

Focus on the Kingdom

Volume 7 No. 11

Anthony Buzzard, editor

August, 2005

Why Words?

What an enormous blessing that God has *spoken* to us, that God is daily involved with us by means of the creative activity of His living word and words.

(The term “word,” we should always remember, means almost exclusively in the New Testament the saving “word of the Kingdom,” Matt. 13:19, the Gospel of salvation which Satan struggles to snatch from us “so that we cannot believe it and be saved,” Luke 8:12.) Christians cannot possibly be called “deists,” believing only that God exists and that He wound up the universe to get it going and then went off and left us to our own devices. No, not at all. The God of the Creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of Jesus, Jesus’ creator, has spoken to us and left us reliable records of what He has said. His word is active and energizing as we absorb it day by day. The Gospel “is at work [“energizing”] in those who believe” and understand it (I Thess. 2:13).

If God were not active in our lives through His spirit and word, His whole purpose would be frustrated. He made the world as a training ground and preparatory school for all those who desire to find the destiny God intended for them. And what is that grand destiny appointed for man? What honor has been potentially bestowed on us human beings?

To gain immortality when Jesus comes back and to fix the world on a grand scale (cp. Paul in I Cor. 6:2, where “judge” means manage or administer) with Jesus in that future Kingdom of God on the renewed earth — this planet purified of the evil which now tortures, distorts and wrecks it. (Can you imagine the mindless insanity of getting up in the morning, strapping a bomb to yourself and proceeding to blow fellow human beings and yourself to smithereens before lunchtime? Does the world need “fixing”? Does it not desperately need Jesus back here running world affairs from Jerusalem? You are called to take part in that greatest of all ventures.)

After some 50 years experience dealing with those amazing documents we call the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament — we have the same books as Jesus had) and the New Testament Greek Scriptures (which were written in the lingua franca of the day, Greek and not in Aramaic, although Jesus spoke Aramaic as mother tongue), I find the study of these extraordinary writings daily more exciting. Truly the treasures of understanding and

wisdom are breathed into those precious words of Scripture. Jesus was a master rabbi, speaking and teaching as no man spoke before, displaying a wisdom superior even to the phenomenally wise Solomon. His words “will never pass away.” They can transform us today and mold us into like-mindedness with him.

And what did Jesus say? What words did he use to unpack the will and wisdom of his Father, the one who brought him into existence by miracle as the Son of God in Mary’s womb (Luke 1:35)? The answer is a simple one. Jesus spoke always of his Father as the one and only true God, of himself as the appointed Son of God, Messiah, and of his Father’s great Kingdom plan. The Kingdom is the central concern of all that Jesus taught. The Kingdom of God is the axis around which every word of Jesus revolves. In a beautiful and memorable mission statement Jesus declared the passion which drove his ministry 24/7. “I came to announce the Gospel, Good News, about the Kingdom of God. That is what I was sent to do. That is why God commissioned me” (see Luke 4:43, and keep this text close to your heart always and show it to your friends and contacts on every occasion).

The words of Jesus, of the prophets and the Apostles and other Bible writers, are the creative tools of God designed to fashion your mind into harmony with the mind of Jesus. The spirit of Jesus is the mind of Jesus. Note how Paul in I Corinthians 2:16 can say “we have the mind of Christ,” having just discussed the spirit of God: “Who has known the mind of God? Who was His counselor?” Paul read in the Hebrew Bible of the RUACH (spirit, thought, mind) of God (Isa. 40:13). In his Greek Bible (the LXX) he saw the word “spirit” translated into Greek as NOUS (mind). There is no essential difference. To have the mind of Jesus is to have imbibed the mind of God who is the Father of Jesus. Jesus is the great and final prophet, revealer of the will of God for us humans. The words of Jesus are the words of God Himself. Jesus spoke what the Father had taught him to say. To encounter Jesus is to encounter the Father of Jesus who procreated him supernaturally (Luke 1:35, Matt. 1:18, *genesis* of Jesus, and verse 20, “begotten, brought into existence, in her”).

