Because they were being persecuted, the early Christians could be tempted to fear that the world was getting out of hand—that Jesus, who had claimed "all authority...in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18), was not really in control at all. The apostles often warned against this man-centered error, reminding the people that God's sovereignty is over all of history (including our particular tribulations). This was the basis for some of the most beautiful passages of comfort in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 8:28–39; 2 Cor. 1:3–7; 4:7–15).

John's primary concern in writing the Book of Revelation was just this very thing: to strengthen the Christian community in the faith of Jesus Christ's Lordship, to make them aware that the persecutions they suffered were integrally involved in the great war of history. The Lord of glory had ascended His throne, and the ungodly rulers were now resisting His authority by persecuting His brethren. The suffering of Christians was *not* a sign that Jesus had abandoned this world to the devil; rather, it revealed that He was King. If Jesus' Lordship were historically meaningless, the ungodly would have had no reason whatsoever to trouble the Christians. But instead, they persecuted Jesus' followers, showing their unwilling recognition of His supremacy over their rule. The Book of Revelation presents Jesus seated on a white horse as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16), doing battle with the nations, judging and making war in righteousness. The persecuted Christians were not at all forsaken by God. In reality they were on the front lines of the conflict of the ages, a conflict in which Jesus Christ had already won the decisive battle. Since His resurrection, all

of history has been a “mopping up” operation, wherein the implications of His work are gradually being implemented throughout the world. John is realistic: the battles will not be easy, nor will Christians emerge unscathed. It will often be bloody, and much of the blood will be our own. But Jesus is King, Jesus is Lord, and (as Luther says) “He must win the battle.” The Son of God goes forth to war, conquering and to conquer, until He has put all enemies under His feet.

The subject of the Revelation thus was *contemporary*; that is, it was written to and for Christians who were living at the time it was first delivered. We are wrong to interpret it futuristically, as if its message were primarily intended for a time 2000 years after John wrote it. (It is interesting—but not surprising—that those who interpret the book “futuristically” always seem to focus on their *own* era as the subject of the prophecies. Convinced of their own importance, they are unable to think of themselves as living at any other time than the climax of history.) Of course, the events John foretold *were* “in the future” to John and his readers; but they occurred soon after he wrote of them. To interpret the book otherwise is to contradict both the scope of the work as a whole, and the particular passages which indicate its subject. For us, the great majority of the Revelation (i.e., everything excluding a few verses which mention the end of the world) is *history*: it has already happened. This may be a real disappointment to those who were looking forward to experiencing some of the thrilling scenes in the book, so for them I have a small word of comfort: Cheer up—the Killer Bees are still on their way north! Moreover, the Beast has a host of modern imitators, so you still have a chance to get beheaded. Unfortunately, those who had hoped to escape the fireworks in the rapture aren’t so lucky. They’ll just have to slog through to victory with the rest of us.

The early Church had two great enemies: apostate Israel and pagan Rome. Many Christians died at their hands (indeed, these two enemies of the Church often cooperated with each other in putting Christians to death, as they had with the crucifixion of the Lord Himself). And the message of the Revelation was that these two persecutors, inspired by Satan, would soon be judged and destroyed. Its message was contemporary, not futuristic.

Some will complain that this interpretation makes the Revelation “irrelevant” for our age. A more wrong-headed idea is unimaginable. Are the books of Romans and Ephesians “irrelevant” just because they were written to believers in the first century? Should 1 Corin-

ans and Galatians be dismissed because they dealt with first-century problems? Is not all Scripture profitable for believers in every age (2 Tim. 3:16–17)? Actually, it is the *futurists* who have made the Revelation irrelevant—for on the futurist hypothesis the book has been inapplicable from the time it was written until the twentieth century! Only if we see the Revelation in terms of its contemporary relevance is it anything but a dead letter. From the outset, John stated that his book was intended for “the seven churches which are in Asia” (1:4), and we must assume that he meant what he said. He clearly expected that even the most difficult symbols in the prophecy could be understood by his first-century readers (13:18). Not once did he imply that his book was written with the twentieth century in mind, and that Christians would be wasting their time attempting to decipher it until space stations were invented. The primary relevance of the Book of Revelation was for its first-century readers. It still has relevance for us today as we understand its message and apply its principles to our lives and our culture. Jesus Christ still demands of us what He demanded of the early Church: absolute faithfulness to Him.

Several lines of evidence for the contemporary nature of the Revelation may be pointed out here. *First*, there is the general tone of the book, which is taken up with the martyrs (see, e.g., 6:9; 7:14; 12:11). The subject is clearly the present situation of the churches: the Revelation was written to a suffering Church in order to comfort believers during their time of testing.

Second, John writes that the book concerns “the things which must shortly take place” (1:1), and warns that “the time is near” (1:3). In case we might miss it, he says again, at the close of the book, that “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place” (22:6). Given the fact that one important proof of a true prophet lay in the fact that his predictions came true (Deut. 18:21–22), John’s first-century readers had every reason to expect his book to have immediate significance. The words *shortly* and *near* simply cannot be made to mean anything but what they say. If I tell you, “I’ll be there *shortly*,” and I don’t show up for 2000 years, wouldn’t you say I was a little tardy? Some will object to this on the basis of 2 Peter 3:8, that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” But the context there is entirely different: Peter is exhorting us to have patience with respect to God’s promises, assuring us that God’s faithfulness to His holy Word will not wear out or diminish.

The Book of Revelation is *not* about the Second Coming. It is about the destruction of Israel and Christ's victory over Rome. In fact, the word *coming* as used in the Book of Revelation *never refers to the Second Coming*. Revelation prophesies the judgment of God on the two ancient enemies of the Church; and while it goes on to describe briefly certain end-time events, that description is merely a "wrap-up," to show that the ungodly will *never* prevail against Christ's Kingdom. But the main focus of Revelation is upon events which were soon to take place.

Third, John identifies certain situations as contemporary: in 13:18, John clearly encourages his contemporary readers to calculate the "number of the beast" and decipher its meaning; in 17:10, *one* of the seven kings *is* currently on the throne; and John tells us that the great harlot "*is* [present tense] the great city, which *reigns* [present tense] over the kings of the earth" (17:18). Again, the Revelation was meant to be understood in terms of its contemporary significance. A futuristic interpretation is completely opposed to the way John himself interprets his own prophecy.

Fourth, we should notice carefully the words of the angel in 22:10: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." Again, of course, we are told explicitly that the prophecy is contemporary in nature; but there is more. The angel's statement is in contrast to the command Daniel received at the end of his book: "Conceal the words and *seal up the book* until the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). Daniel was specifically ordered to seal up his prophecy, because it referred to "the end," in the distant future. But John is told *not* to seal up his prophecy, because the time of which it speaks is *near!*

Thus, the focus of the Book of Revelation is upon the contemporary situation of John and his first-century readers. It was written to show those early Christians that Jesus is Lord, "ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). It shows that Jesus is the key to world history—that nothing can occur apart from His sovereign will, that He will be glorified in all things, and that His enemies will lick the dust. The Christians of that day were tempted to compromise with the statism and false religions of their day, and they needed this message of Christ's absolute dominion over all, that they might be strengthened in the warfare to which they were called.

And we need this message also. We too are subjected daily to the threats and seductions of Christ's enemies. We too are asked—even by

fellow Christians—to compromise with modern Beasts and Harlots in order to save ourselves (or our jobs or property or tax exemptions). We too are faced with a choice: surrender to Jesus Christ or surrender to Satan. The Revelation speaks powerfully to the issues we face today, and its message to us is the same as it was to the early Church: that there is not an inch of neutral ground between Christ and Satan, that our Lord demands universal submission to His rule, and that He has predestined His people to victorious conquest and dominion over all things in His Name. There must be no compromise and no quarter given in the great battle of history. We are commanded to *win*.

For the Lord touched all parts of creation, and freed and undeceived them all from every deceit. As St. Paul says, “Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He triumphed on the cross” [Col. 2:15], so that no one could possibly be any longer deceived, but everywhere might find the very Word of God.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [45]

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE REVELATION

The Book of Revelation is not impossible to understand, but it is exceedingly complex. Its extensive use of Old Testament imagery would require volumes to explore fully. My purpose in the present book, of course, is simply to present in broad outline a Biblical exposition of the eschatology of dominion. (Those wishing for a more complete treatment of these issues should consult my commentary on Revelation, *The Days of Vengeance*, as well as other works listed in the Bibliography.)

As a whole, the Book of Revelation is a prophecy of the end of the old order and the establishment of the new order. It is a message to the church that the terrifying convulsions coursing throughout the world in every sphere comprised the final “shaking of heaven and earth,” ending once and for all the Old Covenant system, announcing that the kingdom of God had come to earth and broken Satan’s hold on the nations. In the destruction of Jerusalem, the old kingdom, and the Temple, God revealed that they had been merely the scaffolding for His eternal City, His Holy Nation, and the most glorious Temple of all.

See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.” And this expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:25–29).

The following outline provides merely a thumbnail sketch of the primary message of the Revelation. In the interests of brevity, its for-

mal literary character (for instance, the fact that it is structured in terms of both the creation week and the Old Testament festival calendar!) will be ignored for now.

Chapter One introduces the subject of the prophecy, assuring the readers that Christians are *now* ruling, even in tribulation, as kings and priests. It closes with a vision of Jesus Christ, making use of some important symbols which appear later in the book.

Chapters Two and Three contain messages from the Lord to seven churches in Asia Minor. The letters deal with the major themes of the prophecy, particularly the problems of Judaism, statism, and persecution. Christ declares that His church is the true Israel, the rightful inheritor of the covenant promises, and encourages His people to “overcome,” to conquer and reign in His Name. Although these letters are generally neglected, they actually comprise the central section of the prophecy. To a great extent, the later visions are simply supplementary illustrations of the lessons in this passage.

Chapters Four and Five give the Biblical philosophy of history: all things are seen from the perspective of the throne of God. Christ is revealed as the Conqueror, worthy to open the book of God’s judgments; creation and history are centered in Him.

Chapters Six and Seven show the breaking of the seven seals on the scroll, symbolizing the judgments about to fall upon apostate Israel. These judgments are specifically shown to be divine responses to the imprecatory prayers of the Church against her enemies; the governmental and liturgical actions of the church are the means of changing world history.

Chapters Eight and Nine extend this message in the actual opening of the scroll, revealing the coordination between the judicial declarations of the church on earth and God’s judicial decrees from heaven. Jerusalem is given over to Satan and his demonic legions, which flood the city to possess and consume its ungodly inhabitants, until the entire nation is driven into suicidal madness.

Chapters Ten and Eleven again present a vision of Christ, who announces that the New Creation and the New Covenant have become an accomplished fact. The witnessing, prophetic Church, seemingly annihilated by the Jewish persecution, is resurrected; and it is the persecutors who are crushed. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Old Covenant scaffolding, the completion and filling of the new and final Temple are revealed to the world.

Chapter Twelve forms a dramatic interlude, portraying the basic

battle of history in the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. The Son of God ascends the throne of His kingdom, unharmed and victorious, and Satan then turns to persecute the Church. Again, this assures God's people that all their persecutions originate in the total warfare of the forces of evil against Christ, the Seed of the Woman, who has been predestined to shatter the Dragon's head. With Him, the Church will be more than conquerors.

Chapter Thirteen reveals the all-out warfare which was approaching between the faithful Church and the pagan Roman Empire (the Beast). God's people are warned that the religious forces of apostate Judaism will be aligned with the Roman State, seeking to enforce the worship of Caesar in place of the worship of Jesus Christ. With confident faith in Christ's lordship, the Church is to exercise steadfast patience; revolution is condemned.

Chapters Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen reveal the victorious army of the redeemed, standing on Mount Zion singing a song of triumph. Christ is seen coming in the Cloud of judgment upon rebellious Israel, trampling on the ripened grapes of wrath. The Temple is opened, and while the Glory-Cloud fills the sanctuary the divine judgments are outpoured from it, bringing Egyptian plagues upon the apostates.

Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen expose the essence of Jerusalem's sin as spiritual adultery. She has forsaken her rightful husband and is committing fornication with pagan rulers, worshiping Caesar, "drunk with the blood of the saints"; the holy city has become another Babylon. God issues one final call for His people to separate themselves from Jerusalem's harlotries, and abandons her to the ravaging armies of the Empire. At the sight of the utter ruin of apostate Israel, the saints in heaven and earth rejoice.

Chapter Nineteen begins with Communion—the joyful wedding feast of Christ and His Bride, the Church. The scene then shifts to reveal the coming worldwide dominion of the gospel, as the King of kings rides forth with His army of saints to wage holy war for the reconquest of earth. The agent of victory is His *Word*, which proceeds from His mouth like a sword.

Chapter Twenty gives a capsulized history of the new world order, from the first coming of Christ until the end of the world. The Lord binds Satan and enthrones His people as kings and priests with Him. Satan's final attempt to overthrow the King is crushed, and the Last Judgment is ushered in. The righteous and the wicked are eternally separated, and God's people enter into their eternal inheritance.

Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-two record a vision of the Church in all its glory, comprehending both its earthly and its heavenly aspects. The Church is revealed as the City of God, the beginning of the New Creation, extending a worldwide influence, drawing all nations into itself, until the whole earth is one glorious Temple. The goals of Paradise are consummated in the fulfillment of the dominion mandate.

With this broad overview in mind, we can now proceed to a more detailed study of the imagery of Revelation, concentrating on four of the most dramatic and controversial symbols: the Beast, the Harlot, the Millennium, and the New Jerusalem. As we shall see, each one of these images spoke to the first-century Church about contemporary realities, assuring God's people of Christ's universal lordship and encouraging them in the Hope of the gospel's worldwide triumph.

Therefore blessed Moses of old time ordained the great feast of the Passover, and our celebration of it, because, namely, Pharaoh was killed, and the people were delivered from bondage. For in those times it was especially, when those who tyrannized over the people had been slain, that temporal feasts and holidays were observed in Judea.

Now, however, that the devil, that tyrant against the whole world, is slain, we do not approach a temporal feast, my beloved, but an eternal and heavenly. Not in shadows do we show it forth, but we come to it in truth. For they being filled with the flesh of a dumb lamb, accomplished the feast, and having anointed their door-posts with the blood, implored aid against the destroyer. But now we, eating of the Word of the Father, and having the lintels of our hearts sealed with the blood of the New Testament, acknowledge the grace given us from the Saviour, Who said, "Behold, I have given unto you to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" [Luke 10:19]. For no more does death reign; but instead of death henceforth is life, since our Lord said, "I am the life" [John 14:6]; so that everything is filled with joy and gladness; as it is written, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice" [Ps. 97:1].

ST. ATHANASIUS, *Letters* [IV]

THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET (*Revelation 13*)

The Book of Revelation is *a covenant document*. It is a prophecy, like the prophecies of the Old Testament. This means that it is not concerned with making “predictions” of astonishing events as such. As prophecy, its focus is redemptive and ethical. Its concern is with the *covenant*. There is not a chance that the Biblical authors would have thought it important to prophesy about Cobra helicopters (which would be rendered obsolete by “Blue Thunder”), or personal computers, or chewing gum, or space shuttles. Nor would they have been interested in foretelling the future of the United States of America, the Soviet Union, or the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. The point is not that these things are unimportant (in varying degrees), or that “spiritual” Christians should not be concerned about all areas of life; we should. But the point is that *the Bible is God’s revelation about His covenant with His people*. It was not written to satisfy our curiosities about the Common Market or the prime rate of interest. *It was written to show what God has done to save His people and glorify Himself through them.*

Therefore, even when God speaks of the Roman Empire in the Book of Revelation, His purpose is not to tell us exciting bits of news about life at Nero’s court. He speaks of Rome only in relation to the covenant and the history of redemption. The Roman Empire is not seen in terms of itself, but solely in terms of 1) *the Land* (Israel), and 2) *the Church*.

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA

The Roman Empire is symbolized in Revelation as a ravenous, ferocious animal, untamed and under the Curse. John says its appearance

was like a leopard, a bear, and a lion (Rev. 13:2)—the very animals used to describe the first three of the four great world empires in Daniel 7:1–6 (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece; cf. Daniel’s description of the same empires under a different symbol, in Dan. 2:31–45). The fourth empire, Rome, partakes of the evil, beast-like characteristics of the other empires, but it is much worse: “Behold, a fourth Beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns” (Dan. 7:7). The Beast of Revelation is clearly the Roman Empire.

This Beast, however, is not just an institution, but a person; specifically, as we shall see, the Emperor Nero. How could this symbol have referred to both the Empire and the Emperor? Because, in a sense (particularly the way the Bible looks at things), the *two* could be considered as *one*. Rome was identified with its leader; the Empire was embodied in Nero. Thus the Bible can shift back and forth between them, or consider them both together, under the same designation. And both Nero and the Empire were sunk in degrading, degenerate, bestial activities. Nero, who murdered numerous members of his own family (including his pregnant wife, whom he kicked to death); who was a homosexual, the final stage in degeneracy (Rom. 1:24–32); whose favorite aphrodisiac consisted of watching people suffer the most horrifying and disgusting tortures; who dressed up as a wild beast in order to attack and rape male and female prisoners; who used the bodies of Christians burning at the stake as the original “Roman candles” to light up his filthy garden parties; who launched the first imperial persecution of Christians at the instigation of the Jews, in order to destroy the Church; *this* animalistic pervert was the ruler of the most powerful empire on earth. And he set the tone for his subjects. Rome was the moral sewer of the world.

Let’s consider what the Book of Revelation tells us about Nero/Rome, the Beast. *First*, John saw him “coming up out of the sea” (Rev. 13:1). In a visual, dramatic sense, of course, the mighty Roman Empire did seem to arise out of the sea, from the Italian peninsula across the ocean. More than this, however, there is the Biblical symbolism of the sea. At the original creation, the earth was a fluid, formless, uninhabitable mass of darkness, which the light of the Spirit “overcame” (Gen. 1:2; John 1:5). Obviously, there was no real conflict between God and His creation; in the beginning, everything was “very

good.” The sea is most fundamentally an image of life. But after the Fall, the *picture* of the raging deep is used and developed in Scripture as a symbol of the world in chaos through the rebellion of men and nations against God: “The wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud” (Isa. 57:20; cf. 17:12). Thus John is told later that “the waters which you saw . . . are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” (Rev. 17:15). Out of this chaotic, rebellious mass of humanity emerged Rome, an entire empire founded on the premise of opposition to God.

Second, John saw that the Beast had “ten horns and seven heads” (Rev. 13:1), in the image of the Dragon (12:3), who gives the Beast “his power and his throne and great authority” (13:2). The ten horns (powers) of the Beast are explained in Revelation 17:12 in terms of the governors of the ten imperial provinces, while the seven heads are explained as the line of the Caesars (17:9–11): Nero is one of the “heads” (we will return to this in the following chapter).

Third, “on his heads were blasphemous names” (13:1). As we have already seen, the Caesars were gods. Each emperor was called *Augustus* or *Sebastos*, meaning *One to be worshiped*; they also took on the name *divus* (god) and even *Deus* and *Theos* (God). Many temples were erected to them throughout the Empire, especially, as we have seen, in Asia Minor. The Roman Caesars received honor belonging only to the one true God; Nero commanded *absolute* obedience, and even had an image of himself built, 120 feet high. For this reason Paul called Caesar “the man of sin”; he was, Paul said, “the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thess. 2:3–4). John emphasizes this aspect of the Beast: “And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies. . . . And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His Name and His tabernacle, those who tabernacle in heaven” (13:5–6). The Christians were persecuted precisely because they refused to join in this idolatrous Emperor-cult.

Fourth, John saw “one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed” (13:3). Some have pointed out that, after Nero was killed, the rumor began to spread that he would rise again and recapture the throne; in some way, they suppose, John must be referring to that myth. This, it seems to me, is a very unsatisfactory method of dealing with Scripture. John mentions the Beast’s “death-wound” three times in this passage (see v. 12, 14); clearly, this is much

more than a casual symbol, and we should attempt a Biblical explanation for it.

The Beast, as we saw, resembles the Dragon. The fact that he receives a *head wound* should make us think of the scene in the Garden of Eden, when God promised that Christ would come and crush the Dragon's head (Gen. 3:15). Daniel had prophesied that in the days of the Roman rulers, Christ's Kingdom would crush the Satanic empires and replace them, filling the earth. Accordingly, apostolic testimony proclaimed that Christ's Kingdom had come, that the devil had been defeated, disarmed, and bound, and that all nations would begin to flow toward the mountain of the Lord's House. Within the first generation, the gospel spread rapidly around the world, to all the nations; churches sprang up everywhere, and members of Caesar's own household came into the faith (Phil. 4:22). In fact, Tiberius Caesar even formally requested that the Roman Senate officially acknowledge Christ's divinity. For a time, therefore, it looked as if a coup were taking place: Christianity was in the ascendant, and soon would gain control. Satan's head had been crushed, and with it the Roman Empire had been wounded to death with the sword (Rev. 13:14) of the gospel.

But then the tables were reversed. Although the gospel had spread everywhere, so had heresy and apostasy; and under persecution by the Jews and the Roman State, great masses of Christians began falling away. The New Testament gives the definite impression that *most* of the churches fell apart and abandoned the faith; under Nero's persecution, the Church seemed to have been stamped out entirely. The Beast had received the head-wound, the wound unto death—yet it still lived. The reality, of course, was that Christ *had* defeated the Dragon and the Beast; but the implications of His victory still had to be worked out; the saints had yet to overcome, and take possession (Dan. 7:21–22; Rev. 12:11).

Fifth, “the whole Land wondered after the Beast; and they worshiped the Dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the Beast, saying, ‘Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war against him?’” (13:3–4). John is not speaking of the *world* following the beast; the word he uses here should be translated *Land*, meaning *Israel*. We know this because the context identifies his worshipers as *those who dwell on the Land* (Rev. 13:8, 12, 14)—a technical phrase used several times in Revelation to denote apostate Israel. In the Greek Old Testament (the version used by the early Church), it

is a common prophetic expression for *rebellious, idolatrous Israel about to be destroyed and driven from the Land* (Jer. 1:14; 10:18; Ezek. 7:7; 36:17; Hos. 4:1, 3; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1; Zeph. 1:8), based on its original usage in the historical books of the Bible for *rebellious, idolatrous pagans about to be destroyed and driven from the Land* (Num. 32:17; 33:52, 55; Josh. 7:9; 9:24; Jud. 1:32; 2 Sam. 5:6; 1 Chron. 11:4; 22:18; Neh. 9:24). Israel had become a nation of pagans, and was about to be destroyed, exiled, and supplanted by a new nation. It is true, of course, that Nero was loved all over the Empire as the benevolent provider of welfare and entertainment. But it is *Israel* in particular which is condemned for Emperor-worship. Faced with a choice between Christ and Caesar, they had proclaimed: *We have no king but Caesar!* (John 19:15). Their reaction to Caesar's apparently victorious war against the Church (Rev. 11:7) was awe and worship. *Israel sided with Caesar and the Empire against Christ and the Church*. Ultimately, therefore, they were worshipping the Dragon, and for this reason Jesus Himself called their worship assemblies *synagogues of Satan* (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

Sixth, the Beast was given "authority to act for forty-two months" (13:5), "to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (13:7). The period of 42 months (three-and-one-half years—*a broken seven*) is a symbolic figure in prophetic language, signifying a time of sadness, when the enemies of God are in power, or when judgment is being poured out (taken from the period of drought between Elijah's first appearance and the defeat of Baal on Mount Carmel). Its prophetic usage is not *primarily* literal, although it is interesting that *Nero's persecution of the Church did in fact last a full 42 months*, from the middle of November 64 to the beginning of June 68.

Seventh, John provided his readers with a positive identification of the Beast: "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the Beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is 666" (13:18). There are several significant aspects of this strange number; we will examine only two of them here.

The first point is that the Old Testament has already told us about 666. It is found in the books of the Kings and the Chronicles, surely some of the most neglected books of the Bible. Interestingly, however, John takes many of his symbolic numbers from them (for one example, compare 1 Chron. 24:1–19 with Rev. 4:4). These historical writings tell us that Solomon (a Biblical type of both Christ and the Beast) received *666 talents of gold* in one year, at the height of his power and glory (1 Kings 10:14; 2 Chron. 9:13). That number marks

both the high point of his reign and the beginning of his downfall; from then on, everything goes downhill into apostasy. One by one, Solomon breaks the three laws of godly kingship recorded in Deuteronomy 17:16–17: against multiplying gold (1 Kings 10:14–25), against multiplying horses (1 Kings 10:26–29), and against multiplying wives (1 Kings 11:1–8). For the Hebrews, 666 was a fearful sign of apostasy, the mark of both a king and a State in the Dragon's image.

