

**The Bible
and
Some Bible Teachings**

Contents

	Page
The Bible	
The One Thing Needful.....	7
One Is Your Master.....	11
This is an Hard Saying.....	15
The Quest for Certainty.....	23
The Apocrypha.....	37
Loving the Authorised Version.....	49
Signs and Wonders and Spiritual Gifts.....	69
Marriage	
Marriage.....	131

Arranged Marriages.....141

Divorce and Remarriage.....147

Understanding the Future

Understanding Future Events.....167

The Use of Apocalyptic Literature.....171

The Antichrist.....177

The Future of the Jews.....187

Dispensationalism..... 197

The Millennium.....223

Scripture Indexes.....249

I

The Bible

The One Thing Needful

Luke 10:38-42

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

It is so, so easy for all of us to fill our every waking moment with things. Thoughts and ideas about our activities in this world engage our minds constantly. Indeed, sometimes we can't even get to sleep for thinking about them, but our minds can be buzzing long into the night.

Now, while we have breath on this earth, the Lord has given each child of His work to do, and so we, of course, should do this to the best of the ability given to us, and that would include thinking, planning and using our minds accordingly. These are therefore perfectly legitimate things to be doing. But in our busy-ness, we often miss the one thing needful. We need to prepare and be ready for our death.

Are we ready to die and go to meet the great Judge of all the earth? We may say, "Yes, because I have trusted in Jesus." Very good, may that indeed be so. But we can't just sit back, trust in a decision we supposedly made many years ago and then forget about it. There are still warnings in the Bible to be diligent, to always be ready:

2 Peter 1:10,11

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Not that we can lose our election once we have it, that is impossible, we can't be un-born again. But we must make the fact sure in our own hearts and minds, continually examining ourselves for our own benefit:

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

We are exhorted by the Lord to spend our time watching and praying:

Mark 13:33

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

But most people are too busy with their little lives in this world to be bothered to do much of this. Thoughts of heaven are very far away most of the time. Only when trouble comes do we begin to reconsider our lives in the light of eternity.

I am talking about professing Christians here. As for unbelievers, they can't do this. They have no hope. This world is all they have. They either think that death is the end, or they invent something beyond it that is pleasing to their carnal nature. None of them want to come to terms with the truth that:

Hebrews 9:27

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Christians should be so much more focused on eternal things than they are. Our critics accuse us of being so heavenly-minded that we are of no earthly use. But that's impossible! Our problem is that we're nowhere near heavenly-minded enough. We can only do the work we've been given to do down here properly – i.e. to the glory of God – if we view it in the light of eternity. So many of us busy, busy, busy ourselves with church activities. Working in our “corner of the Lord's vineyard” for what? To get more people in to our cosy little denomination? To make a name for ourselves in the church? But are we ready to die?? That's the question. I fear that a lot of the time, sadly, Christians keep themselves busy to avoid thoughts of eternity, rather than to prepare for it.

It has to be said that most Christians seem to have tunnel vision, and can't see beyond the activities of their own little church ghetto – as though theirs is the only denomination in the world, and the whole of Christ's kingdom is dependent upon them. They can't seem to be able to pass the baton on, to ease up in any of their busy-ness. Even Paul recognised the need to do this, as he handed over his work to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

I've come across people who fill their retirement travelling all over the world preaching. Now, there's nothing wrong with preaching, but when the activity completely takes over our lives, preparation for our latter end takes a back seat. I also know of ministers in their 70's who still feel they have to fill their lives with church work, even though they've got health problems and should have calmed down their active participation a long time ago. STOP!! Whatever age we are, and in old age particularly, our great need is to prepare ourselves for the great translation that is death. As Christians, we should not be so full of busy-ness in this world that we neglect readiness for the next. All of us still, even after many years as a Christian, have a long, long way to go before we can be fitted for heaven, because we are still so full of the ways of this world in our hearts. And we just can't seem to learn to wean ourselves off this world. Help us, Lord! Change us, Lord! Make us ready! And it's only familiarity with the Word of God that can do that:

John 17:17

Sanctify us by thy truth, thy Word is truth.

Sadly, we'd rather stay here. We quite like our position and place in the church we're in, and the work we're doing. I even suggest that some of us, if we do ever get to heaven at all, would be bored spending the rest of eternity no longer in control of what's happening around us any more. That should not be. This world is merely a preparation place for the next. May we all realise that this is so.

Ecclesiastes 7:1-4

A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

James 4:14

For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Colossians 3:1-4

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

One Is Your Master

Matthew 23:8

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

I used to have lots of Christian books, but the older I get, the more time I now spend reading the Holy Scriptures alone, and I hardly touch my library at all these days. In fact, I've got rid of most of it. Now, I'm not saying it is wrong to go to others for advice or help (including going to the authors of Christian books), but we must realise eventually that men can only help us so far. Not only do they have limited knowledge, but they are also prone to errors and wrong thinking – as indeed are we ourselves. Only the Holy Scriptures are inerrant and completely trustworthy.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

One major thing I've noticed in my reading is that, whereas Christ had compassion on the multitude, He had not one good word to say about the church leaders of His day. This culminates in Matthew chapter 23, where He pronounces eight “woes” on the leadership of the church, and concludes in verse 33:

Matthew 23:33

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Yes, there were good men in the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus to name but two, and it's not wrong to be in church leadership. If we are, then we must use our position for good; but most likely we will be sidelined by those unregenerate men (and women these days) who want status in the church on earth.

The Sanhedrin consisted of both Sadducees, liberals who deny the resurrection:

Matthew 22:23

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection.

and Pharisees, evangelicals, who interpreted the Scriptures too literally, and completely missed their Messiah when He came:

John 5:39,40

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

So we see that no church on earth is unaffected by this phenomenon. We need to recognise it and avoid following men and movements. No church on earth can satisfy, only Christ.

There are very few places on this earth where the eternal world meets this one. Death is one of them, and in this I include near-death experiences, such as severe illnesses, earthquakes, famines, etc., all of which are ordained in the Lord's providence to one end – to get men to repent:

Luke 13:1-5

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

If it seems a harsh thing to say that God ordains all these things, then we must always remember that Christ said:

Matthew 24:8

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Compared to hell fire, these are nothing. We must never, ever ask God to give us what we justly deserve, because it would be much worse than anything we can experience on this earth. We should only ever cry for mercy.

This world is not under Satan's control, as Jehovah's Witnesses teach, nor does everything happen by random chance, as the humanists believe, but God is in control of all things, ordaining all things to His greatest glory in the end. This should be our comfort in this world.

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

The reading of Scripture is therefore a very precious thing. It brings us to the point where the eternal world meets this one before death can come anywhere near us. So we can prepare for the inevitable while we still have breath, reason and life. Sadly, when we are well, eternity seems so far away, and we often don't have the inclination to bother about it. Let us prepare ourselves properly for eternity, read our Scriptures, not follow men and their whims, but follow Christ alone, who will lead us to glory.

1 John 2:26,27

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

This is an Hard Saying

John 6:60

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

We know that every word of Scripture is given by inspiration of God:

2 Timothy 3:16,17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

So, the Bible is all important. It is the very Word of God itself. Creation alone shews every man God's eternal power and Godhead, so that all of us are without excuse for not approaching Him to find out more about Him:

Romans 1:20

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse....

But if we want to know anything further about God, we must come to the Bible. This is God's infallible Word to men. This is the full revelation of what God has chosen to shew us. In fact, it's the only window we have on spiritual things. All the information we need – all that pertains to life and godliness – is in here. Everything else we may think we know about God is mere conjecture. If it's not in this book, we must acknowledge our ignorance.

There are plenty of other books, sermons, teachers and churches around, all purporting to give us insight into the things of God. The

Christian can feel inundated with such material. Some of this can be useful, but one thing they will all have in common is that they are all the fallible words of fallible men. They can, and do, contain mistakes. But as long as we stick to the Bible, we can be confident of its trustworthiness. We may go wrong reading it, but that will always be our problem, never the Bible's.

But, you may say, the Bible is very difficult to understand. And we should expect it to be. Peter acknowledged the writings of the apostle Paul were "hard":

2 Peter 3:15-16

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

But just because some parts are "hard," that shouldn't put us off reading it.

The Bible is no ordinary book. The Bible is God's Word to men. It is our daily spiritual food, and should be used as such. It is to last us a lifetime, and we'll never be able to plumb the depths of it. We could read the same passage a thousand times, and the Lord will always reveal something new in it for us every time. The Bible is alive:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

There are going to be many things that we won't understand, but we shouldn't be worried about that. We must concentrate on the passages that we can understand:

Matthew 5:44

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Romans 12:21

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Ephesians 4:28

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

A child can understand these principles. Start here. Work on these in fear and trembling. Then later on, as we gradually get to understand more, we can expand our repertoire. Peter calls us to start with the milk first, things we can easily grasp. Then we will grow healthily:

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

But we don't stick to drinking milk all our lives. We eventually ought to go on to the meat:

Hebrews 5:12-14

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

But, many Bible passages have different interpretations, only one of which must be correct. But which one? Not only do we need the Bible, but we also need the Holy Spirit within us to interpret it correctly. The Scriptures and the Holy Spirit are the two witnesses God has given us, and we need both:

Revelation 11:3-4

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Acts 5:32

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

We have to go along with what we're convinced of as individuals at any one time, right or wrong, until the Holy Spirit convicts us differently by leading us into the truth. And that means accepting the probability that we are always going to be wrong somewhere, and being willing to change as we later grow in our understanding of the Scriptures.

We all...

2 Peter 3:18

...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ....

So, not only does that mean there will be differences of opinion between fellow Christians, but we'll also find differences between what we used to believe and what we believe now. God quite often allows His people to embrace wrong teaching for a time, before they come to understand the truth a little better. Some things we thought we understood in the past, we now realise were hopelessly wrong, and we now believe something altogether different. What fools we were. But God knows what He is doing with us in letting us grow in this way. We must be humbled by this. Let us always be aware:

1 Corinthians 8:1-2

...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

But things get more complicated still. God, in His inscrutable wisdom, seems to have, in the Scriptures, used certain words and phrases which can be so easily misunderstood. Why didn't He use plainer language? Let's look at a few examples:

Luke 22:19

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

The bread in the Lord's Supper is a symbol of the body of Christ, which all believers partake of in remembrance of Him. But Roman Catholics interpret this passage altogether differently. To them, this is not speaking to every believer, but only the twelve disciples, who in turn, by apostolic succession, institute it among all their priests. Christ says to the priests: "Do this in remembrance of me: Break a piece of

bread, say this is Christ's body, and then give it to the people." We find that ridiculous because we're used to the way we understand this. But if this is what the people are taught by their church, and they know nothing else, we can see how easily they can think the way they do. Especially when they also read:

John 6:53-56

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

There we are, you see. The bread and wine in the "Mass" really does turn into the body and blood of Christ. So, is the Roman Catholic interpretation correct? Of course not. This passage isn't even talking about the Lord's Supper. The "eating" and "drinking" Christ's flesh and blood refers to eating and drinking spiritually, and not in any physical way. It certainly does not condone a mindless, superstitious practice. If we have the Holy Spirit guiding us, He will lead us to that correct interpretation. But we can easily see how people without the Holy Spirit can come to a totally wrong idea.

Or how about this:

1 Corinthians 15:29

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

One phrase, "*baptized for the dead*," confirms Mormons in their idea that they can posthumously, retrospectively baptise their ancestors and bring them into the kingdom of God, long after they have died. But it can't mean that because that wouldn't tally with any other part of Scripture:

Luke 16:26

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

But taking the phrase “*baptised for the dead*” on its own out of context, without any guidance from the Holy Spirit, we can easily see how they come to their conclusions.

Or how about this:

Mark 16:17-18

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

All sorts of people really believe they are able to do these things today, for themselves, but we’re told:

Deuteronomy 6:16

Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God.

These signs were performed by the apostles for a time after Christ’s ascension, and that is to whom Christ is directly speaking about these things. But surely it could have been made a bit clearer that it no longer applies to us today, couldn’t it?

Or how about this verse:

Revelation 14:12

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Some Christians use this verse to try to tell us that there are two different ways to get to heaven, one by being born a Jew (i.e. those who “*keep the commandments of God*”) and one for those who become born-again Christians (i.e. those who have “*the faith of Jesus*”). But no man, whether Jew or Gentile, can “*keep the commandments of God,*” unless he has had a new heart put within him by the Lord, and thereby received “*the faith of Jesus.*” To “*keep the commandments of God*” was never a means of salvation:

Romans 3:20-23

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

But why not make this clearer in the text? Why do so many Christians today think that the Jews *en masse* will get to heaven without Christ?

In these examples, and many more, we see that it is so easy to misunderstand what the passages actually mean, and come to wrong conclusions. If I was composing Scripture (which, God forbid, I'm not), I would want to change such passages, in order to make them a lot clearer to the reader. But God chose the words He chose. God never makes mistakes. The words of Scripture are exactly the words He wants to use. It almost seems as if He is wanting people to misunderstand. The Bible tells us the solemn truth that:

2 Thessalonians 2:11,12

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The Lord wants us to genuinely seek Him, not blindly follow men and movements, who easily trip up over the stumbling blocks God has put in the Bible and get it wrong. Rather, if we have a question, we should ask of Christ personally, for ourselves, and He will always, through His Holy Spirit, show us the true way:

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7,8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Many people have found hard sayings in the Lord's teaching, and given up on following Him altogether:

John 6:60

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it?

John 6:66

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

These obviously never had the Holy Spirit to guide them. They just gave up, because they couldn't understand things for themselves. Many people can't understand the Trinity – something which to our tiny minds is incomprehensible anyway – so they become Jehovah's Witnesses, and embrace something they can understand instead.

The Lord has deliberately written His word in such a way that we have to think through it. But we should always think through it prayerfully, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and He will always lead us into the truth. We should never blindly accept whatever people or churches tell us, or whatever first comes into our heads.

1 John 2:27

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The Scripture is like a word fitly spoken:

Proverbs 25:11

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

And our job is to harvest the apples of gold.

The Quest For Certainty

Introduction

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q.2:

What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The word of God (which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament)^a is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.^b

a 2 Timothy 3:16.

b 1 John 1:3,4.

When Christ was set before Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked the question:

John 18:38

What is truth?

The Christian, who lives by faith, must answer “the Bible.” This book is his only source of truth. It contains the truth, the whole truth (or at least all that the Christian needs to know in this world) and nothing but the truth.

Westminster Confession of Faith 1:1:

I. ALTHOUGH the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation^b. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased^f.

a Romans 2:14,15; Romans 1:19,20; Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:32 with 2:1.

b I Corinthians 1:21; I Corinthians 2:13,14.

c Hebrews 1:1.

d Proverbs 22:19-21; Luke 1:3,4; Romans 15:4; Matthew 4:4,7,10; Isaiah 8:19,20.

e 2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 1:19.

f Hebrews 1:1,2.

There are two very popular misconceptions in the church today, which we see corrected here. Firstly the idea that God still speaks to His people directly today and that therefore we don't need a Bible; and secondly the idea that truth can never be found, everything is relative, so we can really believe what we like. Neither of these are true. In both cases, truth changes either depending on who has experienced the latest prophecy, or depending on whatever the individual wants it to be at the time. There must be one, and only one, absolute truth. And the Bible is the Christian's only source of truth.

2 Peter 1:3,4

His [God's] divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Every word of the Bible in the original languages, has been breathed out by God:

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Peter 1:21

....the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

If we bring something from outside of the Bible into the equation when searching for truth, there is always the problem that whatever comes in from outside of the Bible may be mixed with error. I have read many books, and heard many sermons that try to explain a passage of the Bible by use of outside sources. For example, in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Magazine (January 2004), an article was printed on the parable of the wedding garment by W. K. Tweedie (a Free Church minister in the nineteenth century). He started the article by saying, "This parable cannot be understood unless we keep in view certain of the customs of the East." The rest of the article interpreted the Bible passage in the light of extra-biblical

information on eastern wedding customs. How do we know the accuracy of these? Will not scholars change their views on what these eastern wedding customs were twenty years from now? There are therefore big problems with the use of any material other than that which is in the Bible itself, purely because we cannot vouch for the accuracy of it. However we *can* vouch for the accuracy of the Bible. We must only interpret Scripture with Scripture and nothing else:

Westminster Confession 1:9:

IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

a 2 Peter 1:20,21; Acts 15:15,16.

But we still have a big problem. Not, I hasten to add, with God or with the Bible. We thoroughly agree that every word of the Bible is God-breathed, and is our only source of truth. That's not the issue. The big problem we have is with *language*. And this is the subject we have to deal with here.

The Need for Logical Analysis

Every time we read the Bible, before we can get to the truth, we have to analyse the text. In order to understand a passage properly, we must apply the rules of logic to it. We must convert every sentence in the Bible into its categorical form and analyse what can be deduced from the sentence by good and necessary consequence, and indeed what cannot be deduced from it by these means too. This is not a logic text book, so I am not going to go into these things here, but just to say that's not as easy as it sounds, and we, being stupid creatures, will often make mistakes.

Most professing Christians try to avoid this because it's too much like hard work. They just don't have the patience to do this, and so go off on their own, thinking they know better. They find another source of truth that their own tiny brains can understand. These sources can be many and varied: other men such as the pope of Rome, other literature such as the Watchtower magazine, or maybe they believe that the Holy

Spirit can guide them directly without the use of the Bible at all. All of these are very common ideas, and used by countless numbers of professing Christians. But they are all blindly following an uninspired source. This is blind faith and not real faith. Real faith involves *the understanding of the truth*.

But while we can't approve of any of these things, we still have the problem that logical analysis is an extremely difficult exercise for all of us. Sadly, logic has been missing from the state school curriculum for many years now. It would be good if it returned, and we had a nation of people who thought logically once more. But even if we had this, we all have different capacities to understand, and some people would understand more than others. All of us only have a limited capacity to understand anything.

But the Reformation gave the Bible into the hands of the ploughboy for him to understand *for himself*, to get away from him having to rely on others to tell him what the Scriptures meant. We are not to rely on doctors, scholars, priests or ministers to tell us what to believe. They will often lead us astray, for their own evil ends. But we are to have the Scriptures *for ourselves* so we may understand it *for ourselves*.

But we all have different capacities to understand. Some have been given five talents by God, and others only one. We should realise this. There is only one truth, and that is the truth that can be deduced from proper logical analysis of the propositions in the Bible. But all Christians have great difficulty performing this deduction process.

But, despite the fact that most people have not got the capacity to get to the bottom of a text for themselves, the fact remains that we still need proper logical analysis if we are to understand any passage of the Bible properly. It may be very *difficult* to get to the bottom of a passage of Scripture using logical analysis, but it is still *possible*. So far, so good.

The Problems with Language

But the problems grow. When we apply logical analysis to a passage of Scripture, we assume that the passage in question means exactly what it says, and all we have to do is logically analyse it, trying not to make

mistakes along the way. However, this is not so. Many passages in the Bible do NOT mean what they say. We repeat: **Many passages in the Bible do NOT mean what they say.** This might seem a shocking thing to say to the average evangelical Christian, but it is true for the following reasons:

(a.) Firstly, we must realise that God breathed out the Scripture originally in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). (Other languages are present as well, in short passages, Aramaic, Chaldee etc., but it is mainly in Hebrew and Greek). So, if we want to understand God's meaning of a passage, we must always perform our logical analysis on the passage *in these original languages*. The problem with a translation from one language to another is that the translation itself will automatically bring about some changes. Change is inevitable in any translation. It may be possible to directly translate nouns, as these words point to objects we can see and know about, but translation of other words such as prepositions, or dealing with the word order, grammar and syntax, all these present problems in translation that cannot be translated absolutely perfectly.

Just looking up two common words in "*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*," we find 34 Greek words for the English word "*take*" (plus 17 notes), and 39 for "*come*" (with 16 notes); each Greek word having its own nuance. Unless we learn every Hebrew and Greek word in the Bible, together with each word's exact nuance (which will not necessarily be identical to the translated English nuance), then we have not really got to the bottom of the meaning of the text.

Not only that, but how do we find out what these nuances are? We can try using Strong's Hebrew and Greek dictionaries, but we've just started to interpret the Bible using an outside source, which may or may not be correct. Strong's may be wrong. Your Hebrew or Greek teacher may be wrong. How can we know for sure, unless Hebrew or Greek is our mother tongue? We can't.

(b.) Secondly, we can't take everything in the Bible literally. Some of the Bible is poetry and should be taken as such. For example:

Isaiah 55:12

The trees of the field shall clap their hands.