Jesus would have endorsed the words of David: “The spirit of God spoke by me; His words were in my mouth” (II Sam. 23:2). God had promised to raise up a prophet superior even to Moses (Deut 18:15-19), and He intended to place His own words in the mouth of that prophet *Jesus* (not as claimed by some, Mohammed). Jesus spoke

as the Wisdom of God. The Jews liked to treat attributes of God, His word or wisdom, as though they were persons operating for God. We call this personification. The wisdom of God is pictured as a lady — Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8, 9. “Lady Wisdom” in Proverbs 1:23 summons the public to action, just as Jesus (in Mark 1:14, 15) later summoned the public to repentance and wise living. Wisdom said, “Turn at my reproof. Look, I will pour out my **spirit** on you and make my **words** known to you” (Prov. 1:23). The invitation was to share the heart of Wisdom which is the heart and spirit of God the creator Himself. You cannot get closer to God than via His heart and mind exposed to us in His spirit. Both the words of God and of Jesus are “verbalizations” of the spirit/heart/mind of God and as such those words are the creative instruments of God. We are to allow those words to “sink deep into our ears” and change us, change our thinking so that we can think as do God and Jesus. We are to meditate day and night on those creative, life-changing words, to talk about the words of God in the course of daily life, to be absorbed by them moment by moment (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2, 3; I Tim. 4:6, 13-16).

The Devil may whisper, “Those are just dead words on paper; what you need is ‘spirit.’” What the Devil does not want known is that the words of God in Scripture are the living words of the living God and they are as vital and energizing as when they were first uttered by God and His agents and inscribed for us in the Bible. As Jesus, who now speaks from heaven, said, “my words will never pass away” (Matt. 24:35). They are permanently vitalizing and transforming. The Bible is living information, affecting our minds with the spirit of God and Jesus, forming our life and conduct in the image of Jesus, who is the model of a human person in relation to his Creator.

Again, the Devil may whisper, “It is not your understanding that counts; it is your conduct.” True, good conduct is essential for the followers of Jesus, but it is conduct *informed* by the spirit of Jesus and of God. Little preached are these two texts: “The Son of God came to give us an *understanding* that we might know God” (1 John 5:20) and above all Isaiah 53:11: “By his [the Messiah’s] *knowledge* he [the Messiah] makes many righteous.” Christianity is not a do-it-yourself religion based on the highest human ideals we may imagine. It is a life based on the will of God and of Jesus revealed to us in the spirit-words of Jesus and the Bible writers. In one of his most telling and sublime utterances, the Messiah declared, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). In what sense are those words spirit and life?

They communicate the very life, mind and spirit of God Himself *when properly understood by us* and internalized. Look at the advantages of having the words of Jesus deeply rooted in our hearts. “If you abide in me and **my words abide in you**, ask what you will and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). No wonder Paul urged the Colossians, shielding them from the various false spirits and lying visions which threatened their stability, to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom and teaching” (Col. 3:16). In that way the spirit of Jesus would be in them and that living, guiding spirit would reassure them at all times and remind them of all that Jesus had taught. The “Comforter” promised by Jesus is none other than the risen Jesus escorting his people now on the journey to immortality in the coming Kingdom of God on earth. The Jesus who walked in Israel told his disciples that he was going to leave them, but not as orphans, because he himself in the form of the spirit of Jesus, “the Comforter,” would come to them and take up residence with them and in them. That comforter is “the spirit of the Truth,” not a lying spirit, but a spirit which harmonizes with the revealed will of God found in the spirit-words of Scripture (see John 15:26; 16:7, 14; I John 2:1; II Cor. 3:17, 18). Discernment is learned over a long period of training and it enables us to distinguish the true from the false.

The false of course parades as the true. Satan is intelligent enough to know that camouflage and counterfeit are his most effective tools. As long as the public remains relatively ignorant of what the Scripture teaches, the Devil’s task is not difficult. Provided that the name “Jesus” is made public, most people will imagine that the “Jesus” so described is the Jesus of the Bible. But unfortunately there are counterfeit “Jesuses,” Gospels and spirits and Paul was profoundly troubled by the fact that his Corinthian converts were so easily bamboozled into confusing the spirit of error and falsehood with the true spirit of God and Jesus. He complained that the Corinthians were blithely putting up with a sham Gospel, spirit and Jesus (II Cor. 11:1-4, 13-15).

They were being cheerfully deceived by the smart religious talk of the day which to the uninstructed seemed most plausible. The tragedy, as Paul saw it, was that the Garden of Eden deception of mother Eve was being repeated, but this time the “con-job” was being worked on the precious bride of Christ. Paul was alarmed and spoke out in defense of **truth**, warning the Corinthians and later the Thessalonians that only a “passion for the Truth” would be sufficient to save them (II Thess. 2:10).

