Happy 40th, Jerusalem

Special Issue on the errors of Replacement Theology:

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Winona Lake
Conference Ad
(Waveline)
Happy 40th Birthday, Jerusalem
by Elwood McQuaid

Forty years ago in June, Israel recaptured its city of cities in a six-day war that stunned the world. But things haven’t turned out as anticipated.

The Roots of Replacement Theology
by William L. Krewson

What in the world happened to make Christians believe they are the “new Israel”? The answer does not flatter the early church.

A Look at the Big Picture
by Renald E. Showers

Satan is at war with God. And if you can understand this war, you’ll understand the entire drama of human history.

How Anti-Semitism Corrupted the Church
by Renald E. Showers

Anti-Semitism is one of Satan’s biggest tools. Unfortunately, the church has not been immune to his handiwork.

For the Glory of God
by Richard D. Emmons

You don’t need to be a theologian to understand Dispensationalism. You only need to grasp some of the important points explained here.

Biblical prophecy and history never collide. They are always compatible, illuminating the future and exposing the present in light of the ultimate divine plan. This issue, themed around dispensational truth, illustrates the point. Our cover is David Rubinger’s famous photograph of Israeli paratroopers at the Western Wall in 1967, when Israel captured the Old City and reunited Jerusalem. It speaks to an event that, by human assessment, should never have happened. But God’s plan dictated otherwise. Prophetically, Israel is still at center stage. You’ll find out why and understand that Replacement Theology is totally out of step with biblical and historical reality. Furthermore, a dispensational outlook is absolutely essential if we are to study and interpret God’s Word properly, as well as gain inspiration from it for daily living (David Rubinger/Getty Images).

ABOUT THE ISSUE

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Reports from many areas of our worldwide ministry indicate a resurgence of an errant teaching best described as Replacement Theology. Deviating from a literal interpretation of God’s prophetic Word, Replacement Theology holds that the church and Christians have replaced Israel and the Jewish people as the recipients of the promises God made to Israel. Adherents contend that Israel has no future in God’s plan.

The case for Replacement Theology is expressed in “An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel.” Posted under the banner of Knox Theological Seminary and The Wittenberg Door magazine, it denies God’s plans for the nation of Israel. The letter can be found online at www.knoxseminary.org/prospective/faculty/wittenbergdoor. Below are excerpts, followed by what we believe to be the truth.

1. The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the “Holy Land” cannot be supported by Scripture. This assertion contradicts God’s everlasting covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, 13, and 15.

2. The promised Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ has been inaugurated. This stance spiritualizes Christ’s Kingdom and thereby denies His literal, future reign of righteousness on the earth for 1,000 years—a prophetic truth repeated several times in Revelation 20.

3. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ’s kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in “the land,” by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices. This statement flies in the face of the abundant prophetic teachings in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. Regrettably, after stripping Israel of God’s promises, proponents of Replacement Theology then cast Israel as the militant aggressor in the Middle East conflict.

4. Lamentably, bad Christian theology is today attributing to secular Israel a divine mandate to conquer and hold Palestine, with the consequence that the Palestinian people are marginalized and regarded as virtual “Canaanites.” Such an outrageous charge completely disregards tiny Israel’s continuing struggle for survival in the midst of a huge, hostile, Arab and Islamic world bent on its destruction.

Since its posting in 2002, this Open Letter has been signed by more than 150 Christian educators, pastors, public figures, and lay leaders—many with Presbyterian affiliations. They are, in effect, declaring that God is finished with Israel as a nation. Tragically, the second signer is the well-known R. C. Sproul, president of Ligonier Ministries.

Particularly offensive is the implication in the letter’s last paragraph that those of us who believe in the literal fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures have departed from “the proclamation of the free offer of Christ’s grace in the Gospel to all the children of Abraham.” Nothing could be further from the truth!

William E. Sutter is executive director of The Friends of Israel.
Remember the story about Rip Van Winkle, the likable fellow of Dutch descent who slipped away from a nagging wife and bedded down for a nap under a shady tree in the Catskills? After 20 years in the arms of Morpheus, old Rip awoke to find himself in a different world—one he was completely out of touch with.

I thought about the Catskill snoozer while reading a story in The Washington Times recently. It concerned the U.S. State Department’s unease about what the department dubbed the Muslim “nativist surge” in Western Europe.

In an article titled “Europe’s Muslims Find Ally in U.S.,” Nicholas Kralev reported that “Daniel Fried, assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, said U.S. embassies and consulates in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and other countries will decide what exactly they can do” to help Europe solve its problems with disenfranchised Muslim immigrants.

Fried called Europe’s growing Muslim presence “a fascinating issue and one that the American government is just now trying to get its mind around.” He said, “It’s a huge problem, we are thinking about it seriously, and we’ve tried to do some intellectual framing up. This appears to be State Department-speak for, “We just noticed that Europe might have a problem with radicals.” Sound a bit Van Winklish to you? It certainly does in this corner. And just why does this newly discovered Muslim disenchantment exist?

In the words of France’s ambassador to Washington, Jean-David Levitte, “The unrest that existed in poor neighborhoods had nothing to do with jihad and much to do with social conditions. That’s why we have to put the emphasis on improving the social conditions—schools, better housing—and hopefully all this will trigger better absorption in the social fabric of France of this minority.” Kralev reported that Fried believes a “process of alienation” is occurring between Muslims and their host countries, which Fried said have “no sense of integration.”

All of which leads to a “nativist surge,” causing a sizable number of Islamists to embrace radicalism. And who is ultimately to blame? Why, European host countries, of course. Just what does the American State Department intend to do to change the direction of these “unintegrated masses” that murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam and that are rioting, bombing subways in London, and carrying out other jihadist acts? The question seems superfluous because the answer will be what it always is: Give them what they want; buy them off.

There are two issues here, and neither has anything to do with genuine solutions to the problems.

First, there’s the incomprehensible confession of surprise that this violence is going on. Where have these officials been? In Europe, with its rampant anti-Semitism and Christian bashing, Muslims have been declaring their intent to create an Islamic caliphate on the continent for years. It is common knowledge that virtually anyone who cares to notice. Anyone that is, except some American and European bureaucrats who should, of all people, know what’s happening.

Does their defective analysis prove the thesis that, in the tangle of the war on terror, many in places of Western leadership just don’t get it? Or perhaps these leaders have chosen to operate under the delusion of denial, the most devastating aspect of which is the fiction that the war in Islam has forced upon us has nothing to do with religion but everything to do with a lack of material and social resources. Such a view is a prescription for disaster.

Then there is the issue of what radical Islamic forces in Europe actually want for themselves and the countries they have invaded with hordes of immigrants who, in all fairness, have lived in conditions much worse than those in the countries they have adopted.

Do they wish to be integrated into Western democratic lifestyles? Undoubtedly, some do. But from all appearances, they remain outsiders. Their radical clerics and would-be Islamist mentors make it clear that they have no intentions of integrating into European society. Rather, they intend to transform it into an Islamostate dominated by the trappings of Sharia law and the ways of Islam. The idea that Western diplomats and politicians can talk or bribe such Muslim ideologues out of their plans is not viable. The fundamental issue rests first and foremost on religious commitment, not material or societal disenfranchise-ment. Those matters are incidental to the overall objective.

If Westerners refuse to face reality, they are playing Rip Van Winkle and will suddenly awake in a far different world. The transformation has already begun.
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It’s All or Nothing

In 1960 Christian entertainer Pat Boone wrote lyrics for the theme song of a movie based on Leon Uris’s popular novel Exodus. Exodus told the epic story of the Jewish people’s valiant struggle in 1947 to make Israel their home. Boone’s first 10 words say it all: “This land is mine. God gave this land to me.”

Unfortunately, few would write lyrics like that today. Many people, including a growing number of Christians, believe the land does not rightfully belong to Abraham’s physical seed through Isaac, but that it belongs to the Palestinians or possibly even to the church—but definitely not to the Jews.

In fact, 154 preachers and teachers, including R. C. Sproul and Bruce Waltke, have signed an open letter on the Knox Theological Seminary Web site declaring the Jewish people have no special title to any land in the Middle East:

The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the “Holy Land” cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua.

The founder, president, and chancellor of Knox Theological Seminary is D. James Kennedy, called “the most listened-to Presbyterian minister in the world today” on his Coral Ridge Ministries’ Web site.

The open letter’s position, however, is flawed. The covenant the Lord made with Abraham included three parts: land, seed, and blessing. God promised all three equally and unconditionally, and you cannot have one without the other two.

God promised that Abraham and his descendants would be physically, literally blessed. One of the physical ways He has blessed them is by bringing them back to their land.

God promised Abraham literal, physical descendants whose numbers would be as “the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore” (Gen. 22:17). “In your seed,” God told Abraham, “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (v. 18). Through their many gifts and accomplishments, the Jewish people have blessed this world in highly significant ways. Between 1901 and 2006, 23 percent of all Nobel Prize winners have been Jewish. Scripture says, “The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass” (Mic. 5:7).

Ultimately, Abraham’s greatest literal, physical descendant is the Messiah of Israel: Jesus Christ. He fulfills the long-range seed promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. However, the land portion still exists. God gave it along with the rest. Therefore, you cannot separate the Jewishness of the physical seed from the promise of blessing and land to the Jewish people. The covenant is an indivisible unit, promising physical blessing, physical seed, and physical land to physical descendants of Abraham. The Gentiles who are grafted in, as discussed in Romans 11, receive spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).

Furthermore, if the land portion was supposedly fulfilled under Joshua, why did God reiterate His promise to give the Jewish people the land hundreds of years after Joshua had passed off the scene and the Jewish people were languishing in captivity in Babylon? Yet God still promised, “They shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever” (Ezek. 37:25, emphasis added). In fact, God states, “I will . . . bring you into the land of Israel” (v. 12).

When the Lord called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, He brought him to a physical place, the land of Canaan. There the Lord told Abraham, “To your descendants I will give this land” (Gen. 12:7; cf. 26:3–4; 28:13–15). “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land [literal, physical, material] which you see I give to you and your descendants forever (13:14–15, emphasis added).

In Genesis 15:18 the Lord set physical boundaries for this Promised Land: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.”

The river of Egypt could refer to the Nile; but most likely it refers to the Wadi of Egypt, which cuts through the northeastern Sinai. From there the borders go all the way to modern Iraq and the Euphrates.

The prophet Obadiah fleshed out several additional boundaries. The Jewish people will possess “the mountains of Esau,” meaning, modern Jordan; the Philistine lowland, which is the Gaza strip; “the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria,” which the news media calls the West Bank.

God’s Unconditional

Personal: To Abraham

To bless him (material wealth, Gen. 13:2)
To make Abraham a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2)
To make his name great (Gen. 12:2)
To give him many physical descendants (Gen. 13:16; 15:4–5; 17:6)
To make him the father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:4–5)
To give him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Gen. 13:14–15, 17; 15:7; 17:8)
To bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him (Gen. 12:3)

Explanation: Although God gave some of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:2–3 and 13:14–17, He formally established the covenant in Genesis 15:7–21: “On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram” (v. 18). While Abraham was in a deep sleep, God (represented by a smoking oven and flaming torch) moved between the pieces of animals that He had commanded Abraham to cut into two halves. This
## Promises Through the Abrahamic Covenant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>National:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Universal:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To the People of Israel</strong></td>
<td><strong>To the People of the World</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To make a great nation of Abraham’s physical descendants (Gen. 12:2)</td>
<td>To bless all the families of the earth through Abraham’s physical line of descent (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 28:14)</td>
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<td>To give the land of Canaan, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, to Abraham’s physical descendants forever (Gen. 12:7; 13:14–15; 15:18–21; 17:8)</td>
<td>To bless those who bless Abraham’s descendants and curse those who curse them (Gen. 12:3; 27:29; Num. 24:8–9)</td>
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<td>To give the Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham’s descendants for an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7, 19)</td>
<td>God’s blessing or cursing of the peoples of the world would largely be determined by their behavior toward Israel. Jesus’ statements in Matthew 25 promise blessing to saved Gentiles who will aid persecuted Jews during the future Tribulation, and they promise judgment to unsaved Gentiles who will not (Mt. 25:31–46).</td>
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<td>Covenant is restated to Isaac (Gen. 26:1–4)</td>
<td>The fact that God promised to give Abraham’s physical descendants the land of Canaan forever and the covenant for an everlasting covenant demands that Israel never perish as a people. Should Israel perish, it could not possess the land forever and its Abrahamic Covenant could not be everlasting.</td>
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<td>Covenant is restated to Jacob, whom God renamed Israel (Gen. 28:10–14; 35:9–12; 48:4)</td>
<td>This covenant is not dependent on human obedience but on the faithfulness of God to His Word.</td>
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<td>Thus the covenant passed through Abraham’s physical seed.</td>
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Procedure of passing between the halves of animals was a common way of establishing covenants in Old Testament times (Jer. 34:18). Many years later, the instructions that Abraham’s great-grandson Joseph gave at the end of his life clearly indicate that he understood the Abrahamic Covenant to have been made with Abraham and his physical descendants: the people of Israel (Gen. 50:24–25).