This does not mean that trees will literally grow hands and clap them. It is “obviously” poetry, and should be read as such. But how do we *know* which passages are poetry and which aren’t? In some texts we are told that we have a “psalm” or “song,” so we can know we are dealing with poetry in those places, but in other passages we really can’t tell. Most modern Bible versions change seamlessly from printing the text in prose to printing it in poetry. But how do the compilers of those version *know* which is which? We can’t explain how we come to the conclusion that certain passages are poetry. It is not “obvious” at all. We go along the lines of thinking that the idea of trees growing hands and clapping is ridiculous, so we conclude that it must be poetic. But Christ dying on a cross to save His people from their sins is “ridiculous” to human reasoning, but it is nonetheless true. We can never use what we call “common sense” to analyse a passage of Scripture.

And what about parables? How far do we go in our interpretation of them? Christ often gives us the interpretation, but what about, for example, the parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8)? We can understand it to teach that God “*will avenge His own elect speedily*” because that’s what the Bible tells us (vv.7,8), but we can’t extend the interpretation to teach that God is unjust, because we know from other passages of the Bible that that’s not true. But unless we are told, how do we know how far to take a parable? We don’t.

And how do we interpret allegorical language? Many people think that they can understand the book of Revelation, but in most cases they only interpret it to conveniently fit in with their already preconceived ideas about things to come. Can any of us really understand an allegory, unless the interpretation is also revealed in Scripture at the same time?

(c.) If the above problems about language seem overwhelming enough, this third problem is the biggest of all – *figures of speech*. In every passage we always need to work out whether a figure of speech is being used or not. There are many figures of speech, most of which do not affect the sense of the passage, but some do. Two of the most common of these are *ellipsis* (where something is deliberately missing from the sentence) or *hyperbole* (exaggeration for effect). These are used a lot in the Bible. For example, take the following verses:

Matthew 14:19

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matthew 15:36

And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

In both these passages the Bible clearly says that Jesus “*gave... the disciples to the multitude.*” That is what the Bible says, so it must be true. But, that is “obviously” wrong. We “obviously” have an ellipsis here. It should read “*and the disciples **gave the loaves** to the multitude.*” (or *bread* might be a better word instead of *loaves*, because the loaves would have been multiplied by this point).

So which is right? Did Jesus give the disciples to the multitude, or did the disciples give the bread to the multitude? One must be right and the other wrong, but which one, and why? Is a figure of speech (in this case an ellipsis) being used here or not? How do we *know*? We really, seriously can’t tell. Again, we go along the lines of thinking that it can’t mean Christ gave the disciples because that would be ridiculous, and the disciples giving the bread would be the more “obvious, common sense” meaning, but we can’t really *know* this for sure.

There is a book written by Ethelbert Bullinger called “*Figures of Speech in the Bible.*” It lists hundreds of different types of figures of speech, and gives Biblical examples to illustrate each one. It is in general a very useful book, but in some cases he sees a figure of speech where there isn’t one, mostly in order to promote his preconceived premillennial dispensationalist views. So who is right? Are these examples figures of speech or not? How do we know whether a figure of speech is being used in a passage or not? The fact is, we don’t.

The Impossibility of Bible Interpretation

Do we see the dilemma now? How can we *know* the nuances of the words of Scripture in the original languages, whether the text is poetry

or not, or whether a figure of speech is being used or not? Or how to interpret a parable or allegorical passage?

We need to know all these things before even beginning to apply logic to a passage in order to get to the bottom of a Biblical text, and find out what it teaches.

Who is sufficient for these things? How can anybody get to the absolute truth? As we have seen, no-one is capable of doing this, for two reasons:

(1.) Most of us are just not clever enough to analyse a text properly, and those who try, easily make mistakes. This excludes nearly all of us from understanding the truth of a passage at all, although it is still theoretically possible to do so for those who persevere.

(2.) But, more than this, there are many passages where we have to guess the nuances of the original words, whether it is poetry, allegorical or whether a figure of speech is being used or not, and all this can affect the sense. And in all these we have to *guess*, because not one of us can *know* for sure, even the best logician in the world.

If we can't tell whether a passage is a figure of speech or poetry or not, then how can we know for sure whether, for example, the first three chapters of Genesis should be taken literally? Or the resurrection of Christ? Liberals would say that they shouldn't be taken literally, whereas Evangelicals would say that they should, but how do we *know*? We have just concluded that **no-one can know the truth**, even from the Bible alone. So are the liberals right?

No. We hasten to add that we are not becoming liberals at all by saying any of this. We fully accept that the Bible in the original languages is the Word of God, every word has been inspired by Him and providentially preserved through the ages – a fact that the liberal theologian would completely dismiss. What we are saying is that it is *language* that is the problem, not the Bible. We can't know the truth because of the difficulties of *language*.

The Answer

Should We Follow Men?

Sadly, to solve this problem, a vast majority of professing Christians end up following other men who, to them, at least seem to have a gift of understanding the truth. However, that's not necessarily so. We've just proved that *no-one* can know the truth. Many who end up in leadership positions in the church (or in any other walk of life for that matter), don't get into those positions for their intelligence or knowledge of the subject in hand at all. They get there for their *ability to impress other people* that they're right. A good hospital consultant doctor is not someone who has all the right answers. Rather, he is one who can make a decision (right or wrong) and stick to it, and is able to impress other people that his decision is right, rather than it necessarily being right absolutely. All people in leadership have this persuasive, almost hypnotic power. And the ordinary Christian finds it a lot easier to blindly follow someone like that, than to even try to think for themselves. These leaders don't have to be right, but they just have to give the *impression* they are right to people who can be easily persuaded of it.

As an example, we once heard a good Bible teacher expounding 1 Peter 2:8:

1 Peter 2:8

And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

He explained that "the Greek text supports the idea that..." these people were appointed to salvation, but they chose to reject it. This interpretation is completely the opposite of what the passage actually says. Firstly, notice that he referred to the Greek. He knew very well that hardly any of the congregation would understand Greek, neither would they check up for themselves; and he also knew very well that the fact of his mentioning that he knew the Greek would impress most of them how scholarly he was. So that's why he did it. Also, he must have read John Calvin's commentary on the passage, because Calvin states that this interpretation (that they were appointed to salvation) is possible, but then immediately says that he rejects it, and gives good

reasons why, Calvin then going on to explain the true interpretation of the text. Of course the speaker never mentioned any of this, but simply tried to impress his hearers of his own point of view.

Other people can be helpful in our search for truth, but they are not to be blindly followed.

Should We Follow the Holy Spirit?

Look at Christ's teaching about the parables:

Mark 4:11,12

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

Christ Himself said that He deliberately taught in parables so that those outside the church would not understand. So we shouldn't be surprised that men can't fully interpret Scripture themselves.

Having said that, the Pharisees, who were unregenerate men, could at least find out something from a parable:

Matthew 21:45

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

So they did know something. The parable didn't mean nothing to them.

But note that unto believers "*it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God*". How can this be? Of course as Evangelicals we know the answer: the Holy Spirit interprets the Scripture for the believer.

Westminster Confession of Faith 1:10:

X. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and

private spirits, are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest; can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

a Matthew 22:29,31; Ephesians 2:20 with Acts 28:25.

Christ has given us two witnesses:

John 15:26,27

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The true believer has the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures (the latter being the witness of the apostles and prophets). The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit:

John 14:17

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

So the unbeliever only has Scripture, out of which he can find some truth, but he is bound to make mistakes, because even if he was the greatest logician in the world, he can't distinguish between a piece of prose (whereby he can use logical analysis) or poetry or allegory or a figure of speech, and he certainly can't get to the bottom of a parable, although he can know something about it – particularly the fact that it condemns him. Also, every time a true believer trusts in himself to interpret Scripture, rather than relying on the Holy Spirit, he too will assuredly go wrong.

But, can we not see another problem here? With Scripture not being able to furnish us with the answers on its own, and with the Holy Spirit being needed to determine the interpretation of Scripture for sure, do we not become no different from all those who say they rely on (what they consider to be) the Holy Spirit alone as their guide?

This produces problems. I used to know someone who was utterly convinced through reading the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit had taught her that there is no such place as eternal hell-fire. I am thoroughly convinced, from the Holy Spirit interpreting the same

Scriptures, that she is completely wrong, but how do I convince her of this? We both claim the Holy Spirit has taught us the truth through reading the Scriptures. Who is right? How do we know?

Only the Lord knows. We can never get to the bottom of it. That is a humbling message, isn't it? This doesn't mean that we shouldn't *try* to know truth, because we are sanctified by the truth:

John 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

So knowing truth is very important to our sanctification. All any of us can do is stick to, and live by, what we believe to be the truth to the best of our understanding at the time, knowing that this will be constantly changing in our minds as over the years we learn more from the Scriptures.

There is only one truth, and it is found in the Bible. But our condition is such that we are never going to arrive at a position where we can honestly say that we know as much truth as we need to know, without it still being mixed with an awful lot of error. This will result in us always differing with other fellow professing believers who are all at different stages in their Christian lives. A lot of churches believe that we should never have differences between the members of the congregation and that we should always put on a united front as a church, but we have here proved that we can't avoid differences. So we should never pretend that we can. This is normal.

We will all come to some knowledge of the truth from our reading the Bible, we will not always be completely ignorant. And we will be growing in that knowledge, the more we read the Bible and are led by the Spirit into the truth. We will over time change our views on things, as we align our beliefs with what we are learning from Scripture. And this is the point. All of us only ever have the knowledge of some truth but it is mixed with a lot of error. And it changes over the years.

We shouldn't be arrogant enough to think we have arrived anywhere on this earth. No church is our home here. We can always know some truth from the Bible. There is no other source of truth, after all. But we shouldn't be arrogant enough to think that any of us are not still

full of error. Since Adam's fall, we're all in bondage to decay and death because of our sin. We're born knowing nothing, and having to learn everything we need in this world as we grow up. But in our old age, we forget things and decay until we know nothing again. Do you want to learn humility? Here it is.

Genesis 3:19

...dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

But if we know Christ for ourselves, we will continue learning of Him and loving Him to all eternity. This is the one thing needful.

1 Corinthians 8:2

...if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Galatians 6:3

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

The Apocrypha

If we have ever picked up a Bible more than 300 years old, we will immediately notice that, more often than not, it contains the Apocrypha, a collection of 14 books usually situated between the Old and New Testaments. The question must therefore be asked: Why are these books not in our Bibles today? Many enemies of the Bible, including muslims and atheists, notice that at the Protestant Reformation these books were condemned as not being canonical, and consequently these enemies cast aspersions over the validity of the text of the whole Bible, suggesting that if men can add or remove some of it, then it must therefore all be of human origin (although the Koran has also suffered from attempts to change the text and add “satanic verses” into it).

Many modern day Protestants are also attempting to defend these 14 books and trying to suggest that they should be included again in modern Bibles. Some of the allegations are as follows:

- (1.) Christ used the Septuagint Greek Bible, which would have contained the Apocrypha.
- (2.) New Testament writers quote over 400 times from the Apocrypha.
- (3.) Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, had doubts about the Apocrypha only because he was influenced by Jews.
- (4.) The council of Carthage canonised the Apocrypha with the other Scriptures.
- (5.) Condemning the Apocrypha was a ploy by the seventeenth century Puritans.
- (6.) Most Bibles of Protestants nearly always contained the Apocrypha up until as recently as the revision led by the higher critical movement in the 1880’s.
- (7.) Parts of the Apocrypha were found in Hebrew in the Dead Sea Scrolls, therefore the Apocrypha was not originally of Greek origin.

With all these attempts to defend the Apocrypha, we therefore need to know why we don’t believe it to be the inspired Word of God, so that we may have confidence in the true Scriptures, which are:

2 Timothy 3:16,17

...given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The “*Apocrypha*” as a name was coined by Jerome in the fifth century, from the Latin meaning “*hidden writings*.” It must be asked here: Why would God “hide” his writings away? Of course the answer is that He didn’t, and never has done. It referred in Jerome’s day to the fourteen books that had become included in many Bibles by that time, but which were not in the original Hebrew text that the Jews considered to be canonical. Rather, they were Greek writings that were produced in the period between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. They became widely known after being included in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, which was made during this period in Alexandria.

It is commonly thought that the Apocrypha contains the following 14 books:

1. The First Book of Esdras
2. The Second Book of Esdras
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach
8. Baruch (incl. Letter of Jeremiah as chapter 6)
9. The Song of the Three Children
10. Daniel and Susanna
11. Daniel, Bel, and the Dragon
12. The Prayer of Manasseh
13. The First Book of the Maccabees
14. The Second Book of the Maccabees

But this list is not definitive at all, as different churches have their different ideas:

The Roman Catholic church accepted all the above as canonical, except First and Second Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh, although these were still printed as an appendix in Latin Vulgate Bibles.

The Greek Orthodox church accepted all of the above list as canonical except Second Esdras, but they also included Psalm 151 and the Third Book of the Maccabees. The Fourth Book of the Maccabees was included in an appendix.

The Russian Orthodox church accepted all of the above list as canonical, as well as Psalm 151 and the Third Book of the Maccabees.

So we see that the commonly accepted list is not a cut and dried affair at all, as extra books are included or excluded depending on the church. This is in sharp contrast to the acceptance of all the other books in the Old Testament and all the books in the New Testament, all 66 books of which are agreed today (in the Lord's providence) in churches right across the "Christian" world. Some individuals in history have questioned some of the New Testament books, such as Origen questioning James and Jude, Cyril omitting the Revelation and Martin Luther questioning the Epistle of James. However, in the main, there has been total agreement amongst churches on these 66 books.

However, history should not be our guide. As we believe the Bible to be our absolute authority in all things, we can only turn there for our answer. And it is found in Romans 3:1,2:

Romans 3:1,2

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

This passage alone proves beyond doubt that, up to the time of Paul's writing, the Jews were the keepers of the oracles of God. God in His providence kept His Word pure, through them, in the Hebrew text. This was written long before the Greek Apocrypha, which all the Jews rejected. They only held what are the 39 books of our Old Testament to be the sacred canonical writings directly inspired of God.

Since Paul's day, the Jews' house is left to them desolate (Matthew 23:38) and the Christians have since that time been the keepers of the oracles (now to include 27 books of the New Testament as well), which God has preserved throughout the ages. The church is now "*the pillar and ground of the truth*":

1 Timothy 3:15

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

This argument should therefore end here.

However, let's now come to the above criticisms of our position, and make some more comments on them:

(1.) Christ used the Septuagint Greek Bible, which would have contained the Apocrypha.

Christ used the Bible in the common tongue of the day, which was Greek. The most common translation available at the time was the Septuagint. All this proves to us is that we have authority to translate the Scriptures into the language of the people, seeing as Christ approved of it. Nowhere does Christ actually quote from the Apocrypha. Just because a particular edition of the Bible is not quite perfect, as long as we avoid what is wrong, it is suitable for use.

(2.) New Testament writers quote over 400 times from the Apocrypha.

This allegation is just not true. I took the 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible and counted the number of marginal references in the Apocrypha to any passages in the New Testament. (To be honest, I didn't do this the other way around and go through the New Testament looking for references to passages in the Apocrypha. I just assumed that references would point both ways). I found 105, a lot less than the "over 400" claimed here. I then discovered that, of these, only three could seriously be considered to have any similarity to a New Testament passage at all. All of these were in 2 Esdras:

2 Esdras 1:30

I gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but now what shall I do unto you? I will cast you out from my sight.

cf. Matthew 23:37

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.

2 Esdras 2:42

I Esdras saw upon mount Sion a great people whom I could not number, and they all praised the Lord with songs.

cf. Revelation 7:9

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

2 Esdras 8:3

There be many created, but few shall be saved.

cf. Matthew 20:16

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

I then found out that most scholars put the date of writing of 2 Esdras after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, in other words 2 Esdras was written AFTER the New Testament, not before. Hence, the author of 2 Esdras copied from the New Testament, not the other way around. In any case, 2 Esdras is not accepted as canonical by most of the major churches, such as the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox.

(3.) *Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, had doubts about the Apocrypha only because he was influenced by Jews.*

Good. I am glad he was influenced by Jews, because the Bible says that the Jews were the “*keepers of the oracles of God*” until New Testament times (Romans 3:2). Jerome was not so influenced by them that he abandoned the New Testament.

(4.) *The council of Carthage canonised the Apocrypha with the other scriptures.*

There were quite a few church councils held in Carthage. Many people believe that the one held in AD 397 finally defined what books should be in the Bible. But what is and is not Scripture is not determined by the church. Scripture establishes itself as God's Word *at the point of writing*, not when or whether men agree on it or not. The fact that it took such a long time for men to agree on these books does not prove that the church came before the Bible (and therefore is the higher authority), rather it merely shows how difficult men find it to agree on anything.

Paul's epistles had been defined as Scripture before the death of Peter:

2 Peter 3:15-16

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also **the other scriptures**, unto their own destruction.*

And the canon was completed by AD 70:

Daniel 9:24

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

What the councils of men do is neither here nor there. The Bible is our only authority. The Council of Carthage in AD 397 correctly decreed the New Testament to be the 27 books we have today. But it got it wrong when at the same time it adopted the Septuagint (which includes the Apocrypha) as the Old Testament canon. The Septuagint was but a Greek translation from the original Hebrew plus the Greek Apocryphal texts (which were written at a later date). As has already been mentioned, the Hebrew text is the true canonical text of the Old Testament, which never had the Apocrypha in it. And in any case, a translation from the original language is by definition going to be imperfect.

(5.) *Condemning the Apocrypha was a ploy by the seventeenth century Puritans.*

The Puritans, and indeed all of the Reformers, were concerned about the purity of the church. This reformation in the church happened over time. Among other things, they got rid of papal authority, they got rid of the trappings of popery such as vestments, statues, organs etc. and they purified God's Word. The first thing they did with regards God's Word was to collect out of the Old Testament all the Apocryphal writings and put them together in a separate place in the Bible between the two Testaments. This idea was not known before the Reformation, as all Latin Bibles for 1000 years before then, had them dispersed into their chronological place, mixed in amongst the rest of the Old Testament books. Along with the gathering out of these writings, the Reformers printed a warning in their Bibles that these books were not canonical, as a preface to them.

Two examples will suffice, firstly from the first complete English Bible ever printed, the Matthews Bible (1536):

“In consideration that the books before [i.e. our Old Testament] are found in the Hebrew tongue, received of all men; and that the other following, which are called Apocrypha (because they were wont to be read, not openly and in common, but as it were in secret and apart) are neither found in the Hebrew nor in the Chaldee; in which tongue they have not of long been written (in less than it were haply the book of Sapience) whereupon it were now very hard to repay and amend them: And that also they are not received, or taken as legitimate and lawfull, as well of the Hebrews as well of the whole church, as St. Jerome sheweth: we have separated them and let them aside, that they may the better be known, to the intent that men may know of which books which ought to be received, and of which not. For the said St. Jerome, speaking of the book of Judith (which is Apocrypha) sayeth that the authority thereof is not esteemed worthy and sufficient to confirm and stablish the things that light in disputation. And generally of all the books called Apocrypha, he sayeth that men may read them to the edifying of the people, but not to confirm and strengthen the doctrine of the church. I leave out here the law (as they call it) of Canon c. Sancta Romana. in. divine, where he sheweth his judgment. Likewise the Gloss of c. Canons, vii, divine, which sayeth that men read them, but not in general; as though he should say that generally and thoroughly they are not allowed. And not without a cause; for that they have been corrupted and falsified in many places, it appeareth sufficiently by Eusebius in his book called Historia Ecclesiastica; which thing is easy to be known nowadays in certain points, namely in

the books of the Maccabees, whose second book St Hiero confesseth that he found not in the Hebrew, by the means whereof it is become unto us the more suspect and the less received. In like manner is it of the third and fourth books of Esdras [N.B. Our books of Ezra and Nehemiah were known as I Esdras and II Esdras, whereas the Apocrypha books we know as I Esdras and II Esdras were known as III Esdras and IV Esdras], which St Jerome protesteth that he would not have them translated, esteeming them for dreams; whereas Josephus yet in his book of his Antiquities, declareth the sum of the matter after the manner of a story, as well of the book of Maccabees as of the third of Esdras; although he esteem the books compiled from the reign of king Artaxerxes but this time to be Apocrypha.

Wherefore then, when thou wilt maintain anything for certain, rendering a reason of thy faith, take heed to proceed therein by the living and pithy Scriptures, following St Peter which sayeth, He that speaketh, let him speak as though he spake the Word of God. He sayeth the Word of God, as a thing most true and certain, opened by the prophets and apostles, inspired with the Holy Ghost; of whom we have witness more clear than the day. Lawyers having great desire to confirm and stablish their opinions by the law of man, say that it is shame to speak without law; how much more fear and dread then ought he to have that sayeth he is a Christian, the which holdeth not himself, or teacheth not in the laws of the living God, but in men's inventions, judging of all things according to them, and leaning to an uncertain imagination and fantasy? Let us therefore that are builded on the foundation of the holy prophets and apostles, and on the head cornerstone (on which they themselves were founded, and which they preached, that is Jesus Christ the sure stone) leave the things that are uncertain to follow the certain; holding us and resting us in them, and fastening our anchor there, as in a sure place. For our Christian faith consisteth not in doubtful things, but in plain and most certain assurance, and in most true persuasion, taken and confirmed by infallible desire. In which God grant us to walk perpetually, to the intent that according to it (fulfilling His holy will in us, and setting aside all inventions contrary unto Him), we may live to His honour, and to the edifying of His church. So be it."