Does it matter what you believe?! Is truth the same as lies? The question hardly needs to be answered. The answer should be obvious. “Many will say,” Jesus

remarked in a final warning, that they considered themselves fine preachers and skilled miracle workers, only to suffer the shattering disappointment that Jesus had never recognized their “Christian” work. Please read Matthew 7:21-27 and along with these trenchant words the appalled reaction of Jeremiah (Jer. 23) as he lamented the false and phony preaching of his day. What, said Jeremiah, can compare with the words of God? “Is not my word like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29). What has wheat in common with chaff? The word of God was burning in the heart of the prophet (Jer. 15:16; 20:9) — as later in the hearts of the apostles in Bible study with Jesus (Luke 24:32). Our own absorption with the words of Scripture should follow this model, as the compelling motive for all we do in the brief time allowed to us to function while it is still day. ✧

What about the Words of Prophecy and Prediction?

One does not have to travel far in the USA to see a bold announcement inviting the public to seek psychic information about the future. Apparently the lines on your hand reveal what is going to happen to you. For a fee, a practitioner will let you in on the secrets of your personal future.

People who fall for this avenue for gaining information make an exceedingly poor choice. They are liable to put themselves in contact with the demonic world, at their peril. Psychic activity was punishable by death in Israel. The risk was much too great. Instead of dabbling with the occult the Scriptures of the prophets were a far more worthy and sufficient source of information. After all they proceed from the mind and spirit of the God who had created all things and who knew the end from the beginning. Graciously God has provided about 28% of the Bible as predictive prophecy, announcing the events of the end-time (note, not “the end of time”: time will continue in the Kingdom of the age to come. There will still be a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, etc. A timeless and spaceless future is really a meaningless prospect for us all, and interminably boring!).

Zechariah 7:12 links the **spirit** and **words** of God beautifully for us: It speaks of “the instruction and the **words** which the Lord God had sent by His **spirit** by the former prophets.” Once again the words are the expression of the mind and spirit of God Himself, the precious and priceless index of God’s plan and intention for us. Truly God has spoken. The constant problem complained of in the Bible on page after page is that we have not listened well! “But they refused to listen and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that

they might not hear. They made their hearts as adamant as flint” (Zech. 7:11, 12).

One of the surest ways of *not* hearing the words of the Bible well is to have been indoctrinated from early childhood days by teachers who were admired and trusted and whose views were taken as “gospel truth.” Yet these teachers should be subject to critical investigation. There is always room for considering that what one has learned may not be quite as true as we once thought. It may be in relation to the nature of God, the definition of the Gospel, or the question of law and obedience, the New Covenant and the Old Covenant, Sabbath-keeping, speaking in tongues and other issues. A wise Christian will keep an open mind and hear all sides of the question. Our common need and the great unifying truth of the Bible concerns the Gospel of the Kingdom, God’s future for you and for mankind.

Before all else the Hebrew prophets whom Jesus had absorbed spoke of the (genuine) new age of the coming Kingdom of God to be inaugurated on earth by the splendid public and visible return of the Messiah. II Thessalonians 1:7-9 provides perhaps the most startling and dramatic descriptions of that stupendous event coming. The Lord will be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey God or know the Gospel and they will be punished with the fire of the age to come. This will banish them from the presence of God and Jesus as unfit citizens of the Kingdom of God to be organized by Jesus and the saints when he returns.

We observe first that there is no such thing as a secret “**pre-tribulation rapture**” so much popularized by literature today. It is comforting, no doubt, to be told that as a believer you are going to be whisked away from the earth when the great tribulation breaks out in the world. But it is comfort without biblical basis, and presumably those who live to see the pre-trib rapture NOT happen will be not unreasonably upset at themselves and their teachers for not having done better homework on the question of the end time events. The “pre-trib rapture” promises to be another “great disappointment.” The problem is not that hard. Anyone can read that Jesus promised that the “elect” — that is, the Christians — will be gathered “immediately **after** [“**post**”] the tribulation of those days,” that is following the cosmic signs which follow immediately after the yet future great tribulation (see Matt. 24:29-31).

The sequence is not difficult to follow. Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:14 of the worldwide preaching of the true Christian Gospel about the Kingdom of God and then, enjoying no doubt the rapt attention of the Apostles, and I hope of us too, he said: “When you therefore see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel standing

in a holy place (let the reader be careful to understand), then flee...”