The second point to consider about the number 666 is this. In both Greek and Hebrew, each letter of the alphabet is also a numeral (see the table of numerals at the end of this chapter). Thus, the “number” of anyone's name could be computed by simply adding up the numerical value of its letters. Clearly, John expected that his *contemporary* readers were capable of using this method to discover the Beast's name—thus indicating, again, the *contemporary message* of Revelation; he did not expect them to figure out the name of some 20th-century official in a foreign government. At the same time, however, he tells them that it will not be as easy as they might think: it will require someone “who has understanding.” For John did not give a number that could be worked out in Greek, which is what a Roman official scanning Revelation for subversive content would expect. The unexpected element in the computation was that it had to be worked out in *Hebrew*, a language which at least some members of the churches would know. His readers would have guessed by now that he was speaking of Nero, and those who understood Hebrew probably grasped it instantly. The numerical values of the Hebrew letters in Neron Kesar (Nero Caesar) are:

$$\text{נ} = 50 \quad \text{ר} = 200 \quad \text{ו} = 6 \quad \text{נ} = 50 \quad \text{ק} = 100 \quad \text{ס} = 60 \quad \text{ר} = 200$$

thus:

$$\text{נִרְוֹן קֶסֶר} = 666$$

It is significant that all early Christian writers, even those who did not understand Hebrew and were therefore confused by the number 666, connected the Roman Empire, and especially Nero, with the Beast. There should be no reasonable doubt about this. John was writing to first-century Christians, warning them of things that were “shortly” to take place. They were engaged in the most crucial bat-

tle of history, against the Dragon and the evil Empire which he possessed. The purpose of the Revelation was to comfort the Church with the assurance that God was in control, so that even the awesome might of the Dragon and the Beast would not stand before the armies of Jesus Christ. The number of *Man* is *six* (Gen. 1:27, 31); Christ was wounded in His heel on the sixth day (Friday)—yet that is the day He crushed the Dragon's head. At his most powerful, John says, Nero is just a *six*, or a series of sixes; never a *seven*. His plans of world dominion will never be fulfilled, and the Church will overcome.

THE BEAST FROM THE LAND

Just as the Beast from the sea was in the image of the Dragon, so we see another creature in Revelation 13 who is in the image of the Beast. John saw this one “coming up out of the Land” (13:11), arising from within Israel itself. In Revelation 19:20, we are told the identity of this Land Beast: he is “the False Prophet.” As such, he represents what Jesus had foretold would take place in Israel's last days: “Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. . . . Many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many” (Matt. 24:5, 11). The rise of the false prophets paralleled that of the antichrists; but whereas the antichrists had apostatized into Judaism from within the Church, the false prophets were Jewish religious leaders who sought to seduce Christians from the outside.

It is important to remember that Judaism is *not* Old Testament religion, but rather a rejection of the Biblical faith altogether in favor of the Pharisaical, Talmudic heresy. Like Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church, and other cults, it claims to be based on the Bible; but its actual authority comes from the traditions of men. Jesus was quite clear: Judaism denies *Christ* because it denies *Moses*. Orthodox Christianity *alone* is the true continuation and fulfillment of Old Testament religion (see Matt. 5:17–20; 15:1–9; Mark 7:1–13; Luke 16:29–31; John 5:45–47; 8:42–47).

The Jewish false prophets had the appearance of a lamb (Rev. 13:11), as Jesus had warned (Matt. 7:15); but they “spoke as a Dragon” (Rev. 13:11). How does the Dragon speak? He uses deceptive, subtle, seductive speech to draw God's people away from the faith and into a trap (Gen. 3:1–6, 13; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9); furthermore, he is a liar, a slanderer, and a blasphemer (John 8:44; Rev. 12:10). The Book of Acts records numerous examples of Draconian false witness by the Jews

against Christians, a major problem for the early Church (Acts 6:9–15; 13:10; 14:2–5; 17:5–8; 18:6, 12–13; 19:9; 21:27–36; 24:1–9; 25:2–3, 7).

The Jewish leaders, symbolized by this Beast from the Land, joined forces with the Beast of Rome in an attempt to destroy the Church (Acts 4:24–28; 12:1–3; 13:8; 14:5; 17:5–8; 18:12–13; 21:11; 24:1–9; 25:2–3, 9, 24). They led Israel in worship of the Emperor (Rev. 13:12); and, in the service of apostasy, the false prophets even performed miracles (Rev. 13:13–15). Jesus had warned that “false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). Again, Acts records instances of miracle-working Jewish false prophets, including the fact that, as Jesus had foretold (Matt. 7:22–23), some of them even used His name in their incantations (Acts 13:6–11; 19:13–16).

The Jewish leaders enforced submission to the Emperor. Indeed, their charge against Christ Himself was that He was a rival to the all-embracing authority of Caesar (John 19:12–15). Similarly, they organized economic boycotts against those who refused to submit to Caesar as Lord, going so far as to put them to death (Rev. 13:15–17). The Book of Acts is studded with incidents of organized Jewish persecution of the Church (Acts 4:1–3, 15–18; 5:17–18, 27–33, 40; 7:51–60; 9:23, 29; 13:45–50; 14:2–5; 17:5–8, 13; 18:17; 20:3; 22:22–23; 23:12, 20–21; 24:27; 26:21; 28:17–29; cf. 1 Thess. 2:14–16).

The New Testament gives abundant testimony of this fact. The Jewish hierarchy was involved in a massive, organized attempt to destroy the Church by both deceit and persecution. In pursuit of this diabolical goal, they united in a conspiracy with the Roman government against Christianity. Some of them were able to perform miracles in the service of Satan. And this is exactly what is told us of the Beast from the Land. The False Prophet of Revelation was none other than the leadership of apostate Israel, who rejected Christ and worshiped the Beast.

There is an interesting reversal of imagery in the text. The Book of Job has prepared us for John’s prophecy, for it too tells us of a Land Beast (*Behemoth*, Job 40:15–24) and a Sea Beast (*Leviathan*, Job 41:1–34). But John’s visions expand on Job’s descriptions of these dinosaurs, and the order of their appearance is reversed. First we see Satan as the Dragon, the true Leviathan (Rev. 12); then comes the Sea Beast, who is in the Dragon’s image (Rev. 13:1); finally, trailing behind and serving them, comes the Land Beast, in the image of the Sea Beast. By thus showing the Beasts appearing in reverse order,

John underscores his point: Israel, which was to have been a kingdom of priests to the nations of the world, has surrendered its position of priority to Leviathan. Instead of placing a godly imprint upon every culture and society, Israel has been remade into the image of the pagan, antichristian State. Abraham's children have become the seed of the Dragon (John 8:37-44).

During three years of ministry in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul continually suffered persecution because of "the plots of the Jews" (Acts 20:19); in describing his conflicts with them, he called them "wild beasts" (1 Cor. 15:32). The Jewish Beast was the early Church's most deceptive and dangerous enemy, and Paul strenuously warned the Church about these Judaistic seducers:

For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed (Tit. 1:10-16).

TABLE OF NUMERALS IN USE
DURING THE BIBLICAL PERIOD¹

	<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Greek</i>
1	א	Α
2	ב	Β
3	ג	Γ
4	ד	Δ
5	ה	Ε
6	ו	Ϝ
7	ז	Ζ
8	ח	Η
9	ט	Θ
10	י	Ι
20	כ	Κ
30	ל	Λ
40	מ	Μ
50	נ	Ν
60	ס	Ξ
70	ע	Ο
80	פ	Π
90	צ	Ϟ
100	ק	Ρ
200	ר	Σ
300	ש	Τ
400	ת	Υ
500	קת	Φ
600		Χ
700		Ψ
800		Ω

1. J. D. Douglas, ed., *New Bible Dictionary*, Second Edition (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1982), pp. 842-843.

A king who has founded a city, so far from neglecting it when through the carelessness of the inhabitants it is attacked by robbers, avenges it and saves it from destruction, having regard rather to his own honour than to the people's neglect. Much more, then, the Word of the All-good Father was not unmindful of the human race that He had called to be; but rather, by the offering of His own body He abolished the death which they had incurred, and corrected their neglect by His own teaching. Thus by His own power He restored the whole nature of man.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [10]

THE GREAT HARLOT (*Revelation 17–19*)

The Book of Revelation presents us with two great cities, antithetical to each other: *Babylon and New Jerusalem*. As we will see in a later chapter, the New Jerusalem is Paradise Consummated, the community of the saints, the City of God. The other city, which is continually contrasted to the New Jerusalem, is the *old* Jerusalem, which has become unfaithful to God. If we knew our Bibles better this would be immediately apparent, for most of the language describing “Babylon” is taken from other Biblical descriptions of Jerusalem. Let’s consider some of the information John provides about this evil city.

First, we are told that she is “the great Harlot . . . with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication” (Rev. 17:1–2). This striking picture of a Harlot-city fornicating with the nations comes from Isaiah 57 and Ezekiel 16 and 23, where Jerusalem is represented as God’s Bride who has turned to harlotry. The people of Jerusalem had abandoned the true faith and had turned to heathen gods and ungodly nations for help, rather than trusting in God to be their protector and deliverer. Using language so explicit that most modern pastors won’t preach from these chapters, Ezekiel condemns Jerusalem as a degraded, wanton whore: “You spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry” (Ezek. 16:25). John saw the harlot sitting in a wilderness, a symbol we have already considered at length as an image of the Curse; moreover, the specific picture of Jerusalem as a harlot in a wilderness is used in Jeremiah 2–3 and Hosea 2.

The Harlot in the wilderness, John says, is *seated on the Beast* (Rev. 17:3), representing her dependence upon the Roman Empire for her national existence and power; from the testimony of the New Testament there is no doubt that Jerusalem was politically and religiously

“in bed” with the pagan Empire, cooperating with Rome in the crucifixion of Christ and the murderous persecution of Christians. Developing this aspect of the symbolism further, an angel tells John more about the Beast: “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while” (Rev. 17:9–10). The “seven mountains” again identify the Beast as Rome, famous for its “seven hills”; but these also correspond to the line of the Caesars. *Five have fallen*: the first five Caesars were Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius. *One now is*: Nero, the sixth Caesar, was on the throne as John was writing the Revelation. *The other . . . must remain a little while*: Galba, the seventh Caesar, reigned for seven months.

The symbolic name given to the Harlot was *Babylon the Great* (Rev. 17:5), a reminder of the Old Testament city which was the epitome of rebellion against God (cf. Gen. 11:1–9; Jer. 50–51). This new and greater Babylon, the “Mother of harlots,” is “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (Rev. 17:6). Later John tells us that “*in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth*” (Rev. 18:24). That statement has a familiar ring, doesn’t it? It comes from a passage we have considered several times before: Jesus’ condemnation of *Jerusalem*.

Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall *all the righteous blood shed on the earth*. . . . Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!* (Matt. 23:34–37).

Historically, it was *Jerusalem* which had always been the great harlot, continually falling into apostasy and persecuting the prophets (Acts 7:51–52); *Jerusalem* was the place where the prophets were killed (Luke 13:33). We cannot grasp the message of Revelation if we fail to recognize its central character as a *covenantal, legal document*; like the writings of Amos and other Old Testament prophets, it represents a *covenant lawsuit*, charging Jerusalem with breaches of the covenant and declaring her judgment.

John records that the “ten kings,” the rulers subject to the Empire, join with the Beast against Christ: “These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the Beast. These will wage war against the Lamb”—and what is to be the outcome? “*And the Lamb*

will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful” (Rev. 17:13–14). John assures the Church that in their terrible and terrifying conflict with the awesome might of imperial Rome, *the victory of Christianity is guaranteed*.

At this point the focus seems to shift. Just as the war between Caesar and Christ is heating up, John says, the peoples of the Empire “will hate the Harlot and will make her *desolate* [cf. Matt. 24:15] and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the Beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled” (Rev. 17:16–17; cf. 18:6–8). Jerusalem had committed fornication with the heathen nations, but in A.D. 70 they turned against her and destroyed her. Again, this picture is taken from the Old Testament prophets who spoke of Jerusalem as the Whore: they said that just as a priest’s daughter who became a harlot was to be “burned with fire” (Lev. 21:9), so God would use Jerusalem’s former “lovers,” the heathen nations, to destroy her and burn her to the ground (Jer. 4:11–13, 30–31; Ezek. 16:37–41; 23:22, 25–30). It is noteworthy, however, that *the Beast destroys Jerusalem as part of his war against Christ*; early historians report that the Roman leaders’ motive in destroying the Temple was not only to destroy the Jews, but *to obliterate Christianity*. The Beast thought that he could kill the Whore and the Bride in one stroke! But when the dust settled, the scaffolding of old, apostate Jerusalem lay in ruins, and the Church was revealed as the new and most glorious Temple, God’s eternal dwelling place.

John tells us that the Harlot “is the great city, which has a kingdom over all the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18). This verse has thrown some interpreters. Even though all the other signs point to Jerusalem as the Harlot, how can she be said to wield this kind of worldwide political power? The answer is that *Revelation is not a book about politics; it is a book about the covenant*. Jerusalem *did* reign over the nations. She had a covenantal priority over the kingdoms of the earth. It is rarely appreciated sufficiently that Israel was a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6), exercising this ministry on behalf of the nations of the world. When Israel was faithful to God, offering up sacrifices for the nations, the world was at peace; when Israel broke the covenant, the world was in turmoil. The Gentile nations recognized this (1 Kings 10:24; Ezra 1; 4–7; cf. Rom. 2:17–24). Yet, perversely, they would seek to seduce Israel to commit whoredom against the covenant—and

when she did, they would turn on her and destroy her. That pattern is repeated several times, until Israel's final excommunication in A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed as God's sign that the Kingdom had been transferred to His new people, the Church (Rev. 11:19; 15:5; 21:3).

Since Israel was to be destroyed, the apostles spent much of their time during the last days warning God's people to separate themselves from her and align themselves with the Church (cf. Acts 2:37–40; 3:19, 26; 4:8–12; 5:27–32). This is John's message in Revelation. Jerusalem's apostasy has become so great, he says, that her judgment is permanent and irrevocable. She is now *Babylon*, the implacable enemy of God. "And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2). Because Israel rejected Christ, the entire nation has become demon-possessed, utterly beyond hope (cf. Matt. 12:38–45; Rev. 9:1–11). Therefore, God's people must not seek to reform Israel, but to abandon her to her fate. Salvation is with Christ and the Church, and only destruction awaits those who are aligned with the Harlot: "Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4; cf. Heb. 10:19–39; 12:15–29; 13:10–14).

And so Jerusalem is destroyed, never to rise again: "And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea [cf. Luke 17:2], saying, 'Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer'" (Rev. 18:21). But "Jerusalem" is still standing in the twentieth century, is it not? How was it destroyed *forever* in A.D. 70? What this means is that Israel, as *the* covenant people, will cease to exist. Jerusalem—as the *great city*, the *holy city*—"will not be found any longer." True, as we have seen from Romans 11, the descendants of Abraham will come into the covenant again. But they will *not* be a distinct, holy nation of special priests. They will join the peoples of the world in the saved multitude, with no distinction (Usa. 19:19–25; cf. Eph. 2:11–22). Thus Jerusalem, which left the covenant religion and turned to a demonic cult of sorcery, witchcraft, and state-worship, will be forever ruined. What was once a paradise will never again know the blessings of the Garden of Eden (Rev. 18:22–23).

God's people had been praying for Jerusalem's destruction (Rev. 6:9–11). Now that their prayers are answered, the great multitude of the redeemed breaks out into antiphonal praise:

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great Harlot who was corrupting the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged the blood of His bondservants on her.” And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever” (Rev. 19:1–3; cf. 18:20).

Contrary to the expectations of Rome, the destruction of Jerusalem was not the end for the Church. Instead, it was the Church’s full establishment as the new Temple, the final declaration that the Harlot has been divorced and executed, and God has taken to Himself a new Bride. *Judgment and salvation are inseparable*. The collapse of the ungodly culture is not the end of the world but its re-creation, as in the Flood and the Exodus. God’s people have been saved from the whoredoms of the world to become His wife; and the constant token of this fact is the Church’s celebration of Communion, the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7–9).

But there is another great feast recorded here, the “Great Supper of God,” in which the scavengers of the earth are invited to “eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great” (Rev. 19:17–18)—all the enemies of Christ, those who refuse to submit to His rule. For He is riding out on His war-horse, followed by His army of saints, conquering the nations with the Word of God, the gospel, symbolized by a sword proceeding from His mouth (Rev. 19:11–16). This is not the Second Coming; rather, it is a symbolic declaration of hope, the assurance that the Word of God will be victorious throughout the world, so that Christ’s rule will be established universally. Christ will be acknowledged everywhere as King of all kings, Lord over all lords. From the beginning of Revelation, Christ’s message to His Church had been a command to overcome, to *conquer* (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21); here, He assures the suffering Church that, regardless of the fierce persecution by Israel and Rome, Christ and His people will be victorious over all enemies. The destiny of the Beast, the False Prophet, and all who oppose Christ’s lordship is death and destruction, in time and in eternity (Rev. 19:19–21).

The first-century Christians, surrounded by persecution and apostasy, could easily have been tempted to see their generation as the End. The great testimony of Revelation was that these things were not the End, but the Beginning. At their worst, the Beast and his co-conspirators are merely fulfilling the decrees of the sovereign God

(Rev. 17:17). He has ordained their every move, and He has ordained their destruction. The nations rage, but God laughs: He has already set up His King on His holy mountain, and all nations will be ruled by Him (Ps. 2). *All power in heaven and earth has been given to Christ* (Matt. 28:18); as Martin Luther sang, “He *must* win the battle.” As the gospel progresses throughout the world it will win, and win, and win, until all kingdoms become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever. We must not concede to the enemy even one square inch of ground in heaven or on earth. Christ and His army are riding forth, conquering and to conquer, and we through Him will inherit all things.

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh he has a name written, *KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS* (Rev. 19:11–16).

Who, then, is He Who has done these things and has united in peace those who hated each other, save the beloved Son of the Father, the common Saviour of ours, Jesus Christ, Who by His own love underwent all things for our salvation? Even from the beginning, moreover, this peace that He was to administer was foretold, for Scripture says, “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles, and nation shall not take sword against nation, neither shall they learn any more to wage war” [Isa. 2:4].

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [52]

THE KINGDOM OF PRIESTS (*Revelation 20*)

There are three main systems of interpretation regarding the Millennium, the “thousand years” of Revelation 20. The *Premillennialists* say that this passage teaches that Christ will return and resurrect Christians *before (pre-)* the Millennium, which is to be a literal 1000 years with Christ reigning in Jerusalem as a political, earthly ruler of the nations. The *Amillennialists* say that there is not and will never be a “millennium” of any kind on earth; instead, they say, Revelation 20 refers to the state of Christians who have died and are now “reigning” in heaven. The *Postmillennialists* say that the Millennium refers to the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ; the Millennium is going on *now*, with Christians reigning as kings on earth.

Which of these three positions is correct? As I have tried to show throughout this book, the answer is of more than casual significance for our practical attitudes and actions in working for God’s Kingdom. As I have also tried to show, the answer is given throughout Scripture. *Postmillennialism*—the eschatology of dominion—is the message of the whole Bible. It is time now, however, to show that it is taught in Revelation 20 as well.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The key to the interpretation of the chapter is what John tells us about what he calls *the First Resurrection*:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God, and those who had not worshiped the Beast or his image, and had not received his mark

upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were completed. This is the First Resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the First Resurrection; over these the Second Death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4–6).

In the first place, we can dispose of the Amillennial position right away, by pointing out the obvious: this is a *resurrection*, a *rising again from the dead*. Dying and going to heaven is wonderful, but, for all its benefits, it is not a resurrection. This passage cannot be a description of the state of disembodied saints in heaven; moreover, the context as a whole is set on *earth* (cf. v. 7–9).

Second, however, this is not a bodily resurrection. John gives us a clue that he means something special by calling it *the First Resurrection*. What could this mean? We saw in a previous chapter that there is only one bodily resurrection, at the end of the world. To find the answer, we again go back to Genesis, which tells us of *the First Death*: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From every tree of the Garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die’” (Gen. 2:16–17). As we know, Adam and Eve did not actually die physically on the day that they ate the forbidden fruit. But that *was* the Day of their *Spiritual death*, their alienation from God. This Spiritual death was inherited by the children of Adam and Eve, so that we all are born “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The First Death is this Spiritual death. And thus the First Resurrection is Spiritual as well:

God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even *when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ* (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4–6; cf. Col. 2:11–13; 1 John 3:14).

It is the bodily, physical Resurrection which takes place at the Last Day, when “there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (Acts 24:15). But would John have used the term *resurrection* in two radically different senses in the same passage? Certainly—and with excellent precedent, for Jesus did so Himself, in another passage recorded by John:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My Word, and believes Him who

sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, *an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. . . . Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment* (John 5:24–25, 28–29).

We who believe in Him are *now* partakers in the First Resurrection, Jesus said; and some day all men, the just and the unjust, will rise out of the graves. The First Resurrection is Spiritual and ethical, our regeneration in Christ and ethical union with God, our re-creation in His image. This interpretation is confirmed by the Revelation's description of those in the First Resurrection: they are *blessed and holy; the Second Death has no power over them; they are priests* (John began the Revelation informing us that *all Christians are priests*: Rev. 1:6); and *they reign with Christ* (the Bible says we are now seated with Christ, reigning in His Kingdom: Eph. 1:20–22; 2:6; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). The greatest error in dealing with this passage is the failure to recognize that it speaks of present realities of the Christian life. The Bible is clear: we have been resurrected to eternal life and rule with Christ now, in this age. The First Resurrection is taking place now. And this means, of necessity, that *the Millennium is taking place now as well*.

THE BINDING OF SATAN

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in His hand. And He laid hold of the Dragon, the Serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time (Rev. 20:1–3).

The binding of the dragon expresses in symbolic, prophetic language much of what we have seen in previous chapters: Christ's defeat of Satan. The *angel* (*messenger*) with the controlling authority over the abyss is the Son of God (cf. Rev. 1:18; 10:1; 18:1), who "appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). As we have already noted, our Lord began "binding the strong man" during His earthly ministry (Matt. 12:28–29). The New Testament (cf. Luke 10:17–20; John 12:31–32; Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14) stresses that *Satan was definitively defeated in the life, death, resur-*

rection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. And he is overcome daily in the experience of Christians as we resist him (James 4:7) and proclaim the Word of God (Rev. 12:11). The Kingdom has come!

We should note, too, the *specific sense* in which Satan is said to be bound: it is with reference to *his ability to deceive the nations*. Before the coming of Christ, Satan controlled the nations. But now his death-grip has been shattered by the gospel, as the good news of the Kingdom has spread throughout the world. The Lord Jesus sent the Apostle Paul to the Gentile nations “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and *from the dominion of Satan to God*, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18). Christ came “to rule over the Gentiles” (Rom. 15:12). That Satan has been bound does not mean that all his activity has ceased. The New Testament tells us specifically that the demons have been disarmed and bound (Col. 2:15; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), but they are still active. It is just that their activity is *restricted*. And, as the gospel progresses throughout the world, their activity will become even more limited. *Satan is unable to prevent the victory of Christ’s Kingdom.* We will overcome (1 John 4:4). “Let it be known to you therefore, that *this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen*” (Acts 28:28). Satan will be crushed beneath our feet (Rom. 16:20).

A THOUSAND YEARS

Like the other numbers in Revelation, the “1,000” is symbolic, a large, rounded-off number. Where *seven* connotes a fullness of *quality* in Biblical imagery, the number *ten* contains the idea of a fullness of *quantity*; in other words, it stands for *manyness*. A thousand multiplies and intensifies this ($10 \times 10 \times 10$), and it is used in Scripture much the way we, with a more inflationary mentality, use the term *million*: “I’ve told you a million times!” (Perhaps “literalists” never talk that way, but I’m sure the rest of us do on occasion.) There is a difference, however. When the Bible speaks of 1,000, it is not really for the purpose of exaggeration, the way we do, but simply to express great vastness. Thus, God claims to own “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10). Does Hill No. 1,001 belong to someone else? Of course not. God owns *all* the cattle on *all* the hills. But He says “a thousand” to indicate that there are many hills, and much cattle. (For some similar uses of 1,000, see Deut. 1:11; 7:9; Ps. 68:17; 84:10; 90:4.) In the same

way—particularly with regard to a highly symbolic book—we should see that the “1,000 years” of Revelation 20 represent a vast, undefined period of time. It has already lasted almost 2,000 years, and will probably go on for many more. “Exactly how many years?” someone asked me. “I’ll be happy to tell you,” I cheerfully replied, “as soon as you tell me exactly how many hills are in Psalm 50.”

According to some, Christ’s Kingdom will begin only when He returns in the Second Coming; then, they say, Jesus Christ will actually take up residence in Jerusalem, where there will be a restored, active Temple, with real sacrifices—sometimes I wonder if these dear people ever read the New Testament! None of these ideas are contained in this text (or any other, for that matter). As we have repeatedly seen, Jesus, Christ is reigning now (Acts 2:29–36; Rev. 1:5), and *He will remain in heaven until the Last Judgment* (Acts 3:2).