Then the Geneva Bible (1560):

"These books that follow in order after the Prophets unto the New Testament, are called Apocrypha, that is books which were not received by a common consent to be read and expounded publicly in the church, neither yet served to prove any point of Christian religion, save inasmuch as they had the consent of the other Scriptures called Canonical to confirm the same, or rather whereon they were grounded; but as books proceeding from godly men, were received to be read for the advancement and

furtherance of the knowledge of the history, and for the instruction of godly manners: which books declare that at all times God had an especial care of His church and left them not utterly destitute of teachers and means to confirm them in the hope of the promised Messiah, and also witness that those calamities that God sent to His church were according to His providence, who had both so threatened by His prophets, and so brought it to pass for the destruction of their enemies, and for the trial of His children.”

Note also that the Geneva Bible, which contains profuse notes in the canonical material, does not contain any notes at all in the Apocrypha, only references. However, it does have the occasional note indicating where the text clearly teaches falsehood. These prove the Apocrypha’s unworthiness to be counted as canonical Scripture. For example:

Geneva Bible footnote to II Maccabees 12:44 [on prayer for the dead]:
“From this verse to the end of the chapter the Greek text is corrupt, so that no good sense, much less certain doctrine can be gathered thereby. Also it is evident that this place was not written by the Holy Ghost, both because it dissenteth for the rest of the holy Scriptures, and also the author of this book acknowledging his own infirmity, desireth pardon, if he have not attained to that he should. And it seemeth that this Jason the Cyrenean, out of whom he took this abridgement, is Joseph Ben Gurion, who hath written in Hebrew five books of these matters, and in treating this place, makes no mention of this prayer for the dead (lib. 3, chap. 19), for it is contrary to the custom of the Jews, even to this day, to pray for the dead. And though Judas had so done, yet this particular example is not sufficient to establish a doctrine no more than Zipporah’s was to prove that women might minister the sacraments (Exod. 4:25), or the example of Razis that one might kill himself, whom this author so much commendeth (II Macc. 14:41)”

N.B. There is a footnote in the normally footnote-free Matthews Bible at this point as well.

Geneva Bible footnote to II Maccabees 14:41 [on suicide]:
“As this private example ought not to be followed of the godly, because it is contrary to the word of God, although the author seems here to approve it; so that place as touching prayer (12:44), though Judas had appointed it, yet were it not sufficient to prove a doctrine, because it is only a particular example.”

It must be noted that the original King James Bible (1611) had no such warning about the Apocrypha in it at all.

Later on, Geneva Bibles from 1599 onwards and King James Bibles from 1625 onwards started being produced without the Apocrypha altogether. So we note the progression. First the Apocryphal books were gathered together with a note stating that they were not canonical, and later they were omitted altogether.

(6.) The Bible of Protestants nearly always contained the Apocrypha up until as recently as the revision led by the higher critical movement in 1885.

This is just not true. After the Reformation, it became unusual for Protestant Bibles to be printed with the Apocrypha in it. In 1831 the Trinitarian Bible Society had to be formed because the British and Foreign Bible Society had passed a motion in 1813 stating that to avoid unnecessary offence in Lutheran and Roman Catholic countries, they would start distributing Bibles with the Apocrypha in them in those places (previously they had not done this).

So long before the higher critics became influential in the 1880's, Bibles had been purified of all material that was not inspired, and this state of affairs lasted for many generations. The higher critics weren't the ones who got rid of the Apocrypha, it had long gone in Protestant circles before their time. Rather they did untold damage to the Scriptures in other ways. All the modern translations of the Bible now produced are based on their erroneous modern text. If ever there was another Reformation, what do you think one of the first priorities of the new Reformers would be? Of course it would be to purify the Word of Life again, and get rid of all the erroneous translations and either distribute older translations based on the correct received text again, or indeed make new translations from the same.

(7.) Parts of the Apocrypha were found in Hebrew in the Dead Sea Scrolls, so they were not originally of Greek origin.

The fact that a strange sect by the Dead Sea had some copies of the Apocrypha in their own language hidden away somewhere means nothing. It does not imply that they were in Hebrew first, they could have been translations from the original Greek. Much less does it imply

that the Apocrypha is canonical, because God would not have hidden His Word away for centuries in such a sect and nowhere else.

So from all this, we can conclude that the Apocrypha is not the Word of God, and should not be printed with our Bibles. Today, we have the wonderful gift of having the whole, pure Word of God (with nothing added and nothing taken away) in a language we can understand – something that not many generations in past times have ever had. Let us not go back to the Dark Ages again where the Word is corrupted, but let it be our life, and let us revere it with all the authority that it has, and love it with all our heart.

Loving the Authorised Version

I love the Authorised Version of the Bible, also known as the King James Version. I believe it's still the best translation into English today, which is why I use it. The New King James Bible is also good, as it's simply an updated version of the King James into a more modern English, the main difference being that it gets rid of the rather antiquated “*Thee*” and “*Thou*,” replacing these words with “*You*” instead. We might think that's an improvement, but it does away with the fundamental difference between the two: “*Thee*” and “*Thou*” being singular, and “*You*” plural. Nevertheless, what I am about to say refers to both these versions, as opposed to most of the more modern ones.

There are two main reasons why I prefer these versions:

(1.) Firstly, they're translated from a “received text” – a text that the Lord has providentially preserved and kept pure throughout all generations:

Psalm 12:6-7

The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Psalm 119:89

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

Isaiah 40:8

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Isaiah 49:22

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Most modern translators since 1881 have challenged this idea. No longer do they believe God has preserved and kept one text throughout the ages, but, instead, they take all the Biblical manuscripts they have available at the time of translation, and from them, decide for themselves what is the nearest they can find to the, as yet unknown, original text. So this manufactured “original” will change through time as new manuscripts are discovered and others rejected. In other words, the Bible is no longer fixed, but changes as and when scholars decide it should be changed. And, in any case, even if they did manage to find the original text, they wouldn’t recognise it when they’d got it.

The text in use at the present time for most modern translations, misses out a lot of the original received text, and some passages are translated completely differently.

For example, I once preached on Acts 26, a pivotal verse of which was:

Acts 26:28

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

The word “*almost*” clearly implies that he nearly became a Christian, but not quite. And I would say this was true, because Agrippa was “*expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews*” (v.3), and he also believed the Scriptures:

Acts 26:27

King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

So he “*almost*” became a Christian but not quite, the thing stopping him being his too strong attachment to this world, loving the “*great pomp*” (25:23), and rather preferring his worldly relationship with Festus, the governor, who thought that Paul was mad (v.24) and that the Jewish religion was merely “*superstition*” (25:19).

However, the day after speaking on this passage, I found out (from a television programme actually) that the modern versions say something completely different:

Acts 26:28 (ESV)

And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"

Acts 26:28 (NIV)

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

This gives an altogether different meaning to the text. There's no "almost" here at all. Just a disparaging comment which doesn't seem to relate to Agrippa's background knowledge and belief of the Scriptures at all. Those in the congregation using newer versions of the Bible must have been wondering what on earth I was going on about.

On another occasion, I once heard a sermon on Psalm 110:3, which in the Authorised Version reads:

Psalm 110:3

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power....

The preacher quite rightly interpreted this to mean that when we become a Christian, the Lord not only shows us the truth, but also changes our wills in order to embrace it. Naturally, we're not willing to come to Him. He has to change our wills in order for us to even begin to believe:

Philippians 2:13

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Jeremiah 31:18

....turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.

However, most of the congregation were using the New International Version, which reads altogether differently:

Psalm 110:3 (NIV)

Your troops will be willing on your day of battle...

What's that all about?

Even the same English “version” of the Bible can say two different things. A few years ago, I was speaking to Chinese young people learning English. They all had in front of them an interlinear New International Version (NIV) and Chinese Union Version Bible, so rather than confuse them further by insisting on using my King James Bible, I used the NIV myself. To prepare, I used my wife's 1980 edition. But I found out afterwards that the version everybody else was using was the 2010 edition, which was significantly different, even though both were supposed to be the same NIV. I may as well have used my King James Bible after all.

And it's embarrassing to see how many versions of the Bible there are in English. I don't know the exact number, but just to give an idea of the situation, take a look at *biblegateway.com*. It's a useful resource. Amongst other things, it contains the Bible in many different languages. English tops the list for versions with 59. Next in line is Spanish with 19, followed by Chinese with 13 (although that's really 7 because 12 of those are 6 versions split between use of simplified or traditional characters). All other languages have 7 or less, which is now getting down to a reasonably sensible number. (Maybe English and Spanish are highlighted because it's an American website. In any case, there are far too many translations in these languages).

Modern Bibles are constantly being changed, and they're all being copyrighted. There could be no other reason for doing that apart from monetary gain. This does not bring clarity, but confusion.

2 Timothy 2:9

...but the word of God is not bound.

(2.) My second reason for preferring the King James and New King James versions, is that they are “word for word” translations, as much as it's possible to keep the meaning. It is not possible to translate perfectly between any two languages, so in these Bibles some words are

printed in italics, which indicate words that are not in the original but have been added to make plainer sense in English. So we can easily distinguish between what the original says, and what has been added to aid our understanding. Most modern translations don't do that and translate "idea for idea" instead, which by definition is less accurate. Some are a lot less accurate. Some even vulgar:

1 Kings 18:27 (Living Bible)

....Perhaps he is talking to someone, or is out sitting on the toilet....

This lack of accuracy means that many modern Bibles are not only translations of an original text, but also interpretations of it. They become, no longer Bibles, but commentaries. Translators should stick to translation. Interpretation is the work of the Holy Spirit in each believer:

1 John 2:27

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Only the text in the original languages is inspired of God:

2 Peter 1:21

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Indeed, every word in the original languages is important, because they're the exact words God wanted to use:

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

So to translate "word for word" as much as we can, is important. It's not "nit-picking," as I once heard someone call it.

Even though it's not possible for a translation to be perfect, God can still use whatever truth that's still there. I was converted through reading a Revised Standard Version. This is one of the modern

versions, and I'd never recommend that translation now, but God used it to save me. Jesus Christ Himself used a translation. When quoting Scripture, He uses Greek, which would have been the most common translation of His day. But the Greek Septuagint version contains what we now call the Apocrypha, which isn't inspired by God at all. But Christ never quoted from that part, He only quoted from the inspired books. So it's perfectly all right to use translations, which by definition are imperfect, as long as we realise these things. If we come across a problem, or don't quite understand something, we must always refer to the original languages, which is easy enough, in this day of word searches and online Bibles.

Mistakes in the Authorised Version

As the Authorised Version is only an English translation from the original Hebrew and Greek, and as no translation from one language to another can be perfect, and as men can make mistakes, therefore the Authorised Version cannot be perfect. I want to look here at some examples of where I believe the Authorised Version has got it wrong.

Lucifer

If I mentioned the word "*Lucifer*," what would that mean to you? To most Christians, they would automatically assume without thinking that it's another name for Satan. But I can't see for the life of me where that comes from at all.

I've come across countless examples in Christian books and sermons where the two names are used interchangeably. It's often suggested that "*Lucifer*" was Satan's name before he fell. But I can't see that from the Scriptures. Please, please, please, if I'm wrong, show me from Scripture where my mistake is, I'm willing to change. Maybe there's something obvious I'm not seeing. But until someone can show me, I have to continue to disagree with that idea.

The name "*Lucifer*" occurs in the Bible once, and it's only found today in the King James and New King James versions, in the following passage:

Isaiah 14:12-15

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Surely that's a clear reference to Satan and his fall from heaven, isn't it? Well, the Hebrew word translated "*Lucifer*" is "*heylel*," which is not a proper name. It means "*morning star*" or "*day star*." Nearly all modern translations correct this. It's a reference to the planet Venus, which is known as the "*morning star*" because it's very bright, and often comes up before the sun in the morning. It leads the sun up before the dawn.

In context, Isaiah 14 is primarily a reference to the king of Babylon. The gist of what's being said here is: "You, king of Babylon, call yourself the "*morning star*," but you'll be cast down into hell." This text can also legitimately be used as a reference to Satan's fall, because his fall was similar to that of the king of Babylon, but we don't need the proper name "*Lucifer*" in there to see that.

"*Lucifer*" is in fact Latin. I don't understand why Latin is in the Bible at all. It must have been carried over from the old Latin Vulgate Bible. (That's why I'm not so keen on the word "*Calvary*" either, but that's another issue). The Latin is from two words: "*Luci*" meaning "light" and "*fer*" meaning "to carry." "*Lucifer*" is literally "light-carrier," which can also reasonably refer to the "*morning star*" or "*day star*," because Venus "carries" the light of the sun into the sky, as it were.

But Satan is the prince of darkness. He's "*the prince of this world*":

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

He deceives the whole world:

Revelation 12:9

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Satan has no light in him at all, He is all darkness. And he tries to keep men in darkness.

John 8:44

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

So, Satan is not a “light-carrier” in any sense. There is only one source of spiritual light anywhere. Who is the real “light-carrier,” the real “Lucifer”? We know the answer:

John 8:12

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Christ is the only light there is. There’s no light to be found anywhere else in the world:

John 1:4,5

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Only Jesus Christ can save us from the power of Satan:

Acts 26:18

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

And the Bible actually tells us He is the “light-carrier,” the “morning star,” or, if you prefer the Latin, “Lucifer”:

Revelation 22:16

I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Christ is the “light-carrier,” and He carries light down to men. We can receive of this light for ourselves:

Revelation 2:28

And I will give him the morning star.

The Lord has given us two witnesses of this light:

The first witness the Lord has given us are the Scriptures, which give us a window into the light of heavenly things. They shine in an otherwise dark place:

2 Peter 1:19

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts....

And the second witness is the Holy Spirit, the “*day star*” which arises in the hearts of all those who put their trust in the “light-carrier.” Yes, this light can truly be living in us. When we become Christians, we receive an earnest of the Spirit, a foretaste of heaven. A “*morning star*,” if you like, which guarantees that the dawn will surely come soon enough:

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

What hope a Christian has! But we need to come to the light. We need to repent of our sin and call on Jesus Christ, the true light-carrier, in this life, to save us from where otherwise we deserve to go. Then we can know for sure we’re not going to be following Satan there:

Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....

2 Peter 3:7

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

All those who put their trust in Christ, the “light-carrier,” inherit a far better place. A place Christ has reserved for all His people in heaven:

1 Peter 1:4-5

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Let’s make sure we come to the light, and worship Jesus Christ, the real “Lucifer”:

John 3:19-21

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Easter

This word occurs in the Authorised Version once:

Acts 12:4

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

The Greek word is “*pascha*” which is translated in every other place in the Bible as “*Passover*,” and should be translated here as such too.

Calvary

This word occurs in the Authorised Version (and other translations) once:

Luke 23:33

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

This word is Latin. The original language is Greek. In Greek the word is “*kraneon*,” which means “a skull.” In Matthew, Mark and John the Hebrew “*Golgotha*” is used, together with an explanation that this means “*the place of a skull*.” Therefore here in Luke it should just be “*the place, which is called a skull*,” and the word “*Calvary*” should not be used.

Touch Me Not

Christ told Mary Magdalene not to touch Him because He hadn’t ascended yet:

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

But Matthew tells us that the women (including Mary Magdalene) themselves held Him by His feet:

Matthew 28:9

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Christ allowed this. Therefore, “*Touch me not*” must mean, as modern translations have it, “*Do not cling on to me*.”

Diana

In Acts 19, the false goddess Diana is mentioned: vv. 24,27,28,34,35. In the Greek, this is actually the word “*Artemis*.”

God Forbid

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew is “*chaliylab*,” which is literally “*far be it.*”

References: Genesis 44:17; Joshua 22:29, 24:16; 1 Samuel 12:23, 14:45, 20:2; 1 Chronicles 11:19 (this is “*Elobim chaliylab*”); Job 27:5.

In the New Testament, the Greek is “*me ginomai*,” which is literally “*not be.*”

References: Luke 20:16; Romans 3:4,6,31, 6:2,15, 7:7,13, 9:14, 11:1,11; 1 Corinthians 6:15; Galatians 2:17, 3:21, 6:14.

Only in one place (1 Chronicles 11:19) is God actually mentioned.

The Spirit Itself

The Holy Spirit is a “*He*” not an “*it.*”

Romans 8:16

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Romans 8:26

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

“Red Sea” in Deuteronomy 1:1

Deuteronomy 1:1

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizabab.

This cannot be the Red Sea. The word is “*Suph.*” Everywhere else when Red Sea is meant, it is “*Yam Suph.*”

The Red Sea is not “*on this side Jordan*” (v.1), as the Jordan river ends in the Dead Sea. The Red Sea is further south.

(v.5) We're told that the speech was given "*On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab.*"

"Rachel" in Jeremiah 31:15

Jeremiah 31:15

Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rabel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

The Hebrew is the name "*Rachel.*" This is the only place where it is translated with a different spelling. It is spelt correctly in Matthew 2:17, where this verse is quoted.

"Numbered" in 2 Samuel 18:1

2 Samuel 18:1

And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

The word here is "*paqad*" which means "mustered," not "numbered." No figures are given. This is in contrast to David's sin of numbering the people later, which uses a different word "*manah*":

2 Samuel 24:1

And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

1 Chronicles 21:1

And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

"Sabbaths" in Lamentations 1:7

Lamentations 1:7

Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand

of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.

The word is not “*shabbat*,” but “*mishbath*,” which means “*cessation*.” That could imply their weekly cessation on the Sabbath day, but the more natural meaning would be that it was the “*downfall*” of Jerusalem that the enemies were mocking.

Infinite

The word “*infinite*” occurs three times in the Authorised Version of the Bible, but is a translation of three different words in Hebrew:

Qets = *without end*:

Job 22:5

Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?

Mispar = *innumerable*:

Psalm 147:5

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

Ayin Qatseh = *without extremity*:

Nahum 3:9

Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

The Brother of Goliath

2 Samuel 21:19

And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

The words “*the brother of*” are in italics in the Authorised Version, which mean they aren't in the original language. The original says “*Elhanan the*

son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew Goliath.” But 1 Samuel 17 tells us that David slew Goliath.

This is the third in a list of four battles, the other three of which describe the slaying of three of Goliath’s four sons. At the end of this list we have the statement:

2 Samuel 21:22

These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

So this has been a list of the battles in which the four sons of Goliath were slain. Modern translations therefore add “*the son of,*” not “*the brother of*” in v.19, so it reads, “*Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the son of Goliath.*” Verse 22 would then make sense.

Jesus

This is not really a mistake because in the New Testament the Greek spelling of Hebrew names is routinely used. However, when referring to Old Testament Joshua, it is at least confusing:

Acts 7:45

Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David....

Hebrews 4:8

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

God Save....

This is literally “(Long) Live....”

2 Samuel 16:16

And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

1 Kings 1:34

And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

1 Kings 1:39

And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

2 Kings 11:12

And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

2 Chronicles 23:11

Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

“Their Mourning” in Job 3:8

Job 3:8

Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning.

The phrase “*their mourning*” is the word “*Leviathan.*”

“...The Son...” in Luke’s Genealogy of Christ

In Luke 3, there is a genealogy of Christ:

Luke 3:23-38

*And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son **of Heli**, Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was*

*the son of Juda, Which was the son of **Joanna**, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson, Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.*

The words "...the son..." in this passage are all in italics, meaning they are not in the original. The original reads simply "...of...", so it reads "Joseph, which was of Heli, which was of Matthat..." and so on. This is important because when there was no male heir, the line would go through a female.

"Joanna" (v.27) is a female name:

Luke 8:3

And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Luke 24:10

It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

("*women*" is in italics here, but the context is talking about the women in that place, see Luke 23:55).

"*Heli*" (v.23) is also a female name. Luke gives the genealogy of Joseph through his mother Heli, and Matthew through his father, Jacob. This is not the genealogy of Mary as is often thought, because Mary was not from the line of Judah. She was "*cousin to Elizabeth*" (Luke 1:36), who we are told was descended from the High Priestly line (Luke 1:5 "*of the daughters of Aaron*").

II

Signs and Wonders and Spiritual Gifts

Signs and Wonders and Spiritual Gifts

1. Introduction

I want to write about what seems to me to be the singlemost cause of division in the evangelical church today. What do you think it is? Is it church government? Well, such an issue does split the church, but it's not the greatest cause by any means. Is it baptism, maybe? No. Arminianism versus Calvinism? No. How about worship? Maybe. Important as these issues are, I suggest to you that the singlemost cause of division in the evangelical church today is whether we believe the "*spiritual gifts*" mentioned in the Bible are still with believers today or not.