The fact that God promised to give Abraham’s physical descendants the land of Canaan forever and the covenant for an everlasting covenant demands that Israel never perish as a people. Should Israel perish, it could not possess the land forever and its Abrahamic Covenant could not be everlasting.

This covenant is not dependent on human obedience but on the faithfulness of God to His Word.

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**End Notes**


By Thomas C. Simcox, Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.
Israel, like a cowboy in the old Wild West, did not wait for her enemy to draw—she had seen the glint in Nasser's eye.1

It was Randolph and Winston Churchill, son and grandson of the late British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who chose the Wild West analogy to express Israel's electrifying victory over Arab forces in June 1967.

Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, confident they could at last deliver a finishing blow and destroy Israel, prepared their forces to strike. The Syrian attacks on civilian Israeli targets had become increasingly aggressive. Believing war to be imminent, Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad appealed to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to join the coming fray.

So Egypt, Syria, and Jordan formed a mutual defense treaty and ordered the UN contingent out of the Sinai Peninsula. As usual, the UN peacekeepers ran like rabbits; and the Israelis made a fateful decision: They would not wait and become victims. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched a preemptive strike on June 5, 1967.

Not since the days of Joshua and the fabled fall of Jericho did victory come in what amounted to a heartbeat of history. In six days, little Israel turned back its enemies and, in the process, captured the Sinai Peninsula,

This June marks the 40th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli rule following the 1967 Six-Day War. In this photo, Jewish men celebrate by dancing in a circle at the Western Wall, which had been off limits to them for many years (Ted Spiegel/Corbis).
Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria (West Bank), the Jordan River, the Old City of Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Such feats would have made even the likes of Alexander the Great and the caesars of Rome green with envy.

By a feat of arms unparalleled in modern times, the Israelis, surrounded by enemies superior in quantity and quality of equipment and overwhelming superiority in numbers, had fought a war on three fronts and not only survived, but had won a resounding victory. As a paratrooper put it: This is an interesting country—there’s never a dull moment. You have a war; in six days it’s over and you have turned the whole world upside down.

And why, at that early stage of its existence as a state, would Israel react to seemingly insurmountable military odds by choosing to fight, rather than allowing the UN or others to seek concessional diplomacy? Israeli Gen. Ezer Weizman expressed it well:

You must understand why Israel was built here [in Palestine] rather than in Uganda or Canada [which had been proposed]. We could never have fought the way we have for a Jewish state in any other part of the world. Jerusalem, the West Bank of the Jordan, indeed the whole of Palestine has a very deep significance for us. It is the basis of Zionism.

Jerusalem, Above All Else

There is no question that the crown jewel in the diadem of Israel’s historic victory was Jerusalem. Examine it from any angle—historically, militarily, rationally, socially, or emotionally—there is nothing else to liken it to; Jerusalem is incomparable.

Initially, an Israeli attack on East Jerusalem (then in Jordanian hands) was out of the question. As a matter of fact, the Israeli government was communicating with Jordan’s King Hussein, assuring him it had no intention of attacking the Old City. Hussein, however, was talked into action by Nasser, who lied to the king by saying he was winning a smashing victory over the IDF and that, if Jordan wanted a part of the spoils, it should fire on Jewish forces in Jerusalem. When Hussein’s attack began, the Israelis were more surprised than afraid.

I once asked Gen. Uzi Narkiss, then central commander of Israeli forces in Jerusalem, what he considered to be the greatest miracle of the Six-Day War. He replied that it was not that his troops had taken the Old City. “We were very sure that, given the opportunity, we could take it,” he said. “The biggest miracle of the war was that, by believing Nasser’s lie and firing on us, Hussein gave us the opportunity to win the city. That was the real miracle.”

For people who had been cast abroad to wander among inhospitable Gentile nations and who had intoned the words next year in Jerusalem for two millennia as they sat at Passover tables the world over, the victory seemed almost beyond belief. Never had Israel’s national anthem, Hatikvah, which celebrates the hope that after 2,000 years Jewish people could live in freedom on the hills of Zion and Jerusalem, been sung with greater enthusiasm or tears.

Ask any Israelis today, who lived through that war, where they were when they heard the news of the reunification of Jerusalem, and you’ll most likely hear a heartrending personal account.

Among my favorites is one told me years ago by a bearded Orthodox leader at Kiryat Arba, a settlement outside the ancient city of Hebron:

How can I forget it? It was the greatest day of my life. At the time I was a tank commander and moving with my group from Jenin to the Jordan. We had stopped for some water and a bit of rest when one of the men opened the wireless radio. The first thing I heard was the announcer reading from the Psalms. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O, Jerusalem.” Then he went on to say that our soldiers had taken the Old City. Jerusalem was ours.

I cannot possibly explain to you how I felt. I do remember looking over at my commanding officer, who was not a religious Jew. Even so, the tears were streaming from his face and dripping through his beard.

The scene at the Western Wall was even more chaotic. Photographs taken there are indelibly etched in the minds and memories of that generation. And who can forget the image of Israel’s chief rabbi, Shlomo Goren, sounding the shofar and announcing that the Jewish people were again inhabiting their place of places, as he called Jewry worldwide to return home to Jerusalem.

On June 27, Israel officially annexed the Old City of Jerusalem, declaring its ancient capital as the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. In addition, the declaration assured all religions free access to their holy sites—a promise Israel has scrupulously kept over the last 40 years.

In the aftermath of the conflict, Israeli Gen. Moshe Dayan issued a list of terms for the world to hear:
1. Neither the Gaza Strip nor the West Bank would be returned.
2. Jerusalem would be retained, and all religions in the city would have their freedom guaranteed.
3. Passage through the Suez Canal would be secured.
4. All problems between Israel and the Arabs would be settled by direct contact between them.

Forty Years of Progress?

Looking back on the past 40 years brings, at the very least, a spate of mixed emotions. All of us, Jews and believing Gentiles, saw great hope for the future in the triumphant return of the sons and daughters of Abraham to the city where the ancients of Jewry and Christianity had trod the streets and mounted the way to the Temple Mount. But while Israel has earnestly sought
genuine peace with its neighbors, its neighbors have yet to reciprocate to any appreciable degree. Gen. Dayan was correct in the details he laid out for the future. Today the majority of them have been cast to the wind.

In its weakness and desire to curry favor with the West and mollify its enemies, Israel has retreated from the Gaza with disastrous results. And incomprehensibly, the nation seems determined to make the same mistake with territories in Judea and Samaria. Jerusalem is in the process of being negotiated away from exclusive Jewish control and split into sections that will benefit Israel’s enemies rather than the rightful heirs of the city.

The international community has no right or basis for commandeering the destiny of Israel and the Palestinians. First, doing so constitutes a breach of the basic premise that negotiations should only be conducted by the parties involved: the Arabs and the Jews. To say that others must step in and force the issues because the Arabs are unwilling to negotiate responsibly is a misguided approach and decidedly unfair to Israel.

Second, after all that we have seen, heard, and experienced in the war on terror, our leaders still don’t or won’t get the picture. The fiction that there is a difference between events in Israel and those in other parts of the Middle East—namely, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan—and that those events have nothing in common with Israel, defies belief. Such an attitude is, in actuality, a self-imposed state of denial that only encourages the people who wish to harm us all.

It is important to understand what some of our leaders seem to have difficulty with. Jerusalem—all of it—is the rightful province of the Chosen People. June 7, 1967, was a triumphal entry of the Jewish people into the city of their fathers. The imperative is to celebrate that entry, not to disparage it. Israel’s recapturing of Jerusalem righted a 2,000-year-old wrong perpetrated by Rome, which exiled the Jews from their eternal city. And the world today has no business denying the Jewish people their beloved capital and large chunks of their homeland.

The Arabs have their Mecca and Medina, and neither the Jewish people nor Christians nor the Western nations question it. The Jewish people, on any scale, have the right to possess their Jerusalem. Why assist the enemies of Jews, Christians, and Westerners by forcing Israel to forfeit those rights to revisionist usurpers who will, once again, erect “No Jews Allowed” signs over the most sacred of Jewish places?

The hour has long since passed to say, “Enough is enough!” As it goes for Jerusalem, so it will go for the rest of us. Don’t be deluded into thinking anything less.

Happy Birthday, Jerusalem!

**Endnotes**

2 Ibid., 191.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 147.
5 Ibid., 200–201.

*Elwood McQuaid is executive editor for The Friends of Israel.*
Additionally, if the church is now “spiritual Israel,” as Replacement Theology claims, who is now spiritual Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Egypt, and all the other nations mentioned in the Old Testament?

3. God’s Character. The allegorical method also raises serious questions about God’s veracity. If, in the Old Testament, God promised Israel a literal, earthly Kingdom, but He really meant a figurative, immaterial kingdom, what does that say about God’s character? Does God deceive His people with literal promises and then hold them accountable for not recognizing that they were actually figurative?

In contrast, when a literal hermeneutic is used consistently, there results a consistent understanding of Scripture as a whole. Separate administrations of God’s rule on Earth come to light. A distinct program for both Israel and the church is revealed (not two ways of salvation, but a distinct plan and program). New Testament revelation does not redefine Old Testament concepts.

In addition, a massive amount of unfulfilled, prophetic Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, is faced squarely and addressed. End-times events begin to take shape and fall into their proper chronological places. And God’s character is not impugned, but vindicated. His glory is seen as the chief goal of all of history.

A literal hermeneutic does not make these things so. Rather, it reveals them to be so.

When a literal hermeneutic is used consistently to understand Scripture, the end result is Dispensationalism. When a literal hermeneutic is not used consistently, the end result is Replacement Theology.

by Bruce Scott, staffing coordinator for The Friends of Israel
The definitive New Testament chapter on the identification of Israel and the prophetic destiny and relationship of Christians to the Jewish people is chapter 11 of the book of Romans. God spelled out in clear detail whether He is through with Israel and whether Christians have forever displaced the Chosen People in the plan of God.

Romans 11 also identifies the unmerited grace extended to Gentiles as a result of Israel being temporarily set aside. Beyond these profound clarifications, it draws back the veil of the future, revealing the road beyond the dark days of global, cataclysmic upheaval that lie ahead.

The core issue involves understanding that, whatever detractors may say about Israel’s hour of opportunity passing with the final phase of the Old Testament or rejection of the Messiah, the New Testament proves them wrong. Israel was, is, and shall forever be the central theme of prophetic and historical reality. There is a truism in sports that can well be applied on the field of biblical, dispensational discourse: Always keep your eye on the ball. In the venue under discussion, always keep your eye on Israel.

An Assurance

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! [Don’t ever let it enter your mind!]. . . . God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew (Rom. 11:1–2).

Even in the darkest hours of Israel’s spiritual slippage, God, through His infinite grace, preserved the nation and retained a remnant. An example is the Lord’s response to the prophet Elijah’s
railing against the Israelites when, satu-
rated with idolatry, they resisted the
preaching of the prophets and persecut-
ed the divine messengers. “But what
does the divine response say to him? ‘I
have reserved for Myself seven thou-
sand men who have not bowed the knee
to Baal’” (v. 4).

Fast-forward to the present. The Word
declares, “Even so then, at this present
time there is a remnant according to the
election of grace” (v. 5).

Israel’s grace-remnant accentuates
verse 11:25: “blindness in part has
happened to Israel” (emphasis added). For
this reason and others, it is inaccurate to
state that the entire nation is in rebellion
against God. As a matter of fact, there are
at least three broad categories of religious
opinion among Jewish people. First, there
is the aforementioned remnant of believ-
ers in the Messiah, Jesus. Then there is
the core of Conservative, Orthodox, and
ultra-Orthodox Jews who are believers in
God. Then come the agnostics and athe-
is who doubt or reject belief in Jehovah.
The issue, therefore, is not that a
major segment of Jewish people have
no belief in God; they do. The issue is
the identity of the Messiah. This is not
a trivial distinction; it places the focus
of the last days squarely on the
Messiah and on the nation’s heart
being turned to Him.