The *thrones* in Revelation 20:4 stand for the reign of the saints, the faithful overcomers who are victorious over the Dragon and the Beast (Rev. 12:9–11). Our rule is going on now, on this earth (Matt. 19:28; Luke 18:28–30; 22:29–30; Eph. 2:6), and the extent of our rule coincides with the progress of the gospel. As it increases, so does the dominion of Christians. The two go together, as Jesus stated in His Great Commission (Matt. 2:18–20): we are to *teach* and *disciple* the nations, and as they are disciplined to the commands of God’s Word, the boundaries of the Kingdom will expand. Eventually, through evangelism, the reign of Christians will become so extensive that “the earth will be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea” Isa. 11:9). Edenic blessings will abound across the world as God’s law is increasingly obeyed (Lev. 26:3–13; Deut. 28:1–14). What a tremendous motive for worldwide evangelism! In fact, this view of worldwide conversion has been the basic inspiration for missionary activity throughout the history of the Church, particularly since the Protestant Reformation (for documentation of this, see Iain Murray’s excellent book, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*).

THE LAST BATTLE

The Bible does not teach that absolutely everyone in the world will be converted. The symbolism of Ezekiel’s prophecy suggests that some areas of the world will remain unrenewed by the River of Life (Ezek. 47:11). And we know that both the wheat and the tares will grow to-

gether until the harvest at the end of the world (Matt. 13:37–43). At that point, as the potential of both groups comes to maturity, as each side becomes fully self-conscious in its determination to obey or rebel, there will be a final conflict. The Dragon will be released for a short time, to deceive the nations one more time in a last-ditch attempt to overthrow the Kingdom (Rev. 20:7–8).

In describing this, John uses the vivid imagery of Ezekiel 38–39, which prophetically depicts the Maccabees' defeat of the Syrians in the second century B.C.: the ungodly forces are called *Gog and Magog*. According to some popular writers, this expression refers to Russia, and foretells a war between the Soviets and Israel during the "Tribulation." Of the many problems with this hypothesis, I will mention just two. First, Revelation 20 says that the war of "Gog and Magog" takes place *at the end of the Millennium*; these prophecy writers are sneaking Gog and Magog all the way back to a point before the Millennium even begins! Second, the expression *Gog and Magog* does not, and never did, refer to Russia. That has been entirely made up from whole cloth, and simply repeated so many times that many have assumed it to be true.

To return to reality: Satan's final rebellion is shown to be a disaster. He is overthrown, his followers are devoured by fire falling from heaven, and he is cast into the Lake of Fire for eternal torment (Rev. 20:9–10). At this point, the end of the Millennium, the Resurrection takes place (Rev. 20:5), and all men are judged (Rev. 20:11–15).

The purpose of Revelation 20 is not to give a detailed outline of the end of the world, for that does not fall within the scope of the book. Revelation was written to tell first-century Christians about things which were to happen *shortly*, especially dealing with the Church's struggle against the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Harlot. These all meet their doom by the end of the prophecy. But, of course, behind all the evil conspiracies of the Church's enemies is the shadowy figure of the Dragon. So John gives a brief sketch of his fate, from Christ's definitive triumph over him until the Last Day, when the Dragon and his evil seed are destroyed and the people of God are fully and finally victorious; when Paradise, in the most complete sense, is restored and consummated.

The Saviour works mightily every day, drawing men to religion, persuading them to virtue, teaching them about immortality, quickening their thirst for heavenly things, revealing the knowledge of the Father, inspiring strength in the face of death, manifesting Himself to each, and displacing the irreligion of idols; while the gods and evil spirits of the unbelievers can do none of these things, but rather become dead at Christ's presence, all their ostentation barren and void. By the sign of the cross, on the contrary, all magic is stayed, all sorcery confounded, all the idols are abandoned and deserted, and all senseless pleasure ceases, as the eye of faith looks up from earth to heaven.

ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [31]

THE NEW CREATION

(*Revelation 21–22*)

Well, finally we've gotten to a place in Revelation where everyone's agreed, right? "The new heaven and earth"—that's *got* to be literal, referring to eternity after the end of the world, right? *Wrong*. Or, to be absolutely precise, I should say: *Yes and no*. The truth is that the Bible tells us very little about heaven; just enough, in fact, to let us know we're going there. But the primary concern of Scripture is the present life. Of course, the blessings of the final chapters of Revelation *do* refer to heaven. It is not really an "either/or" kind of an issue. But what is important is that these things are true *now*. Heaven is a continuation and perfection of what is true of the Church in this life. We are not simply to look forward to these blessings in an eternity to come, but to enjoy them and rejoice in them here and now. John was telling the early Church of present realities, of blessings that existed already and would be on the increase as the gospel extended and renewed the earth.

"BEHOLD, I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW"

First, John said, he saw "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away" (Rev. 21:1). To understand this, we need to remember one of the most basic lessons of the Paradise theme: *salvation is a re-creation*. This is why creation language and symbolism is used in Scripture whenever God speaks of saving His people. The Flood, the Exodus, and the First Advent of Christ are all seen as God making a new world. Thus, when God spoke through Isaiah, prophesying the *earthly* blessings of the coming Kingdom, He said:

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
 And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.
 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;
 For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing,
 And her people for gladness.
 I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people;
 And there will no longer be heard in her
 The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.
 No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,
 Or an old man who does not live out his days;
 For the youth will die at the age of one hundred,
 And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred
 Shall be thought accursed.
 And they shall build houses and inhabit them;
 They shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
 They shall not build, and another inhabit;
 They shall not plant, and another eat;
 For as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of My people,
 And My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands.
 They shall not labor in vain,
 Or bear children for calamity;
 For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD,
 And their descendants with them.
 It will also come to pass
 That before they call, I will answer;
 And while they are still speaking, I will hear.
 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together,
 And the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
 And dust shall be the serpent's food.
 They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain.
 (Isa. 65:17–25)

This cannot be speaking of heaven, or of a time after the end of the world; for in this “new heaven and earth” there is still death (at a very advanced age—“the lifetime of a tree”), people are building, planting, working, and having children. We could spend the rest of this chapter examining the implications of this passage in Isaiah, but the only point I will make here is that it is clearly a statement about *this* age, *before* the end of the world, and shows what future generations can expect as the gospel permeates the world, restores the earth to Paradise, and brings to fruition the goals of the Kingdom. Isaiah is describing the blessings of Deuteronomy 28 in what is probably their greatest earthly fulfillment. Thus, when John tells us that he saw “a new heaven and earth,” we should recognize that the *primary* signifi-

cance of that phrase is symbolic, and has to do with the blessings of salvation.

John next saw “the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a Bride adorned for her Husband” (Rev. 21:2). No, it’s not a space station. It is something which *should* be much more thrilling: it is *the Church*. The Bride is not just *in* the City; the Bride *is* the City (cf. Rev. 21:9–10). We are in the New Jerusalem *now*. Proof? The Bible categorically tells us: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven...” (Heb. 12:22–23; cf. Gal. 4:26; Rev. 3:12). The New Jerusalem is a *present* reality; it is said to be coming down from heaven because the origin of the Church is heavenly. We have been “born from above” (John 3:3) and are now citizens of the Heavenly City (Eph. 2:19; Phil. 3:20).

This thought is expanded in John’s further statement. He heard a loud voice from the throne, saying: “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them” (Rev. 21:3). Like Paul, John connects these two concepts: we are citizens of heaven, and we are God’s dwelling place, His holy Temple (Eph. 2:19–22). One of the Edenic blessings God promised in Leviticus was, “I will make My Tabernacle among you” (Lev. 26:11); this is fulfilled in the New Testament Church (2 Cor. 6:16). The voice John heard continued:

“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” And He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost” (Rev. 21:4–6).

Ultimately, this will be fulfilled in heaven to the utmost extent. But we must recognize that *it is true already*. God *has* wiped away our tears. The proof of this is the obvious difference between Christian and pagan funerals: we grieve, but not as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). God has taken away the sting of death (1 Cor. 15:55–58). And most striking is the following phrase: “The first things have passed away. . . . Behold, I am making all things new.” Where have we read that before? It comes from 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is *a new creation; the old things have passed away*;

behold, all things have become new." Is this true now? Of course! The only real difference between the subjects of 2 Corinthians 5 and Revelation 21 is that Paul is speaking of *the redeemed individual*, while John is speaking of *the redeemed community*. But both the individual and the community are restored to Paradise in salvation, and the restoration has already begun. The water of life feeds us freely *now*, giving life to the individual and flowing out to give life to the whole world (John 4:14; 7:37-39). "He who overcomes shall inherit these things," God says, "and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:7); the child of God is characterized by victory against opposition (1 John 5:4). The language used here ("I will be his God") is the basic covenantal promise of salvation (cf. Gen. 17:7-8; 2 Cor. 6:16-18). The highest fulfillment will take place in heaven for eternity. But, *definitively* and *progressively*, it is true now. We are living in the new heaven and the new earth; we are citizens of the New Jerusalem. The old things have passed away, and all things have become new.

CITY ON A HILL

John is carried away in the Spirit "to a great and high mountain" (Rev. 21:10) to see the beauty of this consummate Paradise, which glows with the glory of God. The twelve gates of the City have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on them, and on the twelve foundation stones are the names of the twelve Apostles (Rev. 21:12-14). Is this symbolism difficult to understand? This clearly represents the fact that the City of God contains the whole Church, the entire people of God, comprising both Old Testament and New Testament believers—which, as Paul wrote, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20).

The absurdity of the "literalist" misinterpretation is painfully evident when they attempt to deal with the measurements John gives of the City (Rev. 21:15-17). John says that the City is a pyramid (or cube), 12,000 "furlongs" on each side, with a wall 144 "cubits" high. The numbers are obviously symbolic, the multiples of twelve being a reference to the majesty, vastness, and perfection of the Church. But the "literalist" feels compelled to *translate* those numbers into modern measurements, resulting in a wall 1,500 miles long and 216 feet high. John's clear symbols are erased, and the unfortunate Bible reader is left with just a jumble of meaningless numbers. The "literalists" find themselves in the ridiculous position of deleting the *literal* numbers of

God's Word and replacing them with meaningless *symbols*!

John goes on to describe the City in terms of jewelry: each of the foundation stones is adorned with precious stones, each of the gates is "a single pearl," the wall is made of jasper, and the City and the street are "pure gold, like transparent glass" (Rev. 21:18–21). From our study of the minerals connected with the Garden of Eden, we understand that this, again, is symbolic language, speaking of the restoration and fulfillment of Paradise in salvation. Eight hundred years earlier, Isaiah had described the coming salvation in terms of a City adorned with jewels:

O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,
Behold, I will set your stones in fair colors,
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.
Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,
And your gates of sparkling jewels,
And your entire wall of precious stones.
(Isa. 54:11–12)

It is interesting that the word translated *fair colors* is, in Hebrew, *eye shadow*. This sounds crazy, doesn't it? Walls are intended for protection; this wall is merely decorative. Who would build a wall out of *jewels*, using *cosmetics* for "mortar"? Someone fabulously wealthy, and supremely confident against attack. This, Isaiah says, is the future of the Church, the City of God. She will be rich and secure from enemies, as the rest of the passage explains:

And all your sons will be taught of the LORD;
And the well-being of your sons will be great.
In righteousness you will be established;
You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;
And from terror, for it will not come near you. . . .
No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper;
And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.
This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And their vindication is from Me, declares the LORD.
(Isa. 54:13–17)

John saw that in this new City of God there is no Temple, "for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its Temple. And the City has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22–23). This is also based on Isaiah (see Isa. 60:1–3, 19–20), emphasizing that the Church is lighted by the Glory of God, indwelled by the Cloud,

shining with the original Light. This is the City on the Hill (Matt. 5:14–16), the light of the world, shining before men so that they will glorify God the Father. Drawing from the same passage in Isaiah Usa. 60:4–18), John tells of the City's influence in the nations of the world:

And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the Daytime (for there shall be no Night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 21:24–27; cf. Ps. 22:27; 66:4; 86:9; Isa. 27:6; 42:4; 45:22–23; 49:5–13; Hag. 2:7–8).

This is written of a time when the nations still exist as nations; yet the nations are all converted, flowing into the City and bringing their treasures into it. As the light of the gospel shines through the Church to the world, the world is converted, the nations are disciplined, and the wealth of the sinners becomes inherited by the just. This is a basic promise of Scripture from beginning to end. This is the pattern of history, the direction in which the world is moving. This is our future, the heritage of generations to come.

THE RIVER OF LIFE

We look forward to the turning back of the Curse in every area of life, both in this world and the next, as the gospel flows out to all the world. We studied in an earlier chapter how the image of the Eden River is used throughout Scripture to indicate the blessings of Paradise returning to earth by the power of the Spirit through the Church (cf. Ezek. 47:1–12; Zech. 14:8). John fittingly closes his picture of the New Creation with this picture, taken from Ezekiel's vision of the Church:

And he showed me a River of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the River was the tree of Life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any Curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bondservants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any Night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:1–5).

The River of Life is flowing *now* (John 4:14; 7:37–39), and it will continue to flow in an ever-increasing stream of blessing to the earth, healing the nations, bringing an end to lawlessness and warfare through the application of Biblical law (Mic. 4:1–3). This vision of the Church's glorious future, earthly and heavenly, mends the fabric that was torn in Genesis. In Revelation we see Man redeemed, brought back to the Mountain, sustained by the River and the Tree of Life, regaining his lost dominion and ruling as a priest-king over the earth. This is our privilege and heritage now, definitively and progressively, in this age; and it will be ours fully in the age to come. Paradise is being restored.

PART V

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

*Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for Truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful death the gate of life;
Taught this by his example whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.*

JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost* [12.561–73]

What mere man or magician or tyrant or king was ever able by himself to do so much? Did anyone ever fight against the whole system of idol-worship and the whole host of daemons and all magic and all the wisdom of the Greeks, at a time when all of these were strong and flourishing and taking everybody in, as did our Lord, the very Word of God? Yet He is even now invisibly exposing every man's error, and single-handedly is carrying off all men from them all, so that those who used to worship idols now tread them under foot, reputed magicians burn their books and the wise prefer to all studies the interpretation of the gospels. They are deserting those whom formerly they worshipped, they worship and confess as Christ and God Him Whom they used to ridicule as crucified. Their so-called gods are routed by the sign of the cross, and the crucified Saviour is proclaimed in all the world as God and Son of God.

S1. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation* [53]

FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION

“Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:19–20

The Great Commission to the Church does not end with simply *witnessing* to the nations. Christ’s command is that we *disciple* the nations—*all* the nations. The kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of Christ. They are to be discipled, made obedient to the faith. This means that every aspect of life throughout the world is to be brought under the lordship of Jesus Christ: families, individuals, business, science, agriculture, the arts, law, education, economics, psychology, philosophy, and every other sphere of human activity. Nothing may be left out. Christ “must reign, until He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). We have been given the responsibility of converting the entire world.

In his second letter to the church at Corinth, St. Paul outlined *a strategy for worldwide dominion*:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty in God for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ; and we are ready to punish all disobedience, once your obedience is complete (2 Cor. 10:3–6).

As Paul observes, the army of Christ is invincible: we are not fighting in mere human power, but with weapons that are “mighty in God” (cf. Eph. 6:10–18), divinely powerful, more than adequate to accomplish

the job. With these weapons at our disposal, we are able to destroy everything the enemy raises up in opposition to the lordship of Jesus Christ. "We are taking *every thought* captive to the obedience of Christ": Christ is to be acknowledged as Lord everywhere, in every sphere of human activity. We are to "think God's thoughts after Him" at every point, following His authoritative Word, the law-book of the Kingdom. This is at the root of any genuine program of Christian reconstruction.

Paul tells us that the goal of our warfare is total victory, complete dominion for the Kingdom of Christ. We will not settle for anything less than the entire world. "We are ready to punish all disobedience, once your obedience is complete," Paul says. The Moffatt translation renders it this way: *I am prepared to court-martial anyone who remains insubordinate, once your submission is complete.* Paul's goal is universal obedience to our Lord.

But it is important to note the order here. Paul does not begin his work of reconstruction by fomenting a social revolution. Nor does he begin by seeking political office. He begins with the Church, and will move out to bring the rest of the world under Christ's dominion "once the Church's obedience is complete." *The center of Christian reconstruction* is the Church. The River of Life does not flow out from the doors of the chambers of Congresses and Parliaments. It flows from the restored Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Church of Jesus Christ. Our goal is world dominion under Christ's lordship, a "world takeover" if you will; but our strategy begins with the reformation and reconstruction of the Church. From that will flow social and political reconstruction, indeed a flowering of Christian civilization (Hag. 1:1-15; 2:6-9, 18-23).

This has always been the case. When Moses sued Pharaoh for the freedom of the Israelites, he did not say: "Let us go start a Christian Republic." He said:

Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let My people go *that they may celebrate a feast to Me* in the wilderness" (Ex. 5:1; cf. 7:16).

Certainly, God was planning to create His people a new nation. The law He was to give them would provide the foundation for a social order and judicial system. Important as all that is, however, what is infinitely more important is *God*. And what is basic to our ongoing relationship to Him and service for Him is our *worship* of Him. The fundamental issue between Egypt and Israel was the question of worship. Everything else flowed from that.

LITURGY AND HISTORY

We know the story of Israel. God forced Pharaoh to release them, and they went on to inherit the Promised Land. But the really crucial aspect of the whole Exodus event, as far as *the people's* activity was concerned, was *worship*. The orthodox Christian faith cannot be reduced to personal experiences, academic discussions, or culture-building activity—as important as all these are in varying degrees. The essence of biblical religion is the worship of God. And by *worship* I do not only mean listening to sermons, even though preaching is certainly necessary and important. I mean *organized, congregational prayers, praise, and sacramental celebration*. This means, further, that the reformation of *Church government* is crucial to biblical dominion. True Christian reconstruction of culture is far from being simply a matter of passing Law X and electing Congressman Y. Christianity is not a political cult. It is the divinely ordained worship of the Most High God.

That is why the Book of Revelation begins with a vision of Christ and goes on to deal with the government (the “angels,” or *officers*) of the Church. The entire prophecy, in fact, is *structured as a worship service on the Lord's Day* (Rev. 1:10). Throughout the book we see a repeated pattern: first, the “angels” lead the saints in organized worship; second, God responds to His people's worship by bringing judgment unto salvation. For example, John shows us the martyrs gathered at the incense altar, beseeching God to avenge them on their persecutors (Rev. 6:9–11). Shortly thereafter, an “angel” formally offers up their prayers to God, then *takes coals from the altar and throws them to the earth*: the result is devastation and destruction upon Israel; the land catches fire; a burning mountain is thrown into the sea (Rev. 8:1–8). This is but one illustration among many of a central truth of Revelation: *the inseparable connection between liturgy and history*. The Book of Revelation shows that God's judgments in history are direct responses to the Church's official worship. When the Church, in her official capacity, pronounces lawful judgments, those declarations are honored at the Supreme Court of heaven (Matt. 16:19; John 20:23), and God Himself executes the Church's verdict.

Jesus, in fact, had specifically commanded His people to pray for the Mountain of Israel to be cast into the sea (Matt. 21:21–22), and that is exactly (figuratively) what happened. This is an important lesson for the Church today. Our primary response to persecution and oppression must not be political. That is to put our trust in the State.

The Church's primary response to persecution must be liturgical. We must pray about it, personally, in families, and in the organized, corporate worship of the Church, whose officers are divinely empowered to bring judgments. Of course, this means that the Church must return to the orthodox practice of singing and praying *Imprecatory Psalms* against God's enemies. (The "Imprecatory Psalms" are the Psalms which consist mainly of *imprecations*, or curses, against the wicked; a few of these are Psalms 35, 55, 59, 69, 79, 83, 94, 109, and 140). Church officers must pronounce sentence against oppressors, and Christians must follow this up by faithful prayers that the oppressors will either repent or be destroyed.

To take another example: What should the Church do about the modern form of human sacrifice, the daily abomination known as abortion? If our *central* response is social or political action, we are, *in principle*, atheists; we are confessing our faith in human action as the ultimate determiner of history. True, we should work for the *criminalization* of abortion: the murderers should receive capital punishment (Ex. 21:22–25). We must also work to save the lives of the innocent and defenseless. But our *fundamental* actions should be *governmental* and *liturgical*. Church officers should pronounce judgments upon abortionists—*naming* outstanding Pro-Death advocates, judges, doctors, and publishers.

If the Church faithfully calls upon God to judge murderers and persecutors, what will happen? The answer is given in the whole Book of Revelation: God's angels will cast fire upon the earth, and the wicked will be consumed. But we must remember that *the coals of God's vengeance must come from the altar*. God's fiery wrath issues from His throne, where we meet Him in public worship. A "resistance movement" that is not centered in worship will come under the judgment of God. In principle, it is like Nadab and Abihu's offering of "strange fire" (Lev. 10:1–2).

W. S. Plumer wrote of the power of the Church's imprecatory prayers: "Of thirty Roman Emperors, governors of provinces and others high in office, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and bitterness in persecuting the early Christians, one became speedily deranged after some atrocious cruelty, one was slain by his own son, one became blind, the eyes of one started out of his head, one was drowned, one was strangled, one died in a miserable captivity, one fell dead in a manner that will not bear recital, one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians were put to death because they

could not abide the stench that filled his room, two committed suicide, a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the work, five were assassinated by their own people or servants, five others died the most miserable and excruciating deaths, several of them having an untold complication of diseases, and eight were killed in battle or after being taken prisoners. Among these was Julian the apostate. In the days of his prosperity he is said to have pointed his dagger to heaven defying the Son of God, whom he commonly called the Galilean. But when he was wounded in battle, he saw that all was over with him, and he gathered up his clotted blood, and threw it into the air, exclaiming, "Thou hast conquered, O thou Galilean."

Of course, the Church's worship is not primarily negative but positive: we are to offer up petitions for the conversion of the world. We must ask God to cause all nations to flow into His Temple, praying that His Mountain will grow and fill the earth more and more, and that our age will see increasing triumphs for the gospel in every area of life. There is no reason *not* to expect victory; if we are faithful to God's Word, there is every reason to assume that the powers of darkness will be shattered by our advance. The gates of hell must and shall fall before the aggressive, militant Church (Matt. 16:18).

It is a mark of our unbelief that we put our trust in men and princes rather than in the Spirit of God. Which is more powerful—human depravity or God's sovereignty? *Can* God convert the world? Of course! More than that, He has promised that He *will* convert the world! He has told us that "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). How much do the waters cover the sea? Is there *any* part of the sea that is not covered by water? That is just the point: someday, people everywhere will know the Lord. All nations will serve Him.

The salvation of the world was the reason why Jesus came, as He Himself told Nicodemus:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, *but that the world should be saved through Him* (John 3:16–17).

That the world should be saved! Here is one of the most oft-quoted passages of all the Bible, and so often we miss the point. Jesus Christ came to save the *world*—not just a sinner here, a sinner there. He wants us to disciple the *nations*—not just a few individuals. The Lord Jesus

will not be satisfied in the success of His mission until the whole earth is singing His praises. On the basis of God's infallible promises, the Church must pray and work for the expansion of the Kingdom, with the expectation that God will fill His Church with "a great multitude, which no one can count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9).

We must stop acting as if we are forever destined to be a sub-culture. *We are destined for dominion*; we should straighten up and start acting like it. Our life and worship should reflect our expectation of dominion and our increasing capacity for responsibility. We should not see ourselves as lonely outposts surrounded by an increasingly hostile world; that is to bear false witness against God. The truth is just the opposite of that. It is the devil who is on the run, it is paganism which is doomed to extinction. Christianity is ultimately the dominant culture, predestined to be the final and universal religion. The Church will fill the earth.

The great St. Augustine understood this. Referring to those who saw themselves as the last remnant of a Church which was headed for inevitable decline, he laughed: "The clouds roll with thunder, that the House of the Lord shall be built throughout the earth: and these frogs sit in their marsh and croak—We are the only Christians!"

We are the shapers of world history. God has remade us in His image for world dominion; He has poured out upon us His Spirit, with "power from on high" (Luke 24:49); He has committed to us the gospel of the Kingdom, and commissioned us to take over the world. *If we trust and obey Him, there is no possibility of failure.*

THE THEOCRATIC MANDATE

Our goal is a Christian world, made up of explicitly Christian nations. How could a Christian desire anything else? Our Lord Himself taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come; *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10). We pray that God's orders will be obeyed on earth, just as they are immediately obeyed by the angels and saints in heaven. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for the worldwide dominion of God's Kingdom—not a centralized world government, but a world of decentralized theocratic republics.