There have been so many articles written on the subject, from both sides of the divide, that you could ask of me, why should I write another one? Surely, am I not just adding fuel to the fire, as it were? Well, for years I thought the same way. Surely I don't need to write on this subject, because too many have done so before. But, in all the articles I have read so far, there has always been some kind of confusion between the "*spiritual gifts*" and the "*signs and wonders*." Both are treated as being the same thing, which I argue they are not.

Both sides of the argument would agree that the miracles that Jesus wrought, such as physical healing, cleansing lepers, casting out demons, raising the dead, feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish and so on, were real miracles, which are otherwise described in the Scripture as "*signs and wonders*." That is not the issue. Both sides would be totally against modern liberal theology, which denies the miracles of the Bible completely. The issue at stake however, is that, on the one hand, many people genuinely believe that all these miracles, or "*signs and wonders*," are available for believers to perform today in the church. On the other hand, many other people can't see any of these things happening today, and so are quick to tell us that the "*spiritual gifts*" are not for today, and that they died out with the apostles on the completion of the canon of Scripture. How do we know which one of these irreconcilable factions is right? Well, actually, I suggest that both of them are wrong.

The problem is that the “*signs and wonders*” and the “*spiritual gifts*” are always lumped together as being the same thing. My major argument in this article is to try to show that the two things are completely different. “*Signs and wonders*” are nowhere mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14, the main passage on “*spiritual gifts*.”

2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

God is in control of all things through His providence. All things are arranged and ordained in this world for His own glory. Nothing ever happens “by chance.” Providence is miraculous in and of itself, but normally, as God works, He never breaks any of the laws of nature that He has set up, i.e. He always ordinarily uses means.

Occasionally in history He has done things against or outside of means, to seal His testimony to the truth, i.e. to “*confirm the word*” (Mark 16:20). These are what we call “*miracles*,” or “*signs and wonders*.” There are three periods of time in history when these have been particularly (though not exclusively) prevalent:

- (1.) The time of Moses and the Exodus,
- (2.) The time of Elijah and Elisha,
- (3.) The time of Christ and the apostles.

Notice that, most of the time, this sort of miracle is not the normal way God operates. Normally, God works only through the miracle of Providence. So, Christ coming along with miracles of this nature was unusual in its day.

John 9:32

Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

The Old Testament has many references to “*signs and wonders*,” and they nearly all refer to judgment. Most of these are references to the Exodus and the plagues that God sent on Egypt (hardly a “healing ministry”), but other miraculous events are referred to as well. A few examples will suffice:

Deuteronomy 6:22

And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes.

Deuteronomy 28:46

Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: and they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.

Nehemiah 9:10

And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day.

Jeremiah 32:20

Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day.

Daniel 4:2

I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

Daniel 6:27

He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

In every case, the phrase “*signs and wonders*” refers to miraculous occurrences that God performed to display His power in the world and to seal His testimony to the truth.

An interesting example is given in Isaiah, where his being told by God to go about naked is called a “*sign and wonder*”:

Isaiah 20:2-4

At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon

Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

This, in and of itself, was not a “miracle” as such, but it was at least an unusual commandment of the Lord to Isaiah (God would not normally ask anyone to do this), and it was a sign of the judgment that was to come on the nations round about.

Another prophecy in the Old Testament is that of Joel:

Joel 2:28-32

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Here, we have “prophesy,” “dreaming dreams,” and “seeing visions” mentioned. We also have a description of blood, fire and smoke, the sun being turned into darkness, the moon into blood and the terrible day of the Lord coming. How do we explain all this? Well, for a start, “dreaming dreams,” and “seeing visions,” whatever they may be exactly, are the marks of a prophet:

Numbers 12:6

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

We also have a Scriptural commentary on this passage in Acts chapter 2, which we’ll look at later.

3. Signs and Wonders in the Gospels

In the New Testament, “*signs and wonders*” are no different. They refer to the real miracles performed by Christ and the apostles. These were given to “*confirm the word*,” i.e. the testimony that Christ was indeed the Messiah whom God had promised in the Old Testament to send into the world:

Mark 16:20

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

The “*signs and wonders*” were not the primary reason for Christ’s coming, but only served as a pointer to the fact that he was the true Messiah, through whom the world would be judged:

Acts 10:42

And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

The people, in the main, didn’t see that, and were not really interested in His teaching, but just wanted more miracles, now:

John 6:26

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

“*Signs and wonders*,” were primarily performed by Christ during His ministry:

John 20:30,31

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Acts 2:22

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.

Nobody, in evangelical circles anyway, is disputing the fact that Christ performed real miracles, so that's not the focus of our attention here. Rather, we go on to note that power to perform "*signs and wonders*" was on occasions given by Christ to others:

Matthew 10:1

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Notice here that all twelve of the disciples were given this power for this particular evangelistic campaign.... including Judas Iscariot. So we see that "*signs and wonders*" are not the same as "*spiritual gifts*," which gifts are only given to believers. Judas could never have had them, as he was never regenerated by the Holy Ghost.

Notice also the list of "*signs and wonders*" in v.8:

Matthew 10:8

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

So, the "*signs and wonders*" Christ gave the disciples to perform were as follows:

*Healing the sick,
cleansing the lepers,
raising the dead, and
casting out devils.*

This is completely different from any of the lists of "*spiritual gifts*" we will come across later.

Note the disciples didn't normally have power to do these things except for the specific period of time Christ had given it to them:

Matthew 17:15-16

Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him..

We also read in Luke 10 about another campaign later, when Christ gave similar powers to seventy others:

Luke 10:1,9,17-20

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.... And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.... And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

We're told that the seventy could "heal the sick" and "tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." This may not have meant treading on literal serpents and scorpions, but could refer to having been given spiritual power over the devil and his angels, as such activity could be described as having power "over all the power of the enemy," after all, we see that the devils were subject to them. Note here that Christ rebukes them when they start boasting in the power to perform these "signs and wonders," and tells them not to rejoice in these, but rather to rejoice because their names are written in heaven.

The disciples once came across someone casting out devils from outside of their group of twelve:

Mark 9:38-40

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.

Comparing Mark with Luke, the disciples came across this person round about the same time as the seventy had been sent out, shortly after the transfiguration of our Lord, so it is most likely that this person the disciples met was one of the seventy, rather than someone else from outside of either group.

We also come across the fact that false “*signs and wonders*” can be done by the unregenerate wicked:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Mark 13:22

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

2 Thessalonians 2:9,10

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The wicked love to see “*signs and wonders*.” They find them exciting:

John 4:48

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

The wicked can at least convince themselves that they have done “*signs and wonders*,” even when they have never had the real power to do the real “*signs and wonders*” from Christ at all:

Matthew 7:22,23

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

“Greater Works”

On two occasions, in John’s gospel, Christ mentions that “*greater works*,” even than the “*signs and wonders*” He performed, will be done by His followers in the future. What a marvellous promise! What can be these “*greater works*”? Well a far greater miracle than all the “*signs and wonders*” put together is the conversion of a soul, which only the Lord can do:

John 5:19-21

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

“*Greater works*” can also mean any answers to prayer that a believer may receive:

John 14:11-14

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

All true believers will be able to do these “*greater works*.” Answers to prayer are most definitely with us today, and are far more important than a few measly little “*signs and wonders*” done in Christ’s day. All right, someone is physically healed, a leper is cleansed, the dead is raised, a demon is cast out. These things are temporary. All such people to whom these things have happened would die again one day anyway, and then it would be permanent. Eternal things, such as the preaching of the gospel, the conversion of souls, and answers to prayer, are far more important for all of us, although a lot less visible and outwardly exciting to the natural senses.

Christ's Instructions Before His Ascension

What instruction did Christ leave the eleven apostles before His ascension? We have two passages to consider:

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Here the eleven remaining disciples are given “teaching” and “baptizing” to do. No “signs and wonders” are mentioned here at all. This “great commission” is primarily an instruction to the apostles, but it is possible to apply these instructions to ourselves, because “teaching” and “baptizing” is also the ongoing work of the church in all ages.

Mark 16:15-20

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Here, again, we have “preaching” and “baptizing” as the main work for the apostles to do, but there is also here a reference to “signs” which “shall follow.” These signs are that they shall “cast out devils;” “speak with new tongues;” “take up serpents;” “drink any deadly thing and it will not hurt them;” “lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” Now, don’t try this at home. These could only be performed by the apostles for a short time to “confirm the word.” The “preaching” and “baptizing” were far more important than a few miraculous signs given by the Lord to confirm that what they were saying was the truth. “Signs” followed for a time with the apostles and a few others close to them, and then they

disappeared. We know this because, in the last inspired letter that Paul wrote, shortly before his death, he said:

2 Timothy 4:20

Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

The power to miraculously heal had gone from him by this time.

But is not to “*speak with new tongues*” in this list of “*signs following*”? Surely this is a “*spiritual gift*,” not a “*sign*,” and is with us today? Well, not necessarily. In Mark 16 the sign to “*speak with new tongues*” refers to one specific event, described in the Acts of the Apostles as occurring on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It may also refer to two other events in the book of Acts, but we’ll look at all these more closely later.

4. Signs and Wonders in the Acts of the Apostles

After Christ’s ascension, the apostles were given the power to do “*signs and wonders*.” Often, the following verse is used to prove this:

Acts 1:8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

However, all the verse actually states is that the apostles would receive “*power*” and that they “*shall be witnesses*.” All this could mean is that they are given the power to be Christ’s witnesses. No miracles, or “*signs and wonders*” are actually mentioned here.

But, the apostles were uniquely given the power to do these things directly from Christ. In Scripture, such miracles are denoted specifically as “*the signs of an apostle*”:

2 Corinthians 12:12

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

This was to “*confirm the word*”:

Mark 16:20

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

So power to perform such miracles was not given generally to all believers, but only to the “*apostles*,” and one or two others close to them.

We have many examples of such “*signs and wonders*” being performed by the apostles, particularly in the first half of the Acts of the Apostles:

Acts 2:43

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Acts 4:16

What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

Acts 4:22

For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

Acts 4:30

By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Acts 5:12

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch....)

Acts 14:3

Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Romans 15:19

...through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Hebrews 2:3,4

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

We also see that “*signs and wonders,*” were done by some others, as well as the twelve apostles:

Stephen:

Acts 6:8

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Philip*:

Acts 8:6,7

And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

Acts 8:13

Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

*We assume this is the Philip of Acts 6:5 and not Philip the apostle, because we are told:

Acts 8:1

And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

But it could have been Philip the apostle. Peter and John come to Samaria in Acts 8:14, so the apostles are not completely confined to Jerusalem. They just continue to make their base there, whereas everybody else was scattered. Having said that, this Philip then goes on to Caesarea.

Barnabas:

Acts 15:12

Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

We have to ask at this point whether there were more than just twelve apostles, as more than the twelve performed the “*signs of an apostle*”?

Barnabas is actually denoted an “*apostle*” in Scripture:

Acts 14:14

When the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out....

But Barnabas refers to the apostles (the twelve) as a third party:

Acts 9:27

But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles....

Others:

Others are also denoted apostles:

2 Corinthians 8:23

*Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowbelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the **messengers** (apostolos) of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

Philippians 2:25

*Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your **messenger** (apostolos), and he that ministered to my wants.*

Christ:

Christ Himself is also denoted an “*apostle*”:

Hebrews 3:1

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

All the word “*apostle*” really means is “sent one.” So Christ is sent from God, and the apostles were sent by God after Christ’s ascension to do their particular work, given to them by the Lord to “*confirm the word.*”

False Apostles:

There are such things as false apostles:

Revelation 2:2

...thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.

But if we can designate the word “*apostle*” to others apart from the twelve, we also have to maintain a distinction between the twelve and these others. We see indeed in Scripture that there is a distinction between the “*twelve*” and “*all the apostles*”:

1 Corinthians 15:5,7

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.... After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

It seems that we can use the word “*apostle*” for all those who could perform the “*signs of an apostle,*” which would include Barnabas, Philip and Stephen for example (and Christ for that matter, too), but the “*twelve apostles*” (to include Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot) are uniquely the primary witnesses and the foundation of the church:

Revelation 21:4

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

There are no apostles today. We know that, because an apostle is defined as someone who had been with Christ throughout His ministry, as we see from the requirements needed for Judas’ replacement:

Acts 1:21,22

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Paul is the only exception to this, who was:

1 Corinthians 15:8

....as of one born out of due time.

None of these people are alive today, therefore there are no apostles today.

5. Speaking in Tongues

To understand “*tongues*” a bit more, we first of all need to look at what happened on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.

Acts 2:1-21

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye

suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Firstly, we see that “*all with one accord*” were “*in one place*” (v.1). We are not told how many people were there. We assume there was a lot of people, and that they all spake with tongues, but nowhere is it mentioned how many were affected. I would suggest that only the twelve apostles were affected by the cloven tongues of fire and able to speak in tongues. The rest who came later remarked that they were all Galileans who could do this (v.7). In fact only eleven apart from Peter are ever mentioned in the passage (v.14). Having said that, 16 different people groups and languages are mentioned, but it could be that some of the twelve spoke more than one language.

They “*began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” (v.4). They were given the gift of speaking in other languages fluently and immediately from the Holy Spirit. They did not have to learn the languages as people would normally do. This is the fundamental difference between this particular unique occasion and the “*spiritual gift*” of tongues.

We must here note that these “*tongues*” were other intelligible languages because we see the Jews “*out of every nation under heaven*” (v.5) remarking, “*And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*” (v.8). And furthermore, they understood what was said: “*we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*” (v.11).

Often the following verse is used to try to convince people that “*tongues*” are unknown languages:

1 Corinthians 13:1

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

But read on in the next couple of verses:

1 Corinthians 13:2,3

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

This is a list of impossible things to do. All these are given in order to make the point that even if we did have them (which nobody has), if we have not charity, we are nothing. We can't use a text from a list consisting of impossible things, to try to pretend that we have the ability to perform any of them.

We also must note that it was what the apostles were saying that was the most important thing, not the languages they were miraculously speaking. They spoke “*in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*” (v.11). This is prophecy. They were prophesying in other languages apart from Hebrew. Up to this time, the outward visible church had been confined to the nation of the Jews. Now, after Christ's ascension, it is to go into all the world:

Matthew 28:19,20

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Mark 16:15

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

So the fact that different languages were being spoken here, was a “*sign*” that the period of time when the church was confined to the Jews was over, and now the church would be worldwide. This was a unique occasion of the immediate giving of languages to the apostles as a “*sign*.”

We seem to have two other examples of immediate languages being given in the Acts of the Apostles:

Acts 10:44-47

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Note again that to “*speak with tongues and magnify God*” means languages and prophecy. But Peter is speaking to a group of Gentiles, who would already know other languages. So this is probably not an example of immediate languages being given at all. They already know the languages. The marvellous thing is that they are using their own languages to “*magnify God.*” This was unheard of before in Gentiles.

The third possible example of immediate tongues seemingly being given is:

Acts 19:6

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

These were disciples in Ephesus. There were about twelve of them (v.7), so we are again not talking large numbers. Although we are not told, they are probably Gentiles, and so would know their own languages already. So again, the marvellous thing here is that they “*prophesied*” after the Holy Ghost had come upon them, not the fact they spoke with other languages.

All three cases above seem similar – tongues and prophecy are given after the Holy Ghost has fallen upon them. But the only one where immediate tongues were given, is the first one on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, and then it was only confined to the apostles for a “*sign.*”

This passage in Acts chapter 2 also states that the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32) has been fulfilled in this event at Pentecost (v.16). But

where are the literal “*prophecy*,” “*visions*” and “*dreams*”? Let alone the blood, fire and vapour of smoke, the sun being turned to darkness, the moon into blood, and the terrible day of the Lord coming? We should take heed of this inspired, Scriptural interpretation of Joel’s prophecy, and be very careful how we interpret other prophecies of Scripture in the light of this. What we can say is that this is the language of judgment, and that now, “*the notable day of the Lord*” has come, because Christ has come; and from now on we have this message to send to the ends of the earth:

Acts 2:21

....whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Let’s not try to imagine that we now have a world full of people seeing visions and dreaming dreams and doing other exciting things, when there is a gospel to proclaim and a judgment to come. This prophecy has been fulfilled, so let’s get beyond it.

6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders in Acts

Acts 2:42,43

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Notice here that the ordinary believers continued in “*the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*” Not in doing any “*signs and wonders.*” In fact it states here quite clearly that “*many wonders and signs were done by the apostles,*” but not anyone else.

But the real decline even in the apostles performing any “*signs and wonders*” comes after an incident in Acts 14:

Acts 14:8-18

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: he same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia,

The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Here, Paul miraculously healed a man, but the people saw the miracle and thought that Barnabas and Paul were gods. Even when they cried to them not to sacrifice to them, they scarce restrained the people from doing so. This shocked Barnabas and Paul, and we see a notable decline in any “*signs and wonders*” being performed by any of the apostles after this incident. It seems that God used this incident as the means by which He slowly withdrew the “*signs and wonders*” completely.

Let us take a look at a few passages in the book of Acts after this event:

Acts 15:32

And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

In the past, “*confirming the word*” was with “*signs following*” (Mark 16:20), but here we have no mention of “*signs*” at all. The confirmation of the churches was done by speaking and communicating verbally with them. No “*signs and wonders*” any more.

Acts 15:41

And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Here we have a similar confirmation of the churches going on. If we say that Judas and Silas in the first example were not apostles (although Judas probably was the apostle Judas (not Iscariot)), then here we have

no doubt about it, because it is the apostle Paul himself, no longer confirming the churches with “*signs following*.”

Acts 19:11,12

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Here we see that Paul’s miracles at this time are denoted “*special miracles*,” as though in the past they were more common, and that he was not normally doing them any more, but this was a special case.

Acts 19:13-17

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

This has nothing to do with the “*signs and wonders*” of the apostles. This shows a few examples of false prophets (“*certain of the vagabond Jews*,” “*exorcists*,” and the “*seven sons of one Sceva*”) doing false miracles supposedly in Jesus’ name. It shows how dangerous this activity is. It has nothing to do with the real “*signs and wonders*” that had in the past been performed by the apostles.

Acts 20:9,10

And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

This is often given as an example of Paul raising the dead, but it is nothing of the kind. No miracle occurs here whatsoever. Eutychus falls out of the window, they take him up, convinced he is dead, but Paul

has a closer inspection of him and sees that his life is still in him. No miracle at all here, other than the fall didn't kill him.

Acts 21:4

And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10,11

And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

These are two examples of firstly disciples, and secondly Agabus the prophet, prophesying that Paul would find persecution if he went to Jerusalem – which indeed he did. Such people were discerners of the times, and this is no more than the “*spiritual gifts*” of “*discernment*” and “*prophecy*.” Both were wrong in actually advising Paul not to go up to Jerusalem, when Paul himself had determined (in the Lord's guidance to him personally) to do so, despite the probable persecution he would find there.

Acts 28:3-5

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

Here we have a supposed miracle, but firstly we see that Paul didn't do anything. He didn't perform any miracle at all. Secondly, we see that God is in control of all things. He it was that did not let the viper harm Paul. We have such providential control of all things by the Lord in our world today, and we should be thankful for all His providential dealings with us. It was the barbarians here who had a superstitious idea about such an event.

Acts 28:8,9

And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.

This is the final miracle of the Bible. Maybe the Lord gave Paul a “*special miracle*” as in Acts 19:11, but notice the major difference. This time Paul **prayed**. This is the way we operate today. No-one can perform miracles today. But we do know a God who can heal. We pray. Of course, the Lord may not answer our prayer in the way we would like, but prayer is the ordinary means the Lord has given us for healing and receiving everything else we need from Him today. He will always give us what He wants us to have, and we should be eternally thankful for whatever we receive from Him.

7. Spiritual Gifts

In Hebrews 2:3,4 we have an interesting passage:

Hebrews 2:3,4

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Here we see that “*signs and wonders*” and “*divers miracles*” were God’s bearing witness to the message of Christ and the apostles. But the “*gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will*” are mentioned in this verse also. Does this mean that the “*spiritual gifts*” were the same as the “*signs and wonders*,” seeing they performed the same function and are grouped together here? Well, the word “*both*” must refer to two things. It can’t refer to three things. So it can’t refer to “*signs and wonders*,” “*divers miracles*,” and the “*gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will*.” All three cannot be denoted by the word “*both*.” The word “*both*” must refer on the one hand to “*signs and wonders and divers miracles*,” and on the other hand to “*gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will*.” These are two completely separate, distinct and different things, but both

performing the same function of confirming the truth given by God to men.

“*Spiritual gifts*,” then, are given to all truly born-again believers as the Lord distributes. Not all gifts are given to all believers, neither should any of us boast in the ones we’ve been given, if indeed we have been given any of them at all. This message is the thrust of the passage in 1 Corinthians 12-14, which we shall look at shortly.