An Enigma

So many things that seem cloudy to
our finite minds are settled in God’s
mind and are revealed to us in due
season. So it is with the partial blind-
ing of Israel (vv. 8–10). Why would it
be so? And why would Gentiles, a
truly godless, barbaric, idol-worship-
ing, depraved, and spiritually bot-
tomed-out lot, be extended mercy?

I say then, have they [partially blinded
Israel] stumbled that they should fall?
Certainly not! But through their fall,
to provoke them to jealousy, salvation
has come to the Gentiles. Now if their
fall is riches for the world, and their
failure riches for the Gentiles, how
much more their fullness! (vv. 11–12).

Here’s a peg upon which two semi-
inal revelations are hung: (1) Incompre-
hensible grace is being extended to
unworthy Gentiles and (2) Israel’s
long-sought, future fullness and glory
are indelibly assured.

The evidence is in: God is saving
Gentiles, and Israel will have its unique
place as the consummate theocracy in
ages to come. Thus, in spite of how
Replacement Theology devotees would
like to see it, the church and Israel are
separate entities; and you cannot accept
one and dismiss the other.

An Obligation

The facts of the case reveal that, in re-
ality, the church is a miraculous but tempo-
rary phenomenon on a mission to make
Him known until the Bride is complete
and the Rapture removes believers. Using
the analogy of a cultivated olive tree
(Israel), the apostle Paul depicted the
church as a cluster of wild branches, graft-
ed in for a purpose that extends beyond
merely rescuing Gentiles by grace:

And if some of the branches were bro-
ken 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. For if God did
not spare the natural branches, He may not
spare you either (vv. 17–18, 21).

Pride of position, tainted with dis-
dain for the Jewish people and cynicism
about God’s love for them, is precisely
what God warns us against here.
Scripture condemns anti-Semitism in all
forms—subtle or aggressive. That it is
becoming fashionable in a world in sec-
ular overdrive, however, is predicted.
Second Thessalonians speaks of a tide of
apostasy (falling away from the faith)
that precedes Christ’s Second Advent.
Among the most odious manifestations
of societal failure is theological anti-
Semitism, which is on the rise in
Christian circles, including some consid-
ered evangelical. In the current climate,
one might conjecture that we are now
entering such a period.

Nevertheless, Israel’s full restaura-
tion is assured:

Now if their fall is riches for the
world, . . . how much more their
fullness! For God is able to graft
them in again (vv. 12, 23).

God’s purpose in blessing Gentiles
with redemption through the Jewish
people, who gave us the Scriptures and
the Christ, is to make Gentile Christians
ministers of “provocation” (v. 11). That
is, Christians should so live that others,
Jewish and Gentile, will be provoked to
consider Christ. To live otherwise is to
deny our obligation and scorn the privi-
lege of being a light to the world.

An Explanation

For I do not desire, brethren, that you
should be ignorant of this mystery,
lest you should be wise in your own
opinion, that blindness in part has
happened to Israel until the fullness
of the Gentiles has come in (v. 25).

The day is coming when “the full-
ness of the Gentiles” will have come
in. In simple terms, the church is on
the road to the Rapture—when the
number of Gentiles to be saved is com-
plete, the church program is finished,
and the Lord comes to catch us away
(Jn. 14: 1–4; 1 Th. 4:13–17).

His any-moment return is the great
incentive to be about the Lord’s work
until that transcendng journey. It is
also an incentive of another kind.

Not being reared in church or
Sunday school was my lot in life during
my formative years. Knowing lit-
tle of God, I held the vague, unset-
tering opinion that, when I died, it was
the dark and a hole in the ground for
me. My first formal contact with the
message of the gospel was at a mass
meeting in Detroit, Michigan, where
a Hebrew-Christian evangelist was
speaking. I left the building after the
meeting much the same as I’d gone
in, but with this difference: I came
away convinced of three things: (1)
The Bible was the Word of God, (2)
Christ was coming again, and (3) I
was not ready to meet Him.

For six months thereafter I was
consumed with the fact that the Lord
might come at any moment and find
me wanting; the experience was
known in those days as conviction.
Late one night the issue was settled. I
became a born-again Christian. That
was nearly 60 years ago. And I can
tell you that the imminent return
of Christ is as real to me today as it was
on that spring night in 1948.

My expectancy is bound to what we
have before us in Scripture. The next
great event on the divine calendar is the Rapture of the church—or, as in this text, the day when the fullness of the Gentiles will have 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” (vv. 26–27).*

What is being said here is this: Our Lord never forgets a promise. He has made an irreversible covenant with the Jewish people concerning their land and their King. And those are forever promises. They are as unalterable as is His promise of eternal life to believers. You are as assured of heaven today as you will be the moment you step over the threshold into glory.

Prophetic revelation does not end with the Church Age. In a sense, the Church Age is only the beginning. We are reminded to keep an eye on Israel. That admonition was never truer than it is today. One day all of Israel will be drawn to the promised Deliverer and will believe and be saved. The Word reaches us through the prophet Isaiah:

> “The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” says the Lord. “As for Me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the Lord, “from this time and forevermore” (59:20–21).

As God directs, we can say with the apostle Paul, “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29).

Furthermore, as we scan the entire field of dispensational truth—God’s road map to eternity—we can but exclaim,

> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen (vv. 33–36).”

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**THE ‘MAIN THING’**

**M**y youngest daughter has just completed her sophomore year at a secular university. It took her almost the entire two years to find a church where she could worship that did not consider itself the “new Israel” and that did not believe God is utterly finished with the Jewish people.

As we prepared this issue of *Israel My Glory*, a friend gave me a few sage words of advice: “Keep the main thing the main thing.” The “main thing” is not how many dispensations there are. Nor is it the myriad of differences we could name between Covenant Replacement Theology and Dispensational Theology. The “main thing” is what my daughter focused on when she asked each church she visited for its doctrinal statement. The “main thing” is Israel.

When I was a new believer, I spent many hours listening to preaching on the radio. Fortunately, we had an outstanding Christian radio station in my area, run by a devout believer who was careful about what he allowed on the air. One day I was listening to a well-known Presbyterian minister who was beginning a series on the book of Isaiah.

He began his message by telling this story. Many years ago, as a young preacher fresh out of seminary, he believed that all the wonderful promises God gave to Israel in the Old Testament now went to the church. Israel’s day had come and gone. Israel had sinned, lost its land, and was replaced by the church—God’s new called-out people. (An interesting quirk about this viewpoint is that people who espouse it still let the real Israel keep all the curses God promised but give all the blessings to the church.)

This young preacher’s wife, however, took the Bible a little more literally. She believed that when God made a promise, He kept it. So, he said, his wife prayed every day that he would come to a better, more accurate understanding of God’s Word.

One day he decided to study the book of Isaiah in earnest. Overwhelmed by the magnificent promises God had given to Israel, he began to analyze his view of God. What kind of God did he serve who would make such grand promises and then take them away and give them to someone else?

Finally, he concluded, he had to make a decision about God. Either God was (1) incapable of fulfilling the promises He made to Israel or (2) He was a liar and never intended to fulfill the promises He made to Israel or (3) He was still going to fulfill the promises He made to Israel. He chose number three.

As civilization deteriorates around us and the Muslim lobby in America and the West grows stronger each day, the world—including much of Christendom—would have us believe that the land on which the Jewish nation sits is either up for grabs or rightfully belongs to the Arabs. But the main thing is still the main thing. Israel is not the church, and the church is not Israel.

The fact is that God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his physical descendants via an unconditional covenant that has never been abrogated. Many people confuse the Mosaic Covenant—which required Israel’s obedience—with the Abrahamic Covenant, which did not. Because the Israelites did not keep the Mosaic Covenant, they forfeited the temporal blessings they could have had and were expelled from their land temporarily as punishment. But they still hold the title deed, given to them by God.

The New Covenant—which God also made with Israel—in Jeremiah 31 replaces the Mosaic Covenant, not the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant—land provision and all—has been watertight ever since God gave it in Genesis and repeated it throughout the Old Testament.

The God I serve is not impotent. He is not called God Almighty for nothing. If He could create the world in six days, part the Red Sea to allow 2.5 million people plus livestock to make it from Egypt to Canaan on dry land, rain manna from heaven for 40 years to feed His people whom He led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, then He certainly is capable of bringing Israel back to Himself spiritually and blessing the Jewish people physically with the land He promised them.
The Abrahamic Covenant was not based on Israel’s obedience but on God’s love: “Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them” (Dt. 4:37). Moses told the Israelites, 

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers (Dt. 7:7–8, emphasis added).

Moses warned them that if they forsook God, they would be scattered among the nations and persecuted (Lev. 26:14–39; Dt. 28:15–68). But even then, said the Lord, if they humble themselves and “accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land” (Lev. 26:41–42). Why? Because God gave the land to the Jewish people “for all time” (Dt. 4:40).

What kind of God do you serve? If you have been grafted into the household of faith via the New Covenant, you have become a spiritual descendant of Abraham, not a physical one. And if God will not be faithful to His promises to Israel, how can you trust God to be faithful to His promises to you? Like the Abrahamic Covenant, the New Covenant is unconditional. It is not based on your continued obedience; it is based on God’s love for you (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

Fortunately for us all, “God is not a man, that He should lie, . . . Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Num. 23:19). Then He must “make good” the Abrahamic Covenant, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance” (1 Chr. 16:16–18; Ps. 105:9–11).

And He also will make good the New Covenant that He made with Israel by physically delivering and spiritually regenerating the entire nation in a single day (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:26). After that, He will make good the Davidic Covenant by seating Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, on David’s throne to rule over the Messianic Kingdom, first for 1,000 years and then forever (2 Sam. 7:12, 16; Isa. 9:7; Rev. 20:4, 6).

Do not be deceived by the philosophies of men who “interpret” what God says in a way that makes Him say entirely the opposite of what is written in His Word. Keep the main thing the main thing. Israel and the church are not the same. What is the same is Almighty God’s unconditional love for them both.

The following passage was spoken and written by the prophet Jeremiah to the Jewish people, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If the God you serve is omnipotent, faithful, and true, this passage cannot apply to anyone other than national Israel:

“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place [the land of Israel], and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.” For thus says the Lord: “Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them” (Jer. 32:37–42).

by Lorna Simcox, editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel
The Roots of Replacement Theology

by WILLIAM L. KREWSON

(Composition and digital illustration, Thomas E. Williams)
That erroneous statement was written by a Christian who addressed himself to a Jewish man as they debated about Christianity. He later added, “We who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ are the true Israelitic race.”

The debate occurred almost 1,900 years ago (A.D. 155) between Justin Martyr and his Jewish opponent, Trypho. In a mere 50 years after the last book of the New Testament was written, Gentile Christians had already come to believe that their church had replaced the Jewish people in God’s program and that the only thing the Jewish nation could look forward to was condemnation.

Unfortunately, the roots of Replacement Theology, also known as “supersessionism,” run deep in Christian history.

Misinterpreting Scripture

The early church, now with a Gentile majority, defended itself against Roman paganism and Judaism. Its attack against paganism revealed the clear differences between the two; but its opposition to Judaism created complications, since both Christianity and Judaism shared the same Scriptures as well as other common beliefs.

In an attempt to define themselves as the true inheritors of Israel’s relationship with God, Gentile Christians eradicated the Jewish people from God’s plans, substituting themselves instead. The Gentile church claimed to displace the Jews as God’s people from that time on and forevermore and blamed the Jews for rejecting Jesus, which the church said led God to reject them.

How could the early Christians read the promises that God had made to Israel and justify this substitution? They found that they could do so only by spiritualizing the promises. This method of interpretation allowed them to replace Israel as the beneficiary of God’s unfilled promises. The words of these early Christian leaders reveal their theology of replacement.

Here is a sample of writings from the first 300 years of the church. The Epistle of Barnabas, written around A.D. 100, states that the Jews have no further claim to God’s promises:

“Take heed now to yourselves, and do not be like some, adding largely to your sins, and saying, “The covenant is both theirs and ours.” But they thus finally lost it.”