Now by *theocracy* I do not mean a government ruled by priests and pastors. That is not what the word means at all. A theocracy is *a government ruled by God*, a government whose law code is solidly founded

on the laws of the Bible. Civil rulers are required to be God's ministers, just as much as pastors are (Rom. 13:1–4). According to God's holy, infallible Word, the laws of the Bible are the *best* laws (Deut. 4:5–8). They cannot be improved upon.

The fact is that all law is “religious.” All law is based on some ultimate standard of morality and ethics. Every law-system is founded on the ultimate value of that system, and that ultimate value is the god of that system. The source of law for a society is the god of that society. This means that *a theocracy is inescapable*. All societies are theocracies. The difference is that a society that is not explicitly Christian is a theocracy of a false god. Thus, when God instructed the Israelites about going into the land of Canaan, He warned them not to adopt the law system of the pagans:

I am the LORD your God. You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if He does them; I am the LORD (Lev. 18:2–5).

That is the only choice: pagan law or Christian law. God specifically forbids “pluralism.” God is not the least bit interested in sharing world dominion with Satan. God wants us to honor Him individually, in our families, in our churches, in our businesses, in our cultural pursuits of every kind, and in our statutes and judgments. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (Prov. 14:34). According to humanists, civilizations just “rise” and “fall,” by some naturalistic, evolutionary mechanism. But the Bible says that the key to the history of civilizations is *judgment*. God evaluates our response to His commands, and He answers back with curse and blessing. If a nation obeys Him, He blesses and prospers it (Deut. 28:1–14); if a nation disobeys Him, He curses and destroys it (Deut. 28:15–68). The history of Israel stands as a warning to all nations: for if God did it to them, He will surely do the same to the rest of us (Jer. 25:29).

The eschatology of dominion is not some comfortable doctrine that the world is getting “better and better” in an abstract, automatic sense. Nor is it a doctrine of protection against national judgment and desolation. To the contrary, the eschatology of dominion is a *guarantee* of judgment. It teaches that world history *is* judgment, a series of judgments leading up to the Final Judgment. At every mo-

ment, God is watching over His world, assessing and evaluating our response to His Word. He shakes the nations back and forth in the sieve of history, sifting out the worthless chaff and blowing it away, until nothing is left but His pure wheat. The choice before any nation is not pluralism. The choice is obedience or destruction.

A THOUSAND GENERATIONS

To the Satanist, time is the great curse. As history progresses, the forces of evil sense that *their* time is running out (cf. Rev. 12:12). That is why Satan so often works by revolution: he must get his work done *now*, while he has opportunity. He cannot afford to wait, because time is working against him. He is doomed to defeat, and he knows it.

But the Christian does not have to be afraid of the passage of time, because *time is on our side*. History is working toward our objectives. Every day brings us closer to the realization of the knowledge of God covering the entire world. The nations will worship and obey the one true God, and will cease to make war; the earth will be changed, restored to Edenic conditions; and people will be blessed with long and happy lives—so long, in fact, that it will be unusual for someone to die at the young age of 100 (Isa. 65:20)!

Consider this promise in the law: “Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness *to a thousandth generation* with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut. 7:9). The God of the Covenant told His people that He would bless them to the thousandth generation of their descendants. That promise was made (in round figures) about 3,400 years ago. If we figure the Biblical generation at about 40 years, a thousand generations is *forty thousand years*. We’ve got 36,600 years to go before this promise is fulfilled!

Some might accuse me of falling into an inconsistent “literalism” at this point, taking *thousand* literally in Deuteronomy but not in Revelation. Not so. I will grant that when God uses the term *thousand*, he is speaking of vastness rather than a specific number. Having admitted that, however, let’s look closer at the way this term is used in symbolism. When God said that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, He means a vast number of cattle on a vast number of hills—but there are *more* than 1,000 hills. The Bible promises that God’s people will be kings and priests for a thousand years, meaning a vast number of years—but Christians have been kings and priests for *more* than 1,000

years (almost 2,000 years now). My point is this: the term *thousand* is often used symbolically in Scripture, to express vastness; but that vastness is, in reality, much *more* than the literal thousand.

God promises that He will bless His people for one thousand generations. By the analogy of Scripture, then, this means that a figure of forty thousand years is a bare *minimum*. This world has tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years of increasing godliness ahead of it, before the Second Coming of Christ.

I am not interested in setting dates. I am not going to try to figure out the date of the Second Coming. The Bible does not reveal it, and it is none of our business. What the Bible does reveal is our responsibility to work for God's Kingdom, our duty to bring ourselves, our families, and all our spheres of influence under the dominion of Jesus Christ. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). God has not told us when the Second Coming will occur. But He *has* told us that there is a lot of work to be done, and He expects us to get to it.

What would you say if you hired a worker, gave him detailed instructions, and all he did was to sit around wondering when the quitting bell will ring? Would you regard him as a faithful worker? Does God regard *you* as a faithful worker for His Kingdom? I repeat: the purpose of prophecy is ethical. It is God's assurance that history is under His control, that He is working out His eternal purposes in every event, and that His original plan for His creation will be fulfilled. He has placed us into the great war for world history, with the absolute guarantee that we will win. Even if He has to make the whole universe stand still for us (Josh. 10:12–13), the day will last long enough for us to achieve victory. Time is on our side. The Kingdom has come, and the world has begun again.

Now: Get to work.

APPENDIX A

THE ESCHATOLOGY OF DOMINION: A SUMMARY

For those who like their eschatology wrapped up in a neat package, I have listed 45 of the major arguments of this book, in the general order in which they were presented (chapter numbers are in parentheses). The reader should consider each one in the light of the Biblical arguments in the text of the book. Following these “Theses on Hope” is a brief section answering some of the common misunderstandings of the eschatology of dominion.

THESES ON HOPE

1. The Bible teaches us to have hope, not despair; to expect victory and dominion for the gospel, not flight and defeat. (1)
2. Biblical prophecy is written in both literal and symbolic language. The choice is not between “literalism” and “symbolism,” but between a *Biblical* and a *speculative* method of interpreting the Bible. (2)
3. Salvation is *re-creation*. In redemption, Jesus Christ restores man to the image of God. (3)
4. Salvation and its blessings are presented in the Bible as *definitive*, *progressive*, and *final*. (3)
5. We are not saved out of our environment; rather, salvation works to restore the earth as a whole. God’s Holy Mountain (the Garden) will grow until it fills the entire world. (3–7)
6. God blesses obedience and curses disobedience; this pattern will become dominant as history progresses. (3–7)
7. Through generations of obedience, the godly will increasingly become competent and powerful, while the ungodly will grow weak and impotent. (3–7)

8. The wicked are “raptured” first (i.e., driven out of the earth and disinherited), as the righteous increasingly come into possession of all things. (6)

9. Jesus Christ came as the Son of Man (the Second Adam), to set up God’s Kingdom on the earth. (8)

10. The Biblical prophecies that Christ would reign as King were fulfilled in Christ’s enthronement at His Ascension. (8)

11. Daniel’s prophecy of the Son of Man “coming in the clouds” was fulfilled in the Ascension of Christ. (8)

12. Jesus Christ definitively defeated and bound Satan and the demons in His Atonement, Resurrection, and Ascension. (8)

13. The Kingdom was established during the First Advent of Christ (including the Judgment of A.D. 70); it is now in progress and will increase until the end of the world. (8–16)

14. Ethnic Israel was excommunicated for its apostasy and will never again be God’s Kingdom. (9, 14)

15. The Kingdom is now made up of all those (Jew and Gentile) who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. (9)

16. The Church is now the Temple of God, having been indwelt by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and fully established at the destruction of the old Temple in A.D. 70. (10–13)

17. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21) is not about the Second Coming of Christ. It is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (10–11)

18. The Great Tribulation took place in the Fall of Israel. It will not be repeated and thus is not a future event (although Christians in every age have had to endure suffering for the faith). (10–11)

19. The Bible does not prophesy any future literal Temple or sacrificial system to be set up in Jerusalem. The Biblical prophecies of the Temple refer to Christ and His Church, definitively, progressively, and finally. (10–13)

20. Although Israel will someday be restored to the true faith, the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a *special* nation. (14)

21. The Biblical language of de-creation (the “collapsing universe”) is symbolic of God’s judgment, especially reminiscent of the Flood and the plagues on Egypt at the Exodus. (15)

22. *Antichrist* is a term used by John to describe the wide-spread apostasy of the Christian Church prior to the Fall of Jerusalem. In general, any apostate teacher or system can be called “antichrist”; but the word does not refer to some “future Führer.” (12–13)

23. The “Great Apostasy” happened in the first century. We therefore have no Biblical warrant to expect increasing apostasy as history progresses; instead, we should expect the increasing Christianization of the world. (12–13)

24. *The Last Days* is a Biblical expression for the period between Christ’s Advent and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: the “last days” of Israel. (13)

25. Before the Second Coming of Christ, the vast majority of Jews and Gentiles will be converted to the Christian faith. (14)

26. All of Christ’s enemies are gradually being subdued under His reign from heaven. He will remain in heaven until all enemies have been defeated. The last enemy, Death, will be destroyed when He returns. (16)

27. Jesus Christ will return on the Last Day, when the Resurrection and the Last Judgment will take place. (16)

28. The Rapture and the Second Coming will occur together. (16)

29. There will be one Resurrection of all men; the righteous will be raised to everlasting life, and the wicked will be raised to damnation. (16)

30. The primary concern of prophecy is *ethical conduct*: obedience to God’s commands. (17)

31. The Canon of Scripture was closed in A.D. 70, when the Old Covenant passed away. (18)

32. The Book of Revelation is not to be interpreted “futuristically”; for its first-century readers, its message was *contemporary*, and the time of its fulfillment was “at hand.” (18)

33. The “Beast” of Revelation was a symbol of both Nero in particular and the Roman Empire in general. (20)

34. The “False Prophet” symbolized the Jewish religious leadership. (20)

35. The “Harlot” symbolized apostate Jerusalem, which had ceased to be the City of God. (21)

36. The “Millennium” is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which He established at His First Advent. (22)

37. The “First Resurrection” is a Spiritual resurrection: our justification and regeneration in Christ. (22)

38. The “thousand years” of Revelation 20 is symbolic for a vast number of years—most likely *many* thousands. (22, 24)

39. All Christians are priests in this age; all Christians are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ. (22)

40. The New Creation has already begun: The Bible describes our salvation in Christ, both now and in eternity, as “a new heaven and a new earth.” (23)

41. The “New Jerusalem,” the City of God, is the Church, now and forever. (23)

42. The center of the Christian reconstruction of the world is the Church. The essence of Biblical religion, and the source of Christian culture, is the worship of God. (24)

43. The Church’s worship and government are officially recognized in the heavenly Court. When the Church pronounces lawful judgments, they are executed on earth, in history, through God’s providential administration of the world. (24)

44. The Christian goal for the world is the universal development of Biblical theocratic republics, in which every area of life is redeemed and placed under the lordship of Jesus Christ and the rule of God’s law. (24)

45. The Christian standard for ethics in every area—for individuals, families, businesses, and governments—is Biblical law. The Christian cannot be satisfied with “pluralism,” for his calling is to work for the dominion of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world. Prosperity for the world will come from Jesus Christ, and from Jesus Christ alone. (24)

MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE HOPE

Most of the standard objections to the Hope are based on radical misunderstandings of the position. The following passage from Hal Lindsey’s best-selling *Late Great Planet Earth* is typical of many uninformed and poorly researched statements on the subject:

There used to be a group called “postmillennialists.” They believed that the Christians would root out the evil in the world, abolish godless rulers, and convert the world through ever increasing evangelism until they brought about the Kingdom of God on earth through their own efforts. Then after 1,000 years of the institutional church reigning on earth with peace, equality, and righteousness, Christ would return and time would end. These people rejected much of the Scripture as being literal and believed in the inherent goodness of man. World War I greatly disheartened this group and World War II virtually wiped out this viewpoint. No self-respecting scholar who looks at the world conditions and the accelerating decline of Christian influence today is a “postmillennialist” (p. 176).

While Lindsey’s statement has almost as many errors as words, it is a remarkably concise summary of the numerous misrepresentations of the postmillennial position by evangelicals. In the following numbered sections, I will reply briefly to the major errors in Lindsey’s remarks.

1. *There used to be a group called “postmillennialists.”*

No, we’re still around. In fact, more and more Christians are becoming convinced of the Biblical basis for an eschatology of dominion all the time. (The reasons for the twentieth-century decline of postmillennialism will be discussed in No. 6, below). As I have indicated at several points in this book, the eschatology of dominion is the historic position of the Church. This is not to say that everyone had in mind some specific calendar of events known as “postmillennialism.” In fact, it was not regarded as an *ism*, for the expectation of Christ’s dominion over the world through the gospel was just the orthodox Hope—the commonly accepted attitude of Christians.

On the other hand, there *was* a viewpoint which was regarded by most Christians as offbeat—it was *always* an “ism.” From the time of Cerinthus, this was called *chiliasm* (meaning *thousand-year-ism*). It is known today as *premillennialism*, the doctrine that the “Kingdom Age” will not take place until the Second Coming of Christ. This view was always on the fringes of Christianity until it was revived in the nineteenth century by a number of millennialist sects; it finally achieved widespread publicity after the appearance of the Scofield Bible in 1909. Now, however, this ancient ism is being abandoned by many in favor of the majority position of the orthodox Church throughout the ages: the eschatology of dominion.

2. *They believed that Christians would...[bring] about the Kingdom of God on earth through their own efforts.*

This is one of the most commonly heard objections to the Hope. The dominion outlook is equated with the liberal “Social Gospel” movement of the early 1900s. Such an identification is utterly absurd, devoid of any foundation whatsoever. The leaders of the Social Gospel movement were evolutionary humanists and socialists, and were openly hostile toward Biblical Christianity. It is true that they *borrowed* certain terms and concepts from Christianity, in order to pervert them for their own uses. Thus they talked about the “Kingdom of God,” but what they meant was far removed from the traditional Christian faith. Orthodox postmillennial teachers such as Benjamin Warfield and J. Gresham Machen vigorously opposed the Social Gospel. True postmillennialism has always been truly evangelical: It teaches that the Kingdom was established by Jesus Christ alone, and that the Kingdom is advanced through the spread of the gospel and the application of the Bible to every area of life.

There is another dimension to this issue, however. Since we believe that Christians will overcome all opposition and will bring the gospel to the ends of the earth, postmillennialists are accused of having faith in *man*. This is a radical distortion. The truth is that postmillennialists believe in God, who works in history through *redeemed* man. We believe that the omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth is indwelling His Church, and will not allow us to be defeated in the mission He gave us. St. Augustine prayed: "Give what You command, and command what You will." That is our attitude as well. Because God works in history to bless the godly and curse the ungodly, history is on our side. In the battle between redeemed men and wicked men, we have faith in redeemed men. We believe that God's people will overcome, in time and on earth, as well as in eternity. In Christ we are the heirs of all things.

3. *Then after 1,000 years of the institutional church reigning on earth. . . .*

As I showed in Chapters 22 and 24, we do not believe that the Kingdom will last only for 1,000 years. Admittedly, some postmillennialists have believed that a coming period of worldwide peace and blessedness will last for a literal thousand years, but they are definitely in the minority. In fact, out of dozens of outstanding postmillennial teachers in history, I can think of only a couple who held that view. Most have taught that the "millennium" of Revelation 20 is identical with the Kingdom established by Christ at His First Advent.

Mr. Lindsey further states that we believe that "the institutional church" will reign on the earth. I do not quite know what to make of that. I have never heard or read it advocated by anybody. It sounds as if he is saying that we believe Church officers should exercise police powers, or should be in charge of the civil government. In case there are any doubts on that score, let me state categorically that we do not believe that the *institutional* Church should rule over the State. We do, however, believe that rulers should be *Christians*, and should apply Biblical principles of justice within their areas of responsibility. The point is not that Church and State are merged into one organization; rather, the point is that Church and State are both under God and the absolute authority of His Word. The Church is the divinely appointed ministry of grace; the State is the divinely appointed ministry of justice. Both receive their commission from the Word of God.

4. *These people rejected much of the Scripture as being literal. . . .*

Again, it is hard to be certain about Lindsey's exact meaning here. If he simply means that postmillennialists reject the idea that all of Scripture is to be interpreted "literally," we must plead guilty; but then, we're in safe company. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not "literalists," to judge by the way they interpreted prophecy. They recognized the symbolic character of this passage in Isaiah:

A voice is calling,
Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
Let every valley be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together,
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.
(Isa. 40:3-5)

A strictly "literalist" interpretation would have to understand this as a prophecy of a massive road-building project in Palestine. Yet each of the four Gospels declares that Isaiah's words were fulfilled by the preaching and baptizing ministry of John (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). The fact is that both literal and symbolic forms of speech are in the Bible, and we must be careful to interpret Biblical statements in terms of Biblical guidelines.

Of course, Hal Lindsey himself is not a "literalist," either. Where the Book of Revelation speaks of falling stars, Lindsey can only see thermonuclear weapons; where it mentions locusts, he beholds Cobra helicopters instead (*There's a New World Coming* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1973], pp. 132, 138f.). Whatever else may be said about Lindsey's unique interpretations, they are anything but "literal."

As I noted above, however, Lindsey's accusation against postmillennialists is somewhat confusing. According to him, "These people rejected much of the Scripture as being literal." This may just be imprecise language, but it strongly implies that the eschatology of dominion is a liberal position which *rejects* Scripture. Nothing could be farther from the truth (as I trust the present book has demonstrated). Indeed, postmillennialists throughout history have been outstanding defenders of the inspiration and final authority of Scripture. Most of the members of the historic Westminster Assembly were staunch

postmillennialists, and in the very first chapter of their influential 1646 document, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, they declared that all sixty-six books of the Bible “are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life. . . .”

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God. . . .

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. . . .

The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Perhaps the most outstanding exponent of the Hope in the early part of this century was Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, whose writings have influenced many toward an understanding of the eschatology of dominion. He is perhaps best known, however, for his writings collected in the volume titled *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, which has become a recognized classic of conservative scholarship. Examples could be multiplied, but perhaps it is enough to point out that postmillennialists have been such forthright defenders of the Bible’s inerrancy that in recent years some opponents have actually accused them of “Bibliolatry!”

5. . . . and believed in the inherent goodness of man.

Unfortunately, this charge does not seem to be merely “imprecise” or sloppy language. Lindsey is directly accusing the postmillennial school of thought of believing in the false doctrine of man’s “inherent goodness.” I would simply answer: Name *one*. I would not accuse Lindsey of deliberately lying, but he is at least guilty of very poor research and baseless, inflammatory rhetoric. In any case, the fact remains that no postmillennialist has ever taught the heresy that man is inherently good. We can refute this with a representative statement from the Reformer John Calvin:

The mind of man has been so completely estranged from God’s righteousness that it conceives, desires, and undertakes, only that which is impious, perverted, foul, impure, and infamous. The heart is so steeped in the poison of sin, that it can breathe out nothing but a loathsome stench. But if some men occasionally make a show of good, their minds nevertheless

ever remain enveloped in hypocrisy and deceitful craft, and their hearts bound by inner perversity (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2:5:19).

That is perhaps putting it somewhat stronger than even Mr. Lindsey would wish. But Calvin's statement certainly does not reflect any doctrine of man's "inherent goodness." And the same could be said of all other postmillennialists throughout the history of the Church, for the eschatology of victory is simply the orthodox Hope of historic Christianity.

6. World War I greatly disheartened this group and World War II virtually wiped out this viewpoint.

Let us momentarily suppose, for the sake of argument, that this statement is correct. The proper answer is: So what? This does not prove that the Christian Hope is untrue—only that people stopped *believing* that it is true. The implication of the statement, however, is that the *fact* of two world wars constitutes evidence that the Hope is mistaken, since the world is not "getting better and better." I will grant this much: The two world wars (and the threat of a third) did considerably damage the hopes of those humanists who believed in the heretical doctrine of "automatic" human progress toward peace and brotherhood. Often falsely confused with postmillennialism, it is actually no closer to the eschatology of dominion than pagan sacrifices are to the Lord's Supper. The Christian does not need to become discouraged in the face of world war or widespread persecution. His faith is in God, not in man; his hope is not tied to the destiny of any particular culture. If his nation or civilization falls under the righteous judgment of God, the faithful Christian realizes that God is being faithful to His promises of blessing and cursing. The Hope is no guarantee of blessing for the disobedient. It is a guarantee of judgment unto blessing for the world.

But let us now tackle the question head-on: *Did* the two world wars destroy the Hope? In reality, the origins of postmillennialism's decline began long before World War I, with the rise of theological liberalism (which taught that the Bible's predictions could not be relied upon) and evolutionary "progressivism" (which taught that progress was "natural" rather than ethical). In reaction to these enemies of Biblical Christianity, many evangelical Christians despaired of seeing victory for the gospel. They gave up hope. Like Peter walking on the Sea of Galilee, they looked at "nature" rather than at the Lord Jesus Christ; like the Israelites on the border of Canaan, they looked at

the “giants in the land” instead of trusting the infallible promises of God; they were filled with fear, and took flight. They began to listen to false prophets of despair who taught that the Church is doomed to failure, and that it is “unspiritual” for Christians to seek dominion over civilization. They then demonstrated a major principle of life: If you believe that you will lose, you probably will lose. That’s what happened to twentieth-century evangelicalism, and it backed into a cultural retreat that lasted for decades.

At long last, that picture has begun to change. I think two major issues provided the impetus for the recent resurgence of Christian activism in the United States. First, there was the infamous *Roe v. Wade* pro-abortion decision of the U. S. Supreme Court. That woke Christians up. They realized that thousands of children were being legally slaughtered every day, and they knew that they must act to stop the killings. I believe that 1973 could well be seen as a watershed year in American history—the moment when American Christians began the long march back toward national repentance.

The second issue has been Christian Education. More and more Christians have recognized that God’s Word commands us to educate our children in terms of God’s standards for every area of life. The Christian School and Home School movements have grown tremendously in the last decade, and are rapidly increasing in numbers and influence. The evil attempt by the Federal government to destroy the Christian School movement in 1978 only served to unite many more Christians in a greater determination to raise their children in the full-orbed faith of the Bible. Moreover, the very existence of Christian schools has made Christians realize that true Spirituality does not mean flight from the world, but rather demands that we conquer the world in the name of our Lord. Christians have seen the necessity of developing a consistently Christian “world and life view,” a distinctively Biblical perspective on history, law, government, the arts, the sciences, and every other field of thought and action.

And God is blessing this obedience. Christians have finally begun to fight against the enemy—and, to their utter astonishment, they have begun to win. They have seen, again and again, that resistance to the devil will put him to flight, as God has promised. They are discovering the truth of the third-century Church Father Tertullian’s boast against the demons: “At a distance they oppose us, but at close quarters they beg for mercy.” Having tasted victory, Christians today are talking much less about escaping in the Rapture, and much more

about God's requirements in this life. They are even thinking about the kind of world they are preparing for their grandchildren, and the heritage of godliness which they will leave behind them. Instinctively, *because they are again acting in obedience to God's commands*, Christians are returning to a dominion eschatology. Through doing God's will, they are coming to a knowledge of the doctrine (cf. John 7:17; 2 Pet. 1:5–8). Because a strong Biblical faith is again on the rise, the Biblical eschatology of hope is regaining ground as well.

7. No self-respecting scholar who looks at the world conditions and the accelerating decline of Christian influence today is a "postmillennialist."

Once upon a time, a courtier must have assured a nervous Pharaoh with these words: "No self-respecting scholar who looks at world conditions and the accelerating decline of Hebrew influence agrees with Moses." After all, Egypt was the most powerful nation in the world. What chance did Hebrew slaves have against that mighty empire? Let's take other examples. What did "world conditions" look like on the day before the Flood? What were world conditions like on the day before the first Christmas? What were they like *after* Christmas, when King Herod was slaughtering babies in Bethlehem? And wasn't "Christian influence" in terrible decline on Good Friday?