“*Spiritual gifts*” are given as the Lord distributes, to the end that we may be established in the faith:

Romans 1:11,12

For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

We note here that Paul, as an apostle, was given the ability to impart spiritual gifts to people, but only as the Lord directed him.

With regards “*spiritual gifts*”:

– They are NOT “*signs and wonders*” or “*miracles*.” Such things died out within the lifetime of the apostles.

– They are NOT magic, nor direct revelation apart from Scripture, but are gifts given by the Lord, as He wills, to His true people, for the building up of the church.

– They are NOT temporary, as “*signs and wonders*” were. God giving them to His people will continue until Christ comes again:

Psalms 68:18

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men.

Ephesians 4:8

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Different “*spiritual gifts*” are given to different believers:

Romans 12:4-8

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

In this passage, we have listed amongst the “*spiritual gifts*”:

*prophecy,
ministry,
teaching,
exhortation,
ruling, and
showing mercy.*

Ephesians 4:11-12

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

In this passage, we see that

*apostles,
prophets,
evangelists,
pastors, and
teachers*

all perform the functions of “*ministry*” and “*edification*.”

Notice that there is no similarity whatsoever between the “*spiritual gifts*” in these lists here and the list of “*signs and wonders*” we have in Matthew 10:8. They are completely different.

8. 1 Corinthians 12

12:1 *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*

In 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, we have the major passage in Scripture that talks about “*spiritual gifts*.” Paul here tells his readers that it is important that we are not ignorant about them, how they work and how they should be used. So they must still be around today, otherwise there is no point of having this passage in the Bible.

12:2 *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

The Corinthians were Gentiles, not Jews. This shows us that this passage is particularly directed to the Gentiles as to how to use the “*spiritual gifts*” properly. Did the Jews have “*spiritual gifts*” in the Old Testament? Well, they had the Holy Spirit:

Psalm 51:11

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Isaiah 63:10

But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

So, true believers in Old Testament times must also have had “*spiritual gifts*” as the Lord pleased to distribute them. But here, now, in the days of the apostles, the Holy Spirit was being poured out on all nations, not just primarily amongst the Jews, as it had been in times past. The “*spiritual gifts*” are here being introduced to the Gentile world for the first time, and Paul gives instruction on how to use them properly.

12:3 *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

In chapter 12, Paul’s main message is to show that all true believers (i.e. all those who have had a new heart given them by the Lord) have the Holy Spirit within them, but that there is a diversity of gifts, distributed as the Lord sees fit. Believers do not all have the same gifts. So we

should not despise fellow true believers who do not have the same gift as we do, or hate people who seem to have a greater gift than we do. This is important, because these things are happening in the church today.

So Paul's first message is to make clear that anyone who truly has the Holy Spirit within them, can't call Jesus accursed. It is impossible. They can't bring themselves to utter such words, because they love the Lord, and the Holy Spirit within them prevents them from doing so. No matter how different true believers are from each other outwardly, we must accept all of them as our brethren in Christ.

Paul also has a second foundational message to give, and that is that "*No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*" Does this mean that anyone who says the words "*Jesus is Lord*" is a true believer, and has the Holy Ghost? Of course not. Anyone can form these words with their mouths and tongues. Christ, quoting the prophet Isaiah, warns us against this:

Mark 7:6

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

So, we should not get taken in by anyone who can merely mouth these words. Rather, Paul is saying that everyone who truly has the Holy Spirit within them, also has Jesus as Lord of their life. It has been argued that some people are second class Christians, in that they have Jesus as Saviour but have somehow not yet received Him as Lord. This cannot be. All those who have been truly born-again in the heart, have the Holy Spirit within them, and at the same time have Jesus as Lord of their lives. They may not follow Him very well, because of indwelling sin in their own hearts, but He is there, He is Lord, they will grow in the faith as He guides them, and we should not despise such people or look down upon them as being second-rate in any way. They are true believers, even though they are not quite like us.

This is an important foundation that Paul is laying here, for the rest of the chapter, because the problem in the Corinthian church was that cliques and factions were forming:

1 Corinthians 1:12

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

This was mainly due to the fact that we can't see each other's heart. We must realise that even though we can't see many outward signs in other people of them being true believers, we must accept them as such if they affirm that Jesus is the Lord and if they love Him truly, and therefore cannot say that "*Jesus is accursed.*" Only in cases where their lack of outward fruit clearly gives them away as not being true believers, can we reject them as being such:

Matthew 7:15-20

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

12:4-6 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*

Here we come to the main point of this chapter. Paul is trying to show that there is a diversity of gifts – a greater diversity than the believers in Corinth realised – but only one Spirit who gives them. To make his point he repeats what he says three times. He says that there are a diversity of "*gifts,*" or "*administrations*" or "*operations,*" but only one "*Spirit,*" or "*Lord,*" or "*God.*" The Corinthians needed to know this. Because the whole church was splitting into factions, people were only seeing what little diversity there was within their own particular faction, and not seeing the whole picture, namely, that there were true believers (who all had the same one Spirit) in the other factions, who also had spiritual gifts and should be recognised as true believers.

We have exactly this problem in the church today. Some churches believe that if you don't "speak in tongues" (in the way they interpret

this to mean), then you are a second class Christian, or not a Christian at all. Others believe that if you don't have all your doctrine exactly correct (as their particular faction teaches it), then you are a second class Christian, or not a Christian at all. Others believe that if you are not going out aggressively evangelising, then you are a second class Christian. We all need to repent of any such behaviour in our lives. We can't tell from the outside who truly has had a new heart put within them; but we should accept far more people as true believers than we can see around us in our own cosy little narrow denomination.

12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

In all true believers, the Spirit manifests Himself in different ways, by giving such a diversity of gifts. Not everyone has every gift. In fact, most people only have one or maybe two. But the Spirit has given some gifts to every believer, “*to profit withal*,” i.e. for their own benefit, and for the benefit of the true church.

12:8-10 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

Here we have our first major list of “*spiritual gifts*.” It is not an exhaustive list, but just a few examples. We have mentioned here:

*the word of wisdom,
the word of knowledge,
faith,
the gifts of healing,
the working of miracles,
prophecy,
discerning of spirits,
divers kinds of tongues, and
the interpretation of tongues.*

Again, all these are completely different from the list of “*signs and wonders*?” we have in Matthew 10:8. Only “*the gifts of healing*” and “*the*

working of miracles” can be possibly said to be similar to “*healing the sick.*” And I suggest they are not the same at all really.

What are each of these “*spiritual gifts*” then? Well, let’s look at them in turn:

The Word of Wisdom and The Word of Knowledge

We get all our knowledge, or at least all that we need to know, from the Bible. Some people have a lot more spiritual insight into the Word of God than others. This is the spiritual gift of knowledge and should not be despised, as ignorant people and new believers so easily tend to do. We need to respect people with such a gift and learn from them, not ridicule them. Note that this gift – as indeed all the others – does not come magically to a person, without effort. God gives the recipient such a gift, but he still has to study his Bible. What God gives him is the ability to learn and discern the truth from the Scriptures, better than others.

Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. It is possible to have the gift of knowledge but be hopeless at practically applying it. The gift of wisdom is this practical application. It certainly is not “*worldly wisdom*” but the wisdom that only the Spirit of God can reveal to us:

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

We are all actually encouraged to seek after this gift:

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

After all,

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Faith

All true believers have faith, but we see here that some have more faith than others. This is a spiritual gift from the Lord:

Luke 7:9

When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Matthew 14:31

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

The Gifts of Healing

This is not a special gift given to people who can say, “Be healed, in the name of Jesus!” as a result of which a physical healing would miraculously take place. That really happened with Christ and the apostles, as they performed “*signs and wonders,*” but this is not what we are talking about here.

This is a “*spiritual gift*” given to some people who really do have a gift of being able to speak healing words to people in need. Not just being able to help people in need of physical healing, but also being able to heal relationship problems, or divisions of any kind. Some people have the gift of knowing exactly the right thing to say at the right time in order to defuse a volatile, or awkward situation.

For example, maybe a wayward son has become a drunkard, or a daughter has become a drug addict or something similar. But someone with the gift of “healing” can come alongside such people, relate to

them and help them. Of course it is the Lord that truly changes the situation, but he chooses to do it through someone with the gift of “*healing*.” What a wonderful gift!

Note that the “*gifts of healing*” are plural, so there are many types. Note also that such a gift also has to be learned through time, it is not given to anyone without them learning through experience.

The Working of Miracles

This also is not a special gift given to people today so they can perform the physical miracles that Jesus and the apostles could do.

Galatians 3:5

He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the bearing of faith?

In this verse, “*the working of miracles*” is directly connected to the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of sinners. The one who “*ministereth to you the Spirit*” is said to be the one who “*worketh miracles*.” Preaching the gospel is the ordinary means the Lord uses to convert sinners:

1 Corinthians 1:21

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

And so “*the working of miracles*” in this sense can be said to be the work of the preacher whenever someone is converted, although of course it’s the Lord Himself who actually changes the heart. This is the same as the “*greater works*” Christ talked about, and which we briefly looked at earlier:

John 5:20,21

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

An important point needs to be made here. The word “*miracles*” occurs three times in chapter 12 here, referring to the spiritual gift. On every occasion, it is the Greek word “*dunamis*,” which is the usual word for “*power*.” When the “*signs and wonders*” are spoken about in the gospels and book of Acts, on most occasions the Greek word translated “*miracle*” is “*saymion*,” which is the usual word for “*sign*.” Sometimes the word “*dunamis*” is used, but on every occasion when that occurs, it is in conjunction with the phrase “*miracles and signs*,” where the word “*sign*” has already been translated from the word “*saymion*.”

Prophecy

We need to know exactly what prophecy is, because 1 Corinthians 14 tells us that it is the greatest of all the gifts. Most people believe that it means the supernatural ability to predict the future. That is not true. No-one can “predict” the future. The future is in the Lord’s hands, and He can reveal it to whomsoever He chooses. This is not “prediction.” Some of the Old Testament prophets came in judgment and told the people what God would do to them, and they were right, but we don’t have such an ability today, because God doesn’t use these means to speak to His people any more. So, we have to be very careful of trying to compare ourselves to the Old Testament prophets. We cannot say, “Thus saith the Lord,” like they could. That type of prophet has ceased:

Hebrews 1:1,2

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

Matthew 11:13

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Daniel 9:24

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

But the spiritual gift of prophecy is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 14 as the greatest gift available today, so we need to know what it involves, as much as we can.

The first mention of a “*prophet*” in Scripture is that of Abraham. The Lord told Abimelech, king of Gerar, to restore Sarah to him:

Genesis 20:7

Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

We see that the Lord tells Abimelech that Abraham will pray for him, and warn him that if he does not repent, certain consequences will follow. This is the work of a “*prophet*.”

We next encounter a “*prophet*” when it refers to Aaron:

Exodus 7:1

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

Here, Aaron is the “*prophet*,” because he is God’s mouthpiece to Pharaoh.

Next, we see that the seventy elders, who were set apart to help Moses, “*prophesied*”:

Numbers 11:25

And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

What is this but praising the Lord? Here they have no specific message to give, but they are all given the Holy Spirit and so are genuine prophets, who declare the beauty and attributes of the Lord to the people.

Sometimes prophecy involved singing the praises of God:

1 Samuel 10:5

After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy.

Women can prophesy:

“Prophetesses” in Scripture include Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14 and 2 Chronicles 34:22), Isaiah’s wife (Isaiah 8:3) and Anna (Luke 2:36).

Acts 21:9

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

1 Corinthians 11:5

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

Note also there are two false prophetesses mentioned in Scripture, Naadiah (Nehemiah 6:14) and Jezebel (Revelation 2:20).

Sometimes, prophecy involves declaring how God wants the people to behave:

Proverbs 31:1

The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

Sometimes, prophecy involves declaring judgment on the people if they do not repent:

2 Chronicles 15:8

And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD.

Sometimes, prophecy is exhorting and confirming the brethren:

Acts 15:32

And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

All of Scripture is prophecy, and no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation:

2 Peter 1:19-21

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied:

Luke 1:67,68

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.

[Note that it is not said that Mary prophesied in her speech earlier in the chapter.]

Prophecy is “blessing” God, i.e. declaring His glory, i.e. His attributes and greatness.

Prophecy is given in proportion to the prophet’s faith:

Romans 12:6

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

Prophecy is the testimony of Jesus:

Revelation 19:10

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Taking all of these cases, we conclude that prophecy is the declaring of God’s glory, the blessing and praising of God. This involves anything from simply worshipping the true and living God, to declaring a

message from the Lord to the current generation. Again, note that this gift is also only acquired through learning. The prophet would be one who stays close to the Word of God and studies it carefully.

Discerning of Spirits

The “*discerning of spirits*” is the gift of being able to discern whether a particular spirit is from God:

1 John 4:1-6

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

It also includes the gift of being able to understand and discern the times, similar to that of the children of Issachar:

1 Chronicles 12:32

And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.

Again, these people would have to stick close to Scripture to have this gift.

Divers Kinds of Tongues

The “*spiritual gift*” of tongues we have today is not immediate in the same way as in Acts 2. Rather, it is the supernatural ability to learn a language more quickly than would naturally be the case, or at least the ability to be able to communicate with people of another language more easily than most would be able to. The obvious case in which the

Lord would need to give this gift, is if the person was going onto the mission field, but other situations could exist whereby they would need to learn a language or communicate with someone. Some people have the gift of being able to learn languages quickly, and have the gift of communication generally, and this is a precious thing.

All the “*spiritual gifts*” are, on the one hand, gifts from God, but on the other, all of them involve the recipient still needing to learn, the gift being a better than usual ability to be able to do this, than normally would be the case.

The Interpretation of Tongues

When one thinks of the gift of the “*interpretation of tongues*,” one immediately thinks of the translation from one language into another. Whereas this could be a possible meaning to the word “*interpretation*,” it is not the only one.

But surely, interpretation means more than merely translating. It also means getting the target audience, who can’t speak the original language, to ***understand*** what is being said. A wooden literal translation may still be not understood, or at least misunderstood, in the target language to the target audience, because languages differ such a lot. 1 Corinthians 14 speaks about the importance of the target audience understanding what is being said:

1 Corinthians 14:5

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

These “*spiritual gifts*” are only a representative sample of the many gifts God gives to His people, but we see that there is an explanation for each one of them, which involves supernatural power being given by the Holy Spirit, but does not involve the miracle working of the “*signs and wonders*?” to explain them.

Now, we might object that these “*gifts*” are really no more than glorified natural gifts. What is spiritual about learning a language, or being able to speak the right words of healing to somebody, or having a gift of knowledge? If we have to make an effort to learn and improve them, does that not mean that these are just natural gifts, not spiritual? No, they are spiritual in the sense that they are given by the Holy Spirit.

Either people who didn’t have these gifts naturally before, are given them by the Spirit, or, maybe they did have some natural gift for languages, or knowledge etc. before, and these are enhanced by the Spirit. Either way, the Holy Spirit helps the recipient to improve and use these gifts properly.

We do have to make an effort to learn how to improve our use of these gifts properly, but the Spirit will give us the ability to do that. Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for spiritual ends. It is the difference between, for example, preparing and preaching a sermon by our own efforts – which could be doctrinally correct if we have stuck close to Scripture – or preparing and preaching it in the power of the Holy Spirit, giving us what the Holy Spirit wants us to preach, not just a dry doctrinal sermon we have concocted ourselves. Both involve learning and Bible study, but one is spiritual and the other isn’t.

12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Again, Paul emphasises that these gifts are divided to every believer severally as the Lord wills. Any one of us normally has only one or two “*spiritual gifts*,” but we should not despise or judge others who have other different gifts, or who have a lot more than we have been given. A gift is just that, a gift. It can be given and it can be taken away again. It can be given in a large or small measure. The Lord knows what He is doing, and we should be thankful for any gifts we have been given and the measure of them. We should never boast in any of them, but use all that we have been given to God’s glory.

12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

As our physical bodies are one unit but with many members, so is Christ's spiritual body, i.e. the church. He is the Head and we are the different members of the body:

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church.

Colossians 2:19

....the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

12:13 *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

On the one hand, all those who have been born-again of the Spirit of God, who have had a new heart put within them, who have become a new creature in Christ, are all, by the one Holy Spirit joined into one body, Christ's body. It doesn't matter what we are outwardly, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, we have all become a part, a member, of Christ's one body. We should be aware of this when we come across other believers. They may not have anything like the same gifts as we have, but they should still be respected and regarded as members of the one body of Christ.

12:14 *For the body is not one member, but many.*

On the other hand, all those who have been born-again of the Spirit of God do not all have the same function. We all have different functions as the Lord pleases to distribute to us.

12:15-18 *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

Here, Paul uses the example of the physical human body to try to get his readers to understand the truth about the “*spiritual gifts*.” Just as the human body is made up of different kinds of members, ears, eyes, feet etc., so the body of Christ is made up of those with different kinds of “*spiritual gifts*.”

As it is ridiculous to talk about members of the human body complaining about why they were not made something else – an ear complaining about why he was not made an eye, for example – so it ought to be ridiculous for members of Christ’s body to complain about the way the Lord has made them, and the gifts He has given them.

Paul is saying that we are all born-again by the one Spirit of God, but we are all different, we have been given different gifts, and we should realise and recognise that fact.

12:19-20 And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.

Here, Paul shows how ridiculous it is to think that every member of a physical body should try to be or pretend to be the same member. If we were all one member, a preacher for example, where is the body? The body no longer exists, it is all an ear, or eye, or foot. The fact is that there is one body of Christ, namely all those truly born-again of the Spirit of God, but we are all different members and perform different functions.

12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

And indeed we are all interdependent on one another. We need each other in our different capacities, with our different “*spiritual gifts*.”

12:22,23 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

In fact, the parts of our body that do not appear outwardly to be of much worth, are actually more necessary for the functioning of the whole body. Similarly, those parts of the spiritual body that more outwardly worthy members tend to despise and look down on, are actually more necessary, and truly more honourable and more comely. We so much need to learn this lesson, as so many Christians today look down on other fellow Christians. This is a disgrace, and should not be.

12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

The parts that appear outwardly to men to be more comely, the great eloquent preachers, the great evangelists and so on, seem to have no need of the rest of us simple people who are expected to just blindly follow them (and keep giving them money). But in actual fact, God has ordained everything to be such that the parts that do not appear outwardly to be very comely or important, have more abundant honour in His sight.

12:25 that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

The reason that the Lord has given all the gifts in the way He has done, is that there should be no schism in the body, and that the members should have the same care one for another.

We should not know any man after the flesh any more, but we should judge righteous judgment:

2 Corinthians 5:16,17

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

John 7:24

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

12:26 *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

This is how we ought to behave. When one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is honoured, we should all rejoice with him. How far removed is this from the way the church operates today! How important it is therefore for us to realise that there are such a variety of gifts, but only ever the one Spirit who unites all those who have truly had a new heart put within them.

12:27 *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

So we should humble ourselves. All those who have been born-again of the Spirit of God, are the body of Christ. This is an invisible body, we cannot tell who belongs to it fully. Certainly all those that profess to be a Christian are not necessarily so, and can deceive:

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

But we can also know true believers to some degree by their fruits:

Matthew 7:15-20

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

12:28 *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

Here we have an important list because it shows a hierarchy of gifts. Some gifts are greater than others. We see that the best gift of all is to be an apostle. As we have already established, this is no longer available to any of us today, as all the apostles have died out.

The second best gift, and the best gift available today, is to be a prophet.

1 Corinthians 14:5

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied.

Prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, indeed we should covet, or long to be a prophet:

1 Corinthians 14:39

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Failing this, the third best gift is that of being a teacher.

The rest of the gifts mentioned here are all on the same level, the bottom level. The next one mentioned is “*miracles*,” followed by the word “*then*,” which could imply that the gift of “*miracles*” is of a higher rank than the rest, but this is not a necessary conclusion.

The other gifts mentioned here are:

gifts of healings,

helps,

governments,

diversities of tongues.

Notice the gift of “*governments*” is on the lowest level. So elders, know your place!

12:29,30 *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

The rhetorical answer here is, no, not all do have all the gifts. All true believers may have at best, is one or two of them. So we should never boast in any “*spiritual gifts*” that we have been given by the Lord, and

neither should we be jealous of anyone else's gifts that they have and we don't.

12:31 *But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*

Having said that, we are told to “*covet earnestly the best gifts.*” The best gifts being, as we have seen, “*prophecy*” and “*teaching.*” These are far greater than all the others.

Now the tenth commandment states that:

Exodus 20:17

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

We are not to covet the best gifts in the sense that we want and crave for what other people have, and are jealous of them. That is sin, and a clear breaking of the tenth commandment. But we are to covet the best gifts in the sense that “*prophecy*” and “*teaching*” are greater than the rest. It is always good to desire the best for God, even if the Lord may see fit not to give us what we desire, for His own good and holy ends.