Irenaeus, writing around A.D. 180, said, “They who boast themselves as being the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, are disinherited from the grace of God.”

Origen, the most prolific writer of the early church (c. A.D. 250), grounded his Replacement Theology in allegorical interpretation. For instance, when explaining that Jesus was sent to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 15:24), he argued that the lost sheep are not Jews, who are “carnal” Israel, but Christians, who are “heavenly” Israel.

John Chrysostom preached such a message in the capital city of the Roman Empire in A.D. 387:

“It is because you killed Christ. . . . It is because you shed the precious blood, that there is now no restoration, no mercy anymore and no defense. . . . You have committed the ultimate transgression. This is why you are being punished worse now than in the past. . . . If this were not the case God would not have turned his back on you so completely.”

Correcting Supersessionism

Although some Old Testament promises are fulfilled by the New Testament church, others will be fulfilled by Israel. For example, Jesus Christ taught that Israel has a future in God’s plan:

“Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28).”
Jesus spoke of the time when the entire earth will be regenerated and the Kingdom of God will come to Earth with Jesus as King. At that time Jesus will reign, along with the 12 apostles who will judge Israel’s 12 tribes.

Shortly before Jesus’ ascension, His disciples asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). These disciples had been with Jesus for 40 days, during which time He had taught them about God’s Kingdom (v. 3). Surely they would have known enough from those six weeks to ask an appropriate question about God’s Kingdom and Israel’s relation to it.

Jesus did not correct their view of a literal Israelite Kingdom; He left that untouched. He simply told them that the time of that Kingdom’s arrival is known only by the Father (v. 7). In this brief passage, Jesus affirmed a future Jewish Kingdom. Israel had not been replaced by the church.

In fact, in Romans 11 the Jewish apostle Paul warned Gentile Christians against being proud of their position. He declared that God intends for Gentiles to make Israel envious of the church’s relationship with the God of Abraham (v. 11). Sadly, Christian anti-Semitism has led to the opposite of God’s intent.

Paul stated that Gentiles are merely wild olive branches who have been grafted into the tree, which carries the rich sap of the promises God made to Abraham (vv. 17–19). He condemned the attitude of superiority that had already begun to rear its head against Jewish people who did not believe in Jesus (vv. 20–24). And he revealed the amazing truth that all the people of Israel living at the end of the age will be redeemed when their Messiah Jesus returns to forgive them (vv. 25–27).

Notice his conclusion: “Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers” (v. 28). One day “all Israel will be saved” (v. 26).

Moses told the Israelites, The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers (Dt. 7:7–8).

And though Israel rejects the gospel today, it still remains chosen and deeply loved by God because of His promises to Abraham.

WHO IS ISRAEL?

To whom does the term Israel refer? Many Christians today claim the word Israel in the Bible refers to the church because the church, they say, has replaced Israel in God’s program for mankind. Others, including The Friends of Israel, say that Israel always means Israel and the church is never called Israel.

The first view, known as Replacement Theology, negates all Bible prophecy that has to do with a future, physical Kingdom of David over which Christ will reign for 1,000 years because it does not interpret prophecy in a literal manner. Dispensational Theology, however, uses a consistent historical-grammatical (also called plain or normal) approach to Bible interpretation.

Here, in their own words, are comments from both viewpoints, so you can easily see how they differ.

**Micah 4:1–2**

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

**Replacement View:** Bruce Waltke sees present fulfillment, as “today all nations come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb. 12:22), which was formerly symbolized by earthly Mount Zion.” Waltke believes that “prophecies about events prior to Pentecost find a material fulfillment. . . . With Christ’s ascension from earth to heaven . . . the earthly material symbols were done away and the spiritual reality portrayed by the symbols superseded the earthly shadows.” Thus there is no future fulfillment by literal Israel, but a present fulfillment by “spiritual Israel,” meaning, the church.

**Dispensational View:** Gary Smith interprets the passage as describing the future: “Micah and all the other prophets think this new era will take place at the geographic location of Jerusalem (and that is how we should interpret the meaning of this verse). . . . Since there are still many Jews and Gentiles who have not come to God today, since there is still plenty of war around the world, and since God is not reigning as king on the Earth, I conclude that this prophecy was not fulfilled in the New Testament period.”
Matthew 19:28

Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Replacement View: Without explanation, Craig Blomberg rejects the plain meaning of the text: “Both the Twelve and Israel seem respectively to represent believers and lost humanity in general. . . . The comparison of the Twelve with the twelve tribes of Israel again highlights the theme of the church replacing Israel as the locus of God’s saving activity in the new age.”

Dispensational View: Dispensationalists refuse to reinterpret Israel, instead placing this passage in the eschatological future. Michael Wilkins sees it as “a future time of renewal, the hope that was basic to Jewish expectation of Israel’s future national restoration. . . . Jesus predicts a time of renewal when the Twelve will participate in the final establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, when Israel will be restored to the land and the Twelve will rule with Jesus Messiah.”

Acts 1:6–7

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.”

Replacement View: John Stott disparages the disciples’ question, assuming that it “must have filled Jesus with dismay. Were they still so lacking in perception? . . . The verb, the noun and the adverb of their sentence all betray doctrinal confusion about the kingdom. For the verb restore shows that they were expecting a political and territorial kingdom; the noun Israel that they were expecting a national kingdom; and the adverbial clause at this time that they were expecting its immediate establishment. In his reply (7–8) Jesus corrected their mistaken notions of the kingdom’s nature, extent and arrival.”

Simon Kistemaker assumes that the church has replaced Israel: “If we interpret the text to mean the restoration of spiritual Israel, Jesus intimates that the disciples with their reference to Israel are too restrictive. The gospel of salvation is for all nations. Hence Jesus instructs them to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (v. 8). Conclusively, then, in light of Jesus’ answer it is possible and even plausible to give a spiritual interpretation of the apostles’ question.”

Dispensational View: The dispensational view defends the disciples’ understanding of the Kingdom. Wrote Homer Kent Jr.: “It is obvious from their question that the kingdom referred to was the one which the Jews looked for Messiah to establish (Isa. 9:6–7; 11:10–12). Many conclude that this question indicated a complete misunderstanding of the nature of Christ’s kingdom. . . . However, it must be noted that Christ’s answer did not say that there would be no literal kingdom. He merely said that the time of the establishment would not now be revealed to them.”

This point distinguishes the dispensationalist from the replacement theologian: “The national future of Israel is most definitely assured. . . . Jesus responded directly to their question about time. He most certainly did not resignify their understanding about ‘restoring the kingdom to Israel.’ . . . There can be no doubt that this ‘restoration’ about which the Old Testament prophets spoke focused on national Israel,” wrote C. Blaising and D. Bock.

Conclusion

Would that more theologians who replace Israel would reconsider their views, as did New Testament scholar C. E. B. Cranfield, who offered words of personal regret while commenting on Romans 9—11: “These three chapters emphatically forbid us to speak of the Church as having once and for all taken the place of the Jewish people. . . . And I confess with shame to having also myself used in print on more than one occasion this language of the replacement of Israel by the Church.”

Endnotes


by William L. Kenison
### Explanation

This chart represents a fair understanding of the dispensations. Each dispensation (after Innocence) brings additional divine revelation, increased spiritual help, and a corresponding change in mankind’s responsibilities—all with a view to glorifying God.

Most replacement theologians focus on the redemption principle of Scripture, viewing everything through its lens. While profoundly grateful for redemption, dispensationalists focus on the stewardship principle, viewing everything through the lens of God’s plan to glorify Himself.

Thankfully, our redemption is an important part of that plan. The Law is the codification of God’s holiness and righteousness. It was designed to help mankind understand God’s holiness and to enable Israel to glorify God by keeping the Law. The church, on the other hand, is to glorify God by living a holy life under the control of the Holy Spirit. As a revelation of God’s righteousness and holiness, the Law is valid forever. But as a stewardship for glorifying God, the Law is no longer valid. Israel’s Law stewardship ended with Christ’s death.

### Time Frame and Duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innocence</th>
<th>Conscience</th>
<th>Human Govt.</th>
<th>Promise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation to Fall of Man</td>
<td>Fall of Man to Flood</td>
<td>Flood to Tower of Babel</td>
<td>Abraham to Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Genesis 1—3**

**Genesis 4—8**

**Genesis 9—11**

**Genesis 12—13**

### Goal of Stewardship

- **Innocence**: by governing the earth in worshipful submission to God
- **Conscience**: by walking before God with a clear conscience
- **Human Govt.**: by governing one another with a view to promoting God’s righteousness
- **Promise**: by living by faith in God’s verbal promises to the patriarchs

### God’s Judgment for Failing as Stewards

- **Innocence**: Death, Expulsion From the Garden of Eden
- **Conscience**: Universal Flood
- **Human Govt.**: Confusion of Languages
- **Promise**: Israel Enslaved in Egypt
The chart represents a fair understanding of the dispensations. Each dispensation (after Innocence) brings additional divine revelation, increased spiritual help, and a corresponding change in mankind’s responsibilities—all with a view to glorifying God.

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**Duration in Scripture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Spirit (Grace)</th>
<th>Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Mount Sinai to Pentecost</td>
<td>Pentecost to Second Advent</td>
<td>Second Advent and 1,000-year Reign to End of Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2—Exodus 19</td>
<td>Exodus 20—Acts 1</td>
<td>Acts 2—Revelation 19</td>
<td>Revelation 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal of Stewardship: To Glorify God**

- by faith in God’s promises to the patriarchs
- by living in conformity to the Law
- by walking under the control of the Holy Spirit
- by living in New Covenant harmony with the risen, glorified King

**Failure as Stewards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Jerusalem Destroyed, Israelites Dispersed</th>
<th>Worldwide Tribulation</th>
<th>Satan’s Final Deception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enslaved Egypt</td>
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The church’s stewardship will end with the Rapture. Then seven years of Tribulation (Daniel’s 70th Week) will bring (1) God’s judgment on the Gentiles for their failure under the Spirit stewardship and (2) God’s restoration of Israel to Himself through the full implementation of the New Covenant and its new stewardship, which was ratified at Christ’s death. Initially, national Israel will put its trust in the wrong covenant—the anticovenant, so to speak—to be made with a political leader who will turn out to be the Antichrist.

Eventually, however, Israel will trust God’s everlasting covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus will return to establish Israel’s Kingdom, and the Times of the Gentiles will end with the Antichrist’s death. The primary focus of the book of Revelation is Israel’s deliverance and restoration.

(Panel: 1, 5, 6 and 7, FOI Archive; 2, Thomas E. Williams; 3, Scala/Art Resource, NY; 4, Bettmann/Corbis)
The Bible presents a philosophy of history. It reveals God’s purpose for history and enables us to understand why things have happened in the past, why the world is the way it is today, and what is to happen in the future.

This philosophy begins in eternity past when the personal, sovereign God of the Bible decided to have a Kingdom over which He could rule as the sovereign King. God created the universe as the realm of His universal Kingdom (Ex. 20:11) and made two kinds of personal subjects: angels to serve Him primarily in the heavenly realm and humans to whom He gave dominion over the earthly realm of His universal Kingdom (Gen. 1:26–28; Ps. 103:19–22; 148:2–5).

The fact that God gave mankind dominion over the earth indicates that He established a theocracy as Earth’s original form of government. In a theocracy, God’s rule is administered through a representative. God appointed the first man, Adam, to be this representative, with the responsibility to administer God’s rule the way God wanted it to be administered.

After God created His universal Kingdom, He pronounced it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). But later the most magnificent angel God created, “the anointed cherub who covers,” who was “perfect” from the day he was created until “iniquity was found” in him, became consumed with pride because of his beauty (Ezek. 28:14–15; 1 Tim. 3:6). So he began a war to overthrow God and usurp the position of sovereign Ruler of the universe. He boasted, “I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14). And thus he became Satan, the great adversary—or enemy—of God.

Satan prompted other angels to join his revolt and persuaded Adam, God’s earthly representative, to rebel against God (Gen. 3:1–12; Mt. 25:41). Because God’s human representative defected, the earthly theocracy was lost. Through his defection, called the fall of man, Adam handed over the rule of the world system to God’s enemy; and Satan and his forces have dominated it ever since (Lk. 4:5–7; Jn. 14:30; 1 Jn. 5:19).