Can you imagine Jesus telling the faithful to *flee from Jerusalem* if in fact he believed that they would be *removed* from the earth at that point in the end-time events? Does that make the slightest sense? Does one promise “lift-off” into the sky as a means of avoiding the great tribulation, if one tells one’s followers, the Christians, “to flee to the hills”?

Jesus and the New Testament nowhere recognize the very modern (since 1830 only) doctrine of a double-stage Second Coming, once in secret to remove the believers (the so-called Pre-Tribulation Rapture) and then secondly, seven years later, in public to establish the Kingdom. Christians may indeed escape persecution if God wills but that would be by flight or other protection *on the earth* (see Rev. 12:6, 14; 3:10). But there is no Scripture to support the notion that Jesus will appear in the sky invisibly in order to cause a mass exodus of believers, crashing their cars as they disappear through the roof! Such an idea is the subject of pious fiction and fantasy, with no more truth to it than the *Da Vinci Code* which proposed, among other fictions, that Jesus was married!

Now there is of course the event described by Paul as the “catching up of the saints to meet the Lord” and to escort him to the earth as he returns to take over the reins of world government. Paul referred to this in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. He uses the verb “caught up” but not the noun “rapture.” It would not be inaccurate to speak of a “rapture of the saints,” based on this passage in I Thessalonians 4, but certainly *not* here or anywhere else in the New Testament is there a **PRE-TRIBULATION** rapture.

Notice too how impossible it would be to believe that Paul promised that Christians would be removed by rapture/resurrection *secretly*, and seven years *before* the public appearance of Jesus on earth. Paul urged his converts to endure affliction at the present time as part of the Christian experience of trial and character building. Paul looks forward to the future and encourages his readers that they will be relieved of all tribulation eventually. But when is that to happen? Is trial and suffering to end for the believer when Jesus appears *secretly*, *before* the appearance of the final antichrist? Obviously not. Here are his words in II Thessalonians 1:6-10: “It is just for God to repay with affliction those who are now afflicting you, and to grant rest with us to you **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire** inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel. They will suffer the punishment of destruction pertaining

to the coming age and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints.”

Is it not crystal clear that Paul envisages no prior secret relief from suffering? How could he possibly have approved the writings of Hal Lindsey and many others which constantly affirm a two-stage coming of Jesus and escape for all believers from the time of the future great tribulation? On the contrary, Paul sees one single gathering of the saints, destined to happen when Jesus is revealed from heaven in glory — hardly a private affair!

That gathering of the faithful is accompanied by the blast of the victory trumpet in the teaching of Paul about the resurrection to occur at the seventh trumpet (I Cor. 15:52). Jesus spoke likewise of the same event in Matthew 24:31 — again with the mention of the trumpet — and it is confirmed in Revelation 11:15-18 which should be taken by all as an anchor of prophecy. At the seventh angel’s trumpet (the last trumpet of I Cor. 15:52) the faithful dead of all the ages are invested with immortality, the goal of the present Christian life. It is then, and not before that, that the Kingdoms of this evil world which now belong to Satan become the Kingdom of God and of the Messiah, and Jesus and God **begin to reign**. From that moment on the world can expect a complete reconstruction, the gradual elimination of error and sin and the consequent development of a society of peace, joy and prosperity which collectively we all want but do not know how to achieve.

Here then is the outline of the end-time program as detailed by Jesus. “When you see the Abomination of Desolation standing where HE ought not [Mark 13:14 — the pronoun is *masculine* suggesting a *person* or his image in a temple], flee...For then shall be a great tribulation such has never been and never will be.” So severe will be this coming period of distress that if those days of great tribulation were not shortened, no human persons would remain alive.

But, be assured, “those days will be cut short for the sake of the elect” (who are therefore obviously involved in that time period). The Abomination of Desolation is the trigger of that terrible future great tribulation, which is a short agonizing episode, and then “immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened...” (Matt. 24:29) and Jesus will appear visibly like lightning.

Ordinary, elementary rules of connection and grammar tell us that Jesus had one and only one period of “great tribulation” in mind. He had found it in Daniel 12:1 where the same period is closely linked to the death of the final Antichrist, the King of the North, and the resurrection of the sleeping saints (see Dan. 11:45-12:3). Listen carefully to the words of the master rabbi. “Then

[when the Abomination appears] there will be a **great unprecedented tribulation**...Immediately after the **tribulation of those days**, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and then they will see the Son of Man coming in power and great glory, and he will gather the elect from the four points of the compass..."