But above all this, even the greatest gifts pale in comparison with a more excellent way, which Paul tells us about in chapter 13. The best gifts are nothing compared to having the fruit of charity. God's people should be pursuing the fruit of the Spirit, which all true believers have, and should be increasing in as they grow more and more in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. These are far more important than even having the best of the gifts.

Galatians 5:22-26

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

9. 1 Corinthians 13

13:1-3 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

Here we clearly have a list of impossible things to do. Each item in the list is compared against the spiritual fruit of charity. Even if we could perform any of the things in this list of impossible things, it is nothing if we don't have the spiritual fruit of charity. In other words, the gifts of the Spirit are nothing if we don't have the fruits of the Spirit, which are far more important for us to nurture than any gift we may think we have.

No man on earth with the gift of tongues, can speak with the tongues of **all** men and angels. No man with the gift of prophecy, can understand **all** mysteries and **all** knowledge. No man with the gift of faith, can remove mountains. No man with the gift of helps, can bestow **all** his goods to feed the poor, because there are too many poor, and in any case our selfish nature stops us from doing so. No man can give his body voluntarily to be burned, because his natural instinct stops him. All these are impossible things for any of us to do in these limited bodies that we have, even with grace and a new heart put within us. But even if we could do any one of them, we are nothing without producing fruit. Producing fruit is the primary purpose of the Christian life, not arguing about, let alone boasting in, whatever gifts we have been given.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

13:4-7 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Charity is the spiritual fruit we should be growing in our hearts. It certainly is impossible for the natural man to produce it. The natural man can't love properly at all. Look at the list of spiritual fruit again in Galatians 5:22-26. This is another impossible list for any of us to achieve by nature. We need the Holy Spirit to do any of these things in us. One of the fruits of the Spirit is "love," and the truly born-again believer can just begin to love, or show charity, properly, in the manner shown here. We are growing in grace all the time, and none of us shall achieve perfection while we are on this earth, but the pursuit of holiness must be our primary objective while we are here, and that which we should be following. We should not be hung up on gifts all the time.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

13:8-10 *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

People who believe that neither "signs and wonders" nor "spiritual gifts" are with us today, have been known to interpret the phrase "when that which is perfect is come" to mean the completion of the Bible. Their argument is that now we have the Bible, which is perfect, therefore, we do not need any of the other gifts any more. I find this too strained an interpretation of the passage.

It is far more straightforward to understand the phrase "when that which is perfect is come" to mean when we get to heaven. But with this interpretation, it means that the "spiritual gifts" are still with us today, because the passage states clearly that "prophecies," "tongues," and "knowledge" shall cease only after "that which is perfect is come." Now, if this

is interpreted to mean the canon of Scripture, then we can safely say that all these gifts are now ceased. But I find it difficult to interpret the passage in that way. Perfection is not here. We have a complete Bible, to which nothing should be added or taken away, and every word of it is indeed perfect, but this is not what is being spoken about here. I'm not perfect yet, and I'll only be perfect when I enter into the rest of my Lord, and this has not yet come, while I am still on this earth. Only then, in glory, will I not need “*spiritual gifts*” any more (or indeed a Bible).

13:11-12 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

Our lives are here compared to the difference between being a child and being a man. As a child, we understand and think as a child, but when we grow up, we don't think that way any more, because we can see a lot more clearly. Similarly, on this earth, we can only understand and think as a child. Only when we get to heaven will we see things as they clearly are. I find it difficult to interpret this passage to mean that before we got the complete canon of Scripture we thought as a child, but now we have the Bible, we think as men. It is a much greater contrast than that – the contrast indeed between our life here on earth, and what it shall be when we get to glory.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

13:13 *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

“*Faith*” and “*charity*” are both fruits of the Spirit. “*Hope*” is a type of faith:

Romans 8:24-25

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Those who believe that there are no gifts for today see this verse, and say that now abideth only “*faith*,” “*hope*” and “*charity*,” and not the gifts mentioned, such as “*prophecy*,” “*tongues*” and “*knowledge*.” But this does not see the gifts as we have suggested they should be seen, i.e. not as miraculous “*signs and wonders*” but as rational, sober gifts given by God to whom He wills for His own holy purpose and ends.

10. 1 Corinthians 14

14:1 *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

This chapter now goes on to speak of some gifts being better than others, and which of them we should “*covet*” or desire more than others. We are all agreed that we should “*follow after charity*.” That is a far “*more excellent way*” (1 Corinthians 12:31). But we should secondarily desire spiritual gifts. It is not wrong to desire spiritual gifts, as long as we realise that we will maybe only receive one or two of them, i.e. only those that the Lord wants us to have as individuals for His own purposes. However, if we are going to desire spiritual gifts, it is far better that we desire the best gift, namely “*prophecy*.” This is far greater than the others.

14:2,3 *For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*

A person speaking in the church meeting in an unknown tongue – unknown to the hearers that is – is not speaking to the hearers at all, but to God. So we see that this “*unknown*” tongue is intelligible, but is not fruitful to the hearers because they don’t understand it. It only edifies the speaker, who does understand it, and God to whom the speech is directed. He speaks “*mysteries*,” i.e. things that are hidden at

present, but will later be revealed (presumably when they get an interpreter). But one who prophesies in the church meeting, speaks in a language known to the hearers, so they can all be edified, exhorted and comforted. This is far more useful in a gathering of any kind, and therefore is the greater gift.

14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

The one speaking in the unknown tongue is edifying himself, he is not speaking nonsense, nor anything not understood by him. The problem is that it is not understood by anyone else in the meeting.

14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

It is good to speak with tongues, and one can be edified by it oneself (because oneself understands it), and indeed it is real communion with the Lord, which is always good and useful. But it is always better to be able to edify others in a meeting, so to have the gift of prophecy is always greater than the other gifts, because we are renewed and grow in grace by understanding, which acts on the mind. Once our minds have been renewed accordingly, our bodies will then follow. Speaking in tongues plus the interpretation of tongues in a meeting, is regarded here as the equivalent of prophecy. So we see how important doing all things unto edification really is.

Romans 12:2

...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind....

Ephesians 4:23

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

14:6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

The most important thing we need in the church meeting, is to do or say something profitable to the others around us. Such things therefore are the greater gifts:

*revelation,
knowledge,
prophesyings, and
doctrine.*

All of these come under the umbrella of “*prophecy.*”

14:7-9 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

Here, speaking in tongues unknown to the hearers, without any interpretation, is likened to musical instruments which don't give a distinction in the sounds they make, and consequently no tune is discernible. It is a noise, a cacophony. Nobody is going to prepare himself for anything if such a sound comes into his ears, he is just going to ignore it. This is important, especially if the trumpet is sounding that a battle is imminent. No-one is going to prepare himself for battle if the sound of the trumpet is not clear. Similarly, we must make sure that at all times, if we speak at all, we speak things easy to be understood by others, otherwise they will not understand, and our speaking will be meaningless and pointless.

14:10,11 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

All languages mean something to someone, but if the people listening to us don't understand what is being said, then it is pointless speaking in their presence, we may as well be a foreigner speaking a foreign language, no hearer will be able to understand.

14:12 *Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*

If we say we are zealous of spiritual gifts, then that is a good thing, but we should make sure we seek to excel to the edifying of the church, not to seek to boast as to how many foreign languages we know.

14:13,14 *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.*

If we do speak in an unknown tongue, we must pray that we may interpret, so all around can understand what we say. If we don't interpret, we still pray in our spirit to the Lord, but our understanding is unfruitful to anyone else. We will understand, and it may indeed be fruitful to us personally, but no-one else around will know what we're talking about, and therefore what we say will not be fruitful to them at all.

14:15 *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*

Therefore, whatever we do, whether we pray, or sing, the most important thing is that we do these things with the understanding, or rather, that others may understand us. Otherwise we ought to just keep quiet, and speak to the Lord alone ourselves. If we are to engage in the public worship at all – which involves praying and singing as its major elements – then we are only to engage in it if we can be understood by others. Coming out with some foreign song, foreign language or nonsense, is just not right, and is condemned.

14:16,17 *Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.*

If we bless, or give thanks, and the other people around us can't understand what we are saying, the Lord understands, and indeed we may be giving thanks well, but no-one else is edified, and so can't and shouldn't say "Amen" to what has been said.

14:18,19 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

Paul praises God for the gift of being able to communicate in different tongues more than anyone, but the gift is not given to any of us to boast about at all. It would be far better not to have such a gift at all, and rather speak five words to others that they can understand, than a great homily in a language unknown to them.

14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

Understanding is the most important thing we should be concerned about. Do we understand what we hear and learn? When we communicate to others, do we communicate clearly so that they can understand what we're saying? These are the most important things in the life of the church. If we don't hold to this concept, then we're still children. It is in malice, i.e. the ways of the world, that we should be children, and we should flee from such things. In understanding the truth, we should be men, mature, able to help each other in growing up in the truth. This is how we all grow in the spiritual life.

14:21,22 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

This is an often misunderstood passage. People think that this passage is saying that speaking in tongues is a sign and witness given to believers, in order to bring unbelievers to the Lord, whereas prophesying is only a sign for believers to edify themselves. Nothing

could be further from the truth. Later on in the passage we see in verses 24 and 25 that it is prophesying which brings unbelievers to the Lord, and the knowledge of the truth. So how do we explain the role of tongues? The quote in v.21 is from the prophet Isaiah. Here it is in full:

Isaiah 28:9-13

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

In this original context, the “*sign*” of God speaking to the people with “*other tongues*,” is similar to the sign of God speaking to the people with “*stammering lips*,” namely, a sign of judgment. God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and Gentiles and babes will be brought into the church in their place:

Matthew 11:25

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Psalms 8:2

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

1 Corinthians 1:19, 27-29

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.... But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Jeremiah 5:15

Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

Hosea 2:23

And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Romans 10:20,21

But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

Unbelievers or unlearned people who come into a church and witness many people speaking in foreign languages with no interpretation being given, so that no-one is being edified, will go away thinking that Christians are mad, and that Christianity is pointless and irrational. The witness, far from bringing them nearer to the Lord, drives them away, because the gospel is not preached, and nothing is edifying or rational at all in such a meeting.

14:24,25 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

But, on the other hand, if an unbeliever or unlearned person comes into a meeting where all present are edifying each other in rational conversation, then he too can be convinced that Christianity is true, that he is a sinner in need of salvation, and indeed could be converted as a result.

In other words, to an outsider, people boasting of their gift of tongues with no rational intelligent discussion taking place, will drive people away, whereas prophecy, where rational edification is everyone's goal, can be a powerful means of their conversion.

14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

So, all things in the church ought to be done “unto edifying,” so that all present, believers and unbelievers alike, may profit from what has been said.

14:27,28 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

Here we see that all things must be done by course, i.e. one at a time, no-one trying to interrupt and hog the discussion. And we see that speaking in tongues should be limited to at the most three people per meeting, and then only if what is said can be interpreted for the rest of the group to understand, otherwise the speaker should keep quiet.

14:29-31 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

This concept is also to be extended to prophecy itself. People should speak one at a time, nobody rudely interrupting another, all judging what each other says, with no factions being formed, so that all may learn and be comforted. This should be the ultimate end of all church gatherings.

14:32,33 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Once an argument begins, with people interrupting others, butting in, loudly trying to proclaim their point of view, and so on, the Lord has left the meeting house. If people are truly prophets of the Lord, they will be subject to all the other prophets. God does not wish for confusion in a meeting, one person saying one thing, and another something else. We should try to live at peace with all men, even if that means our point of view (which indeed may be the correct one) is not heard properly. Each one of us is answerable to God as an individual, so we must keep what we believe in our hearts, even if we don't have the opportunity to share it with others because of louder, more aggressive men. They are answerable to God for themselves.

Romans 12:18

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

14:34,35 *Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*

This is, sadly today, a controversial issue. It shouldn't be. By women keeping silence, is not meant absolute silence. They should be allowed to sing and pray, for example. They should also be allowed to speak in conversation before and after the meeting. But what we have here is what Paul spoke to Timothy about:

1 Timothy 2:11,12

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

In this passage it is clear that by "silence" is not meant complete silence, but that women should not "usurp authority over the man." In other words, women should not be speaking officially, in a mixed church gathering; rather they should remain silent. As mentioned earlier, there will be plenty of men who will not be able to get their point of view across in a church gathering either, because of forceful, more aggressive men overwhelming the meeting. Just leave it with the Lord. At least the wife can speak to her husband afterwards about what she has on her mind, and they can pray together over any issues raised.

14:36 *What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?*

Does the word of God come from men, or, is it given to men, by God? Of course, the latter. Therefore we should not complain, or argue about any situation, but simply obey the Lord in all things.

14:37,38 *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

So, we think we are a prophet, do we? Or at least, we think we are so spiritual. If we truly are a prophet or a spiritual person, then we must acknowledge that what is written here is from the Lord and obey it. We must not boast in any gift of tongues we may have, or think we may have. We must not do or say anything in the church meeting, unless people would be edified by it. As women, we must keep silence in church. As men, if we can't get our message across properly because of circumstances in the meeting, leave it with the Lord. A true prophet, a truly spiritual person would acknowledge all these things.

14:39,40 *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.*

Here is the sum of the whole matter. If we would covet the best gift, it would be the gift of “*prophecy*,” because that is the one by which most edification would ensue. However, we should not forbid the speaking in tongues altogether, as long as there is an interpretation available, because by all means we want everyone to be edified as a result. Above all, we should do everything one thing at a time, not all together in confusion, never trying to get our six-penneth in, thinking ourselves to be so important. “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*”

11. Conclusion

We should stop trying to blur the lines and think that “*signs and wonders*” are the same as “*spiritual gifts*.” They are completely different. So many people in this world today want excitement. They want to have the

magical ability to heal miraculously, like Christ had. They want to speak with the tongues of angels, to impress their friends. They want to be seen in the church as a great prophet, with direct communication from God, which no other person has, so they can be looked up to and can impress people and gather a following. No.

“*Signs and wonders*” were only available for a time to Christ and His apostles, to ratify His testimony. We don’t need them any more. We’ve been given something completely different (and far more useful), namely, the “*spiritual gifts*.” The true people of God (whoever they are, we can’t discern) have been given a variety of gifts in order to fulfil their own individual callings before God in the world. We must use these responsibly, realise that they are gifts that can be taken away at any time, and make sure that we use them to point to Christ, never to ourselves. Such a person is a true Christian.

III

Marriage

Marriage

Please, please don't be put off by this title! In my experience, every time I have heard a sermon or message on the subject of marriage, it has always been given by a pastor or preacher who is married and who, outwardly at least, seems to have such an idyllic, obedient, perfect family. Indeed, most pastors believe that this is a witness in itself, and completely possible for real Christians to attain unto, if they work hard enough at it. But, I have to disagree. Single people, and those in dysfunctional marriage situations, keep reading!

All I have ever heard from such preachers are very light sermons on how nice, cosy married families (like the pastor's is outwardly) should love and forgive each other, and that's just about all there is in the message. Now, I agree we should love and forgive each other. But the problem I have is that there is nobody in this fallen world who lives in the ideal situation the pastor assumes. Not even the pastor himself, if he's honest. How are we actually supposed to cope in real situations? This is what we need to know.

For example, single people are told, "When you choose your life partner, make sure they are in the Lord." Well, yes, the Bible does teach that it is absolutely vital that true believers should only marry other true believers:

2 Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

I have no problem with this instruction, but what about this part: "*When you choose....*" As if anyone has a choice out of several, or even many. This sort of language is an example of not living in the real world.

Also, singletons, how many times have you heard the pastor say something like, "Some people have the gift of continence" – the implication being that such people can willingly remain single all their lives. Really? The fact is that there are so, so many single people out

there who are longing for a life-partner, and know that they don't have such a "gift of continence." And I would go further and suggest this so-called gift doesn't exist at all. What good is such instruction to them? We need to get away from such idyllic nonsense and face reality.

One of the most common verses mentioned with regards the subject of marriage, is:

Genesis 2:18

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

But this verse applied to the time before the Fall. It doesn't apply to us today, yet it is still one of the most common verses preached upon with regards the subject of marriage. Before the Fall, it was not good that man should be alone, so marriage was ordained and indeed commanded of God in those days, so they may be fruitful and multiply. But not any more.

Similarly, we have instruction with regards our glorified bodies at the end of time:

Luke 20:34

The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Some people think that this teaches us that a celibate life is of higher value than a married life. So they have taken this to mean that they should become monks, nuns or Roman Catholic priests, thinking, wrongly, that by doing so they are putting themselves in a higher, holier state than the riff-raff who gets married. But again, we can't apply these verses to this present evil world – they only apply to our glorified bodies, where we will all be single. So Moonies and others who believe marriage is eternal and lasts beyond death are all wrong too. Marriage is for this world only and ends at death.

I have in the past been puzzled as to why the Lord allows people to marry again after the death of a spouse. I have known of several examples of people who have been married for a very long time, their spouse dies, then within a year, or even less, they marry again. I used to think that the first spouse must be sitting in heaven fuming over this, shouting, “You told me you’d love me for ever!” The fact that the Lord allows remarriage after the death of a spouse proves that in heaven, we will be totally free from any of these emotional entanglements that so easily beset us in this life.

So, if we can’t use the above verses to speak on marriage in this fallen world, what Scriptures can we turn to? Well, in the Old Testament, we have Moses. And what did Moses give us? Divorce. Christ tells us:

Matthew 19:8

Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

So we see that because of the hardness of our hearts, which came about upon all of us as a result of the Fall, the possibility of divorce has entered in.

There is a big split in the church on the subject of divorce and remarriage. I have met people on both sides of the argument. I remember meeting one person who seemed to bring up the subject all the time, arguing vehemently in favour of divorce and remarriage. I found out later – guess what – he was married to a divorcee! Someone who has such an emotional attachment can’t think rationally. I have also met people who are just as vehement against divorce and remarriage, and I can’t help wondering if their marriages have had some incident in them which brought them to think that way. With that position, one spouse can commit adultery a thousand times and the other is bound to have them back. There are also other people who just blindly follow their denomination’s position on the subject.

This brings us to the New Testament. Which two New Testament characters give us all the information we have on marriage? Paul and The Lord Himself. Both were single, with no emotional attachment to anyone (God forbid we should speak of the Lord in that manner). So, married people, don’t dismiss single people who try to help. We should

never think to ourselves that single people know nothing about marriage. They know a lot actually, as they would be able to see things far more rationally than married people ever could, who are emotionally involved in a situation.

The most comprehensive chapter in the New Testament on marriage as it pertains to this present, fallen, evil world is 1 Corinthians 7. It would be a good idea to study this passage very carefully, whatever our situation, because there is just as much instruction for single people here as for married people. I here only really skim the surface and bring out the salient points:

1 Corinthians 7:1,2 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

Here we see that singleness and marriage are completely equal in status in this fallen world. It is good to be single, whereas before the Fall it was not good. But to avoid fornication, marriage of one man to one woman (and no other combination) for life is also good, if a partner should come along in the Lord's providence.

7:3-5 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Here we are, married people, instructions about how to contain and control yourselves within marriage. All good wholesome instruction.

7:6-9 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

This seems to imply that singleness is a better state than marriage, but this is not so. Paul is stressing that every man has his proper gift from God. Unmarried people, it is better off to stay unmarried because of the present distress (i.e. this fallen, evil world). Paul expounds this more later. But if we have a partner and cannot contain, there is no advantage in staying single in such an instance. Our lack of being able to contain will get in the way of the work the Lord has for us to do. In this case, we must get married and give each other their due benevolence.

7:10-16 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Here are vital instructions for those who are in a marriage where one partner is a true believer and the other is not. This would never have been the case before the Fall, it is a peculiar situation pertaining to a fallen world. This situation may have come about by various means. We are taught to only marry in the Lord, but we cannot see the heart, and people will make mistakes. Many will get involved with someone who is an unbeliever and think they can convert them by preaching the gospel to them. It doesn't work. Others will genuinely think their partner is born again, because they are zealous in the church and so on, only to find out later, after they have married, that their seemingly zealous partner gives up going to church altogether. I have seen many such situations in the church. We should never get so emotionally involved that we can't see rationally and cease to be able to get out before it is too late.

But the most common way we end up in unequally yoked marriages is if two people got married while they were unbelievers, and subsequently one is converted. What to do in such a circumstance? Here we have the answer. Continue in the marriage. Let our light so shine before our partner that he or she may come to a true knowledge of Christ for themselves. Only God can convert the heart, but we could very well be the instrument He uses.

But if the unbeliever can't stand living with a Christian and leaves and wants a divorce, then we must let them go. This is where divorce for wilful desertion comes from, but note it is only the unbeliever who can do this, the believer's responsibility is to keep the marriage going if at all possible, so that in the divorce the believer will come out as the innocent party. The Christian is never to instigate a divorce. If, however, they are being abused in any way, get out. Don't go back to an abusive situation. The Christian is called not to divorce, but they can separate if they have to. Note v.11 "*But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.*" If an unbelieving partner subsequently goes on to commit adultery, the believer is then free to sue out a divorce themselves anyway, as other Scriptures teach.