Since the goal of Satan’s war is to overthrow God and usurp the position of sovereign Ruler, God’s purpose for history is to glorify Himself by demonstrating that He alone is the sovereign God of the universe.

For God to accomplish this purpose for history, He must crush Satan and eliminate him from the earth, along with his evil rule of the world system. Then God must restore His theocracy. Doing so will require another Adam, a human representative, administering God’s rule over the entire earth for the last age of its history. Were God not to accomplish these things before the history of the present earth ends, then God would be defeated by Satan.
the flood in Noah’s day, capital punishment, human government, different languages and nations, false religions, Israel, anti-Semitism, the plagues of Egypt, the Exodus, the Red Sea miracle, and the Mosaic Law. It also prompted how Satan and God used for their purposes such nations as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Through Old Testament prophets, God revealed that the promised Redeemer would be His eternal Son whom He would give to the world through incarnation by human birth via an Israelite, virgin woman. From within Israel, His Son would rule the theocratic Kingdom of God forever from the throne of His ancestor David (Isa. 7:14; 9:6–7; Mic. 5:2).

Despite Satan’s contrary attempts, God brought the Redeemer into the world. He was born of the virgin Mary in Israel during the reign of Herod the Great, the Roman-appointed ruler of that nation. The Redeemer’s God-assigned, human name was Jesus (Hebrew, Yeshua, “salvation”) because, as Savior, He would deal effectively with mankind’s sin (Mt. 1:18—2:2; Lk. 1:26–38; 2:1–20).

Satan failed to prevent the Redeemer from coming. So his next move to escape being crushed was to try to prevent the Redeemer from completing the work that God sent Him to do. Satan used three lines of attack against Jesus: He tried to kill Him, corrupt Him, and force rejection of Him.

First, through Herod and others, Satan tried in vain to destroy Jesus before the Redeemer could complete His God-assigned mission (Mt. 2:1–18; Lk. 4:16–30; Jn. 8:37–44). Second, he offered Jesus the rule of the world system, tempting Him to worship Satan and thereby defect from God. But Jesus refused (Lk. 4:5–6). Third, he worked in the hearts of people who heard the message of the future Kingdom of God, prompting them to reject Jesus as the Messiah and His offer of that Kingdom (Mt. 13:18–19).

Yet God sovereignly used the satanically prompted rejection of both Jesus and His offer of the Kingdom as His means of getting Jesus to the cross to become the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). Jesus’ cry, “It is finished,” signified that He completed the task of dealing effectively with mankind’s sin—the task necessary for God to accomplish His purpose for history (Jn. 19:28–30).

Jesus’ work on the cross sealed Satan’s doom. It brought a sentence of divine judgment that God will execute on His enemy in the future (Jn. 16:11).

Israel Loses Preeminence

So Satan failed to prevent Jesus from dealing effectively with mankind’s sin. However, since Jesus died, and a dead Messiah cannot rule the world, Satan wanted to keep Him dead. Thus Israel’s religious leaders received Pilate’s permission to make the tomb secure (Mt. 27:62–66). But God sovereignly resurrected Jesus bodily from the tomb (28:1–7).

Although thousands of Jewish people accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Savior, Israel as a nation did not. Thus it did not meet the spiritual requirement of repentance for the theocratic Kingdom of God—the restored Davidic Kingdom—to come (3:1–2; 4:17, 23; 10:1–7).

Centuries earlier God had foretold that it would be so (Isa. 53). But God also foretold that in the future, Israel will repent and the future theocratic Kingdom of God will come (Zech. 12—14). Peter indicated the same (Acts 3:12–22).

God has determined that Israel will be the spiritual leader of the world in His future Kingdom (Isa. 2:1–4; 61:6; Zech. 8:20–23). To become that leader, Israel must be spiritually right with God.

Because Israel must repent before God will crush Satan and restore His theocracy, Satan has tried repeatedly to destroy Israel before it can do so. The Holocaust of World War II was one of those satanic attempts. And, unfortunately, more are on the way.
Almost 2,000 years have transpired since Israel as a nation failed to accept Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer. Who would carry God’s message of salvation to the world while Israel was spiritually sidelined (Rom. 11)?

In eternity past God determined to form a new entity to do His work during this interval: the church. The church would be international in scope, comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles from all over the world (Eph. 2:11—3:11). It was born on the Day of Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 2; 11:15).

Jesus ordered the church to take the gospel (“good news”) of His death, burial, and resurrection to all people the world over and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19–20; Mk. 16:15). Now Satan had to deal with the church.

First, he tried to destroy it physically through persecution. Although many Jewish and Gentile Christians lost their lives as martyrs, the church continued to grow and spread throughout the Roman Empire. Thus, by the early fourth century,
Satan concluded that he could not destroy the church physically.

So he then worked to pervert it through beliefs and practices contrary to the Bible. He used two means to accomplish this goal: the union of church and state, and Replacement Theology.

From A.D. 311 to 380, the Roman government changed from trying to annihilate Christianity to making it the only religion allowed. Because of this marriage of church and state, large numbers of unbelievers came into churches, flooding them with pagan beliefs and practices.

In addition, Gentile church leaders took up Greek philosophical and anti-Semitic views. Less than a century after the apostles, key Gentile church leaders formulated the idea that, since Israel as a nation rejected Jesus, God permanently rejected Israel and replaced it with the church. Thus the church became the “Israel of God.” This erroneous view is called Replacement Theology.

The combination of pagan beliefs and practices with Greek philosophy and anti-Semitism radically changed organized Christendom’s ecclesiology (nature and function of the church) and eschatology (doctrine of future things).

In Ecclesiology. Since pagan religions and Israel both had multistoried priesthoods, the church developed a priestly, hierarchical structure derived from elders and priests to one high priest at the top and different levels of priests underneath.

And since pagan religions and Israel had continuing blood sacrifices, the church began changing the significance of communion from a memorial of Jesus’ death (the Scriptural view) to a continuing blood sacrifice of the Savior.

In Eschatology. The church’s original view was Chiliasm (today called Premillennialism, which is The Friends of Israel’s view). Chiliasm maintained that the Messiah would someday come and reign politically as King over the earthly, theocratic Kingdom of God throughout the last age of the present earth’s history.

Because this was also ancient Israel’s view, anti-Semitic, Gentile church leaders rejected it as being “Jewish opinions.” They replaced it with a new view called Amillennialism. This view claimed there would be no future, earthly, political, theocratic Kingdom of God ruled by the Messiah. Instead, the future Kingdom of God foretold in the Bible became the church—a totally spiritual, rather than political, kingdom established by Jesus in conjunction with His First Coming.

The Roman Catholic Church, which adopted Replacement Theology and Amillennialism throughout the Middle Ages, claimed to be the Kingdom of God on Earth foretold in the Bible and therefore believed it had the right to enforce its beliefs and policies on all people. It thereby developed into a powerful religious, political machine that dominated every aspect of life in Western Europe for many centuries, even to the point of setting up and removing kings and emperors and severely persecuting multitudes of Jews.

The reformers of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation broke from the Roman Catholic Church in several areas of ecclesiology and doctrine. They emphasized the following New Testament truths: justification by faith alone, the priesthood of every believer, and the Bible as the authority for faith and practice.

But in eschatology, they rejected Chiliasm (Premillennialism) as “Jewish opinions” and maintained the amillennial view of the Roman Catholic Church.

Satan Infests Protestantism

The Protestant emphasis on justification by faith alone, which took hold in the 16th century, threatened Satan. If people placed their faith wholly in Jesus Christ instead of in their good works, they would become genuine Christians and be transferred from Satan’s kingdom into the Kingdom of God’s Son (Col. 1:13–14). So Satan had to deal with Protestantism.

First, he tried to destroy it physically through persecution. Many Protestants were martyred in Germany, France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland. But the more he persecuted Protestantism, the faster it spread.

Realizing he could not destroy it, Satan then tried to pervert it with beliefs and practices contrary to the Bible. Over several centuries, he used a series of intellectual movements and philosophies that rejected the Bible as the divinely inspired record of God’s revelation to mankind, trying to undermine the biblical faith of many Protestants.

As a result, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, significant parts of Protestantism degenerated into unbiblical beliefs. Many denied the Fall and sinful nature of man; the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible; the virgin birth; and the deity, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and Second Coming of Jesus.

God sovereignly counteracted this satanic perversion through the 18th-century Wesleyan revival in England, the Great Awakening in colonial America, the Second Awakening, revivals headed by D. L. Moody, the Bible school movement, the formation of faith mission boards, and Bible and prophecy conferences.

By the end of World War I, significant parts of Protestantism rejected all forms of divine revelation, which is the only means of knowing if the personal, sovereign Creator-God of the universe exists. Satan used that rejection to launch his current form of attack in his war against God: a growing denial of God’s existence.

That denial has produced the following radical changes in society: an attitude of despair concerning ultimate meaning and purpose for human life; denial of moral absolutes, prompting a breakdown of morality; denial of objective truth for all mankind; denial of an objective standard of right and wrong; a redefinition of tolerance; a radical feminist movement; and a tendency to completely humanize Jesus Christ and to deify mankind.

And it appears that Satan is setting the stage for his greatest assault yet in his war against God.

by Renald E. Showers
1. A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the church distinct. This is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. The one who fails to distinguish Israel and the church consistently will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does will.1

Though God’s purpose for Israel and God’s purpose for the church receive the most attention in Scripture, God has purposes for other groups as well. He has a purpose and plan for the angels, which in no way mixes with His purposes for Israel or the church (2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 4:11). He has a purpose for those who reject Him, which also is distinct from other purposes (Prov. 16:4). He has a plan for the nations, which continues into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2), and those nations are distinct from the bride of Christ. God has more than two purposes even though He reveals more about His purposes for Israel and His purpose for the church than He does about the other groups.

Progressive dispensationalists seem to be blurring this distinction by saying that the concept is not in the same class as what is conveyed by the concepts of Gentiles, Israel, and Jews. What this means is not completely clear. However, it does seem to imply that the classic Israel/church distinction is less clear.

2. This distinction between Israel and the church is born out of a system of hermeneutics that is usually called literal interpretation. Therefore, the second aspect of the sine qua non of Dispensationalism is the matter of historical-grammatical hermeneutics. The word...
is the manifestation of His own glory.

Consistently literal, or plain, interpretation indicates a dispensational approach to the interpretation of Scripture. And it is this very consistency—the strength of dispensational interpretation—that seems to irk the nondispensationalist and becomes the object of his ridicule. To be sure, literal/historical/grammatical interpretation is not the sole possession or practice of dispensationalists, but the consistent use of it in all areas of biblical interpretation is. This does not preclude or exclude correct understanding of types, illustrations, apocalypses, and other genres within the basic framework of literal interpretation.

3. A third aspect of the *sine qua non* of Dispensationalism concerns the underlying purpose of God in the world. The covenant theologian, in practice, believes this purpose to be salvation (although covenant theologians strongly emphasize the glory of God in their theology), and the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that; namely, the glory of God. Progressives have a Christological center, apparently to undergird their emphasis on the Davidic covenant and on Christ as the already reigning Davidic ruler in heaven.

To the normative dispensationalist, the soteriological, or saving, program of God is not the only program but one of the means God is using in the total program of glorifying Himself. Scripture is not man-centered as though salvation were the main theme, but it is God-centered because His glory is the center. The Bible itself clearly teaches that salvation, important and wonderful as it is, is not an end in itself but is rather a means to the end of glorifying God (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). John F. Walvoord, [Lewis Sperry] Chafer’s successor at Dallas Theological Seminary, puts it this way: “The larger purpose of God is the manifestation of His own glory.

To this end each dispensation, each successive revelation of God’s plan for the ages, His dealing with the non-elect as with the elect . . . combine to manifest divine glory.”

4. In another place he says: “All the events of the created world are designed to manifest the glory of God. The error of covenant theologians is that they combine all the many facets of divine purpose in the one objective of the fulfillment of the covenant of grace. From a logical standpoint, this is the reductive error—the use of one aspect of the whole as the determining element.

The essence of Dispensationalism, then, is the distinction between Israel and the church. This grows out of the dispensationalist’s consistent employment of normal or plain or historical-grammatical interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.

**Endnotes**

1. There can be rare exceptions, as with C. E. B. Cranfield (*Commentary on Romans* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979], 448 n. 2), who rejects the teaching that Israel has been replaced by the church.