Attempts to locate the great tribulation in AD 70 fail for the clear reason that "immediately after" the great tribulation of AD 70 Jesus did not reappear! On no account should we think that Jesus came back in AD 70 — an invisible Second Coming or appearance of Jesus (in AD 70 or 1914) would be a complete contradiction and a ghastly "non-event."

It is equally impossible to extend the great tribulation from AD 70 onwards *continuously* until a time future to us, as some suggest, in order to deal with Jesus' critically important time-marker "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29). To describe the whole inter-advent period since AD 70 as "a great tribulation as has never occurred and never will" is really a considerable abuse of language and common sense, since it would mean that such "a great tribulation" would be longer than the millennium!

But Jesus said that God had "*shortened those days*" of great tribulation (Matt. 24:22). He also said that in the days of that great tribulation it would be hard on pregnant women, which makes no sense at all as describing history for the past 2000 years. It would be cynical to imagine that an unparalleled great tribulation, shortened by God lest no flesh survive, could last more than 2000 years!

The only reasonable solution is to note that Jesus spoke of an abomination and great tribulation not in AD 70 at all, but still future and close to the end of the age. Those days of terrible distress and trouble will affect the world *just before* the brilliant dawn of the coming Kingdom — the moment when Jesus intervenes to replace the terrifying government of the Antichrist with his own beneficent royal rule from Jerusalem.

Again, may I persuade you that the **great tribulation** in Scripture (as distinct from general tribulation which can afflict believers at any time) cannot possibly describe an extended period beginning at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Here are the words of Jesus: "When you see the abomination standing where he ought not to (let the reader pay close attention), those in Judea are to flee to the mountains...Woe to those who are pregnant IN THOSE DAYS. Pray that your flight not have to be in the winter, for **THOSE DAYS will be a tribulation** of which there is no parallel from the beginning of the creation which God created until now and never will be again. And if the Lord had not cut short THOSE DAYS no one would be found alive. But because of the elect, he

cut THOSE DAYS short...But in THOSE DAYS after THAT TRIBULATION the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light...and then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (see Mark 13:14-26).

I invite readers to abandon the false notion that the great tribulation here described so vividly by Jesus is to be understood as an extended period of time lasting from AD 70 until now and yet into the future. Unfortunately some have built their system of understanding on this impossible view and it affects their whole grasp of the biblical future and of the spirit of prophecy. We suggest that the great tribulation is that special time of extreme agony destined to afflict the world just before Jesus returns. As I write to you in the peace and comfort of my home in Georgia, I can assure on the authority of the spirit of Jesus in Scripture that you and I are not currently living in the period of "the Great Tribulation," which mercifully will be reduced in length to prevent the death of every human person.

What else is to be expected in the future before and at the time of the arrival of Jesus in glory to install the first successful world government? First of all, we do not have chronological information in the Bible to tell us how far we are away from the great event, the Parousia or Second Coming of the Messiah. "Adventists" have tended constantly to speak of the time being short, and they would like to believe that they will live to see Jesus coming in power. However, the Bible speaks of the appearance *first* of a final antichristian figure with military and political might and cruelty. He is seen in Daniel 11:21ff as King of the North, suggesting that his origin is in the area of ancient Babylon and Assyria, kingdoms founded as early as Genesis 10 after the flood by the infamous Nimrod, the awful first "antichrist" who organized society against God.

Micah 5:5, 6 speaks of the Messiah delivering Israel from her final conqueror, the Assyrian. There is no need to dissolve the meaning of the word Assyrian into a meaningless cipher. As one expert writer on prophecy wrote: "A.B. Davidson is unwilling to allow a place in prophecy for Assyria in biblical eschatology. Davidson admits that Scripture **represents the Assyrian as existing in the time of the Messiah**, but he (Davidson) does not think that this is likely to be fulfilled literally. Yet can one draw the line here? The NT and the OT speak of **an eschatological military campaign in the area of the Euphrates River**. It would appear best to recognize that while the Sargonid dynasty of the 7th and 8th century Assyrians may have come to an end, the LAND [of Assyria] still remains and **it is the land of Assyria which will experience precisely the events**

which Scripture forecasts in its regard” (Dr. Barton-Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, p. 81). This of course points to the area of the Middle East currently so much in the news.