It is also possible to extend this example a little. What about marriages where one partner is more zealous for the Lord than the other? Surely this is a very common situation, in fact every marriage is included here! Again, this situation would never have existed before the Fall, but in a fallen world, everything is dysfunctional, including every marriage to a greater or lesser extent. So that pastor, who has an outwardly idyllic marriage and family, who gives us such sweet sermons on what an ideal marriage we can have if only we listen to him; even he has something dysfunctional about his situation. We don't know what goes on behind the manse doors after all the congregation have left and the cheesy grins have been discarded.

vv.17-24 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou

mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

When we are converted, we come from all sorts of different backgrounds. Some are servants, some free. Some are Jews, others Gentiles. Some are married, some single. Whatever lawful calling we are in, we are not to just give it all up now we've become a Christian. If we were in an unlawful calling before conversion, then we must give it up. Maybe we were a prostitute, or worked in a betting shop. Yes, we would have to give all wicked things up, but every lawful calling we must carry on with, unless the Lord later on in our walk with Him calls us elsewhere. This is important. So many people, upon becoming a Christian, give up their "secular" jobs to "go into full time Christian work." As if a "secular" job is second rate. No it's not. It's just the same with our marriages. Buddha was a wicked evil man. He dumped his wife and family to "seek enlightenment." What a terrible thing to do! Whatever position we are in, we are not to leave it or change it in any way as long as it is lawful. Stay married to that horrible, selfish man. This might sound hard, but everyone under the sun has some sort of difficult situation they have to confront. It is a fallen world. We have to come to terms with that. Yes, some people will always have a better situation than others, but we are not to get jealous of anyone else. If we are truly the Lord's, He has ordained whatever position we are in, for our benefit, and He will look after us and keep us in it.

7:25-31 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

So, are we single? We should seek not a wife. Don't go hunting. Of course, if one comes along in the Lord's providence, all well and good, but we should not go actively, aggressively seeking for a partner. It's not worth it. Single people, please understand that marriage in this fallen world is not the idyllic thing it is cracked up to be, because of the Fall. I know plenty of people who have got married, and then find it was not the wonderful thing they imagined at all. For example, maybe children come along, and the husband has to work long hours and is never at home, while the wife is at home all the time from morning till night with several screaming babies to take care of and no-one to help and no time off to think for herself. Single people, remember this! Do we really want to be burdened in this way? Married people know all this, they've learned it the hard way, but in whatever situation you find ourselves in, we shouldn't seek to be loosed from our marriages either. Remember:

Psalm 127:3

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

Whatever estate we are in, the Lord has put us there. So we should trust in the Lord and be thankful.

7:32-35 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

This again seems to imply that single people are in a better estate than married, because it states specifically that single people care for the things of the Lord and married people for the things of this world. But this still doesn't imply one is better than the other. Both have their own peculiar miseries. Single people long for companionship in this world, but look at the extra time they've been given to care for the things of the Lord. Married people are burdened and have very little time for Bible study or prayer, but look at the privileges they have in this world.

They have the human companionship the single person craves, and maybe they have children the Lord has given them to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What a privilege! The text is simply telling us that the Lord has given married people more responsibilities in this world.

7:36-40 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless be that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better. The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

These last few verses seem again to strongly imply that the single life is better. But really it's not saying that. Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God and we need to see them as such. There are so many single people out there who long to get married, so much so that it's affecting their lives to a great extent. Hence Paul needs to give this special instruction to them. Think of a secular example. Say we are in the middle of a war and we need to flee quickly. A single person can just get up and go, whereas a person with a wife and family, can't just leave them, he is responsible for their safety as well as his own. He can flee, but he would be a lot slower than someone with none of these responsibilities in this world. So a single person has many advantages. Friend, seek not a wife. If one comes along, good, praise the Lord, but because of the present distress, please, please don't worry about it. Maybe we'll never get married. That's a hard truth, isn't it? But it may be the sober truth in this fallen, dysfunctional world. I know we don't want to hear that, but, I'm sorry, it may, sadly, be true. However, the single person has such an advantage. They are not at all being left out by the Lord, even when seemingly idyllically married pastors give endless sermons which are totally irrelevant to them.

Matthew 19:12

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which

have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

This is the one chapter in the Bible where we have all the information we need with regards marriage and singleness. Let's trust in the Lord, whatever situation we're in, and He will guide us in the right way.

Arranged Marriages

Let's get things straight from the beginning, We should never decide who to marry by seeing if we "fall in love" first. That's the way of the world. Our feelings are fickle. If we are to have a life partner at all, we must trust in the Lord's guidance, just as in every other decision we have to make. In fact, in the Bible, most marriages were arranged by the family. This is the complete opposite of the way of the world. In fact, the world is actively against such a position. However, the Bible tells us that the Christian could never accept an unbeliever as a marriage partner. So if we have unbelieving parents, whether they believe in arranged marriages or not, in practice, we only have the Lord to trust in to arrange our marriage anyway.

Choosing a wife by oneself is sin:

Genesis 6:2

The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

In this verse the "sons of God" are the believers, who chose wrongly, because they chose the "daughters of men," who were the unbelievers.

Genesis chapter 24 is the story of Isaac meeting Rebekah.

Genesis 24:1-4

And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Arranged marriages are the normal way for believers. Abraham didn't want Isaac to meet and marry a Canaanite, so he sent his servant away to his own kindred to find Isaac a wife. Notice, he didn't send Isaac

away, because the temptation would then be for him to stay there, as indeed Jacob, Isaac's son, later did for twenty years.

Genesis 24:61-67

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Rebekah knew in the Lord's providence that it was right to marry Isaac even before she had ever set eyes on him. That's trusting in the Lord.

And then there's Joseph:

Genesis 41:45

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

In this case, Pharaoh arranged Joseph's marriage for him, as Joseph's owner.

And then we've got Samson, who decided for himself to get a wife from the Philistines:

Judges 14:1-3

And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

It is the father's duty to get partners for their children, not the children's duty to go out and find anyone they fancy on their own. We see the folly of this in another example:

Judges 21:18-25

Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance. In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Here we see that arranged marriages are the correct means we should use to meet a possible partner. “*Taking them wives*” at dances is NOT the correct means of meeting anyone.

In any case, what about our sinful natures? We all have a sinful nature. If someone thinks very highly of us, how can we have a proper view of our own sinfulness, when we are being confronted every day by our spouse telling us that they love us because we're loveable? God loves us without finding anything loveable in us at all. We find that impossible to do with each other – we always have to find something to love in a person before we can love them in return, especially before we marry them. This leads to the conundrum that we end up seeing something in a person that God does not see. That can't be right. So “falling in love” cannot be the right way to go about things. Having too high a regard for someone is at the very least denying our sinful natures, which is believing a lie, and against the ninth Commandment (Exodus 20:16), or

at worst is blatant, overt idolatry, against the first Commandment (Exodus 20:3). Either way, it is truly and properly sin.

The Westminster Catechisms include in sins forbidden under the first Commandment:

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q.47

....the denying or not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone....

Westminster Larger Catechism Q.105

....setting our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from Him in whole or in part....

Also, if someone thought too highly of me, I couldn't in all good conscience just sit back and lap it all up, much as my carnal nature would enjoy doing so. I would have to tell them that I'm not really like that. This would be purely for the sake of honesty and truth.

And then, "falling in love" the world's way, usually involves having some form of intimacy with someone before marriage to somehow determine whether that person is the one we should marry or not. This must all be wrong, because, if we come to the conclusion that it is NOT the person we should marry, we have just been intimate with someone else's future wife, which would be against the seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:14).

In Genesis 3:16, God says to the woman, "*thy desire shall be to thy husband*":

Genesis 3:16

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Most commentaries take this to mean a wife's simple subjection to her husband; but that's a creation ordinance anyway, not a specific punishment for sin (which is what this passage is talking about). Many commentaries do say that it means an *inordinate* subjection here, a

subjection with rigour, which I can understand, but I can't help thinking there is also an element of *inordinate desire* for her husband too, i.e. a putting him too highly than she ought, and being enslaved by her feelings for him. This is against the first Commandment, a sore bondage, and, what's more, a result of the Fall. This is not the Christian way of doing things. We should not follow the world.

Rather the Biblical way is to use the tools God has given us for the normal way of guidance in everything else – i.e. the Bible, providence and prayer. The Bible tells us what sin is, so we can avoid it; providence and prayer determine all other ways not sinful. This is exactly the same method we use when we look for a job or every other major decision we have to make in life. God's will in the whole thing should be paramount.

There are several Biblical examples of powerful feelings of hatred after powerful feelings of so-called "love." This must prove to us beyond doubt that reliance on feelings is NOT the way to decide on who to marry:

2 Samuel 13:15

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

Jeremiah 4:30

And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clovest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

Ezekiel 16:37

Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

Ezekiel 23:17,22,28

And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from

them. Therefore, O Abolibab, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated.

Nahum 3:6

And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

Revelation 17:16

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

Divorce and Remarriage

1. Introduction

The subject of divorce and remarriage is always a very emotive one, especially as people who take sides on the issue are usually themselves personally involved in some way, with their feelings or emotions completely clouding their view so that they cannot make a rational judgment. It is significant that all the Biblical instruction we have to go by on this matter comes from single men, i.e. Christ and Paul, who could proclaim the truth clearly, without any accusation of being biased or involved in any way.

We need to instil into people their responsibilities before God with regards their marriages. Marriage is never to be entered into lightly, and it is the duty of the church to instruct young people properly. All too easily today the church just sits back and allows two people to get married who “feel” like doing so, with no instruction whatsoever. It is a terrible indictment on all the churches when they are seen to follow the masses and believe that feelings are paramount. They aren’t. God’s guidance is..

2. Church traditions

Although divorce is not referred to a great deal in the early church fathers, it appears that almost all of them rejected even the idea of divorce, let alone remarriage. It is argued that because this is the view of the early church, then this must therefore be the true interpretation of biblical thought on the matter. However, it is well known that the early church fathers were clearly wrong on many other issues, so other factors could have influenced them in their views on this subject. It is certainly *not* true to say (as we have heard it said) that the “orthodox” view for 1400 years has been to ban remarriage after divorce, as some people would argue. Even if this was the case, since when has the majority always been right? Ask Athanasius or Martin Luther.

Some of the early church fathers did indeed question this position. Origen allowed divorce and remarriage to avoid worse sin, and Jerome defended a woman who divorced her husband because of his adultery, and married another. Augustine, on the other hand, believed that marriage was indissoluble, and that there was at least a moral obligation that it should not be dissolved. It appears, however, that the Eastern Orthodox churches began to allow divorce and remarriage for a variety of reasons from the sixth century onwards.

The Roman Catholic church turned the institution of marriage into a sacrament. This put it on a par with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is not at all biblical to think of marriage in this way as it is not merely something only for the church (as the other two sacraments are), but a creation ordinance binding on all men. The Roman church sees marriage as a union between two people for life, which no man can put asunder. To them, even divorce or separation cannot break this bond, and hence they do not sanction the remarriage of anyone while their spouse is still alive. Under canon law, however, a judicial annulment might be obtained. This does not mean that the marriage bond is broken, but it is rather a declaration that the marriage never existed. This is their "get-out clause," if you like. Other cases have shown that people could obtain separation from "bed and board" but, again, the separated parties were not allowed to remarry.

This idea that separation and divorce can never break the marriage bond is also the view of the Anglican church, at least officially, some of the stricter Anabaptist groups and the Protestant Reformed Churches of America (PRC) (although, interestingly, the PRC only adopted this view as their leader Herman Hoeksema embraced it himself in the 1930's¹). None of these groups would see marriage as a sacrament as the Roman church would, and most would see divorce (which they would equate with legalised separation) as legitimate, but only for adultery – neither party being eligible to remarry, as they would still be considered by the church as being "married" to their original partner until that original partner dies. There has however been plenty of opposition to this, in the Anglican church particularly. For example, Archbishop Cranmer proposed a revision of the canon law (which was never carried out) that would have included divorce for adultery, malicious desertion, prolonged absence without news, attempts against the partner's life and cruelty².

This was in line with the Reformers generally, who allowed divorce and remarriage under various circumstances. However, how much of this was due to an over-reaction against the Romanist idea of marriage being a sacrament is very difficult to determine. Not that much literature was actually written on this subject by the Reformers, presumably because there were far more important things to write about and defend in the heat of the situation that existed at the time.

We know that the early Reformed Confessions of Faith of Saxony (1551) and Wirttemberg (1552) both mention the subject of divorce and remarriage, and both agree on remarriage after divorce for the “innocent party.”³ John Calvin was also of this mind. In criticising the abuses of the Roman church he says, “*Moreover, they frame degrees of kindred contrary to the laws of all nations, and even the polity of Moses, and enact that a husband who has repudiated an adulteress may not marry again.*”⁴ Note here that he saw Moses as teaching divorce and remarriage in such circumstances.

In 1560 in Scotland (the year of John Knox’s reformation there), kirk sessions began to grant divorces, but in 1563 the Commissary Court was established in Edinburgh with jurisdiction over all Scotland in questions of marriage and divorce. From this court there was an appeal to the Court of Session, both these courts being civil courts. In 1573 an act was passed declaring that if either husband or wife deserted the other for four years without reasonable cause, and refused to return to co-habitation, this should be grounds for divorce. After that, divorce in Scotland was granted on proof of adultery or desertion of either spouse.⁵

The last hundred years particularly has seen a great increase in the number of divorces. It is now thought of as a fact of life that divorce must be allowed for any and every cause, otherwise we are limiting people’s personal freedom too much, which, according to modern psychology, is the greatest evil. No longer is principle an issue, just as no longer do people believe in an objective truth, or an objective morality, i.e. an absolute right and wrong. The world needs to know once more that God is in the heavens, that there is an absolute right and wrong and that we shall all be accountable for every word we speak and every thought we think. Feelings will mean nothing in that day,

rather, absolute truth and absolute righteousness will be the sole criteria God will use for judging every one of us.

1 Prof. Herman Hanko, “For Thy Truth’s Sake” (Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000) pp.382ff.

2 ed. Walter Elwell, “Evangelical Dictionary of Theology” (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1984).

3 ed. Peter Hall, “The Harmony of the Protestant Confessions” (Still Waters Revival Books, Edmonton, 1992) pp.461,468.

4 John Calvin, “Institutes of the Christian Religion” Book IV, Ch.19, para.37.

5 ed. N. Cameron, “Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology” (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993).

3. Westminster Confession of Faith

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) is a distillation of the most important doctrines of Scripture made by one of the best conferences of Christian men that have ever existed together in one era, and, although only a human document, it can still be used to help formulate the biblical position on the subject. The two articles in question in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with their proof texts, are as follows (Chapter 24):

V. Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract.^a In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce:^b and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.^c

VI. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case.^e

a Matthew 1:18-20.

b Matthew 5:31,32.

c Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2,3.

d Matthew 19:8,9; 1 Corinthians 7:15; Matthew 19:6.

e Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

It is interesting to note at this point that neither the Savoy Declaration of 1658 nor the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 contain these two paragraphs, even though they contain the other four paragraphs on marriage from the Westminster Confession of Faith word for word. This seems to indicate that there was at least some kind of issue with regards these paragraphs at that time. This might have been over the content of the paragraphs themselves, some people may have been wanting to tighten up a seemingly liberal view. However, it could also be possible that the dispute was simply about whether the subject of divorce and remarriage was a suitable subject for inclusion in a Confession of Faith at all, or whether it is more a case for inclusion in the Church Order instead, or indeed even left to the civil courts to legislate over.

Now, let us have a look at the teaching itself.

From these two paragraphs we see, firstly, that an actual act of adultery or fornication in and of itself does not break the marriage bond. All the Confession states is that it allows the innocent party to dissolve that contract, if they so wish. If they wish reconciliation instead, that's fine.

However, it is assumed by holders of the Anglican/PRC position that if the contract is dissolved, then both parties would be free to marry again. And this is consequently seen by them as an easy route to take for anyone who is simply bored with their spouse. All they have to do is commit adultery, then the innocent party can sue out a divorce and the guilty party can go off and marry someone else anyway. Contrary to such an opinion, this is not the Westminster Confession position at all. The Confession does not explicitly state the position of the guilty party in any of this. However, it does state the position of the innocent party, i.e. that they are free *“to sue out a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.”* Now if both parties were allowed to remarry after the contract had been dissolved, why on earth does the Confession only mention the innocent party? Why not mention that both are free to remarry? I suggest that it is because the guilty party *is not free to do so*. The proponents of the Anglican/PRC view are quick to assume that in this view the guilty party is free to remarry because the contract has been dissolved, but nowhere does the Confession teach that. Rather the guilty party is under the ban of the church from remarriage.

This is the position of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. There is nothing in their Church Order about this. Maybe when it was written they thought the Confession to be clear enough. However, their magazine has addressed the issue. In the February 1996 issue of the Free Presbyterian Magazine, for example, referring to the divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales, we read: “*Given the confessed adultery of both parties, we do not object to the divorce, though it would be unscriptural for either of them to remarry.*” (This was written before the death of the Princess of Wales). Now, if the Anglican/PRC criticism about the Westminster position is true, this divorce *would* free them both up to remarry, hence we can only conclude that they would both be under the ban of the church (and the state in an ideal world) to remarry, by reason of them both being guilty parties. This is, after all, no different from the Anglican/PRC view, except for the fact that the Anglican/PRC view would extend the ban on remarriage to the innocent party as well. Remarriage of the guilty party is not an option in either view.

4. Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:32

The scriptural ground for the Westminster position is based (amongst other scriptures) on Matthew 19:9:

Matthew 19:9

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

The first half of this verse tells us:

(1.) Anyone putting away his wife for anything other than “*fornication*,” i.e. NOT for a valid reason (i.e. she is NOT a guilty party), commits adultery if he marries another, because technically he is still married to his first wife as the divorce is for an invalid reason, and therefore should not be recognised.

(2.) The presence of the exception clause then clearly infers by good and necessary consequence that anyone putting away his wife FOR “*fornication*,” i.e. FOR a valid reason (i.e. she IS a guilty party), does NOT commit adultery if he marries again, as he is the innocent party.

The second half of the verse tells us that anyone marrying her that is put away commits adultery because:

(1.) If it was NOT for a valid reason (i.e. “*fornication*”), she would still technically be married to her first husband.

(2.) If it was FOR a valid reason, she is the guilty party and therefore under a ban from remarrying, so if she does marry again it would be classed as adultery.

With regards Matthew 5:32, the first half of the verse is different:

Matthew 5:32

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.

In this case:

(1.) If the putting away was NOT for a valid reason, it would cause the wife to commit adultery (if she married again) because she would still technically be married to her first husband.

(2.) If the putting away was FOR a valid reason, using the same logic as above, we conclude that this does NOT cause her to commit adultery – which it doesn’t as such, as the putting away does not cause the adultery because adultery has already occurred. The adultery causes the putting away. This shows that there is no blame attached to the man if he was to put her away for a valid reason (and indeed remarry, although remarriage isn’t really the issue here). He is not **causing** her to commit adultery (if she should marry again) as he would be if the divorce was on invalid grounds; it would be her own sin alone if she remarried, and he would not be culpable in this case, as he would have been in the case of divorce for an invalid reason.

It has been pointed out that other similar verses appear without the exception clause, i.e. in Mark 10:11,12 and Luke 16:18. But these instances are simply giving the normal position i.e. no divorce “*for every cause,*” as the Pharisees had wanted to be the case. “*Fornication*” is the exception rather than the rule.

Some people argue that because the exception clause is where it is in the sentence, then it must only apply to the divorce and not the remarriage. However, to believe that changing the sentence order around would make a difference is not true. Any other way would make the passage grammatically awkward to say the least. “Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, except it be for fornication, committeth adultery” is very bad grammar. The exception clause applies primarily to the divorce, and the “committeth adultery” clause applies primarily to the remarriage, hence the sentence is naturally structured to reflect this.

Now, how long does a guilty party remain under this ban of remarriage? There are three possibilities:

- (1.) Until the death of the individual guilty party themselves.
- (2.) Until the death of the divorced spouse (e.g. Diana, in the case of Prince Charles).
- (3.) Until a credible profession of repentance on the part of the guilty party (if ever).

Position (3.) is the most common one taken in a vast majority of churches today. The argument goes that as we are indeed to forgive others upon a credible profession of repentance in our everyday lives, then this should be the case here. However, one can easily see the large loophole that this position opens up, in that the more liberal ministers and churches could just ignore the ban on the guilty party completely and allow remarriage anyway. It is this interpretation that people are reacting against when they criticise the position of the Westminster Confession.