2. Cf. George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 126–34. Even though Ladd believes in a future for the nation Israel (cf. “Is There a Future for Israel?” *Eternity* [May 1964], 25–28, 36), that does not mean that he is a dispensationalist, for he fails to meet the criterion concerning the consistent use of the literal principle of interpretation. In this same article (p. 27) he declares that “although the Church is spiritual Israel, the New Testament teaches that literal Israel is yet to be saved.” In other words, he distinguishes the church and Israel in the future millennia, but he does not distinguish them in the present age. Since Israel and the church are not kept distinct throughout God’s program, Ladd fails to meet this test of Dispensationalism.


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**In a Nutshell**

The dispensational philosophy of history is the self-glorification of God, rather than the redemption of man. Covenant Theology builds its entire philosophy on the redemption of man, pre-Fall and post-Fall. Covenant Theology looks at Scripture and asks, “How does this relate to salvation?” We look at Scripture and ask, “How does this relate to the responsibility of living life to glorify God?”

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**Quoteworthy**

“How beautiful was the Church in its first days—so long as it knew itself to consist of the poor of this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom—so long as it was lowly in mind, and walked in simplicity and in conscious dependence on her heavenly Bridegroom! But when world power began to smile upon her . . . she too became proud and wanton in her worldly prosperity. . . . And the idolatries and abominations, and the ‘shedding of blood,’ of which Christendom stands guilty, is not less, but more heinous in God’s sight than that which is laid to the charge of Israel.”

—David Baron, *Israel in the Plan of God*
Clearly, man is in the middle of a cosmic conflict between God and Satan, who are battling over the eternal destiny of people’s souls. Evangelical Protestant Christianity provides us with two major philosophies of history: Covenant (Replacement) Theology, which views all history as the story of God’s redemption of the fallen human race, and Dispensationalism, which sees history as a series of stewardships that God gave mankind in order to manifest His glory. The Friends of Israel holds to the tenets of Dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism is a system of theology constructed on a consistent, literal interpretation of God’s Word, which views the world as a household administered by God, for His own glory, through a series of distinct but progressive stewardships. It emphasizes the eternal distinction between Israel and the church.

For dispensationalists, the central unifying theme for history and theology is God’s self-glorification; and all of human history is best understood as a series of distinct, but progressive, administrations designed to glorify Him.

God’s decisions to permit sin, create the universe, redeem mankind, judge sinners, restore the kingdom to Israel, and ultimately destroy Satan are all designed to glorify Him by manifesting His holiness in each area of His character.

Dr. Charles Ryrie probably provided the best definition of a dispensation, calling it a “distinguishable economy [working relationship] in the outworking of God’s purpose.”¹ “A dispensation is basically the arrangement involved,” wrote Ryrie, “not the time involved.”²

The cosmic battle between God and Satan has been ongoing since before the creation of the universe. God created “ten thousand times ten thousand [myriads of myriads]” of intelligent, personal, spiritual beings, probably intending them to enjoy His fellowship and reflect the glory that characterized His eternal trinity. One of the highest of those angels, Lucifer, was overcome by his own beauty and glory and rebelled against God (Isa. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:17; Rev. 5:11).

Lucifer originally was the “anointed cherub who covers . . . on the holy mountain of God” (Ezek. 28:14). Scripture says Lucifer’s “heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty,” and he “corrupted [his] wisdom for the sake of [his] splendor” (v. 17). Verse 15 is as close as the Bible comes to an explicit declaration of the origin of sin: “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”

Isaiah 14 explains Lucifer’s goals. Though Isaiah’s words were addressed to the king of Babylon, many understand them to refer to God’s archenemy, who influenced that king:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the

For the Glory

(Images: 1, Ellen Schuster/Getty Images; 2 and 4, Stan Stein and Thomas E. Williams; 3, FOI Archives)
His plan, unfolded in the pages of the inspired Scriptures, started with the astonishing creation of the material universe. God later told Job that the angels “sang together” and “shouted for joy” as He created everything (Job 38:7). Like children at a six-day-long fireworks display, they marveled at the truly awesome display of God’s glory and holiness, as He created the entire universe from nothing.

The First Stewardship

Surprise followed surprise until, on the sixth day, this triune God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen. 1:26).

This marvelous manifestation of God’s glory continues to this day for those who will heed it: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

After commissioning the first couple He made to rule over His material creation, God began building a relationship with them that developed their intellectual, emotional, and volitional capacities into a strengthened fellowship with Him. Adam and Eve received the stewardship of governing the earth in worshipful submission to their Creator, thereby manifesting His glory before the angelic host. Heaven rejoiced, and all was well with the world.

Relatively soon after, God’s self-declared challenger appeared on the scene and accused God of holding out on mankind. Lucifer (Satan) challenged Eve’s notion of God’s love and suggested that eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in disobedience to God, would make them just like God.

God had offered humanity the opportunity to live in fellowship with Him. By governing the earth in worshipful submission, mankind would glorify its Creator and experience the wonderful blessings of life, peace, and joy. But mankind failed the test.

Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan’s subtle suggestion that God was not good or holy; and at Satan’s urging, they disregarded God’s order and struck out on their own to make themselves equal to God.

In the heat of the moment, such choices are neither rationally made nor fully comprehended. It is our faith in God’s character and revealed will, when we are under trial, that glorifies Him.

Thus mankind was lovingly made and placed on a lavish, Creator-manifesting stage so that people might respond positively to God’s holiness and thus glorify Him before all the angels, demonstrating God’s holiness through faith in what they could not see.

Because Adam and Eve failed in their stewardship, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Death entered the realm, and mankind’s stewardship was altered.

Changes in Responsibilities

After a number of changes in stewardships, God eventually gave the Mosaic Law at Mount
Many people have negative attitudes toward the study of biblical prophecy. Some say, “I’m only concerned about the present, so don’t bother me with ideas about the future.” Or, “Nobody can understand the prophecies in the Bible, so why bother to study them?” Or, “We will not study biblical prophecy in our church because it is divisive.”

Advocates of Replacement Theology and others claim, “There are very few, if any, prophecies of future events beyond our time in the Bible. Almost all biblical prophecies were fulfilled by the end of the first century A.D.”

These attitudes prompt people to avoid 20 percent to 25 percent of God’s biblical revelation—revelation He wants mankind to possess and heed.

Here are practical, important reasons why Christians should study biblical prophecy:

It is impossible to understand God’s purpose for history apart from prophecy.

God has declared,

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.” . . . I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it (Isa. 46:9–11; cf. 14:24, 26–27).

These Scriptures reveal there is one true God who has a sovereign purpose for history. In the past He planned and purposed what would happen on Earth and, through prophets, declared to mankind what would happen, even to the end of this earth’s history. Then, during the course of history, He sovereignly causes to happen all that He planned, purposed, and declared through prophets. No one can prevent God from fulfilling His sovereign purpose for history.

Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar learned that the God of the Bible controls history. After God had disciplined him via a form of mental illness, causing him to live like a wild animal, Nebuchadnezzar wrote,

I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?” (Dan. 4:34–35).

The prophetic Scriptures are the written record of what God, through the prophets, told mankind would happen, even to the end of this earth’s history. Consequently, no one can understand God’s purpose for history apart from the study of biblical prophecy.

It is no mistake that Revelation was the last book of the Bible written. God intended it to be the capstone of His divine declaration to mankind because it foretells how He will complete His purpose for history. Because this is so, those who avoid the study of Revelation will remain oblivious to how God will obtain His objective.

Biblical prophecy is an effective evangelistic tool.

God had His declarations of future events recorded in the Scriptures, not to satisfy our curiosity, but to be a life-changing tool for people of every generation. He uses biblical prophecy to warn unsaved people about the future, wrathful judgment that He has purposed for this rebellious world and all who fail to receive His gracious gift of salvation through faith in His crucified, buried, and resurrected Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit uses biblical prophecy to impress unsaved people with the urgency of trusting Christ as their Savior now, before it may be too late for them.
I personally have seen people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through biblical prophecy. For example, the Holy Spirit worked through the teaching of biblical prophecy to bring eight office workers and a school superintendent to saving faith in Christ at a conference I conducted in a church. Any Christian who avoids the study and teaching of biblical prophecy fails to use an effective evangelistic tool that God has given to us.

It is impossible to understand God’s plan for Israel apart from prophecy.

1. In the Past. God established a unique relationship with Israel as a nation:

   For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth (Dt. 7:6; cf. 14:2).

   Furthermore, Scripture teaches that God established this relationship with Israel forever. King David said to God, “For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever” (2 Sam. 7:24). In fact, the apostle Paul indicated that, despite Israel’s unbelief, God’s election, or calling, of the nation Israel for this unique relationship will never change (Rom. 11:26–29).

   God did not establish this relationship because Israel was greater than other nations. Moses told the Israelites, “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples” (Dt. 7:7). Instead, God established the relationship because He loves the nation and has a unique, sovereign purpose for it (v. 8).

   God sovereignly purposed that the nation Israel would play a strategic role in fulfilling His purpose for history. One aspect of that key role is to bring great blessing to the entire world through Abraham’s physical offspring.

   God promised Abraham, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:18). The fact that God repeated this promise to Abraham’s son Isaac and grandson Jacob, whose 12 sons became the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel, indicates that God purposed to bring this promised blessing to the world through the nation Israel (26:4; 28:14).

   God has already brought great blessings to the world through Israel. The Bible came through that nation. The apostle Paul wrote that to the Jews “were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1–2). The Messiah-Savior came to the world by birth through Israel. Paul called the Jews the people “from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came” (9:5). Since the Messiah who provided salvation for all people was Jewish in His humanity, then salvation came through Israel. Jesus Himself said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn. 4:22).

2. In the Future. Biblical prophecy indicates that another aspect of Israel’s key role is yet future. God will not totally crush Satan and his forces and establish His future theocratic Kingdom-rule in the world until the nation of Israel returns to God with all its heart and accepts its Messiah-Savior. Zechariah 12—14 reveals that, when the rulers and armies of all the Gentile nations will come against Israel in the future, the Jewish people will see the Messiah come out of heaven to rescue them (12:1–9).

   Gazing on the evidences of His past crucifixion, they will change their minds toward Him and mourn for Him “as one grieves for a firstborn” (v. 10). Then God will cleanse them from their sin (13:1).

   Messiah will destroy the rulers and armies of the world and imprison Satan in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (14:1–3, 12–15; Rev. 19:11–21; 20:1–3). Then He will establish God’s theocratic Kingdom and will rule as “king over all the earth,” and Israel will become the spiritual leader of the world (Zech. 14:9, 16–21; Rev. 20:4–6).

   The people of Israel will “be named the priests of the LORD,” and the Gentiles will call them “the servants [ministers] of our God” (Isa. 61:6). “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you’” (Zech. 8:23).

   Sadly, Christians who subscribe to Replacement Theology rather than Dispensational Theology insist that God did not establish His unique relationship with Israel forever. They believe that, because Israel rejected Jesus in His First Coming, God permanently severed His special relationship with the nation and replaced Israel with the New Testament church. They claim that God will save individual Jews but that He no longer has a national program for Israel.

   This erroneous belief affects their thinking concerning Israel’s right to exist as a national entity in the Middle East today. Such Christians neglect biblical prophecy or interpret it allegorically, which also causes them to reject the idea that God has irrevocably appointed Israel to play a future, key role in the fulfillment of His purpose for history.

   God intends the study of biblical prophecy to purify our lives and change our priorities.

Two aspects of prophetic revelation serve such a purpose.

1. The Imminency of Christ’s Return. The English word imminence means “hanging over one’s head, ready to befall or overtake one; close at hand in its incidence.” Thus an imminent event is one that is always hanging overhead, constantly ready to befall or overtake a person. It is always close at hand in the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things may happen beforehand, but nothing else must happen. If something else must take place before an event can happen, the event is not imminent. Nor can you count on a fixed amount of time transpiring before the event occurs.

   Thus the imminent coming of Christ means His next coming is always hanging overhead, constantly ready to befall or overtake us, always close at hand in the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things may happen before His coming, but nothing else must happen.

   Since we do not know exactly when He will come, we cannot count on a fixed amount of time transpiring before
His arrival. Therefore, we should always be ready for Him at any moment.

Many Bible scholars from various church and theological backgrounds have concluded that the New Testament teaches or implies the imminent coming of Christ in the following passages: 1 Corinthians 1:7; 4:5; 15:51–52; 16:22; Philippians 3:20; 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12; Titus 2:13; James 5:8–9; 1 John 2:28; Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 17, 20.