Hal Lindsey and his group of self-respecting scholars have committed one crucial error which undermines their entire system of interpretation. *Their attention is focused on world conditions rather than on the authoritative and unchanging promises of God.* This fallacy-ridden approach to prophecy has been rightly termed "newspaper exegesis"—studying current events rather than the Bible for clues to the future. The question is not whether current conditions seem favorable for the worldwide triumph of the gospel; the question is only this: *What does the Bible say?* As Christians, we know that God is the Lord of history. "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases" (Ps. 115:3); "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth" (Ps. 135:6). If God has said that the world will be filled with His glory, then it will happen, and no power in heaven or on earth or under the earth can possibly stop it:

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His Kingdom endures from generation to generation.
And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth;

And no one can restrain His hand
Or say to Him, "What hast Thou done?"
(Dan. 4:34-35)

We are not to derive our theology from the newspapers or the evening news. Our faith and hope must be drawn from the unfailing Word of the sovereign God, who brings all things to pass according to His unalterable will. And when we go to God's word, we must recognize that our purpose is not to glean juicy tidbits of information about the future. Rather, as the great theologian and educator R. J. Rushdoony says, we go to receive our "marching orders":

Too often, the modern theologian and churchman goes to the Bible seeking *insight*, not *orders*. Indeed, I may go to Calvin, Luther, Augustine, and others, to scholars Christian and non-Christian, for insights, for data, and for learned studies, but when I go to the Bible I must go to hear God's marching orders for my life. I cannot treat the Bible as a devotional manual designed to give me peace of mind or a "higher plane" of living; it is a command book which can disturb my peace with its orders, and it tells me that I can only find peace in obeying the Almighty. The Bible is not an inspirational book for my personal edification, nor a book of beautiful thoughts and insights for my pleasure. It is the word of the sovereign and Almighty God: I must hear and obey, I must believe and be faithful, *because God requires it*. I am His property, and His absolute possession. There can be nothing better than that (*Law and Society* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House, 1982], pp. 691f.).

APPENDIX B

JOSEPHUS ON THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

...Accordingly it appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were....

So wrote Flavius Josephus in the Preface to his classic, *The Wars of the Jews*, his astonishing record of the Great Tribulation of Israel. Again and again, his history of those terrible years parallels the biblical prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction. The reader of the following excerpts would do well to become familiar with the basic texts on the judgment of Israel, especially Deuteronomy 28, the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), and the Book of Revelation.

The works of Josephus are available in several editions. I like the four-volume set published by Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, 1974). Gaalya Cornfeld has edited a beautiful new translation of *Josephus: The Jewish War* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), with many photographs and an extensive scholarly commentary; anyone wishing to study Josephus in depth should certainly consult this volume (although it is flawed by numerous typographical errors). The excerpts quoted below are from the standard Whiston translation. I have added my own subheads for each excerpt, and have divided some of the longer passages into paragraphs for easier reading; but the numbering of each section corresponds to the original. I have also inserted some explanatory footnotes. While these do help tie the quotations together, this appendix is not intended to be a continuous narrative, but merely a collection of excerpts illustrating a major argument of this book: that the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in the Olivet Discourse.

The excerpts begin by describing some of the background to the Jewish Revolt, and end with the suicide at Masada in A.D. 74.

FACTIONS AND FALSE PROPHETS

(II:XIII:2-6)

2. Nero therefore bestowed the kingdom of the Lesser Armenia upon Aristobulus, Herod's¹ son, and he added to Agrippa's kingdom four cities, with the toparchies to them belonging: I mean Abila, and that Julias which is in Perea, Tarichea also, and Tiberias of Galilee; but over the rest of Judea he made Felix procurator. This Felix took Eleazar the arch robber, and many that were with him, alive, when they had ravaged the country for twenty years together, and sent them to Rome; but as to the number of robbers whom he caused to be crucified, and of whom who were caught among them, and those he brought to punishment, they were a multitude not to be enumerated.

3. When the country was purged of these, there sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the day-time, and in the midst of the city; this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies; and when any fell down dead, the murderers became a part of those that had indignation against them; by which means they appeared persons of such reputation, that they could by no means be discovered. The first man who was slain by them was Jonathan the high-priest, after whose death many were slain every day, while the fear men were in of being so served, was more afflicting than the calamity itself; and while everybody expected death every hour, as men do in war, so men were obliged to look before them, and to take notice of their enemies at a great distance; nor, if their friends were coming to them, durst they trust them any longer; but, in the midst of their suspicions and guarding of themselves, they were slain. Such was the celerity of the plotters against them, and so cunning was their contrivance.

4. There was also another body of wicked men gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, who laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers. These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretence of divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government, and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness,

1. Herod of Chalcis, the grandson of King Herod; the event spoken of here took place in A.D. 52.

as pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty; but Felix thought this procedure was to be the beginning of a revolt; so he sent some horsemen and footmen, both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.

5. But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to domineer over them by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him, but Felix prevented his attempt, and met him with his Roman soldiers, while all the people assisted him in his attack upon them, insomuch that, when it came to a battle, the Egyptian ran away, with a few others, while the greatest part of those that were with him were either destroyed or taken alive; but the rest of the multitude were dispersed everyone to their own homes and there concealed themselves.

6. Now, when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war.

THE TYRANNY OF GESSIUS FLORUS²

(II:XIV:2)

2. And although such was the character of Albinus, yet did Gessius Florus, who succeeded him, demonstrate him to have been a most excellent person, upon the comparison: for the former did the greatest part of his rogueries in private, and with a sort of dissimulation;

2. Florus was the Roman procurator of Judea from A.D. 64–66.

but Gessius did his unjust actions to the harm of the nation after a pompous manner; and as though he had been sent as an executioner to punish condemned malefactors, he omitted no sort of rapine, or of vexation: where the case was really pitiable, he was most barbarous; and in things of the greatest turpitude, he was most impudent; nor could anyone outdo him in disguising the truth; nor could anyone contrive more subtle ways of deceit than he did. He indeed thought it but a petty offence to get money out of single persons; so he spoiled whole cities, and ruined entire bodies of men at once, and did almost publicly proclaim it all the country over, that they had liberty given them to turn robbers, upon this condition, that he might go shares with them in the spoils. Accordingly, this his greediness of gain was the occasion that entire toparchies were brought to desolation; and a great many of the people left their own country, and fled into foreign provinces.

MASSACRE IN JERUSALEM

(II:XIV:8-9)

8. Now at this time Florus took up his quarters at the palace; and on the next day he had his tribunal set before it, and sat upon it, when the high-priests, and the men of power, and those of the greatest eminence in the city, came all before that tribunal; upon which Florus commanded them to deliver up to him those that had reproached him, and told them that they should themselves partake of the vengeance to them belonging, if they did not produce the criminals; but these demonstrated that the people were peaceably disposed, and they begged forgiveness for those that had spoken amiss; for that it was no wonder at all that in so great a multitude there should be some more daring than they ought to be, and by reason of their younger age, foolish also; and that it was impossible to distinguish those that offended from the rest, while everyone was sorry for what he had done, and denied it out of fear of what would follow: that he ought, however, to provide for the peace of the nation, and to take such counsels as might preserve the city for the Romans, and rather, for the sake of a great number of innocent people, to forgive a few that were guilty, than for the sake of a few of the wicked, to put so large and good a body of men into disorder.

9. Florus was more provoked at this, and called out aloud to the soldiers to plunder that which was called the Upper Market Place,

and to slay such as they met with. So the soldiers, taking this exhortation of their commander in a sense agreeable to their desire of gain, did not only plunder the place they were sent to, but forcing themselves into every house, they slew its inhabitants; so the citizens fled along the narrow lanes, and the soldiers slew those that they caught, and no method of plunder was omitted; they also caught many of the quiet people, and brought them before Florus, whom he first chastised with stripes, and then crucified. Accordingly, the whole number of those that were destroyed that day, with their wives and children (for they did not spare even the infants themselves), was about three thousand and six hundred; and what made this calamity the heavier, was this new method of Roman barbarity; for Florus ventured then to do what no one had done before, that is, to have men of the equestrian order whipped, and nailed to the cross before his tribunal; who, although they were by birth Jews, yet were they of Roman dignity notwithstanding.³

“THE DAY-TIME WAS SPENT IN THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD”⁴

(II:XVIII:1–5)

1. Now the people of Cesarea had slain the Jews that were among them on the very same day and hour [when the soldiers were slain], which one would think must have come to pass by the direction of Providence; insomuch that in one hour’s time above twenty thousand Jews were killed, and all Cesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants; for Florus caught such as ran away, and sent them in bonds to the galleys. Upon which stroke that the Jews received at Cesarea, the whole nation was greatly enraged; so they divided themselves into several parties, and laid waste the villages of the Syrians, and their neighboring cities, Philadelphia, and Sebonitis, and Gerasa, and Pella, and Scythopolis, and after them Gadara, and Hippos; and falling upon Gaulonitis, some cities they destroyed there, and some they set on fire, and then they went to Kedasa, belonging to the Tyrians, and to Ptolemais, and to Gaba, and to Cesarea; nor was either Sabaste (Samaria) or Askelon, able to oppose the violence with which they were attacked; and when they had burned these to the ground,

3. The members of the “equestrian order” were the Jewish nobility who held Roman status; this event took place on 3 June, A.D. 66.

4. Because of Florus’s tyranny, the Jews revolted against Gentiles, and the Gentiles brought reprisals against the Jews; thus began a series of counter-massacres between them.

they entirely demolished Anthedon and Gaza; many also of the villages that were about everyone of those cities were plundered, and an immense slaughter was made of the men who were caught in them.

2. However, the Syrians were even with the Jews in the multitude of the men whom they slew; for they killed those whom they caught in their cities, and that not only out of the hatred they bare them, as formerly, but to prevent the danger under which they were from them, so that the disorders in all Syria were terrible, and every city was divided into two armies encamped one against another, and the preservation of the one party was in the destruction of the other; so the day-time was spent in shedding of blood, and the night in fear,—which was of the two the more terrible; for when the Syrians thought they had ruined the Jews, they had the Judaizers in suspicion also; and as each side did not care to slay those whom they only suspected on the other, so did they greatly fear them when they were mingled with the other, as if they were certainly foreigners. Moreover, greediness of gain was a provocation to kill the opposite party, even to such as had of old appeared very mild and gentle towards them; for they without fear plundered the effects of the slain and carried off the spoils of those whom they slew to their own houses, as if they had been gained in a set battle; and he was esteemed a man of honor who got the greatest share, as having prevailed over the greatest number of his enemies. It was then common to see cities filled with dead bodies, still lying unburied, and those of old men, mixed with infants, all dead, and scattered about together; women also lay amongst them, without any covering for their nakedness: you might then see the whole province full of inexpressible calamities, while the dread of still more barbarous practices which were threatened, was everywhere greater than what had been already perpetrated.

3. And thus far the conflict had been between Jews and foreigners; but when they made excursions to Scythopolis they found Jews that acted as enemies; for as they stood in battle array with those of Scythopolis, and preferred their own safety before their relation to us; they fought against their own countrymen; nay, their alacrity was so very great that those of Scythopolis suspected them. These were afraid therefore, lest they should make an assault upon the city in the nighttime, and to their great misfortune, should thereby make an apology for themselves to their own people for their revolt from them. So they commanded them, that in case they would confirm their agreement and demonstrate their fidelity to them, who were of

a different nation, they should go out of the city, with their families, to a neighboring grove: and when they had done as they were commanded, without suspecting anything, the people of Scythopolis lay still for the interval of two days, to tempt them to be secure, but on the third night they watched their opportunity, and cut all their throats, some of them as they lay unguarded, and some as they lay asleep. The number that was slain was above thirteen thousand, and then they plundered them of all that they had.

4. It will deserve our relation what befell Simon: he was the son of one Saul, a man of reputation among the Jews. This man was distinguished from the rest by the strength of his body, and the boldness of his conduct, although he abused them both to the mischieving of his countrymen: for he came every day and slew a great many of the Jews of Scythopolis, and he frequently put them to flight, and became himself alone the cause of his army's conquering. But a just punishment overtook him for the murders he had committed upon those of the same nation with him: for when the people of Scythopolis threw their darts at them in the grove, he drew his sword, but did not attack any of the enemy; for he saw that he could do nothing against such a multitude; but he cried out, after a very moving manner and said,—“O you people of Scythopolis, I have deservedly suffered for what I have done with relation to you, when I gave you such security of my fidelity to you, by slaying so many of those that were related to me. Wherefore we very justly experience the perfidiousness of foreigners while we acted after a most wicked manner against our own nation. I will therefore die, polluted wretch as I am, by mine own hands: for it is not fit I should die by the hands of our enemies; and let the same action be to me both a punishment for my great crimes, and a testimony of my courage to my commendation, that so no one of our enemies may have it to brag of, that he it was that slew me; and no one may insult upon me as I fall.”

Now when he had said this, he looked round about him upon his family with eyes of commiseration, and of rage (that family consisted of a wife and children, and his aged parents); so, in the first place he caught his father by his gray hairs, and ran his sword through him—and after him he did the same to his mother, who willingly received it; and after them he did the like to his wife and children, every one almost offering themselves to his sword, as desirous to prevent being slain by their enemies; so when he had gone over all his family, he stood upon their bodies to be seen by all, and stretching out his

right hand, that his action might be observed by all, he sheathed his entire sword into his own bowels. This young man was to be pitied, on account of the strength of his body and the courage of his soul; but since he had assured foreigners of his fidelity [against his own countrymen] he suffered deservedly.

5. Besides this murder at Scythopolis, the other cities rose up against the Jews that were among them: those of Askelon slew two thousand five hundred, and those of Ptolemais two thousand, and put not a few into bonds; those of Tyre also put a great number to death, but kept a greater number in prison; moreover, those of Hippos and those of Gadara did the like, while they put to death the boldest of the Jews, but kept those of whom they were most afraid in custody; as did the rest of the cities of Syria, according as they everyone either hated them or were afraid of them; only the Antiochians, the Sidonians, and Apamians, spared those that dwelt with them, and they would not endure either to kill any of the Jews, or to put them in bonds. . . .

50,000 JEWS SLAUGHTERED IN ALEXANDRIA (A.D. 66)

(II:XVIII:8)

8. Now when he⁵ perceived that those who were for innovations would not be pacified till some great calamity should overtake them, he sent out upon them those two Roman legions that were in the city, and together with them, five thousand other soldiers, who, by chance, were come together out of Libya, to the ruin of the Jews. They were also permitted not only to kill them, but to plunder them of what they had, and set fire to their houses. These soldiers rushed violently into that part of the city which was called Delta, where the Jewish people lived together, and did as they were bidden, though not without bloodshed on their own side also; for the Jews got together, and set those that were the best armed among them in the fore-front and made resistance for a great while; but when once they gave back they were destroyed unmercifully; and this their destruction was complete, some being caught in the open field, and others forced into their houses, which houses were first plundered of what was in them, and then set on fire by the Romans; wherein no mercy was shown to the infants, and no regard had to the aged; but they went on in the slaughter of persons of every age, till all the place was overflowed

5. Tiberius Alexander, governor of Alexandria.

with blood, and fifty thousand of them lay dead upon heaps: nor had the remainder been preserved, had they not betaken themselves to supplication. So Alexander commiserated their condition, and gave orders to the Romans to retire; accordingly, these, being accustomed to obey orders, left off killing at the first intimation; but the populace of Alexandria bare so very great hatred to the Jews, that it was difficult to recall them; and it was a hard thing to make them leave their dead bodies.

JOHN OF GISCHALA⁶

(II:XXI:1)

1. Now, as Josephus was thus engaged in the administration of the affairs of Galilee, there arose a treacherous person, a man of Gischala, the son of Levi, whose name was John. His character was that of a very cunning, and very knavish person, beyond the ordinary rate of the other men of eminence there; and for wicked practices he had not his fellow anywhere. Poor he was at first, and for a long time his wants were a hinderance to him in his wicked designs. He was a ready liar, and yet very sharp in gaining credit to his fictions: he thought it a point of virtue to delude people, and would delude even such as were the dearest to him. He was a hypocritical pretender to humanity, but, where he had hopes of gain, he spared not the shedding of blood: his desires were ever carried to great things, and he encouraged his hopes from those mean wicked tricks which he was the author of. He had a peculiar knack of thieving; but in some time he got certain companions in his impudent practices: at first they were but few, but as he proceeded on in his evil course, they became still more and more numerous. He took care that none of his partners should be easily caught in their rogueries, but chose such out of the rest as had the strongest constitutions of body, and the greatest courage of soul, together with great skill in martial affairs; so he got together a band of four hundred men, who came principally out of the country of Tyre, and were vagabonds that had run away from its villages; and by the means of these he laid waste all Galilee, and irritated a considerable number, who were in great expectation of a war then suddenly to arise among them.

6. John of Gischala was the leader of a powerful faction of Zealots. The Zealots were a revolutionary Jewish sect of the first century; Josephus uses the term loosely, without explaining the ideological differences among the various revolutionary factions.

GALILEE "FILLED WITH FIRE AND BLOOD"⁷

(III:IV:1)

1. . . . nor did the Romans, out of the anger they bore at this attempt, leave off either by night or by day, burning the places in the plain, or stealing away the cattle that were in the country, and killing whatsoever appeared capable of fighting perpetually, and leading the weaker people as slaves into captivity: so that Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood; . . .

THE DESTRUCTION OF JOTAPATA⁸

(III:VII:36)

36. And on this day the Romans slew all the multitude that appeared openly; but on the following days they searched the hiding-places, and fell upon those that were underground, and in the caverns, and went thus through every age, excepting the infants and the women, and of these there were gathered together as captives twelve hundred; and as for those that were slain at the taking of the city, and in the former fights, they were numbered to be forty thousand. So Vespasian⁹ gave order that the city should be entirely demolished, and all the fortifications burnt down. And thus was Jotapata taken, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Nero, on the first day of the month Panemus [Tamuz].

THE SEA TURNS TO BLOOD

(III:IX:2-4)

2. In the mean time there were gathered together, as well such as had seditiously got out from among their enemies as those that had escaped out of the demolished cities, which were in all a great number, and repaired Joppa, which had been left desolate by Cestius, that it might serve them for a place of refuge; and because the adjoining region had been laid waste in the war, and was not capable of supporting them, they determined to go off to sea. They also built themselves

7. In the spring of A.D. 67, after Nero had received news of the Judean revolt, he appointed Vespasian commander of the Roman forces to subdue the rebellion. (Vespasian became the Roman Emperor in A.D. 69, after the turmoil following Nero's death.) The event described here refers to Vespasian's reprisals against an attempt by Jewish forces to capture the city of Sepphoris from the Romans.

8. This important stronghold of the Jewish rebels was destroyed by the Romans on 20 July, A.D. 67.

9. See Note 7.

a great many piratical ships, and turned pirates upon the sea near to Syria, and Phoenicia, and Egypt, and made those seas unnavigable to all men. Now as soon as Vespasian knew of their conspiracy, he sent both footmen and horsemen to Joppa, which was unguarded in the night-time; however, those that were in it perceived that they should be attacked, and were afraid of it; yet did they not endeavor to keep the Romans out, but fled to their ships, and lay at sea all night, out of reach of their darts.

3. Now Joppa is not naturally a haven, for it ends in a rough shore, where all the rest of it is straight, but the two ends bend towards each other, where there are deep precipices and great stones that jut out into the sea, and where the chains wherewith Andromeda¹⁰ was bound have left their footsteps, which attest to the antiquity of that fable; but the north wind opposes and beats upon the shore, and dashes mighty waves against the rocks which receive them, and renders the haven more dangerous than the country they had deserted.

Now as those people of Joppa were floating about in the sea, in the morning there fell a violent wind upon them; it is called by those that sail there “the black north wind,” and there dashed their ships one against another, and dashed some of them against the rocks, and carried many of them by force, while they strove against the opposite waves, into the main sea; for the shore was so rocky, and had so many of the enemy upon it, that they were afraid to come to land; nay, the waves rose so very high, that they drowned them; nor was there any place whither they could fly, nor any way to save themselves; while they were thrust out of the sea, by the violence of the wind, if they staid where they were, and out of the city by the violence of the Romans; and much lamentation there was when the ships were dashed against one another, and a terrible noise when they were broken to pieces; and some of the multitude that were in them were covered with the waves, and so perished, and a great many were embarrassed with shipwrecks; but some of them thought, that to die by their own swords was lighter than by the sea, and so they killed themselves before they were drowned; although the greatest part of them were carried by the waves, and dashed to pieces against the abrupt parts of the rocks, insomuch that the sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies; for the Romans came upon those that

10. According to Greek mythology, Andromeda was the daughter of Kepheus, king of Ethiopia. She had been bound to a rock in order to be devoured by a sea monster, but was rescued in the nick of time by the hero Perseus.

were carried to the shore, and destroyed them; and the number of the bodies that were thus thrown out of the sea was four thousand and two hundred. The Romans also took the city without opposition, and utterly destroyed it.

4. And thus was Joppa taken twice by the Romans in a little time; but Vespasian, in order to prevent these pirates from coming thither any more, erected a camp there, where the citadel of Joppa had been, and left a body of horse, in it, with a few footmen; that these last might stay there and guard the camp, and the horsemen might spoil the country that lay round it, and might destroy the neighboring villages and smaller cities. So these troops overran the country, as they were ordered to do, and every day cut to pieces and laid desolate the whole region.

“SLAIN ON EVERY SIDE”

(III:X:3)

3. . . . Vespasian had also sent both Antonius and Silo, with two thousand archers, and had given it them in charge to seize upon the mountain that was over-against the city,¹¹ and repel those that were upon the wall; which archers did as they were commanded, and prevented those that attempted to assist them that way; and now Titus¹² made his own horse march first against the enemy, as did the others with a great noise after him, and extended themselves upon the plain as wide as the enemy who confronted them; by which means they appeared much more numerous than they really were. Now the Jews, although they were surprised at their onset, and at their good order, made resistance against their attacks for a little while; but when they were pricked with their long poles, and overborne by the violent noise of the horsemen, they came to be trampled under their feet; many also of them were slain on every side, which made them disperse themselves and run to the city, as fast as everyone of them was able. So Titus pressed upon the hindmost, and slew them; and of the rest, some he fell upon as they stood on heaps, and some he prevented, and met them in the mouth, and run them through; many also he leaped upon as they fell one upon another, and trod them down, and cut off all the retreat they had to the wall, and turned them back into the plain, till

11. The city was another important rebel base, Tarichaeae (also called Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene).

12. Titus was the older son of Vespasian, who assisted his father in the Jewish War. Later, when Vespasian became emperor, Titus took over the direction of the campaign.

at last they forced a passage by their multitude, and got away, and ran into the city.

THE SEA OF GALILEE "FULL OF DEAD BODIES"¹³

(III:X:9)

9. . . . Now those which were driven into the lake could neither fly to the land, where all was in their enemies hand, and in war against them, nor could they fight upon the level by the sea, for their ships were small and fitted only for piracy; they were too weak to fight with Vespasian's vessels, and the mariners that were in them were so few, that they were afraid to come near the Romans, who attacked them in great numbers. However, as they sailed round about the vessels, and sometimes as they came near them, they threw stones at the Romans when they were a good way off, or came closer and fought them; yet did they receive the greatest harm themselves in both cases. As for the stones they threw at the Romans they only made a sound one after another, for they threw them against such as were in their armor, while the Roman darts could reach the Jews themselves; and when they ventured to come near the Romans, they became sufferers themselves before they could do any harm to the other, and were drowned, they and their ships together.

As for those that endeavored to come to an actual fight, the Romans ran many of them through with their long poles. Sometimes the Romans leaped into their ships, with swords in their hands, and slew them; but when some of them met the vessels, the Romans caught them by the middle, and destroyed at once their ships and themselves who were taken in them. And for such as were drowning in the sea, if they lifted their heads up above the water they were either killed by darts, or caught by the vessels; but if, in the desperate case they were in, they attempted to swim, to their enemies, the Romans cut off either their heads or their hands; and indeed they were destroyed after various manners everywhere, till the rest, being put to flight, were forced to get upon the land, while the vessels encompassed them about [on the sea] but as many of these were repulsed when they were getting ashore, they were killed by the darts upon the lake; and the Romans leaped out of their vessels, and destroyed a great many more upon the land: one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies,

13. The Sea of Galilee was also called Lake Gennesareth. The massacre recorded here resulted from the Romans' attempt to catch and destroy the Jews who were trying to escape from Tarichaea. This battle took place in late September 67.

for not one of them escaped.

And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; for as for the shores, they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrified, they corrupted the air, inso-much that the misery was not only the object of commiseration to the Jews, but to those that hated them, and had been the authors of that misery. This was the upshot of the sea-fight. The number of the slain, including those that were killed in the city before, was six thousand and five hundred.

THE EDMITES DESOLATE THE TEMPLE¹⁴

(IV:V:1–4)

1. This advice pleased the Idumeans, and they ascended through the city to the temple. The zealots were also in great expectation of their coming, and earnestly waited for them. When therefore these were entering, they also came boldly out of the inner temple, and mixing themselves with the Idumeans, they attacked the guards; and some of those that were upon the watch, but were fallen asleep, they killed as they were asleep, but as those that were now awakened made a cry, the whole multitude arose, and in the amazement they were in caught hold of their arms immediately, and betook themselves to their own defence; and so long as they thought they were only the zealots who attacked them, they went on boldly, as hoping to overpower them by their numbers; but when they saw others pressing in upon them also, they perceived the Idumeans were got in; and the greatest part of them laid aside their arms, together with their courage, and betook themselves to lamentations.