Zechariah 5:5-11 speaks of a “woman sitting in an ephah,” which is a symbol apparently of commerce. I note that the only other occurrence in Scripture of a “woman sitting” is in Revelation 17:3 where a “woman is sitting” on a scarlet beast. That beast is controlled by the woman, later called “the great city,” and the beast in the vision has seven heads and ten horns. These have one mind and purpose and they give political support to a single leader. That leader is an additional **eighth head** of the seven-headed beast. He himself is given the title “the Beast” as the final wicked political figure of the end-time. There are ten kings who form a confederacy with the Beast. They have “not yet received their royal power but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the Beast [the single eighth head of the wicked system on which the woman rides]” (see Rev. 17:8-18).

This group of ten plus one, the Beast and ten confederate rulers, appears to be a reflection of the alliance formed in Psalm 83 against Israel. Their combined intention is to wipe Israel off the land that “her name may exist no more” (Ps. 83:4). Strikingly there are just ten national units mentioned here, led by Assyria whom we find in Micah 5:5, 6 as invading Israel in the time of the Messiah at his second coming. Commentaries record no convincing historical fulfillment of Psalm 83, which therefore remains as important prophetic material.

Are we to expect then a vast and ugly commercial venture with an international flavor, established as the mysterious woman (Zech. 5; Rev. 17, 18) in the land of Shinar (Zech. 5:11), ancient Sumer and the home of Nimrod and the Assyrian empire he founded along with Babylonia? Zechariah 5:5-11 deserves much attention. Commentaries are generally weak and have little to offer as explanation on this passage.

The Assyrian figures again in the end-time prophecies of Isaiah. Chapters 1-14 of Isaiah should be read carefully at a single sitting, to catch the story flow. We find here that the Kingdom of God will be established on the ruins of Babylon/Assyria. Are we then to expect a political monster in the Middle East?

Why does Revelation 17 and 18 quote so plentifully from Jeremiah 50 and 51? Is that great prophet warning of trouble in the ancient area of Babylon? If Assyria really means Assyria, should not Babylon and its great city point to Babylon the seat of the Beast in the same context as the river Euphrates? Rivers stay put. They do not move from one continent to another! Revelation 18 is

surprisingly unlike an apostate church. It sounds distinctly like a vast international commercial “conglomerate” which winds up as a ghastly antichristian failure. Henry Alford admitted:

“It must not for a moment be denied that the character of this lamentation in Rev. 18 [about Babylon] throws a shade of obscurity over the interpretation, otherwise so plain from the explanation given in ch. 17 at the end. The difficulty is however not confined to the application of the prophecy to Rome papal, but extends over the application of it to Rome *at all*, which last is determined for us by the solution given us by ch. 18 at the end. **For Rome never has been, and from its very position never could be, a great commercial city.** I leave this difficulty unsolved...Certainly, as has been observed, the details of this mercantile lamentation far more nearly suit London than Rome at any assignable period of her history.” Or could Babylon actually be Babylon, which Saddam Hussein was already beginning to rebuild as a new historic center in Iraq?

Another interesting end-time event is the frightful death of the King of Assyria in Isaiah 30:31-33. Who is this amazing Assyrian king who suffers a torturous death in a fire at the valley of Hinnom (=Topheth, Jer. 7:31, = Gehenna in the NT) which is sulphurous, that is brimstone, ignited by Yahweh’s breath? Has that ever happened in history or is it rather naturally connected with the fate of the final Beast (the eighth head) who, with his companion the False Prophet, will be “thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur, brimstone” (Rev. 19:20)? It is often overlooked that the lake of fire exists when Jesus comes back to establish the Kingdom and not only later after the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15).