In James 5:8–9, the apostle James clearly indicated that, since Christ could return at any moment and confront His church saints as judge, Christians should be careful how they treat their fellow believers:

*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 condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!*

Christ’s imminent return should make a difference in the way we live. We should live holy, godly lives every moment of every day because in the very next moment, Christ could step through the door of heaven and confront us face to face.

The apostle John emphasized the same truth when he wrote the following to Christians: “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 Jn. 2:28).

2. The Future Destruction of the Present Earth and Universe. The apostle Peter wrote, “The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Peter foretold the future destruction of the present Earth and universe, including everything that mankind has designed and made during the history of this planet. All of our present material possessions will be destroyed.

In light of this certainty, Peter told believers, “Since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (v. 11).

His point was this: The fact that the present Earth, universe, and all our material possessions someday will be destroyed should shape our values, priorities, and lifestyles. We should be holy in our daily conduct. Our desire to please and glorify God should motivate us and give us ultimate meaning and purpose in life—not money, material things, or the present world system. Because all earthly things are temporary and doomed for destruction, we should conform our values and priorities to things of the future eternal state (vv. 13–14).

Bible prophecy is an integral part of Scripture. Those who consider it irrelevant or fail to study it will wrongly divide the Word of Truth and fall into theological error.

**For the Glory of God from page 31**

Sina. Under Law, believers were required to glorify God by living in conformity to the Law, which included sacrifices for cleansing and renewal and was designed to keep Israel separate from the surrounding pagan nations.

After Christ’s death and resurrection, the stewardship again changed. Today believers are indwelled by the Holy Spirit. The stewardship for the current dispensation (Pentecost to the Rapture) is best stated as “to glorify God by walking consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit.” Though the Law is always valid as a revelation of God’s holiness and righteousness, using it as the present-day means of sanctification is what the Bible condemns as legalism. Law-keeping is like using another company’s handbook to guide your employment.

In Galatians 5:16 Paul wrote, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” He proceeded to contrast the deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 19–23). Paul wrote that part of his task in this dispensation was the following:

*to make all see what is the fellowship [administration, dispensation] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:9–11, emphasis added).*

A person’s salvation manifests God’s glory. Salvation requires confession: *God, I know I am a sinful person who cannot get myself to heaven. It requires belief in God’s Son: God, I understand that Jesus is the only way into heaven because He is the only person in all of human history qualified to die for someone else’s sin. It requires humble acceptance of God’s grace: God, I know I am a sinful person who cannot get myself to heaven. It requires belief in God’s Son: God, I understand that Jesus is the only way into heaven because He is the only person in all of human history qualified to die for someone else’s sin. It requires humble acceptance of God’s grace: God, please forgive me, take away my sin, and give me the grace-gift of eternal life.*

God’s glory could allow no other way.

Going your own way glorifies Satan because it is rebellion against God. But walking under the Spirit’s control not only brings “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control,” but also causes heaven’s citizens to celebrate (Gal. 5:22–23).

Paul taught in Romans that someday all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). During this dispensation, it is primarily Gentiles (along with a Jewish remnant) who are coming to God through the Jewish Messiah. But someday all Israel will come, which will bring glory to God and blessing to the entire world: “Now if their fall is riches for the Gentiles” (Lk. 15:10). God’s glory could allow no other way.

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1 Ryrie, Dispensationalism (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 33.

2 Ibid.
A least seven years before He sets His feet on planet Earth once again, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven. The bodies of Christians who have died during the Church Age will then be resurrected to join their spirits, already with the Lord. Church Age believers who are still alive will follow with new, glorified bodies. Both will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. All of this will happen in a moment, as quickly as the twinkling of an eye.

This event is known as the Rapture. The primary texts describing it are John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:50–52; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. (For nonchurch raptures, see Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11; Hebrews 11:5; Revelation 11:12.)

The word rapture is not in the English Bible. It is derived from the Latin translation of “caught up,” found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Both the Latin and the original Greek word mean “to snatch or take something away by seizing it suddenly.” Being snatched in this passage are both resurrected and living believers in Jesus Christ.

Even though the Church Age, or Age of Grace, does not technically end until the Second Coming of Jesus, the true church—the Body of Christ—will be raptured before then. The results are these:

1. Through the Rapture, Jesus will receive His bride (the church), which will forever remain with Him.
2. The church’s salvation will become experientially complete by the glorification of each person’s body.
3. The “fullness of the Gentiles” will have come in, opening the way for God to continue His program with the nation of Israel (Acts 15:14; Rom. 11:25).
4. The Holy Spirit’s ministry of baptizing individual Jews and Gentiles into the Body of Christ will cease.
5. The church’s stewardship for this age—walking under the control of the Holy Spirit, making disciples, and preserving the faith—will end. People will still become saved during the subsequent Tribulation, but they will not be part of the unique, spiritual union known as the Body of Christ.
6. With the true church gone, only a false, apostate church will remain on this earth.

There is strong evidence the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation. For example, Scripture says the church is to be delivered from the “wrath to come” because God has not destined the church for wrath (1 Th. 1:10; 5:9). Since God pours out His wrath during the entire seven-year Tribulation, the church will be raptured before it. (See also Revelation 3:10; also note the church’s conspicuous absence from the earth in Revelation 4—18.)

Also, the writers of the New Testament believed the Lord could return at any moment, without previous signs (Phil. 4:5; Ti. 2:13; Jas. 5:8–9).

The Tribulation completes the remaining seven years of Daniel’s 70-weeks prophecy for Israel (Dan. 9:24–27). Since God’s programs for Israel and the church are distinct, it is fitting that the church be removed before God’s program for Israel begins anew.

by Bruce Scott
More than 37 million people died during World War I. Another 62 million died in World War II. Despite the horror of those numbers, they are miniscule compared to the billions who will perish during Earth’s most traumatic days (Mt. 24:21). This future holocaust occurs during the final seven years of Daniel’s 70-weeks prophecy (Dan. 9:24–27), or what could be called the dark portion of the Day of the Lord (Amos 5:18).

This period is often referred to as the Tribulation. Scripture calls the last three and one-half years the “time of Jacob’s trouble” and the “great tribulation” (Jer. 30:7; cf. Dan. 12:1; Rev. 7:14).

The Tribulation probably does not immediately follow the Rapture. The last seven years of Daniel’s prophecy will officially begin when “the prince who is to come” (the Antichrist) makes a covenant with many from the nation of Israel (Dan. 9:27). The Tribulation ends immediately prior to the Second Coming of Christ (Mt. 24:29–30).

Between the Rapture and the making of the covenant is an interlude of unknown duration during which the apostate church remains on Earth, the Holy Spirit as restrainer is removed, and the Antichrist is revealed and begins rising to power by overthrowing three kings and making a temporary alliance with the apostasy (Dan. 7:24; 2 Th. 2:7; Rev. 17:1–6).

The purpose of the Tribulation is to glorify God through His righteous judgments for mankind’s failure in the dispensation of grace. These judgments, worldwide in scope, will be disseminated in the form of seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls (Rev. 6:1; 8:2; 15:7).

They will reveal the true, depraved nature of fallen man. Although multitudes will believe the gospel during this time, the vast majority will refuse to receive God’s justice with brokenness and repentance (9:20-21). Instead, most people will become more obstinate and rebellious, demonstrating that God is righteous in punishing them (16:5-7, 9).

The Tribulation has other purposes, as well. Regarding Israel, it completes the 70-weeks prophecy that pertains only to Israel and the city of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24). The “time of Jacob’s trouble” will bring Israel to a point of repentance (Dt. 4:30), leading to the nation’s salvation and restoration in the Kingdom (Ezek. 36). It will also manifest and destroy the world’s final Gentile empire. The “times of the Gentiles,” which began with Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, will be consummated (Dan. 2:40-41; Lk. 21:24). God will use the final attack on Israel and Jerusalem as an opportunity to bring judgment and destruction on the godless nations of the world (Zech. 12:3, 9).

Finally, the Tribulation will end the Church Age, or Age of Grace; and God will use the Antichrist and his 10 cohorts to destroy the apostate church (Rev. 17:16–17).

by Bruce Scott

The Tribulation

The devastation of World War II will not begin to equal the devastation of the future Tribulation. Reminders of World War II, clockwise from top left: U.S. fighter over Italy (Bettmann/Corbis); U.S. infantrymen in Germany (MPI/Getty Images); Normandy American Cemetery in France (Richard Klune/Corbis).
The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. It is sometimes confused with the Rapture of the church. However, there are distinctions between the two.

The Rapture occurs before the Tribulation. The Second Coming takes place after the Tribulation and before the Millennium. The Rapture will be instantaneous and invisible to the naked eye. The Second Coming will be gradual and visible to all. At the Rapture, believers will meet the Lord in the air. At the Second Coming, believers come with the Lord to the earth. At the Rapture, Jesus Christ descends only as far as Earth’s atmosphere. At the Second Coming, Christ sets His feet on planet Earth.

Certain events will take place after the Tribulation but before the Messiah returns (Mt. 24:29–30). There will be great cosmic disturbances. The sign of Jesus Christ will appear in heaven. Individuals from every people group around the globe will mourn, including those from Israel, from the realization that Jesus truly is the Messiah (Zech. 12:10). Some will mourn with the sorrow that leads to repentance, while others will mourn out of regret (2 Cor. 7:10).

Finally, all people still alive after the Tribulation will clearly see the Messiah descend from heaven on the clouds. He will be riding a white horse, followed by the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:11, 14). Jesus’ return will be literal, physical, and visible; thus He will return in the same manner and to the exact place from which He was taken into heaven (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11).

The Second Coming of Christ will accomplish numerous purposes of God. It will officially close the Church Age, or Age of Grace. It will fulfill prophecies concerning the great and terrible Day of the Lord (Joel 2:11; Mal. 4:5). It will be the occasion on which the Messiah rescues and fights for Israel (Zech. 14:2–3). It will be the occasion on which the Messiah, with His heavenly Kingdom, will smash the final manifestation of Gentile world power (Dan. 2:34, 44). It will also be the occasion on which Satan’s rule over the earth, both personally and by proxy through the Antichrist and False Prophet, will end (Rev. 19:20; 20:2).

Christ’s Second Coming will also prepare Israel to enter His Kingdom. The Jewish people will be gathered (fulfilling the prophetic aspect of the Feast of Trumpets), judged, cleansed (fulfilling the prophetic aspect of the Day of Atonement), regenerated, and established in their own land (Isa. 27:12–13; Ezek. 20:33–38; 36:25–28). The surviving Gentiles will also be prepared to enter the Kingdom. They, too, will be gathered and judged (Mt. 25:31–46). Whether they be Jewish or Gentile, only those born again will enter the Messiah’s Kingdom (Jn. 3:3, 5).

by Bruce Scott
The Millennium is the term used to refer to the final dispensation in human history, when mankind’s stewardship will be to live in harmony with the risen, glorified Savior. Despite Jesus’ physical presence on Earth, however, sinful people will still rebel against Him (Rev. 20:7–8). Fire from heaven will consume the rebels; and Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire, concluding this final epoch in human history (v. 9–10). When the Millennium ends and eternity begins, mortality will cease. Thus there will be no further need for God-given managerial structures (i.e., dispensations) for mortal human stewards.

As with all dispensations, the purpose of the Millennium will be to glorify God. His heavenly Kingdom will finally be established on the earth, once and for all (Zech. 14:9). His rule will be literal, material, and spiritual (spiritual does not equate with immaterial), administered by Jesus Christ who will reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem (Isa. 9:7; Ezek. 43:7).

Jesus does not presently sit on the throne of David in heaven, as some claim. Scripture says He sits at the right hand of the Father on His Father’s throne until His Father makes Jesus’ enemies a footstool for His feet (Ps. 110:1; Rev. 3:21). As pictured by the stone cut without hands in the book of Daniel, Jesus’ Millennial Kingdom will not be manmade; it will come from God and will fill the entire earth (Dan. 2:35, 44). It will serve as the radiant portion of the Day of the Lord and will be characterized by peace, prosperity, and righteous judgment (Isa. 2:1–4; 11:1–10; Joel 3:18, 20; Amos 9:13).

Following the Millennium, there is a transition prior to the new heaven and new earth, during which the wicked are judged at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:7—21:1).