But some few of the younger sort covered themselves with their armor, and valiantly received the Idumeans, and for a while protected the multitude of old men. Others, indeed, gave a signal to those that were in the city of the calamities they were in; but when these were also made sensible that the Idumeans were come in, none of them

14. During the civil strife in Jerusalem, the rebellious Zealots barricaded themselves in the Temple against the pro-Roman citizens, who surrounded the Temple with armed guards. A few Zealots escaped in the night and made their way to the camp of the Edomites (Idumeans) who had surrounded the city with 20,000 men. By telling them (falsely) that the priests were planning to surrender the city to the Romans, the Zealots persuaded the Edomites to liberate their comrades from the Temple and then to attack the rest of the city. That night, before the Edomites went on the rampage, was the last opportunity for people to escape from the city with safety.

durst come to their assistance; only they returned the terrible echo of wailing, and lamented their misfortunes. A great howling of the women was excited also, and everyone of the guards were in danger of being killed. The zealots also joined in the shouts raised by the Idumeans; and the storm itself rendered the cry more terrible; nor did the Idumeans spare anybody; for as they are naturally a most barbarous and bloody nation, and had been distressed by the tempest, they made use of their weapons against those that had shut the gates against them, and acted in the same manner as to those that supplicated for their lives, and to those that fought them, insomuch that they ran through those with their swords who desired them to remember the relation there was between them, and begged of them to have regard to their common temple.¹⁵

Now there was at present neither any place for flight nor any hope for preservation; but as they were driven one upon another in heaps, so were they slain. Thus the greater part were driven together by force, as there was now no place of retirement, and the murderers were upon them; and, having no other way, threw themselves down headlong into the city; whereby, in my opinion, they underwent a more miserable destruction than that which they avoided, because that was a voluntary one. And now the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood; and that day, as it came on, saw eight thousand five hundred dead bodies there.

2. But the rage of the Idumeans was not satiated by these slaughters; but they now betook themselves to the city, and plundered every house, and slew everyone they met; and for the other multitude, they esteemed it needless to go on with killing them, but they sought for the high-priests, and the generality went with the greatest zeal against them; and as soon as they caught them they slew them, and then standing upon their dead bodies, in way of jest, upbraided Ananus¹⁶ with his kindness to the people, and Jesus¹⁷ with his speech made to them from the wall. Nay, they proceeded to that degree of impiety, as to cast away their dead bodies without burial, although the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those that were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the going down of the sun. I should not mistake if I said that the death

15. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother (Gen. 25:30; 36:8-43), and thus related to the Israelites.

16. Ananus was the High Priest.

17. Jesus, son of Gamalus, was a chief priest, second under Ananus.

of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city, and that from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs, whereon they saw their high-priest, and the procurer of their preservation, slain in the midst of their city.

He was on other accounts also a venerable, and a very just man; and besides the grandeur of that nobility, and dignity, and honor, of which he was possessed, he had been a lover of a kind of parity, even with regard to the meanest of the people; he was a prodigious lover of liberty, and an admirer of a democracy in government; and did ever prefer the public welfare before his own advantage, and preferred peace above all things; for he was thoroughly sensible that the Romans were not to be conquered. He also foresaw that of necessity a war would follow, and that unless the Jews made up matters with them very dexterously, they would be destroyed: to say all in a word, if Ananus had survived they had certainly compounded matters; for he was a shrewd man in speaking and persuading the people, and had already gotten the mastery of those that opposed his designs, or were for the war. And the Jews had then put abundance of delays in the way of the Romans, if they had had such a general as he was.

Jesus was also joined with him; and although he was inferior to him upon the comparison, he was superior to the rest; and I cannot but think that it was because God had doomed this city to destruction, as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge his sanctuary by fire, that he cut off these their great defenders and wellwishers, while those that a little before had worn the sacred garments, and had presided over the public worship, and had been esteemed venerable by those that dwelt on the whole habitable earth when they came into our city, were cast out naked, and seen to be the food of dogs and wild beasts. And I cannot but imagine that virtue itself groaned at these men's case, and lamented that she was here so terribly conquered by wickedness. And this at last was the end of Ananus and Jesus.

3. Now after these were slain, the zealots and the multitude of the Idumeans fell upon the people as upon a flock of profane animals, and cut their throats; and, for the ordinary sort, they were destroyed in what place soever they caught them. But for the noblemen and the youth, they first caught them and bound them, and shut them up in prison, and put off their slaughter, in hopes that some of them would turn over to their party; but not one of them would comply with their desires, but all of them preferred death before being enrolled among such wicked wretches as acted against their own country. But this

refusal of theirs brought upon them terrible torments; for they were so scourged and tortured, that their bodies were not able to sustain their torments, till at length, and with difficulty, they had the favor to be slain.

Those whom they caught in the day-time, were slain in the night, and then their bodies were carried out and thrown away, that there might be room for other prisoners; and the terror that was upon the people was so great, that no one had courage enough either to weep openly for the dead man that was related to him, or bury him; but those that were shut up in their own houses, could only shed tears in secret, and durst not even groan without great caution, lest any of their enemies should hear them; for if they did, those that mourned for others soon underwent the same death with those whom they mourned for. Only in the nighttime they would take up a little dust and throw it upon their bodies; and even some that were the most ready to expose themselves to danger, would do it in the day-time: and there were twelve thousand of the better sort who perished in this manner.

4. And now these zealots and Idumeans were quite weary of barely killing men, so they had the impudence of setting up fictitious tribunals and judicatures for that purpose; and as they intended to have Zacharias,¹⁸ the son of Baruch, one of the most eminent of the citizens, slain,—so what provoked them against him was, that hatred of wickedness and love of liberty which were so eminent in him: he was also a rich man, so that by taking him off, they did not only hope to seize his effects, but also to get rid of a man that had great power to destroy them. So they called together, by a public proclamation, seventy of the principal men of the populace, for a show, as if they were real judges, while they had no proper authority. Before these was Zacharias accused of a design to betray their polity to the Romans, and having traitorously sent to Vespasian for that purpose. Now there appeared no proof or sign of what he was accused; but they affirmed themselves that they were well persuaded that so it was, and desired that such their affirmation might be taken for sufficient evidence. Now when Zacharias clearly saw that there was no way remaining for his escape from them, as having been treacherously called before them, and then put in prison, but not with any intention of a legal trial, he took great liberty of speech in that despair of life he was under. Accordingly he stood up, and laughed at their pretended accusa-

¹⁸. Cf. Matt. 23:35.

tion, and in a few words confuted the crimes laid to his charge; after which he turned his speech to his accusers, and went over distinctly all their transgressions of the law, and made heavy lamentations upon the confusion they had brought public affairs to: in the mean time the zealots grew tumultuous, and had much ado to abstain from drawing their swords, although they designed to preserve the appearance and show of judicature to the end. They were also desirous, on other accounts, to try the judges, whether they would be mindful of what was just at their own peril.

Now the seventy judges brought in their verdict, that the person accused was not guilty,—as choosing rather to die themselves with him, than to have his death laid at their doors; hereupon there rose a great clamor of the zealots upon his acquittal, and they all had indignation at the judges, for not understanding that the authority that was given them was but in jest. So two of the boldest of them fell upon Zacharias in the middle of the temple, and slew him; and as he fell down dead they bantered him, and said, “Thou hast also our verdict, and this will prove a more sure acquittal to thee than the other.” They also threw him down out of the temple immediately into the valley beneath it. Moreover, they struck the judges with the backs of their swords, by way of abuse, and thrust them out of the court of the temple, and spared their lives with no other design than that, when they were dispersed among the people in the city, they might become their messengers, to let them know they were no better than slaves.

HOW THE ZEALOTS FULFILLED PROPHECY¹⁹

(IV:VI:3)

3...and indeed many there were of the Jews that deserted every day, and fled away from the zealots, although their flight was very difficult, since they had guarded every passage out of the city, and slew everyone that was caught at them, as taking it for granted they were going over to the Romans; yet did he who gave them money get clear off, while he only that gave them none was voted a traitor. So the upshot was this, that the rich purchased their flight by money, while none but the poor were slain. Along all the roads also vast numbers of dead bodies lay in heaps, and even many of those that were so

19. Realizing they had been tricked, most of the Edomites left the city. Meanwhile, the Romans continued their slow advance through Judea, counting on the internal warfare in Jerusalem to weaken the rebellion. Many Jews tried to escape from the coming holocaust; most were unsuccessful.

zealous in deserting, at length chose rather to perish within the city; for the hopes of burial made death in their own city appear of the two less terrible to them.

But these zealots came at last to that degree of barbarity, as not to bestow a burial either on those slain in the city, or on those that lay along the roads; but as if they had made an agreement to cancel both the laws of their country and the laws of nature, and, at the same time that they defiled men with their wicked actions, they would pollute the Divinity itself also, they left the dead bodies to putrify under the sun: and the same punishment was allotted to such as buried any, as to those that deserted, which was no other than death; while he that granted the favor of a grave to another, would presently stand in need of a grave himself. To say all in a word, no other gentle passion was so entirely lost among them as mercy; for what were the greatest objects of pity did most of all irritate these wretches, and they transferred their rage from the living to those that had been slain, and from the dead to the living. Nay the terror was so very great, that he who survived called them that were first dead happy, as being at rest already; as did those that were under torture in the prisons, declare, that, upon this comparison, those that lay unburied were the happiest.

These men, therefore, trampled upon all the laws of man, and laughed at the laws of God; and for the oracles of the prophets, they ridiculed them as the tricks of jugglers; yet did these prophets foretell many things concerning [the rewards of] virtue, and [punishments of] vice, which when these zealots violated, they occasioned the fulfilling of those very prophecies belonging to their own country: for there was a certain ancient oracle of those men, that the city should then be taken and the sanctuary burnt, by right of war, when a sedition should invade the Jews, and their own hand should pollute the temple of God. Now, while these zealots did not [quite] disbelieve these predictions, they made themselves the instruments of their accomplishment.

SIMON'S "PERPETUAL BLOODSHEDDING"²⁰

(IV:IX:7-8)

7.... Thence did Simon make his progress over all Idumea, and did not only ravage the cities and villages, but laid waste the whole coun-

20. Simon was the leader of a powerful faction of rebels in Jerusalem, in competition with the Zealots led by Eleazar, son of Gion, and the Galilean followers of John of Gischala.

try; for, besides those that were completely armed, he had forty thousand men that followed him, insomuch that he had not provisions enough to suffice such a multitude. Now, besides this want of provisions that he was in, he was of a barbarous disposition, and bore great anger at this nation, by which means it came to pass that Idumea was greatly depopulated; and as one may see all the woods behind despoiled of their leaves by locusts, after they have been there, so was there nothing left behind Simon's army but a desert. Some places they burnt down, some they utterly demolished, and whatsoever grew in the country, they either trod it down or fed upon it, and by their marches they made the ground that was cultivated, harder and more untractable than that which was barren. In short, there was no sign remaining of those places that had been laid waste, that ever they had had a being.

8. This success of Simon excited the zealots afresh; and though they were afraid to fight him openly in a fair battle, yet did they lay ambushes in the passes, and seized upon his wife, with a considerable number of her attendants; whereupon they came back to the city rejoicing, as if they had taken Simon himself captive, and were in present expectation that he would lay down his arms, and make supplication to them for his wife; but instead of indulging any merciful affection, he grew very angry at them for seizing his beloved wife; so he came to the wall of Jerusalem, and, like wild beasts when they are wounded, and cannot overtake those that wounded them, he vented his spleen upon all persons that he met with.

Accordingly, he caught all those that were come out of the citygates, either to gather herbs or sticks, who were unarmed and in years; he then tormented them and destroyed them, out of the immense rage he was in, and was almost ready to taste the very flesh of their dead bodies. He also cut off the hands of a great many, and sent them into the city to astonish his enemies, and in order to make the people fall into a sedition, and desert those that had been the authors of his wife's seizure. He also enjoined them to tell the people that Simon swore by the God of the universe, who sees all things, that unless they will restore him his wife, he will break down their wall, and inflict the like punishment upon all the citizens, without sparing any age, and without making any distinction between the guilty and the innocent. These threatenings so greatly affrighted, not the people only, but the zealots themselves also, that they sent his wife back to him,—when he became a little milder, and left off his perpetual bloodshedding.

“GOD TURNED THEIR OPINIONS TO THE WORST ADVICE”

(IV:IX:10–11)

10.... Now this Simon, who was without the wall, was a greater terror to the people than the Romans themselves, as were the zealots who were within it more heavy upon them than both of the other; and during this time did the mischievous contrivances and courage [of John] corrupt the body of the Galileans; for these Galileans had advanced this John, and made him very potent, who made them a suitable requital from the authority he had obtained by their means; for he permitted them to do all things that any of them desired to do, while their inclination to plunder was insatiable, as was their zeal in searching the houses of the rich; and for the murdering of the men, and abusing of the women, it was sport to them. They also devoured what spoils they had taken, together with their blood, and indulged themselves in feminine wantonness, without any disturbance till they were satiated therewith: while they decked their hair, and put on women's garments, and were besmeared over with ointments: and that they might appear very comely, they had paints under their eyes, and imitated, not only the ornaments, but also the lust of women, and were guilty of such intolerable uncleanness, that they invented unlawful pleasures of that sort.

And thus did they roll themselves up and down the city, as in a brothelhouse, and defiled it entirely with their impure actions; nay, while their faces looked like the faces of women, they killed with their right hands; and when their gait was effeminate, they presently attacked men, and became warriors, and drew their swords from under their finely dyed cloaks and ran everybody through whom they alighted upon. However, Simon waited for such as ran away from John, and was the more bloody of the two: and he who had escaped the tyrant within the wall, was destroyed by the other that lay before the gates. So that all attempts of flying and deserting to the Romans were cut off, if any had a mind so to do.

11. Yet did the army that was under John raise a sedition against him; and all the Idumeans separated themselves from the tyrant, and attempted to destroy him, and this out of their envy at his power and hatred of his cruelty; so they got together, and slew many of the zealots, and drove the rest before them into that royal palace that was built by Grapte, who was a relation of Izates, the king of Adiabene; the Idumeans fell in with them and drove the zealots out thence into

the temple, and betook themselves to plunder John's effects; for both he himself was, in that palace, and therein had he laid up the spoils he had acquired by his tyranny. In the mean time the multitude of those zealots that were dispersed over the city ran together to the temple unto those that had fled thither, and John prepared to bring them down against the people and the Idumeans, who were not so much afraid of being attacked by them, (because they were themselves better soldiers than they), as at their madness, lest they should privately sally out of the temple and get among them, and not only destroy them, but set the city on fire also. So they assembled themselves together, and the high-priests with them, and took counsel after what manner they should avoid their assault.

Now it was God who turned their opinions to the worst advice, and thence they devised such a remedy to get themselves free, as was worse than the disease itself. Accordingly, in order to overthrow John, they determined to admit Simon, and earnestly to desire the introduction of a second tyrant into the city: which resolution they brought to perfection, and sent Matthias, the high-priest, to beseech this Simon to come into them, of whom they had so often been afraid. Those also that had fled from the zealots in Jerusalem joined in this request to him, out of the desire they had of preserving their houses and their effects. Accordingly he, in an arrogant manner, granted them his lordly protection, and came into the city, in order to deliver it from the zealots. The people also made joyful acclamations to him, as their saviour and their preserver; but when he was come in with his army, he took care to secure his own authority, and looked upon those that invited him to be no less his enemies than those against whom the invitation was intended.

LAKES OF BLOOD IN THE TEMPLE

(V:I:3-5)

3. But now the tyrant Simon, the son of Gioras, whom the people had invited in, out of the hopes they had of his assistance in the great distresses they were in, having in his power the upper city, and a great part of the lower, did now make more vehement assaults upon John and his party, because they were fought against from above also; yet was he beneath their situation, when he attacked them, as they were beneath the attacks of the others above them. Whereby it came to pass, that John did both receive and inflict great damage, and that

easily, as he was fought against on both sides; and the same advantage that Eleazar and his party had over him, since he was beneath them, the same advantage had he, by his higher situation over Simon.

On which account he easily repelled the attacks that were made from beneath, by the weapons thrown from their hands only; but was obliged to repel those that threw darts from the temple above him, by his engines of war; for he had such engines as threw darts, and javelins, and stones, and that in no small number, by which he did not only defend himself from such as fought against him, but slew moreover many of the priests, as they were about their sacred ministrations; for notwithstanding these men were mad with all sorts of impiety, yet did they still admit those that desired to offer their sacrifices, although they took care to search the people of their own country beforehand, and both suspected and watched them; while they were not so much afraid of strangers, who, although they had gotten leave of them, how cruel soever they were, to come into that court, were yet often destroyed by this sedition: for those darts that were thrown by the engines came with that force, that they went allover the buildings, and reached as far as the altar, and the temple itself, and fell upon the priests, and those that were about the sacred offices; insomuch that in any persons who came thither with great zeal from the ends of the earth, to offer sacrifices at this celebrated place, which was esteemed holy by all mankind,²¹ fell down before their own sacrifices themselves, and sprinkled that altar which was venerable among all men, both Greeks and Barbarians, with their own blood; till the dead bodies of strangers were mingled together with those of their own country, and those of profane persons with those of the priests, and the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves.²²

And now, "O most wretched city, what misery so great as this didst thou suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify thee from thy intestine hatred! For thou couldst be no longer a place fit for God, nor couldst thou longer continue in being, after thou hadst been a sepulchre for the bodies of thine own people, and hadst made the holy house itself a burying-place in this civil war of thine! Yet mayst thou again grow better, if perchance thou wilt hereafter appease the anger of that God who is the author of thy destruction." But I must

21. As Josephus mentions several times in his narrative, people all over the world knew of the Temple in Jerusalem: it was "esteemed holy by all mankind."

22. Cf. Luke 13:1-9.

restrain myself from these passions by the rules of history, since this is not a proper time for domestic lamentations, but for historical narrations; I therefore return to the operations that follow in this sedition.

4. And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one parted from the other.²³ Eleazar and his party, that kept the sacred first-fruits, came against John in their cups. Those that were with John plundered the populace, and went out with zeal against Simon. This Simon had his supply of provisions from the city, in opposition to the seditious. When, therefore, John was assaulted on both sides, he made his men turn about, throwing his darts upon those citizens that came up against him, from the cloisters he had in his possession, while he opposed those that attacked him from the temple by his engines of war; and if at any time he was freed from those that were above him, which happened frequently, from their being drunk and tired, he sallied out with a great number upon Simon and his party; and this he did always in such parts of the city as he could come at, till he set on fire those houses that were full of corn, and of all other provisions. The same thing was done by Simon, when, upon the other's retreat, he attacked the city also; as if they had, on purpose, done it to serve the Romans, by destroying what the city had laid up against the siege, and by thus cutting off the nerves of their own power.

Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space, ready for fighting on both sides, and that almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years. So they were taken by the means of the famine, which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure.

5. And now, as the city was engaged in a war on all sides, from these treacherous crowds of wicked men, the people of the city, between them, were like a great body torn in pieces. The aged men and the women were in such distress by their internal calamities, that they wished for the Romans, and earnestly hoped for an external war, in order to their delivery from their domestic miseries. The citizens themselves were under a terrible consternation and fear; nor had they any opportunity of taking counsel, and of changing their conduct, nor were there any hopes of coming to an agreement with their ene-

23. Eleazar's forces occupied the sanctuary. John's followers controlled the outer Temple area (while trying to overthrow Eleazar), and Simon's men held most of the rest of the city while fighting against John.

mies; nor could such as had a mind flee away; for guards were set at all places, and the heads of the robbers, although they were seditious one against another in other respects, yet did they agree in killing those that were for peace with the Romans, or were suspected of an inclination to desert to them, as their common enemies. They agreed in nothing but this, to kill those that were innocent.

The noise also of those that were fighting was incessant, both by day and by night; but the lamentation of those that mourned exceeded the other; nor was there ever any occasion for them to leave off their lamentations, because their calamities came perpetually one upon another, although the deep consternation they were in prevented their outward wailing; but, being constrained by their fear to conceal their inward passions, they were inwardly tormented, without daring to open their lips in groans. Nor was any regard paid to those that were still alive, by their relations; nor was there any care taken of burial for those that were dead; the occasion of both which was this, that every one despaired of himself; for those that were not among the seditious had no great desires of any thing, as expecting for certain that they should very soon be destroyed; but, for the seditious themselves, they fought against each other, while they trod upon the dead bodies as they lay heaped one upon another, and taking up a mad rage from those dead bodies that were under their feet, became the fiercer thereupon. They, moreover, were still inventing somewhat or other that was pernicious against themselves; and when they had resolved upon anything, they executed it without mercy, and omitted no method of torment or of barbarity....

“THE SON IS COMING!”²⁴

(V:VI:3)

3....The engines, that all the legions had ready prepared for them, were admirably contrived; but still more extraordinary ones belonged to the tenth legion: those that threw darts and those that threw stones, were more forcible and larger than the rest, by which they not only repelled the excursions of the Jews, but drove those away that were upon the walls also. Now, the stones that were cast were of the weight

24. By this time the Romans under Titus had surrounded the city. Eleazar's Zealots had combined with John's forces under John's leadership, and there were now two main factions in the city. The Romans began assaulting the city with catapults.

of a talent,²⁵ and were carried two furlongs²⁶ and farther. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space. As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone, for it was of a white color, and could therefore not only be perceived by the great noise it made, but could be seen also before it came by its brightness; accordingly the watchmen that sat upon the towers gave them notice when the engine was let go, and the stone came from it, and cried out aloud in their own country language, "THE SON COMETH:"²⁷ so those that were in its way stood off, and threw themselves down upon the ground; by which means, and by their thus guarding themselves, the stone fell down and did them no harm. But the Romans contrived how to prevent that by blacking the stone, who then could aim at them with success, when the stone was not discerned beforehand, as it had been till then; and so they destroyed many of them at one blow. . . .

JOSEPHUS REBUKES THE JEWS²⁸

(V:IX:4)

4. While Josephus was making this exhortation to the Jews, many of them jested upon him from the wall, and many reproached him; nay, some threw their darts at him; but when he could not himself persuade them by such open good advice, he betook himself to the histories belonging to their own nation; and cried out aloud, "O miserable creatures! Are you so unmindful of those that used to assist

25. About 90 lbs.

26. About 1200 feet.

27. After reviewing the various theories on this strange passage, J. Stuart Russell offers the following explanation:

It could not but be well known to the Jews that the great hope and faith of the Christians was the speedy coming of the Son. It was about this very time, according to Hegesippus, that St. James, the brother of our Lord, publicly testified in the temple that "the Son of man was about to come in the clouds of heaven," and then sealed his testimony with his blood. It seems highly probable that the Jews, in their defiant and desperate blasphemy, when they saw the white mass hurtling through the air, raised the ribald cry, "The Son is coming," in mockery of the Christian hope of the Parousia, to which they might trace a ludicrous resemblance in the strange appearance of the missile. (J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1887, 1983], p. 482. Hegesippus's statement about James can be found in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970 reprint] vol. 8, p. 763.)

28. Josephus was trying to persuade the Jews to surrender to the Romans (or, at the very least, he wrote passages such as this one to convince the Romans of his loyalty). This section is important as a summary of God's historical judgments against Israel.

you, that you will fight by your weapons and by your hands against the Romans? When did we ever conquer any other nation by such means? and when was it that God, who is the Creator of the Jewish people, did not avenge them when they had been injured? Will not you turn again, and look back, and consider whence it is that you fight with such violence, and how great a Supporter you have profanely abused? Will not you recall to mind the prodigious things done for your forefathers and this holy place, and how great enemies of yours were by him subdued under you? I even tremble myself in declaring the works of God before your ears, that are unworthy to hear them: however, hearken to me, that you may be informed how you fight, not only against the Romans but against God himself.

“In old times there was one Necao, king of Egypt, who was also called Pharaoh; he came with a prodigious army of soldiers, and seized queen Sarah, the mother of our nation. What did Abraham our progenitor then do? Did he defend himself from this injurious person by war, although he had three hundred and eighteen captains under him, and an immense army under each of them? Indeed, he deemed them to be no number at all without God’s assistance, and only spread out his hands towards this holy place, which you have now polluted, and reckoned upon him as upon his invincible supporter, instead of his own army. Was not our queen sent back, without any defilement to her husband, the very next evening?—while the king of Egypt fled away, adoring this place which you have defiled by shedding thereon the blood of your countrymen; and he also trembled at those visions which he saw in the night-season, and bestowed both silver and gold on the Hebrews, as on a people beloved of God.