On a more positive note, what of the faithful believers resurrected at the coming of Jesus? “Those [will be resurrected] at his coming” (I Cor. 15:23). Jesus referred to a wonderful day coming “when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom” (Matt. 8:11). Believers will be celebrating their newly gained immortality in the Kingdom of God. Individuals will, of course, be clearly recognized. Wine and unheard of celebration will mark that glorious occasion. Believers will be thrilled to meet the former “greats” of the faith: David, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the prophets and many other faithful whose stories will have been unique. Servetus, tragically burned by John Calvin for his legitimate opposition to the Trinity, will I think be there — and many other noble souls. This company will form the theocratic government of the Kingdom of God under the supervision of the King Messiah, His Majesty the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will finish by alluding to a real possibility dealing with the final days of this age. When Jesus arrives in glory he will in all probability move the resurrected saints and those who are living at his coming to a location in the wilderness known to Bible lovers as Mount Sinai, in Arabia (Gal. 4:25). As once Moses arranged and constituted the Kingdom which was Israel at Sinai, so Jesus as the new and final Moses will organize the government which at that time will be about to assume power over the nations. The well known text in Isaiah 40:3 calls for a highway to be constructed in the wilderness. Psalm 68 speaks of a future gathering at Sinai and the suggestion is that the Messianic banquet might well be celebrated in a wilderness-become-paradise resort (“the desert will blossom like a rose”). There is an intriguing 45-day period connected with the end-time events in Daniel 12:11, 12. Ancient Jewish tradition tells us that when the Messiah comes in glory he “retires” for a period of 45 days. This could account for those extra 45 days in Daniel 12:12. Can you imagine getting to know Jesus face to face and the saints of all the ages and preparing to have a part in the first effective world government?

Following the constitution of the Kingdom in the wilderness-turned-resort, the saints might then march, as once Joshua did, into the promised land. Jesus as the ultimate Joshua, who already in his historical ministry on earth in the first century cleansed the land at least in part of evil spirits, will confront the Antichrist who will by then have moved his headquarters to Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45). Defeating the antichrist, the new David and his immortal warriors will proceed to establish the capital of the Kingdom at Jerusalem and put down all objectors to the coming Kingdom of God. The nations will be urged to submit for their own good to the Son, “so that he not be angry and you perish” (Ps. 2). Gradually the world will learn peace under this new regime. Assyria and Egypt, once inveterate enemies of Israel, will become model citizens and Christian national units fully blessed by God and the Messiah (Isa. 19:23-25), along with a remnant of converted Israel.

While Billy Graham promises his audiences that we are going to “polish rainbows in heaven, prepare heavenly dishes and tend heavenly gardens,” we of Restoration Fellowship invite you to consider your calling to royal office and places of responsibility in the Kingdom, according to your talents and achievements in Christ. Truly the Kingdom of God is the pearl of great price which is worth giving up all to attain. In that secret of the Kingdom now revealed in the teaching of Jesus lies your personal hope of immortality and life in the renewed earth amidst a teeming host of surviving mortals, needing

reeducation. All important is the seed/word of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19), the word of the Gospel which contains the germ of immortality as God begets sons transmitting in some mysterious way His own divine “DNA.”

Satan has one important objective against which we should be ever on guard. He wants to snatch away that seed message/Gospel from your heart “so that you cannot believe it and be saved” (Luke 8:12). At the same time he knows better than most Bible readers that belief in that Kingdom Plan of God to confer immortality is the first condition of successful repentance. Mark 4:11, 12 deserve profound meditation. Jesus states here: Unless they accept the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom they cannot truly repent and be forgiven, i.e. saved. Yes, the blood of Jesus’ sacrificial death is all important but forgiveness and repentance are predicated also, Jesus clearly taught, on an intelligent reception of the Gospel of the Kingdom as he taught it (Mark 4:11, 12). By all means show your friends these astonishingly interesting texts (Acts 8:12; Luke 8:12; Mark 4:11, 12; I Tim. 6:3 and II John 7-9). Popular theology has practically bypassed Jesus’ own Gospel with a counter Gospel which limits belief to a faith in a dying and rising savior. We have been propagandized through C.S. Lewis that the “Gospel is not in the gospels.”

We suggest to our readers the exact opposite. It would be safer to consult the full teaching of Jesus himself, beginning with his Gospel of the Kingdom and working back through the Hebrew prophets on whom he was raised and on whom he fed, as one desiring to be filled, as we should, with the word of truth. Peter got it right: “You, Messiah, have the words of the life of the age to come” (John 6:68). Where else shall we go? Cling to those life-saving and immortality-imparting living words of the living God and His unique Son. ✧

Comment

“The article ‘Word and Spirit: The Vital Energy of the Christian Life’ (June) hit a cord; it was inspiring! Looking forward to more about the Word/Spirit subject. It could be a great subject for a new book! It is a perfect way of preaching the gospel about the coming kingdom and the POWER of the message as Paul says. I really got excited when I read that article. It made so much sense to me. It really encourages one to want to study the Scriptures all the more as the end time approaches. I don’t think people have any concept about what terrible times are ahead of us. Things can change so rapidly. There is no doubt in my mind that those who remain true to the scriptural revelation will suffer persecution, a lot!”

— Canada