God will also be glorified in the Millennium because all of the unilateral, eternal covenants He made with Israel will be brought to fruition (Abrahamic—Gen. 12:1–3; Land—Ps. 105:8–11; Davidic—Ps. 89:3–4; New—Jer. 31:31–34). When Israel is restored to its place of blessing during this time, even the Gentiles will benefit (Zech. 8:23; Rom. 11:12).

Finally, God will be glorified in the Millennium because it will be shown that despite an ideal environment, mankind will still rebel against God’s rule, thus demonstrating God’s righteousness in all His judgments (Isa. 11:4; Rev. 20:8–9).

by Bruce Scott
T
he most intense period of the continuing war between Satan and God will be the last seven years before Jesus the Messiah returns in His Second Coming to crush Satan and restore the theocratic Kingdom of God to the earth.

That seven-year period, called the Tribulation, will be the final phase of a unique program that God designed, not for the church, but specifically for Israel to bring it to repentance and reconciliation (Dan. 9:24, 27). Consequently, the church will be raptured (removed) from the earth beforehand (Jn. 14:1–3; 1 Th. 4:13–18).

The Enemy’s Goals
Satan will have four purposes for these seven years.

(1) He will try to convert his invisible, spiritual kingdom-rule over the world system into a visible, political kingdom. Satan will take control of the ruler of a revived form of the Roman Empire, turning him into the Antichrist who will become the king of his political kingdom (Dan. 7:8, 19–25; 1 Jn. 2:18). At the beginning of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will establish a binding seven-year covenant with Israel, guaranteeing the nation’s security (Dan. 9:27).

(2) Then Satan will try to destroy all testimony for God. Great multitudes will come to Christ during this period (Rev. 7), and Satan’s Antichrist will wage war against these saints. Many will be martyred (Dan. 7:21; Rev. 13:7; 20:4).

(3) He will try to destroy Israel. Since God will not crush Satan and restore His theocratic Kingdom until Israel as a nation repents of its rebellion against Him, Satan will try to annihilate Israel before it repents so that God will not crush him. If He could accomplish that, he would win his war against God.

Once the Antichrist takes control of Israel’s Temple in the middle of the seven years, he will demand that he be worshiped. He will turn against Israel and desecrate it throughout the second half of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15–21; 2 Th. 2:3–4). Satan himself will attack Israel during that time (Rev. 12:9, 12–17).

(4) Near the end of the seven years, Satan will play a key role in gathering the political leaders and armies of all Gentile nations to Jerusalem near the end of the seven years (Zech. 14:1–2). However, God will bring them for their judgment (Joel 3:9–16; Zeph. 3:8). At His Second Coming, Jesus will destroy the political leaders and armies of Satan’s kingdom (Zech. 14:3–4, 12–15; Rev. 19:11–21).

(2) Second, God will use that time to begin crushing Satan’s kingdom. Throughout the seven years, He will systematically bombard Satan’s domain with three series of judgments (Rev. 6–17).

The seventh trumpet judgment will unleash the final series of judgments that will culminate with (a) the Second Coming of Jesus the Messiah, (b) the complete end of Satan’s rule over the world system, and (c) the restoration of the theocratic Kingdom of God. Thus, when the seventh trumpet is sounded, God’s creatures in heaven will exclaim, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ [Messiah], and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Rev. 11:15).

God’s rule through Jesus the Messiah will last for 1,000 years on this present earth and forever on the new, eternal earth.

(3) God will also play a key role in gathering the political leaders and armies of all the nations of the world (Zech. 14:3–4). He will systemically destroy them for their judgment (Joel 3:9–16; Zeph. 3:8). At His Second Coming, Jesus will destroy the political leaders and armies of Satan’s kingdom (Zech. 14:3–4, 12–15; Rev. 19:11–21).

(4) Finally, God will bring the nation of Israel into a right relationship with Him. When Israel’s back is to the wall and there is no nation it can appeal to for help, it will realize that God is its only hope for survival. Its rebellion against God will be broken, and the nation will repent and cry out for Him to send the Messiah (Zech. 13:9).

In response, God will send the resurrected, glorified Redeemer from heaven. Zechariah 12:10 says, “They will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

When the Jewish people see the resurrected, glorified Savior come out of heaven with the wounds of His crucifixion in His resurrection body, they will repent. The word repent refers to a change of mind. They will change their minds from rejection of Him to acceptance of Him as their Messiah and Savior. God will respond by cleansing them of their sin (Zech. 13:1).

Then Messiah will go to battle and destroy the leaders and armies of all the nations of the world (Zech. 14:3–4, 11–15; cf. Rev. 19:11–21). All members of Satan’s kingdom living on Earth will be removed in judgment (Mt. 13:24–42; 47–50; 24:29–30, 37–41). And Satan will be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1–3).

Then Messiah will restore God’s theocratic Kingdom to the earth; and as God’s representative (the last Adam), He will administer God’s rule over all the earthly province of God’s universal Kingdom for 1,000 years on this present earth and forever on the new, eternal earth (Isa. 9:6–7; Dan. 7:13–14; Zech. 14:9, 16–21; Lk. 1:30–33; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rev. 20:4–6).

By doing all these things, God will fulfill His purpose for history: the glorifying of Himself by demonstrating that He alone is the sovereign God of the universe.

God’s Goals
God, too, will have four purposes for the Tribulation.

(1) His first purpose will be the salvation of many people (Rev. 7).

For an in-depth exposition of the Bible’s philosophy of history, read Renald E. Showers’ What on Earth Is God Doing? published by The Friends of Israel.
To most people, the word *remnant* means something that is left over. Leftovers aren’t usually thought of positively. One thinks of leftover food, a sock that missed the laundry, or screws and washers left over from a recently assembled bicycle.

The Hebrew Old Testament uses several words to express the English word *remnant*. Mostly they refer to “things or people left over after famine, conquest, division, passage of time, etc.”

Deuteronomy 3:11 states, “Only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants,” and Nehemiah 1:3 speaks of “the survivors who are left from the captivity.”

But other Scriptures use *remnant* in a positive sense, referring to a small group that is able to withstand the persecutions and temptations of the world and remain true to the one and only God. Although in each dispensation mankind has failed in its responsibility to glorify God, there have always been individuals who have sincerely loved and obeyed Him. Such people are identified as the faithful remnant.

From the time recorded history began in Genesis, God has had people, usually a minority, who are fully devoted to Him.

**Adam and Eve to Babylon**

*Noah*. From creation to the time of Noah, mankind followed the biblical command, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Most people are familiar with the story of Cain and Abel. Jealous of his brother, Cain killed Abel who had faith and who had offered “a more excellent sacrifice” (Heb 11:4).

Although Earth’s population grew, most people were evil. However, Scripture says Enoch “walked with God” and was spared death, “for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). Those who remained faithful were, in fact, so few in number that finally “the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (6:6). Noah and his family were the faithful remnant, and Noah preached repentance to a needy people for more than 100 years. No one outside Noah’s family responded. And Noah’s family alone was left over from a flood that devastated the entire world.

*Abraham*. Abraham obeyed God, leaving his countrymen of idol worshipers in Ur to become the father of a nation called out by God (12:1–2). Later Abraham’s nephew Lot and Lot’s two daughters were the only ones rescued from God’s judgment on Sodom. The Lord would have spared the city had there been even 10 righteous people. Lot and his daughters alone survived.

*Moses*. While in the wilderness waiting for Moses’ return from Mount Sinai, the children of Israel built an idol. Angered by their infidelity and lack of restraint, Moses confronted them: “Whoever is on the Lord’s side—come to me!” (Ex. 32:26). That challenge was answered by a mere remnant, the tribe of Levi. Of all the 12 tribes, only one identified with the Lord.
Each day, we as Christians are given the opportunity to glorify God. Using our time well, exercising the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, and making wise use of the finances God has entrusted to us are just a few of the many ways in which we can honor Him.

One way we can glorify God beyond our time here on Earth is through a will. A will allows us to make sure that what the Lord has entrusted to us remains His when we no longer need it. Sadly, it is reported that more than 50 percent of Americans (Christians included) have no legal will in force. This requires the laws of your state to intercede and make a will for you. Does your state know how you want your estate handled? Distributions are often made in ways that may be contrary to your wishes. In addition, your desire to see the Lord’s work benefited is likely to go unfulfilled.

If you would like to have a will written but don’t know where to start, let us help. We would like to send you our informative brochure Making a Will That Works at no cost and without obligation. It is our way of helping you become a wise steward over all the Lord has entrusted to you.

To receive Making a Will That Works, simply check the appropriate box on the envelope in this magazine; or write to Tom Geoghan.
It seems that people come to Israel from the ends of the earth. We have many Arabs in our area of Jerusalem and also many Jewish people who consider themselves extremely religious. We have been living in the same neighborhood for 33 years, so many people know us. We try to be friendly with everyone.

Not long ago one of our Jewish neighbors met me on the street and declared, “Zvi, one day I would like you to come to visit us at our home.”

So I asked him, “Which day is best for you? Tell me, and I shall be happy to come.”

“Friday,” he replied. “The best day is Friday because it will give us an opportunity to learn something about the great holy day of the Sabbath.”

I know it is difficult to speak with some people about the Lord, but I had been waiting a long time to be invited to this home so that I could have a good conversation with my friend about faith in Christ. I told him I would be there.

When Friday arrived, I went to his home. He and his wife received me warmly, and my neighbor asked, “Do you know why I invited you?”

I answered, “Because we are good neighbors and friends.”

“No,” he said. “I invited you to listen to one of our great rabbis preach on television about Shabbat (the Sabbath). He teaches people how to pray and from which books to pray. All these things are very important.”

And what else did this neighbor do? He invited some of his Orthodox friends so he would not be alone with me and would have help when he needed to answer my questions.

So the rabbi began to preach. He spoke about prayers and the books people must have, and he told everyone which prayers (according to him) are the ones God receives best in heaven. The people who invited me told me, “Listen good, so you will know how to pray; what to say; which prayers to use in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings; and where all these prayers are written.”

I listened for two hours. They were certain that, because I was silent, they had put me in my place. Finally they began to ask me questions. “What do you have to say about all you have heard?” one man asked.

“What I have to say is written in Ecclesiastes 1:2: ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’”

“How can you say such a thing?” they asked with surprise. “You have seen who spoke about prayer. He is a great and famous rabbi. And what you say is ‘vanity’? Of course, you do not pray! And how can you pray when you do not even have a prayer book?”

“Many years ago,” I told them, “our great prophets were here in Israel. Did they pray using your prayer books, or did they pray from the depths of their hearts? And God heard their prayers. My faith is in the Lord, who hears us when we pray from our hearts. I bow down only before Him, who is God Almighty. I do not put my faith in what men say about prayer, no matter how famous you say they are.”

But these men were determined to prove that they knew more than I did. Some of the men there knew me because we had had a long discussion about faith in Christ many months earlier. They knew in whom I believe. So one said, “Of course, you are telling us what you have learned from this Christian...
I replied, “How blind you are. You do not even know where it is written that we should pray with our hearts.” So I opened my Bible and read to them from a chapter they knew very well, Deuteronomy 6:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart (vv. 5–6).

They looked at each other with great shame. But they did not give up trying to convince me I was wrong. One man replied, “But as we know, those who believe in This Man, Jesus, they have strayed from the Bible. They believe in their Christian books, not in the Bible.”

This time I showed them my Bible. It is the complete Bible, Old and New Testaments, all in Hebrew. They were extremely surprised that we who believe in Christ read the Bible. After a few hours of discussion, several men finally asked, “How did you come to know the Lord, as you say?”

I told them it was because I read the Bible only, not a big stack of other books. But they were not happy to hear this. They became angry and started shouting that there was no way I could believe in Jesus by reading the Hebrew Scriptures.

So I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53 and read it to them. They asked why I was reading to them from the New Testament. I showed them that I was reading from one of the major prophets of Israel. They looked at my Bible and began to read Isaiah 53 for themselves.

“We’ll have to ask our rabbis about this,” one said. “But you believe in This One who was born in Bethlehem. Isn’t He your God? Where is it written that God was to be born in Bethlehem?”

“If you would believe what is written in the Bible,” I told them, “you would not be asking such questions.” So I told them to look in my Bible and read Micah 5:2:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

After they read they all were quiet. Pray that God will help them to see with their hearts and understand that Jesus is God—and that He loves them.