“Shall I say nothing, or, shall I mention the removal of our fathers into Egypt who, when they were used tyrannically, and were fallen under the power of foreign kings for four hundred years together, and might have defended themselves by war and by fighting, did yet do nothing but commit themselves to God? Who is there that does not know that Egypt was over-run with all sorts of wild beasts, and consumed by all sorts of distempers? how their land did not bring forth its fruits? how the Nile failed of water; how the ten plagues of Egypt followed one upon another? and how, by those means, our fathers were sent away, under a guard, without any bloodshed, and without running any dangers, because God conducted them as his peculiar servants?

“Moreover, did not Palestine groan under the ravage the Assyrians

made, when they carried away our sacred ark? as they did their idol Dagon, and as also did that entire nation of those that carried it away, how they were smitten with a loathsome distemper in the secret parts of their bodies, when their very bowels came down together with what they had eaten, till those hands that stole it away were obliged to bring it back again, and that with the sound of cymbals and timbrels, and other oblations, in order to appease the anger of God for their violation of His holy ark. It was God who then became our general, and accomplished these great things for our fathers, and this because they did not meddle with war and fighting, but committed it to him to judge about their affairs.

“When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, brought along with him all Asia, and encompassed this city round with his army, did he fall by the hands of men? were not those hands lifted up to God in prayers, without meddling with their arms, when an angel of God destroyed that prodigious army in one night? when the Assyrian king, as he rose next day, found a hundred fourscore and five thousand dead bodies, and when he, with the remainder of his army, fled away from the Hebrews, though they were unarmed, and did not pursue them! You are also acquainted with the slavery we were under at Babylon, where the people were captives for seventy years; yet were they not delivered into freedom again before God made Cyrus his gracious instrument in bringing it about; accordingly they were set free by him, and did again restore the worship of their Deliverer at his temple.

“And, to speak in general, we can produce no example wherein our fathers got any success by war, or failed of success, when without war they committed themselves to God. When they staid at home they conquered, as pleased their Judge; but when they went out to fight they were always disappointed: for example, when the king of Babylon besieged this very city, and our king Zedekiah fought against him, contrary to what predictions were made to him by Jeremiah the prophet, he was at once taken prisoner, and saw the city and the temple demolished. Yet how much greater was the moderation of that king, than is that of your present governors, and that of the people then under him, than is that of you at this time! for when Jeremiah cried out aloud, how very angry God was at them, because of their transgressions, and told them that they should be taken prisoners, unless they would surrender up their city, neither did the king nor the people put him to death; but for you (to pass over what you have done within the city, which I am not able to describe, as your wick-

edness deserves) you abuse me, and throw darts at me who only exhort you to save yourselves, as being provoked when you are put in mind of your sins, and cannot bear the very mention of those crimes which you every day perpetrate. For another example, when Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, lay before this city, and had been guilty of many indignities against God, and our forefathers met him in arms, they then were slain in the battle, this city was plundered by our enemies, and our sanctuary made desolate for three years and six months.²⁹

“And what need I bring any more examples! Indeed, what can it be that hath stirred up an army of the Romans against our nation? Is it not the impiety of the inhabitants? Whence did our servitude commence? Was it not derived from the seditions that were among our forefathers, when the madness of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, and our mutual quarrels, brought Pompey upon this city, and when God reduced those under subjection to the Romans, who were unworthy of the liberty they enjoyed? After a siege, therefore of three months, they were forced to surrender themselves, although they had been guilty of such offences with regard to our sanctuary and our laws, as you have, and this while they had much greater advantages to go to war than you have. Do not we know what end Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, came to, under whose reign God provided that this city should be taken again upon account of the people’s offences? When Herod, the son of Antipater, brought upon us Sosius, and Sosius brought upon us the Roman army, they were then encompassed and besieged for six months, till, as a punishment for their sins, they were taken, and the city was plundered by the enemy.

“Thus it appears, that arms were never given to our nation but that we are always given up to be fought against, and to be taken; for I suppose, that such as inhabit this holy place ought to commit the disposal of all things to God, and then only to disregard the assistance of men when they resign themselves up to their arbitrator, who is above. As for you, what have you done of those things that are recommended by our legislator! and what have you not done of those things that he hath condemned! How much more impious are you than those who were so quickly taken! You have not avoided so much as those sins which are usually done in secret; I mean thefts, and treacherous plots against men, and adulteries. You are quarrelling about rapines

29. Note: 42 months. The period from Nero’s appointment of Vespasian until the destruction of the Temple (30 August, A.D. 70) was also about 42 months.

and murders, and invent strange ways of wickedness. Nay, the temple itself has become the receptacle of all, and this divine place is polluted by the hands of those of our own country; which place hath yet been revered by the Romans when it was at a distance from them, when they have suffered many of their own customs to give place to our law.³⁰

“And, after all this, do you expect Him whom you have so impiously abused to be your supporter? To be sure then you have a right to be a petitioners, and to call upon Him to assist you, so pure are your hands! Did your king [Hezekiah] lift up such hands in prayer to God against the king of Assyria, when he destroyed that great army in one night? And do the Romans commit such wickedness as did the king of Assyria, that you may have reason to hope for the like vengeance upon them? Did not that king accept of money from our king upon this condition, that he should not destroy the city, and yet, contrary to the oath he had taken, he came down to burn the temple? while the Romans do demand no more than that accustomed tribute which our fathers paid to their fathers; and if they may but once obtain that, they neither aim to destroy this city, nor to touch this sanctuary; nay, they will grant you besides, that your posterity shall be free, and your possessions secured to you, and will preserve your holy laws inviolate to you.

“And it is plain madness to expect that God should appear as well disposed towards the wicked as towards the righteous, since he knows when it is proper to punish men for their sins immediately, accordingly he broke the power of the Assyrians the very first night that they pitched their camp. Wherefore had he judged that our nation was worthy of freedom, or the Romans of punishment, he had immediately inflicted punishment upon those Romans, as he did upon the Assyrians, when Pompey began to meddle with our nation, or when after him Sosius came up against us, or when Vespasian laid waste Galilee, or, lastly, when Titus came first of all near to the city; although Magnus and Sosius did not only suffer nothing, but took the city by force; as did Vespasian go from the war he made against you to receive the empire; and as for Titus, those springs that were formerly almost dried up when they were under your power since he is come, run more plentifully than they did before; accordingly, you know that Siloam, as well as all the other springs that were without the city, did so far fail, that water was sold by distinct measures; whereas they now

30. Cf. note 21 above.

have such a great quantity of water for your enemies, as is sufficient not only for drink both for themselves and their cattle, but for watering their gardens also. The same wonderful sign you had also experience of formerly, when the fore-mentioned king of Babylon made war against us, when he took the city and burnt the temple; while yet I believe the Jews of that age were not so impious as you are.

“Wherefore I cannot but suppose that God is fled out of his sanctuary, and stands on the side of those against whom you fight. Now, even a man, if he be but a good man, will fly from an impure house, and will hate those that are in it; and do you persuade yourselves that God will abide with you in your iniquities, who sees all secret things, and hears what is kept most private! Now, what crime is there, I pray you, that is so much as kept secret among you, or is concealed by you! nay, what is there that is not open to your very enemies! for you show your transgressions after a pompous manner, and contend one with another which of you shall be more wicked than another; and you make a public demonstration of your injustice, as if it were virtue!

“However, there is a place left for your preservation, if you be willing to accept of it, and God is easily reconciled to those that confess their faults, and repent of them. O hard-hearted wretches as you are! cast away all your arms, and take pity of your country already going to ruin; return from your wicked ways, and have regard to the excellency of that city which you are going to betray, to that excellent temple with the donations of so many countries in it. Who could bear to be the first to set that temple on fire! who could be willing that these things should be no more! and what is there that can better deserve to be preserved, O insensible creatures, and more stupid than are the stones themselves!

“And if you cannot look at these things with discerning eyes, yet however, have pity upon your families, and set before every one of your eyes your children, and wives, and parents, who will be gradually consumed either by famine or by war. I am sensible that this danger will extend to my mother, and wife, and to that family of mine who have been by no means ignoble, and indeed to one that hath been very eminent in old time; and perhaps you may imagine that it is on their account only that I give you this advice; if that be all, kill them; nay, take my own blood as a reward, if it may but procure your preservation; for I am ready to die in case you will but return to a sound mind after my death.”

THE HORRORS OF FAMINE

(V:X:3)

3. It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough, and the weaker were lamenting (for want of it). But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence was in this case despised; insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and, what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants; and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives; and while they ate after this manner, yet were they not concealed in so doing: but the seditious everywhere came upon them immediately, and snatched away from them what they had gotten from others: for when they saw any house shut up, this was to them a signal that the people within had gotten some food; whereupon they broke open the doors, and ran in and took pieces of what they were eating, almost up out of their very throats, and this by force; the old men, who held their food fast, were beaten; and if the women hid what they had within their hands, their hair was torn for so doing; nor was there any commiseration shown either to the aged or to infants, but they lifted up children from the ground as they hung upon the morsels they had gotten, and shook them down upon the floor; but still were they more barbarously cruel to those that had prevented their coming in, and had actually swallowed down what they were going to seize upon, as if they had been unjustly defrauded of their right.

They also invented terrible methods of torment to discover where any food was, and they were these: to stop up the passages of the privy parts of the miserable wretches, and to drive sharp stakes up their fundamentals! and a man was forced to bear what it is terrible even to hear, in order to make him confess that he had but one loaf of bread, or that he might discover a handful of barley-meal that was concealed; and this was done when these tormentors were not themselves hungry; for the thing had been less barbarous had necessity forced them to it; but this was done to keep their madness in exercise, and as making preparations of provisions for themselves for the following days.

These men went also to meet those that had crept out of the city by night, as far as the Roman guards, to gather some plants and herbs that grew wild; and when those people thought they had got clear of the enemy, these snatched from them what they had brought with them, even while they had frequently entreated them, and that by calling upon the tremendous name of God, to give them back some part of what they had brought; though these would not give them the least crumb; and they were to be well contented that they were only spoiled, and not slain at the same time.

THE WORST GENERATION

(V:X:5)

5. It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly:—That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, not did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world....

THE RATE OF CRUCIFIXIONS: 500 PER DAY

(V:XI:1–2)

1. So now Titus's banks were advanced a great way, notwithstanding his soldiers had been very much distressed from the wall. He then sent a party of horsemen, and ordered they should lay ambushes for those that went out into the valleys to gather food. Some of these were indeed fighting men, who were not contented with what they got by rapine; but the greater part of them were poor people, who were deterred from deserting by the concern they were under for their own relations; for they could not hope to escape away, together with their wives and children, without the knowledge of the seditious; nor could they think of leaving these relations to be slain by the robbers on their account: nay, the severity of the famine made them bold in thus going out; so nothing remained but that, when they were concealed from the robbers, they should be taken by the enemy; and when they were going to be taken, they were forced to defend themselves, for fear of being punished; as, after they had fought, they thought it too late to make any supplications for mercy; so they were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were then crucified before the wall of the city.

This miserable procedure made Titus greatly to pity them, while

they caught every day five hundred Jews; nay, some days they caught more; yet did it not appear to be safe for him to let those that were taken by force go their way; and to set a guard over so many, he saw would be to make such as guarded them useless to him. The main reason why he did not forbid that cruelty was this, that he hoped the Jews might perhaps yield at that sight, out of fear lest they might themselves afterwards be liable to the same cruel treatment. So the soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies.

2. But so far were the seditious from repenting at this sad sight, that, on the contrary, they made the rest of the multitude believe otherwise, for they brought the relations of those that had deserted upon the wall, with such of the populace as were very eager to go over upon the security offered them, and showed them what miseries those underwent who fled to the Romans; and told them that those who were caught were supplicants to them, and not such as were taken prisoners. This sight kept many of those within the city who were so eager to desert, till the truth was known; yet did some of them run away immediately as unto certain punishment, esteeming death from their enemies to be a quiet departure, if compared with that by famine.

“WITH THEIR EYES FIXED UPON THE TEMPLE”

(V:XII:3–4)

3. So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the marketplaces like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. As for burying them, those that were sick themselves were not able to do it; and those that were hearty and well were deterred from doing it by the great multitude of those dead bodies, and by the uncertainty there was how soon they should die themselves, for many died as they were burying others, and many went to their coffins before that fatal hour was come! Nor was there any lamentation made under these calamities, nor

were heard any mournful complaints; but the famine confounded all natural passions; for those who were just going to die, looked upon those that were gone to their rest before them with dry eyes and open mouths.

A deep silence also, and a kind of deadly night, had seized upon the city; while yet the robbers were still more terrible than these miseries were themselves; for they brake open those houses which were no other than graves of dead bodies, and plundered them of what they had; and carrying off the coverings of their bodies, went out laughing, and tried the points of their swords on their dead bodies; and, in order to prove what mettle they were made of, they thrust some of those through that still lay alive upon the ground; but for those that entreated them to lend them their right hand, and their sword to dispatch them, they were too proud to grant their requests, and left them to be consumed by the famine. Now everyone of these died with their eyes fixed upon the temple, and left the seditious alive behind them. Now the seditious at first gave orders that the dead should be buried out of the public treasury as not enduring the stench of their dead bodies. But afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the walls into the valleys beneath.

4. However, when Titus, in going his rounds along those valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing; and such was the sad case of the city itself. But the Romans were very joyful, since none of the seditious could now make sallies out of the city, because they were themselves disconsolate; and the famine already touched them also. These Romans besides, had great plenty of corn and other necessities out of Syria, and out of the neighboring provinces; many of whom would stand near to the wall of the city, and show the people what great quantities of provisions they had, and so make the enemy more sensible of their famine, by the great plenty, even to satiety, which they had themselves.

However, when the seditious still showed no inclination of yielding, Titus, out of his commiseration of the people that remained, and out of his earnest desire of rescuing what was still left out of these miseries, began to raise his banks again, although materials for them were hard to be come at; for all the trees that were about the city had been already cut down for the making of the former banks. Yet did the soldiers bring with them other materials from the distance of ninety

furlongs, and thereby raised banks in four parts, much greater than the former, though this was done only at the tower of Antonia....

THE MURDER OF THE CHIEF PRIEST

(V:XIII:1)

1. Accordingly Simon would not suffer Matthias, by whose means he got possession of the city, to go off without torment. This Matthias was the son of Boethus, and was one of the high-priests, one that had been very faithful to the people, and in great esteem with them: he, when the multitude were distressed by the zealots among whom John was numbered, persuaded the people to admit this Simon to come in to assist them, while he had made no terms with him, nor expected anything that was evil from him. But when Simon was come in, and had gotten the city under his power, he esteemed him that had advised them to admit him as his enemy equally with the rest, as looking upon that advice as a piece of his simplicity only: so he had him then brought before him, and condemned to die for being of the side of the Romans, without giving him leave to make his defence. He condemned also his three sons to die with him: for as to the fourth, he prevented him, by running away to Titus before. And when he begged for this, that he might be slain before his sons, and that as a favor, on account that he had procured the gates of the city to be opened to him, he gave order that he should be slain the last of themall: so he was not slain till he had seen his sons slain before his eyes, and that by being produced over-against the Romans; for such a charge had Simon given to Ananus, the son of Bamadus, who was the most barbarous of all his guards. He also jested upon him, and told him that he might now see whether those to whom he intended to go over, would send him any succors or not: but still he forbade their dead bodies should be buried.

After the slaughter of these, a certain priest, Ananias, the son of Masambulus, a person of eminency, as also Aristeus, the scribe of the sanhedrin, and born at Emmaus, and with them fifteen men of figure among the people, were slain. They also kept Josephus's father in prison, and made public proclamation, that no citizen whosoever should either speak to him himself, or go into his company among others, for fear he should betray them. They also slew such as joined in lamenting these men, without any farther examination.

“IT WAS GOD WHO CONDEMNED THE WHOLE NATION”

(V:XIII:4–6)

4. Hereupon some of the deserters, having no other way, leaped down from the wall immediately, while others of them went out of the city with stones, as if they would fight them; but thereupon, they fled away to the Romans:—but here a Worse fate accompanied these than what they had found within the city; and they met with a quicker dispatch from the too great abundance they had among the Romans, than they could have done from the famine among the Jews; for when they came first to the Romans, they were puffed up by the famine, and swelled like men in a dropsy; after which they all on the sudden over-filled those bodies that were before empty, and so burst asunder, excepting such only as were skilful enough to restrain their appetites, and, by degrees, took in their food into bodies unaccustomed thereto.

Yet did another plague seize upon those that were thus preserved; for there was found among the Syrian deserters a certain person who was caught gathering pieces of gold out of the excrements of the Jews’ bellies; for the deserters used to swallow such pieces of gold, as we told you before, when they came out; and for these did the seditious search them all; for there was a great quantity of gold in the city, insomuch that as much was now sold [in the Roman camp] for twelve Attic [drams], as was sold before for twenty-five; but when this contrivance was discovered in one instance, the fame of it filled their several camps, that the deserters came to them full of gold. So the multitude of the Arabians, with the Syrians, cut up those that came as supplicants, and searched their bellies. Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night’s time about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected.

5. When Titus came to the knowledge of this wicked practice, he had like to have surrounded those that had been guilty of it with his horse, and have shot them dead; and he had done it, had not their number been so very great, and those that were liable to this punishment would have been manifold, more than those whom they had slain. However, he called together the commanders of the auxiliary troops he had with him, as well as the commanders of the Roman legions (for some of his own soldiers had been also guilty herein, as he had been informed) and had great indignation against both sorts of them, and spoke to them as follows:—“What! have any of my own

soldiers done such things as this out of the uncertain hope of gain, without regarding their own weapons, which are made of silver and gold? Moreover, do the Arabians and Syrians now first of all begin to govern themselves as they please, and to indulge their appetites in a foreign war, and then, out of their barbarity in murdering men, and out of their hatred to the Jews, get it ascribed to the Romans?"—for this infamous practice was said to be spread among some of his own soldiers also. Titus then threatened that he would put such men to death, if any of them were discovered to be so insolent as to do so again: moreover, he gave it in charge to the legions, that they should make a search after such as were suspected, and should bring them to him; but it appeared that the love of money was too hard for all their dread of punishment, and a vehement desire of gain is natural to men, and no passion is so venturesome as covetousness, otherwise such passions have certain bounds, and are subordinate to fear; but in reality it was God who condemned the whole nation, and turned every course that was taken for their preservation to their destruction.

This, therefore, which was forbidden by Caesar under such a threatening, was ventured upon privately against the deserters, and these barbarians would go out still, and meet those that ran away before any saw them, and looking about them to see that no Roman spied them, they dissected them, and pulled this polluted money out of their bowels; which money was still found in a few of them, while yet a great many were destroyed by the bare hope there was of thus getting by them, which miserable treatment made many that were deserting to return back again into the city.

6. But as for John, when he could no longer plunder the people, he betook himself to sacrilege, and melted down many of the sacred utensils, which had been given to the temple; as also many of those vessels which were necessary for such as ministered about holy things, the caldrons, the dishes, and the tables; nay, he did not abstain from those pouring-vessels that were sent them by Augustus and his wife; for the Roman emperors did ever both honor and adorn this temple; whereas this man, who was a Jew, seized upon what were the donations of foreigners; and said to those that were with him, that it was proper for them to use divine things while they were fighting for the Divinity, without fear, and that such whose warfare is for the temple, should live of the temple, on which account he emptied the vessels of that sacred wine and oil, which the priests kept to be poured on the burnt-offerings, and which lay in the inner court of the temple,

and distributed it among the multitude, who, in their anointing themselves and drinking, used [each of them] above an hin of them: and here I cannot but speak my mind, and what the concern I am under dictates to me, and it is this:

I suppose, that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water, or else been destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed.

JERUSALEM BECOMES A WILDERNESS

(VI:I:1)

1. Thus did the miseries of Jerusalem grow worse and worse every day, and the seditious were still more irritated by the calamities they were under, even while the famine preyed upon themselves, after it had preyed upon the people. And indeed the multitude of carcases that lay in heaps one upon another, was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench, which was a hindrance to those that would make sallies out of the city and fight the enemy: but as those were to go in battle-array, who had been already used to ten thousand murders, and must tread upon those dead bodies as they marched along, so were not they terrified, nor did they pity men as they marched over them; nor did they deem this affront offered to the deceased to be any ill omen to themselves; but as they had their right hands already polluted with the murders of their own countrymen, and in that condition ran out to fight with foreigners, they seem to me to have cast a reproach upon God himself, as if he were too slow in punishing them; for the war was not now gone on with as if they had any hope of victory; for they gloried after a brutish manner in that despair of deliverance they were already in.

And now the Romans, although they were greatly distressed in getting together their materials, raised their banks in one-and-twenty days, after they had cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety furlongs round about, as I have already related. And, truly, the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country

every way, and its trees were all cut down: nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change; for the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste; nor, if any one that had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again; but though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding.

“IT IS GOD HIMSELF WHO IS BRINGING THIS FIRE”

(VI:II:1)

1. And now Titus gave orders to his soldiers that were with him to dig up the foundations of the tower of Antonia, and make him a ready passage for his army to come up; while he himself had Josephus brought to him (for he had been informed that on that very day, which was the seventeenth day of Panemus [Tamuz], the sacrifice called “the Daily Sacrifice” had failed, and had not been offered to God for want of men to offer it, and that the people were grievously troubled at it) and commanded him to say the same things to John that he had said before, that if he had any malicious inclination for fighting, he might come out with as many of his men as he pleased, in order to fight, without the danger of destroying either his city or temple; but that he desired he would not defile the temple, nor thereby offend against God. That he might, if he pleased, offer the sacrifices which were now discontinued, by any of the Jews whom he should pitch upon. Upon this, Josephus stood in such a place where he might be heard, not by John only, but by many more, and then declared to them what Caesar had given him in charge, and this in the Hebrew language. So he earnestly prayed them to spare their own city, and to prevent that fire that was just ready to seize upon the temple, and to offer their usual sacrifices to God therein. At these words of his a great sadness and silence were observed among the people. But the tyrant himself cast many reproaches upon Josephus, with imprecations besides; and at last added this withal, that he did never fear the taking of the city, because it was God’s own city.

In answer to which, Josephus said thus, with a loud voice:—“To be sure, thou hast kept this city wonderfully pure for God’s sake! the temple also continues entirely unpolluted! Nor hast thou been guilty of any impiety against him, for whose assistance thou hopest! He still receives his accustomed sacrifices! Vile wretch that thou art!

if anyone should deprive thee of thy daily food, thou wouldst esteem him to be an enemy to thee; but thou hopest to have that God for thy supporter in this war whom thou hast deprived of his everlasting worship! and thou imputest those sins to the Romans, who to this very time take care to have our laws observed, and almost compel these sacrifices to be still offered to God, which have by thy means been intermitted! Who is there that can avoid groans and lamentations at the amazing change that is made in this city? Since very foreigners and enemies do now correct that impiety which thou hast occasioned; while thou, who art a Jew, and was educated in our laws, art become a greater enemy to them than the others! But still, John, it is never dishonorable to repent, and amend what hath been done amiss, even at the last extremity. Thou hast an instance before thee in Jechoniah, the king of the Jews, if thou hast a mind to save the city, who, when the king of Babylon made war against him, did, of his own accord, go out of this city before it was taken, and did undergo a voluntary captivity with his family, that the sanctuary might not be delivered up to the enemy, and that he might not see the house of God set on fire; on which account he is celebrated among all the Jews, in their sacred memorials, and his memory is become immortal, and will be conveyed fresh down to our posterity through all ages. This, John, is an excellent example in such a time of danger; and I dare venture to promise that the Romans shall still forgive thee.

“And take notice, that I, who make this exhortation to thee, am one of thine own nation; I who am a Jew do make this promise to thee. And it will become thee to consider who I am that give thee this counsel, and whence I am derived; for while I am alive I shall never be in such slavery as to forego my own kindred, or forget the laws of our forefathers. Thou hast indignation at me again, and makest a clamor at me, and reproachest me; indeed, I cannot deny that I am worthy of worse treatment than all this amounts to, because, in opposition to fate, I make this kind invitation to thee, and endeavor to force deliverance upon those whom God hath condemned.

“And who is there that does not know what the writings of the ancient prophets contain in them,—and particularly that oracle which is just now going to be fulfilled upon this miserable city—for they foretold that this city should be then taken when somebody shall begin the slaughter of his own countrymen! and are not both the city and the entire temple now full of the dead bodies of your countrymen? It is God therefore, it is God himself who is bringing on this fire, to

purge that city and temple by means of the Romans, and is going to pluck up this city, which is full of your pollutions.”

A MOTHER BECOMES A CANNIBAL³¹

(VI:III:3-4)

3. Now of those that perished by famine in the city, the number was prodigious, and the miseries they underwent were unspeakable; for if so much as the shadow of any kind of food did anywhere appear, a war was commenced presently; and the dearest friends fell a fighting one with another about it, snatching from each other the most miserable supports of life. Nor would men believe that those who were dying had no food; but the robbers would search them when they were expiring, lest anyone should have concealed food in their bosoms, and counterfeited dying: nay, these robbers gaped for want, and ran about stumbling and staggering along like mad dogs, and reeling against the doors of the houses like drunken men; they would also, in the great distress they were in, rush into the very same houses two or three times in one and the same day. Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable, that it obliged them to chew everything, while they gathered such things as the most sordid animals would not touch, and endured to eat them; nor did they at length abstain from girdles and shoes; and the very leather which belonged to their shields they pulled off and gnawed: the very wisps of old hay became food to some; and some gathered up fibres, and sold a very small weight of them for four Attic [drachmae].

But why do I describe the shameless impudence that the famine brought on men in their eating inanimate things, while I am going to relate a matter of fact, the like to which no history relates, either among the Greeks or Barbarians! It is horrible to speak of it, and incredible when heard. I had indeed willingly omitted this calamity of ours, that I might not seem to deliver what is so portentous to posterity, but that I have innumerable witnesses to it in my own age; and, besides, my country would have had little reason to thank me for suppressing the miseries that she underwent at this time.

4. There was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was Mary; her father was Eleazar, of the village Bethesub, which signifies *the House of Hyssop*. She was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude,

31. Cf. Deut. 28:53-57; 2 Kings 6:26-29; Jer. 19:9; Lam. 4:10; Ezek. 5:10.

and was with them besieged therein at this time. The other effects of this woman had been already seized upon; such I mean as she had brought with her out of Perea, and removed to the city. What she had treasured up besides, as also what food she had contrived to save, had been also carried off by the rapacious guards, who came every day running into her house for that purpose. This put the poor woman into a very great passion, and by the frequent reproaches and imprecations she cast at these rapacious villains, she had provoked them to anger against her; but none of them, either out of the indignation she had raised against herself, or out of the commiseration of her case, would take away her life; and if she found any food, she perceived her labors were for others, and not for herself; and it was now become impossible for her any way to find any more food, while the famine pierced through her very bowels and marrow, when also her passion was fired to a degree beyond the famine itself; nor did she consult with anything but with her passion and the necessity she was in.

She then attempted a most unnatural thing; and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, "O, thou miserable infant! for whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition? As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! This famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us;—yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other. Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a by-word to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews." As soon as she had said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed.

Upon this the seditious came in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her, that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied, that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son. Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, "This is mine own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself! Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous, and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also." After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at any-

thing as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother.

Upon which the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately; and while every body laid this miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled, as if this unheard-of action had been done by themselves. So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die; and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or to see such miseries.

THE TEMPLE IS BURNED

(VI:IV:5–7)

5. So Titus retired into the tower of Antonia, and resolved to storm the temple the next day, early in the morning, with his whole army, and to encamp round about the holy house; but, as for that house, God had for certain long ago doomed it to the fire; and now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages: it was the tenth day of the month Lous [Ab], upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon;³² although these flames took their rise from the Jews themselves, and were occasioned by them; for upon Titus's retiring, the seditious lay still for a little while, and then attacked Romans again, when those that guarded the holy house fought with those that quenched the fire that was burning in the inner !court of the) temple; but these Romans put the Jews to flight, and proceeded as far as the holy house itself.

At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it. As the flames went upward the Jews made a great clamor, such as so mighty an affliction required, and ran together to prevent it; and now they spared not their lives any longer, nor suffered anything to restrain their force, since that holy house was perishing, for whose sake it was that they kept such a guard about it.

32. Josephus here draws attention to the fact that, under the Providence of God, the Temple was destroyed by the Romans on the tenth day of Ab—the very same date on which the first Temple had been burned by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (see Jer. 52:12–13).

6. And now a certain person came running to Titus, and told him of this fire, as he was resting himself in his tent after the last battle; whereupon he rose up in great haste and, as he was, ran to the holy house, in order to have a stop put to the fire; after him followed all his commanders, and after them followed the several legions, in great astonishment; so there was a great clamor and tumult raised, as was natural upon the disorderly motion of so great an army. Then did Caesar, both by calling to the soldiers that were fighting, with a loud voice, and by giving a signal to them with his right hand, order them to quench the fire; but they did not hear what he said, though he spake so loud, having their ears already dinned by a greater noise another way; nor did they attend to the signal he made with his hand neither, as still some of them were distracted with fighting, and others with passion; but as for the legions that came running thither, neither any persuasions nor any threatenings could restrain their violence, but each one's own passion was his commander at this time; and as they were crowding into the temple together, many of them were trampled on by one another, while a great number fell among the ruins of the cloisters, which were still hot and smoking, and were destroyed in the same miserable way with those whom they had conquered: and when they were come near the holy house, they made as if they did not so much as hear Caesar's orders to the contrary; but they encouraged those that were before them to set it on fire.

As for the seditious, they were in too great distress already to afford their assistance [towards quenching the fire]; they were everywhere slain, and everywhere beaten; and as for a great part of the people, they were weak and without arms, and had their throats cut wherever they were caught. Now, round about the altar lay dead bodies heaped one upon another; as at the steps going up to it ran a great quantity of their blood, whither also the dead bodies that were slain above [on the altar] fell down.

7. And now, since Caesar was no way able to restrain the enthusiastic fury of the soldiers, and the fire proceeded on more and more, he went into the holy place of the temple, with his commanders, and saw it, with what was in it, which he found to be far superior to what the relations of foreigners contained, and not inferior to what we ourselves boasted of and believed about it; but as the flame had not as yet reached to its inward parts, but was still consuming the rooms that were about the holy house, and Titus supposing what the fact was, that the house itself might yet' be saved, he came in haste and

endeavored to persuade the soldiers to quench the fire, and gave order to Liberalius the centurion, and one of those spearmen that were about him, to beat the soldiers that were refractory with their staves, and to restrain them; yet were their passions too hard for the regards they had for Caesar, and the dread they had of him who forbade them, as was their hatred of the Jews, and a certain vehement inclination to fight them, too hard for them also.

Moreover, the hope of plunder induced many to go on, as having this opinion, that all the places within were full of money, and as seeing that all round about it was made of gold; and besides, one of those that went into the place prevented Caesar, when he ran so hastily out to restrain the soldiers, and threw the fire upon the hinges of the gate, in the dark; whereby the flame burst out from within the holy house itself immediately, when the commanders retired, and Caesar with them, and when nobody any longer forbade those that were without to set fire to it; and thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar's approbation.³³

JERUSALEM UNDER THE BAN³⁴

(VI:V:1-2)

1. While the holy house was on fire, every thing was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to destruction, and as well those that made supplication for their lives as those that defended themselves by fighting. The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together

33. According to this passage in Josephus, Titus tried to prevent the soldiers from destroying the Temple. It is possible, however, that Josephus was trying to defend the Romans against the Jewish charge that it had been a matter of deliberate policy. The early Church historian Sulpitius Severus, following Tacitus, wrote:

Titus himself thought that the temple ought especially to be overthrown, in order that the religion of the Jews and of the Christians might more thoroughly be subverted; for that these religions, although contrary to each other, had nevertheless proceeded from the same authors; that the Christians had sprung up from among the Jews; and that, if the root were extirpated, the offshoot would speedily perish. Thus, according to the divine will, the minds of all being inflamed, the temple was destroyed. . . . (*The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus, in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 reprint], Second Series, vol. 11, p. 111. Cf. Michael Grant, *The Twelve Caesars* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975], pp. 228f.)

34. Cf. Mal. 4:6.

with the groans of those that were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought the whole city had been on fire. Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamor of the seditious, who were now surrounded with fire and sword.

The people also that were left above were beaten back upon the enemy, and under a great consternation, and made sad moans at the calamity they were under; the multitude also that was in the city joined in this outcry with those that were upon the hill; and besides, many of those that were worn away by the famine, and their mouths almost closed, when they saw the fire of the holy house, they exerted their utmost strength, and brake out into groans and outcries again: Perea did also return the echo, as well as the mountains round about [the city], and augmented the force of the entire noise.

Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething-hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of these bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.

And now it was that the multitude of the robbers were thrust out [of the inner court of the temple] by the Romans, and had much ado to get into the outer court, and from thence into the city, while the remainder of the populace fled into the cloister of that outer court. As for the priests, some of them plucked up from the holy house the spikes that were upon it, with their bases, which were made of lead, and shot them at the Romans instead of darts. But then as they gained nothing by so doing, and as the fire burst out upon them, they retired to the wall that was eight cubits broad, and there they tarried; yet did two of these of eminence among them, who might have saved themselves by going over to the Romans, or have borne up with courage, and taken their fortune with the others, throw themselves into the fire, and were burnt together with the holy house; their names were Meirus the son of Belgas, and Joseph the son of Daleus.

2. And now the Romans, judging that it was in vain to spare what was round about the holy house, burnt all those places, as also the remains of the cloisters and the gates, two excepted; the one on the east

side, and the other on the south: both which, however, they burnt afterward. They also burnt down the treasury chambers, in which was an immense quantity of money, and an immense number of garments, and other precious goods, there reposed; and to speak all in a few words, there it was that the entire riches of the Jews were heaped up together, while the rich people had there built themselves chambers [to contain such furniture].

The soldiers also came to the rest of the cloisters that were in the outer [court of the] temple, whither the women and children, and a great mixed multitude of the people fled, in number about six thousand. But before Caesar had determined anything about these people, or given the commanders any orders relating to them, the soldiers were in such a rage, that they set the cloister on fire; by which means it came to pass that some of these were destroyed by throwing themselves down headlong, and some were burnt in the cloisters themselves. Nor did anyone of them escape with his life.

A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now, a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such deliverance.

CHARIOTS IN THE CLOUDS

(VI:V:3)

3. Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which

preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskilful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high-priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now, those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them.

Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], a certain prOdigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence."³⁵

35. This event is also reported by the Roman historian Tacitus:

In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armour. A sudden lightning flash from the clouds lit up the Temple. The doors of the holy

But, what is still more terrible, there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple, began on a sudden to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city.

However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare: yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, "Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!" And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him, Who he was? and whence he came? and why he uttered such words? he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him.

Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, "Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!" Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come.

This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing boarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; for as he was going

place abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it, and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure. (Tacitus, *The Histories*, translated by Kenneth Wellesley [New York: Penguin Books, 1964, 1975], p. 279.)

round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, "Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!" And just as he added at the last,—“Woe, woe, to myself also!” there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.

THE BURNING OF JERUSALEM

(VI:VI:3)

3. . . . So he gave orders to the soldiers both to burn and to plunder the city; who did nothing indeed that day; but on the next day they set fire to the repository of the archives, to Acra, to the council-house, and to the place called Ophlas; at which time the fire proceeded as far as the palace of queen Helena, which was in the middle of Acra: the lanes also were burnt down, as were also those houses that were full of the dead bodies of such as were destroyed by famine.

HIDING IN THE CAVES AND AMONG THE ROCKS³⁶

(VI:VII:1–3)

1. And now the seditious rushed into the royal palace, into which many had put their effects, because it was so strong, and drove the Romans away from it. They also slew all the people that had crowded into it, who were in number about eight thousand four hundred, and plundered them of what they had. They also took two of the Romans alive; the one was a horseman, and the other a footman. They then cut the throat of the footman, and immediately had him drawn through the whole city, as revenging themselves upon the whole body of the Romans by this one instance. But the horseman said he had somewhat to suggest to them, in order to their preservation; whereupon he was brought before Simon; but he having nothing to say when he was there, he was delivered to Ardalas, one of his commanders, to be punished, who bound his hands behind him and put a ribbon over his eyes, and then brought him out over against the Romans, as intending to cut off his head. But the man prevented that execution, and ran away to the Romans, and this while the Jewish executioner was drawing out his sword. Now when he was gotten away from the enemy, Titus could not think of putting him to death; but because he deemed him unworthy of being a Roman soldier any longer, on

36. Cf. Isa. 2:10–12; Hos. 10:8; Luke 23:28–30; Rev. 6:15–17.

account that he had been taken alive by the enemy, he took away his arms, and ejected him out of the legion whereto he had belonged: which, to one that had a sense of shame, was a penalty severer than death itself.

2. On the next day the Romans drove the robbers out of the lower city, and set all on fire as far as Siloam. These soldiers were indeed glad to see the city destroyed. But they missed the plunder, because the seditious had carried off all their effects, and were retired into the upper city; for they did not yet at all repent of the mischiefs they had done, but were insolent, as if they had done well; for as they saw the city on fire, they appeared cheerful, and put on joyful countenances, in expectation, as they said, of death to end their miseries. Accordingly, as the people were now slain, the holy house was burnt down, and the city was on fire, there was nothing farther left for the enemy to do.

Yet did not Josephus grow weary, even in this utmost extremity, to beg of them to spare what was left of the city, he spake largely to them about their barbarity and impiety, and gave them his advice, in order to their escape, though he gained nothing thereby more than to be laughed at by them; and as they could not think of surrendering themselves up, because of the oath they had taken, nor were strong enough to fight with the Romans any longer upon the square, as being surrounded on all sides, and a kind of prisoners already, yet were they so accustomed to kill people that they could not restrain their right hands from acting accordingly. So they dispersed themselves before the city, and laid themselves in ambush among its ruins, to catch those that attempted to desert to the Romans; accordingly many such deserters were caught by them, and were all slain; for these were too weak, by reason of their want of food to flyaway from them; so their dead bodies were thrown to the dogs.

Now every sort of death was thought more tolerable than the famine, insomuch that, though the Jews despaired now of mercy, yet would they fly to the Romans, and would themselves even of their own accord, fall among the murderous rebels also. Nor was there any place in the city that had no dead bodies in it, but what was entirely covered with those that were killed either by the famine or the rebellion; and all was full of the dead bodies of such as had perished, either by that sedition or by that famine.

3. So now the last hope which supported the tyrants and that crew of robbers who were with them, was in the caves and caverns under-

ground; whither, if they could once fly, they did not expect to be searched for; but endeavored, that after the whole city should be destroyed, and the Romans gone away, they might come out again, and escape from them. This was no better than a dream of theirs; for they were not able to lie hid either from God or from the Romans. However, they depended on these underground subterfuges, and set more places on fire than did the Romans themselves; and those that fled out of their houses thus set on fire into ditches, they killed without mercy, and pillaged them also; and if they discovered food belonging to anyone, they seized upon it and swallowed it down, together with their blood also; nay, they were now come to fight one with another about their plunder; and I cannot but think that, had not their destruction prevented it, their barbarity would have made them taste of even the dead bodies themselves.

A SURPLUS OF JEWISH SLAVES³⁷

(VI:VIII:2)

2. . . . Yet could not that garrison resist those that were deserting; for although a great number of them were slain, yet were the deserters many more in number. These were all received by the Romans, because Titus himself grew negligent as to his former orders for killing them, and because the very soldiers grew weary of killing them, and because they hoped to get some money by sparing them; for they left only the populace, and sold the rest of the multitude, with their wives and children, and everyone of them at a very low price, and that because such as were sold were very many, and the buyers very few. . . .

“THE POWER OF GOD EXERCISED UPON THESE WICKED WRETCHES”

(VI:VIII:4–5)

4. . . . Now, as soon as a part of the wall was battered down, and certain of the towers yielded to the impression of the battering-rams, those that opposed themselves fled away, and such a terror fell upon the tyrants, as was much greater than the occasion required; for before the enemy got over the breach they were quite stunned, and were immediately for flying away; and now one might see these men, who had hitherto been so insolent and arrogant in their wicked practices, to be cast down and to tremble, insomuch that it would pity one's heart to observe the change that was made in those vile persons.

37. Cf. Deut. 28:68.

Accordingly they ran with great violence upon the Roman wall that encompassed them, in order to force away those that guarded it, and to break through it, and get away; but when they saw that those who had formerly been faithful to them, had gone away (as indeed they were fled whithersoever the great distress they were in persuaded them to flee) as also when those that came running before the rest told them that the western wall was entirely overthrown, while others said the Romans were gotten in, and others that they were near, and looking out for them, which were only the dictates of their fear which imposed upon their sight, they fell upon their faces, and greatly lamented their own mad conduct; and their nerves were so terribly loosed, that they could not flee away; and here one may chiefly reflect on the power of God exercised upon these wicked wretches, and on the good fortune of the Romans; for these tyrants did now wholly deprive themselves of the security they had in their own power, and came down from those very towers of their own accord, wherein they could have never been taken by force, nor indeed by any other way than by famine.

And thus did the Romans, when they had taken such great pains about weaker walls, get by good fortune what they could never have gotten by their engines; for three of these towers were too strong for all mechanical engines whatsoever; concerning which we have treated of before.

5. So they now left these towers of themselves, or rather they were ejected out of them by God himself, and fled immediately to that valley which was under Siloam, where they again recovered themselves out of the dread they were in for a while, and ran violently against that part of the Roman wall which lay on that side; but as their courage was too much depressed to make their attacks with sufficient force, and their power was now broken with fear and affliction, they were repulsed by the guards, and dispersing themselves at distances from each other, went down into the subterranean caverns.

So the Romans being now become masters of the walls, they both placed their ensigns upon the towers, and made joyful acclamations for the victory they had gained, as having found the end of this war much lighter than its beginning; for when they had gotten upon the last wall, without any bloodshed, they could hardly believe what they found to be true; but seeing nobody to oppose them, they stood in doubt what such an unusual solitude could mean. But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those

whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses whither the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is of such as died by the famine; they then stood in a horror at this sight, and went out without touching anything. But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran everyone through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood.

And truly so it happened, that though the slayers left off at the evening, yet did the fire greatly prevail in the night; and as all was burning, came that eighth day of the month Gorpheus [Elul] upon Jerusalem; a city that had been liable to so many miseries during the siege, that, had it always enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would certainly have been the envy of the world. Nor did it on any other account so much deserve these sore misfortunes, as by producing such a generation of men as were the occasions of this its overthrow.

THE LAST PASSOVER "SACRIFICE"³⁸

(VI:IX:3-4)

3. Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine, as destroyed them more suddenly.

38. Whiston comments at this point: "What is here chiefly remarkable is this, that no foreign nation ever came thus to destroy the Jews at any of their solemn festivals, from the days of Moses till this time, but came now upon their apostasy from God, and from obedience to him." God had promised protection during the festivals (Ex. 34:23-24). The fact that God did not observe this promise any longer is another indication that Israel had been excommunicated from the covenant.

And that this city could contain so many people in it is manifest by that number of them which was taken under Cestius, who being desirous of informing Nero of the power of the city, who otherwise was disposed to condemn that nation, entreated the high-priests, if the thing were possible, to take the number of their whole multitude. So these high-priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour till the eleventh, but so that a company not less than ten belong to every sacrifice (for it is not lawful for them to feast singly by themselves), and many of us are twenty in a company, found the number of sacrifices was two hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred; which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to two millions seven hundred thousand and two hundred persons that were pure and holy; for as to those that have the leprosy, or the gonorrhoea, or women that have their monthly courses, or such as are otherwise polluted, it is not lawful for them to be partakers of this sacrifice; nor indeed for any foreigners neither, who come hither to worship.

4. Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in a prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world; for, to speak only of what was publicly known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with.

There were also found slain there above two thousand persons, partly by their own hands, and partly by one another, but chiefly destroyed by the famine; but then, the ill savor of the dead bodies was most offensive to those that lighted upon them, insomuch that some were obliged to get away immediately, while others were so greedy of gain, that they would go in among the dead bodies that lay in heaps, and tread upon them; for a great deal of treasure was found in these caverns, and the hope of gain made every way of getting it to be esteemed lawful. Many also of those that had been put in prison by the tyrants were now brought out; for they did not leave off their barbarous cruelty at the very last; yet did God avenge himself upon them both, in a manner agreeable to justice.

As for John, he wanted food, together with his brethren, in these caverns, and begged that the Romans would now give him their right

hand for his security, which had often proudly rejected before; but for Simon, he struggled hard with the distress he was in, till he was forced to surrender himself, as we shall relate hereafter; so he was reserved for the triumph, and to be then slain: as was John condemned to perpetual imprisonment: and now the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city, and burnt them down, and entirely demolished its walls.

CAESAR'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

(VII:III: 1)

1. While Titus was at Cesarea, he solemnized the birth-day of his brother [Domitian] after a splendid manner, and inflicted a great deal of the punishment intended for the Jews in honour of him: for the number of those that were now slain in fighting with the beasts, and were burnt, and fought with one another, exceeded two thousand five hundred. Yet did all this seem to the Romans, when they were thus destroying ten thousand several ways, to be a punishment beneath their deserts. After this, Caesar came to Berytus, which is a city of Phoenicia, and a Roman colony, and staid there a longer time, and exhibited a still more pompous solemnity about his father's birth-day, both in the magnificence of the shows, and in the other vast expenses he was at in his devices thereto belonging; so that a great multitude of the captives were here destroyed after the same manner as before.

SUICIDE AT MASADA³⁹

(VII:IX:1)

1. Now as Eleazar was proceeding on in his exhortation, they all cut him off short, and made haste to do the work, as full of an unconquerable ardor of mind, and moved with a demoniacal fury. So they went their ways, as one still endeavoring to be before another, and as thinking that this eagerness would be a demonstration of their courage and good conduct, if they could avoid appearing in the last class;

39. The last stronghold of the Zealots was atop the lonely limestone crag of Masada, towering 1,700 feet high near the western shore of the Dead Sea. Led by Eleazar, son of Jairus (not the Eleazar who led the Zealots in Jerusalem), the Masada Zealots were able to hold off the Romans for about four years after the fall of Jerusalem. When Eleazar saw, however, that the Romans would soon succeed in taking his fortress, he urged his followers to commit mass suicide rather than submit to the dishonor of capture by the Romans. Eternal life and glory, he assured them, would be their reward. The tragedy occurred on the 15th of Nisan, A.D. 74—Passover.

so great was the zeal they were in to slay their wives and children, and themselves also!

Nor, indeed, when they came to the work itself, did their courage fail them, as one might imagine it would have done, but they then held fast the same resolution, without wavering, which they had upon the hearing of Eleazar's speech, while yet everyone of them still retained the natural passion of love to themselves and their families, because the reasoning they went upon appeared to them to be very just, even with regard to those that were dearest to them; for the husbands tenderly embraced their wives, and took their children into their arms, and gave the longest parting kisses to them, with tears in their eyes. Yet at the same time did they complete what they had resolved on, as if they had been executed by the hands of strangers, and they had nothing else for their comfort but the necessity they were in of doing this execution to avoid that prospect they had of the miseries they were to suffer from their enemies. Nor was there at length anyone of these men found that scrupled to act their part in this terrible execution, but everyone of them dispatched his dearest relations. Miserable men indeed were they! whose distress forced them to slay their own wives and children with their own hands, as the lightest of those evils that were before them.

So they being not able to bear the grief they were under for what they had done any longer, and esteeming it an injury to those they had slain to live even the shortest space of time after them,—they presently laid all they had in a heap, and set fire to it. They then chose ten men by lot out of them, to slay all the rest; everyone of whom laid himself down by his wife and children on the ground, and threw his arms about them, and they offered their necks to the stroke of those who by lot executed that melancholy office; and when these ten had, without fear, slain them all, they made the same rule for casting lots for themselves, that he whose lot it was should first kill the other nine, and after all, should kill himself. Accordingly, all these had courage sufficient to be no way behind one another in doing or suffering; so, for a conclusion, the nine offered their necks to the executioner, and he who was the last of all took a view of all the other bodies, lest perchance some or other among so many that were slain should want his assistance to be quite dispatched; and when he perceived that they were all slain, he set fire to the palace, and with the great force of his hands ran his sword entirely through himself, and fell down dead near to his own relations. So these people died with this intention,

that they would leave not so much as one soul among them all alive to be subject to the Romans.

Yet there was an ancient woman, and another who was of kin to Eleazar, and superior to most women in prudence and learning, with five children, who had concealed themselves in caverns under ground, and had carried water thither for their drink, and were hidden there when the rest were intent upon the slaughter of one another. Those others were nine hundred and sixty in number, the women and children being withal included in that computation. This calamitous slaughter was made on the fifteenth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan].

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Books are important in the development of any Christian's growth in the faith. The present volume is not by any means the last word on the subject; if anything, it is only a beginning. I have listed a few books which should be helpful to those who wish to dig deeper. Many of them have been significant in my own understanding of eschatology. The list is certainly not complete (for example, an extensive section on Church history could well have been added), but the basics are here. My listing of any particular book does not constitute a full endorsement of its contents, but I believe these works will generally be rewarding to any serious student of Scripture.

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HISTORY INDEX

The purpose of this index is to provide a timeline of the material references so that the reader may see how the author traced certain themes in their historical contexts.

General entries are sorted in logical or loose chronological order. Dates used in the dated entries are based on the indexer's research, with deference given to any dates the author provided. The dates in the index are for the reader's convenience but are not to be relied upon as an infallible record. Italicized dates indicate the occupation of an office.

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