Position (2.) is the correct one (this would agree with the Anglican/PRC view in fact). An article in the Free Presbyterian Magazine for March 2005 states: “*Mrs Parker-Bowles is now divorced but her former husband is still alive. Obviously Prince Charles is now free to remarry as his wife is dead, but his fiancée is not free to do so, and so the proposed marriage will not be scriptural.*” (This assumes that Mrs Parker-Bowles was not an innocent party in her divorce). So this is a very simple rule of thumb that we have. The Westminster Confession states that the innocent party is to be treated “*as if the offending party were dead,*” so we can at least strongly imply (although technically it is not a necessary implication) that the

guilty party is to be treated *as if they were still married*, in which case the guilty party may not remarry until their original spouse dies – even if that spouse has lawfully divorced and remarried someone else in the meantime.

It might be objected that God would never allow anyone to be in a position whereby they have to live “*as if*” something, when that something is not the case in reality. However, we do have Biblical precedent for this, albeit in a slightly different context:

2 Samuel 20:3

And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

Here we have David putting away ten of his concubines. Although this refers to divorce after polygamy, the thing to note here is that Scripture describes them after having been put away as “*living in widowhood*,” in other words “*as if*” their husband was dead (which David was not). So we cannot dismiss this idea as readily as some people would like us to do.

5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

In Deuteronomy 22, we have a series of situations with regards various related subjects and how to deal with them practically:

- (1.) vv.13-21 - a man whose new wife cannot prove her virginity.
- (2.) v.22 - adultery with a married person (see also Leviticus 20:10).
- (3.) vv.23-27 - adultery with a betrothed person.
- (4.) vv.28,29 - fornication before marriage.

In the first three cases the penalty if found guilty is stoning to death. The promoters of the Anglican/PRC view are quick to insist that this was the penalty in the Old Testament for adultery, so divorce was not an issue, but (a.) why then is it that Moses allows divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1? And (b.) why then is it that Joseph, spoken of as a “*just*” man, sought to divorce Mary after he found Mary with child in

Matthew 1:19? Surely, if he was a “*just*” man, as the text says, he would have sought to get her stoned to death. We see here in fact that Joseph had a choice, either to “*make her a publick example*” (which was stoning to death, after a fair trial by the public authorities), or to “*put her away privily,*” in other words, divorce. The Old Testament law always allowed the choice.

Note, in the fourth case above (4.), that the penalty for fornication where no married person is involved is *not* stoning. The greater penalty of stoning for crimes involving at least one married party, shows the seriousness with which a crime against the ordinance of marriage should be held.

In case (1.), the penalty for the man if found wrong about questioning his wife’s virginity, is that he may “*not put her away all his days*” (v.19). Note he is guilty of a crime, but not of adultery, rather the crime of giving a virgin in Israel a bad name. So stoning is not a suitable penalty for him, rather he is fined an hundred shekels of silver (payable to the father of his bride) and never allowed to divorce her as long as he lives. In case (4.), the penalty for the fornicator who lies with a virgin not betrothed is similar. He has technically not committed adultery as such (i.e. no married person is involved in the crime) and so is not stoned, but is fined 50 shekels of silver, and not allowed to divorce her as long as she lives. It seems here that he is forced to marry her, and on the face of it, it looks like a rapist is being forced to marry his victim, which seems rather unfair to say the least. However, comparing this passage with Exodus 22:16,17, we see that there was a way out of forcing the poor woman to marry if she did not want to:

Exodus 22:16,17

If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

So a fine (payable to the father) could be imposed instead. The main point here is that in these two cases we have a specific statement that divorce would not be allowed all the man’s days, i.e. this is *a ban placed on a guilty party*. So the idea of the church being able to place a ban of some kind on one party and not the other has a scriptural precedent. In this case it is a ban on divorce, in our case in question it is a ban on remarriage for a divorced guilty party.

Note also, in cases (2.) and (3.) above, that the penalty for adultery with a married person is the same as the penalty for adultery with a betrothed person, i.e. stoning to death. Also, the parties in a betrothal are referred to with words such as “*husband*,” “*wife*” and “*married*” (see also Matthew 1:19). Hence we see that betrothal is treated in exactly the same way as marriage, the only difference between the two being that the parties have not yet officially signed a legal, public document or come into sexual union. This is interesting because some people argue (and many Strict Baptists argue this way) that the exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 deliberately use the word “*fornication*” not “*adultery*” because, they say, it only applies to betrothal, and betrothal is the only state, in their view, from which one can get a legitimate divorce. But we see that the Bible makes no such distinction between betrothal and marriage with regards these things. Betrothal is not a “halfway house,” it is marriage in everything but the final contract being signed and the sexual union. In fact, in cases (1.) and (4.), not having divorce available to the guilty party after marriage is a penalty, not the normal position. The word “*fornication*” is used, not to provide a special case to refer to betrothal only, but to include many more sinful practices than just adultery, including sodomy (Jude 7), incest (1 Corinthians 5:1), and uncleanness with single or married people (1 Corinthians 10:8). Does this include something “minor” (in the world’s eyes), like finding a pornographic magazine in one’s spouse’s possession? Yes, indeed it does:

Matthew 5:28

Anyone who looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

But, as with any sin, we can’t legislate against thoughts alone; only when hard evidence comes to light can we go ahead and do something about it. Possession of a magazine of this nature could be used as that evidence, the only problem being that it might be difficult to prove this in a divorce court, as it would be difficult to produce witnesses, or proof that it hadn’t been planted on the person without their knowledge and so on, but technically, yes, it is hard evidence of fornication and therefore could be used as just grounds for a lawful divorce.

Sexual union is the final stage in a marriage union, but it is not the whole of the marriage. Betrothal was equally as important, being everything else to do with marriage except for the final contract being signed and this union – i.e. it was a public, witnessed statement of intent to marry (and stay together), and public declaration of consent between both parties (Genesis 24:5-8; Genesis 24:57-58) and their parents (Genesis 34:4-6). All of these are necessary for a marriage to be declared valid. A marriage is not just sexual union alone, as can be witnessed by the woman of Samaria in John 4 who had five husbands, and the one she now had was not her husband (John 4:18). To have someone who is not her husband implies there is more to marriage than just sexual union, i.e. a public, official, recorded declaration of some kind must be entered into for the marriage to be valid.

6. Wilful Desertion

“*Wilful desertion,*” according to the Westminster Confession, is also legitimate grounds for divorce. Again, proponents of the Anglican/PRC view think this also makes the Westminster Confession view a very “low” view of marriage, but the Confession is very careful. Firstly the main proof text is 1 Corinthians 7:15:

1 Corinthians 7:15

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

This only ever applies to an unbeliever wilfully deserting. Believers would not have this option. Then the divorce is not in the hands of the couple to just “decide” to do it. Only “*such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage.... and the persons concerned in it are not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case.*” If found guilty, the deserter would be under the same ban of remarriage as if he had committed adultery, so again we have a suitable deterrent from doing such a thing. All this is a far cry from the easy divorce that the Anglican/PRC view would have us believe the Westminster view entails.

1 Corinthians 7:14

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

In this scenario of marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, the believer is not to try to get out of the marriage, as it is still a legitimate one, bringing forth “*holy*” seed indeed. So if the unbeliever is pleased to dwell with the believer then they should do so. However, if the unbeliever departs (v.15) then he or she should be permitted to leave. The word for “*depart*” here and in vv.10-11 is the Greek word “*chorizo*,” which literally means “*separate*.” Divorce is a completely different word, “*apolo*.” This is used by some people to suggest that this passage is not talking about divorce at all. This is not the case however, as the word “*chorizo*” is the same word used for “*put asunder*” in Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9 – verses clearly talking of divorce.

This is also implied purely from vv. 12 and 13 alone:

1 Corinthians 7:12,13

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

These verses state that if the unbeliever be pleased to dwell with the believer then let them **not** be put away. This clearly at least **implies** that if the unbeliever is **not** pleased to dwell with the believer, then this would be a valid reason to put him/her away (i.e. divorce).

A person whose unbelieving spouse has wilfully deserted them, can therefore legitimately sue out a divorce, but this can only be done after the church has officially declared the deserter an unbeliever, i.e. “*as an heathen man and a publican*”:

Matthew 18:17

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

This would need to be done, because the duty of the believer otherwise would be to stay single or be reconciled to the spouse as described in

vv.10-11. An unbeliever outwardly proves himself to be an unbeliever by refusing to listen to the church warning him, and his subsequent excommunication – the church has no way of knowing or declaring him an unbeliever otherwise.

It is never up to either party's will that the divorce goes ahead, it needs to be granted by the authorities. This is totally different to the divorce-on-demand mentality of today. The “*wilful desertion*” clause in the Westminster Confession, gives the church the power to divorce people, without it having to be for adultery, in exceptional cases, when an unbeliever insists on leaving. The deserted party would then be treated as a divorced innocent party and allowed to marry again, and the unbeliever who has departed as a divorced guilty party, under the ban of the church from remarriage.

What happens if the unbeliever, upon departure, insists on applying for a divorce themselves? They can't have one, as the innocent party has done nothing wrong to warrant it.

7. Highest View of Marriage

It seems that the holders of the Anglican/PRC view tend to think of Westminster Confession people as having a very “low” view of marriage and they a very “high” one, whereas we would suggest it is the other way around. In the Anglican/PRC view, a man can commit adultery a thousand times, and his wife could do nothing about it and would be duty bound to have the cad back (the only other alternative being some kind of separation with no possibility of remarriage until the death of one of them, but even then they would still believe it is their *duty* to have them back if at all possible). The Westminster Confession position on the other hand is that if one of the parties commits adultery once, the innocent spouse can (if they so wish) sue out a divorce straight away, kick the wicked adulterer out of the house, and put them under the ban of church from ever marrying again. *That* is a high view of marriage. That would make anyone think twice about adultery.

8. Objections Considered

(1.) Does this not make adultery the unforgivable sin? No. All it does is force on someone a ban on remarriage. This is not lifted even on a credible profession of repentance. The person has to live with this ban upon them until the death of the original spouse. We all have consequences of sin to live with. Maybe we used to be a bank robber and trapped our hand in a safe door, maiming it for life whilst in the process of robbing a bank. We could subsequently be truly converted and become a member of a church, but we still have to live with a maimed hand, gained as the result of our sin, for the rest of our lives. The same applies if in our unregenerate state we may have covered ourselves with tattoos etc. The same also applies if we were a guilty party in a divorce. We could truly repent, and be accepted (back) into the church, but we would still be under a ban of remarriage until the death of the original spouse. Being a “*divorced guilty party*” is a **declared state**, like being “*single*,” or being “*married*” or being a “*divorced innocent party*.” It is not a **sin** as such, so repentance is not able to extricate anyone from such a state (albeit it is the consequence of sin).

(2.) What happens if a “*divorced guilty party*” remarries while the original spouse is still alive, either in a state ceremony, or in a ceremony in another church with laxer views than that expounded here? The church should not recognise any marriage unless it is in keeping with its own laws. So, in the above example, the new partnership is unlawful in the eyes of the church, and the parties would not be recognised by the church as being married, but rather as living in adultery. The church can only recognise biblically **valid** marriages, divorces and remarriages, not **invalid** ones entered into via the state or other laxer body that allows such things. So long as a certificate of marriage is signed and records are lodged after a public declaration, any valid marriage is deemed lawful by the church, even if it took place outside of the church itself. But unbiblical (i.e. invalid) marriages are not to be recognised by the church, e.g. in cases of polygamy, same sex couples, remarriages after invalid divorce etc. We are quite happy to say “No” to same sex marriages, so why are we not as forthright in condemning marriages of divorced guilty parties?

This again is the position of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, as stated in a “*Protest re Family Law (Scotland) Bill 2005*” sent to the Scottish Parliament, which includes the following: “*The Synod further protests the right and privilege of the Church to consider those aspects of this law which are at variance with Scripture teaching on marriage and divorce, as defined in the 24th chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as unlawful for the purposes of ecclesiastical and spiritual jurisdiction.*”

(3.) What if the spouse is no longer traceable? How do we know when they are dead, and so when the guilty party is eligible to remarry? It is not likely that this would occur in this modern age of record keeping. However, if the person *admits* to being a guilty party, we must try to trace the spouse by whatever means possible. If we fail to do this, they must, on their own admission, not be allowed to remarry until the death of the spouse can be proved. The death of the spouse must be proved before the ban can be lifted. If they lie, and *do not admit* to being a guilty party when in reality they are, and no record is available to say that they are, the church must treat them as it would an unknown polygamist. If a polygamist comes forward for marriage in the church, and the church is unaware of their being married to another person, the church must accept a credible profession, and admit them not only into the church, but indeed to marriage. Banns are read in church, and records investigated, but if nothing comes to light they should be allowed to marry with the church’s blessing. If, subsequently, the church finds out that they were a polygamist, or a divorced guilty party, (i.e. already had a spouse, or was “*as if*” they had a spouse), then the remarriage would have to be immediately declared unlawful, the church must then insist that the partners cease living together (otherwise it would be adultery), and the guilty party disciplined accordingly.

9. Conclusion

The correct position on divorce and remarriage, therefore, is that a guilty party after divorce is put under a church ban of remarriage for the rest of the lifetime of the original spouse, “*as if*” they were still married, even though the marriage contract has been dissolved by the divorce, and maybe the innocent party has married someone else.

Any other position than this, either on the one hand brings undue suffering to the innocent party by not allowing them to remarry when they have done nothing wrong; or on the other hand allows marriage of the guilty party in through the back door, and creates all kinds of difficult situations in the church, as indeed does every case of not disciplining sin after the biblical manner.

IV

Understanding the Future

Understanding Future Events

In the years I have spent in various different churches, there has always been something in the back of my mind annoying me, which stops me from getting more involved with the church than I could be. That “something” was the fact that the church I was in had a view on future events. Let me explain what I mean.

A while ago, I went to a regional Missionary Conference organised by the local Brethren assemblies. It was excellent. It was so encouraging to listen to missionary reports from various countries, to hear about the number of people being converted, and the many congregations being established throughout the world. At the end of the conference, one of the missionaries gave a rousing call for us all to get involved with missionary work, and it certainly moved my heart to want to get involved. However, in the second to last sentence of his speech, he just happened to mention, in passing, the “Rapture,” and my heart sank. They are doing such a good work planting all these congregations, yet when the congregations are established, they are teaching the people their particular view of future events. What a disappointment.

I want to make it clear straight away that, here, I’m not trying to conclude which scheme of future events is right or wrong. Neither am I here wanting to force my own personal view on anybody. In return, I don’t like other people trying to force their views on me. But churches do. Many churches have a fixed view on future events, a view that is taught dogmatically from their pulpits, which, if you don’t believe it, they’ll still accept you as a member, but you’ll be pretty much sidelined, as I felt in all the churches that I was in that did this.

In my life, I have been a member of three different churches. Each had their own particular view on future events. In my case, these churches were the Brethren (who teach Premillennial Dispensationalism), the Evangelical Movement of Wales (who teach Amillennialism) and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (who teach Postmillennialism). It doesn’t matter if we aren’t familiar with these schemes, just to say that they are all different and mutually exclusive. In two of these churches (Brethren and Free Presbyterians) I specifically told them that I did not

agree with their view on future events before becoming a member, and they still allowed me into membership. Which was fine, except that the implicit understanding between us was that I would have to put up with the official teaching of the church, and that no-one, including myself, would ever be allowed to rock the boat in any way, by criticising their view or teaching any other view to others in the church.

This is so sad. It meant that I couldn't fully put my heart and soul into the work of any of these churches. Yes, we evangelise. Yes, we have good Biblical preaching. Yes, we bring people into the church. But then they're taught one particular view of future events. Whatever view is taught, it may or may not be correct. None of us will ever know for sure, until the events actually happen anyway. I find it so frustrating that, in whatever church we're in, we all have to put up with dogmatic, unnecessary teaching on such a subject.

We have two extremes to avoid. We have a Biblical warning about being too dogmatic on this subject in the attitude of the Pharisees with regards the first coming of Christ. They were the Bible scholars of the day. They thought they knew exactly what their future Messiah would be like and how He would come. They thought they knew the interpretation of all the relevant prophecies from the Scriptures, and they waited for their expectation to materialise. But they completely missed Him when He came. Christ said to them:

John 5:39,46,47

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.... For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

The Pharisees had their idea of exactly what the Scriptures taught about future events, but Christ told them they didn't truly believe the Scriptures after all. Indeed, today, 2,000 years later, the Jews are still waiting for a future Messiah, and still don't believe their own Scriptures.

This shows to us the danger of thinking that we know what the Scriptures teach about future events. Do we have in our mind a firm belief as to exactly what will happen when Christ comes again? Whether we've understood this out of our own study of the Scriptures or whether we're blindly following what our church teaches, it doesn't

matter. The warning is, Be careful. The Pharisees had such a firm belief, and they were totally wrong.

The opposite extreme, is to say that because we can't tell what's going to happen in the future, therefore we shouldn't study those Scriptures which refer to these things at all. The fact remains that there are passages in Scripture which do refer to Christ's second coming. They are in the Bible, so they must mean something. They can't mean nothing. Neither can we ignore them. We ignore Scripture at our peril.

The correct way to treat all Bible passages that refer to future events, is to read, understand and learn what we can from them. We shouldn't, however, read them in order to try to sort out in our minds a dogmatic timetable of exactly what's going to happen. Rather, we should make sure we're sufficiently familiar with the Scriptures, so that when and if Christ does come again in our lifetime, we shall look at what's happening around us and then say to ourselves something like, "So **that** is what this Scripture means," "So **that** is what that Scripture is referring to." In other words, we should be familiar with Scripture, so that we can be ready to interpret it correctly when the events happen, and not before.

With regards Christ's first coming, there were people around who knew the Scriptures just as much as the Pharisees, but who were also open-minded enough to think in this way, like Simeon and Anna:

Luke 2:25-38

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be

revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Notice that Simeon was “*waiting for the consolation of Israel*” (v.25), whilst Anna “*departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*” Both knew the Scriptures. Both were waiting patiently for the Messiah to appear, in the meantime daily performing their duties before God. And that’s exactly what we should be doing.

We should not be trying to interpret difficult prophetic Scriptures, pretending we’re an oracle for others to follow. Neither should we be blindly following whatever our church teaches on these things, even if it is right. We should rather be like Mary, who simply:

Luke 2:51

....kept all these sayings in her heart.

We all need to be ready for that day, so we will recognise it when it comes.

Matthew 24:42-44

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Mark 13:32,33

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

The Bible contains many different kinds of writings. There are historical books like Genesis, Samuel and Kings, poetic books like the Psalms and Song of Solomon, wisdom books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and letters of practical Christian living in the epistles. But there's one type of writing which is slightly different from the others. What I refer to as "apocalyptic literature."

I don't like using the word "literature" to describe the Bible. The Bible is not just another piece of literature, like the Works of William Shakespeare. The Bible is the Word of God. Shakespeare was an unbeliever. The two things are completely different.

However, there are sections of the Bible that are "apocalyptic." This word simply means something that is revealed, which is otherwise normally hidden. The major "apocalyptic" passages (although not the only ones) are found in the book of Revelation, Daniel chapters 7 to 12 and Zechariah chapters 1 to 6.

The question is: How do we deal with such passages? There are many different interpretations, which one, if any, is correct?

We need first of all to look at the Scripture to see how such passages are introduced:

Revelation 4:1

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven.

Revelation 15:5

And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

Ezekiel 1:1

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Luke 3:21,22

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Acts 7:55,56

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

2 Kings 6:17

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Acts 10:10,11

And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth.

All of these passages are introduced with “*The heavens were opened,*” or a similar phrase. So they are a description in human terms and in human language, of heavenly, spiritual things.

But we can't properly speak of heavenly things while we are in these bodies. They are too much for us to take in. At one point, the Apostle Paul:

2 Corinthians 12:4

...was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

And others who had seen glorious things were overwhelmed, and told not to write about them:

Revelation 10:4

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Daniel 12:8,9

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Heaven is so glorious, and God is so great, that no man can see God and live:

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Exodus 33:20

And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

So when we approach these “apocalyptic” passages, we must be very careful. We need to realise that God is condescending to us and describing heavenly things, which we cannot grasp, in terms of earthly things that we do know about. This is in exactly the same way as when we are told that God has hands, feet, eyes, etc. God is a Spirit and does not have these things, but it is helpful to us to think of Him as though He does have these things, for our own benefit whilst we are down here.

The most important thing to understand from all of this is that we should NEVER take any of these “apocalyptic” passages literally. So many people think they know what these passages are teaching. They have the book of Revelation sussed. They are so sure they know the meaning of every word of the book of Daniel, and Matthew 24. But they don't. But, does this mean that these passages are totally useless? Well, of course not. They are in the Bible. They are therefore useful.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable....

These passages don't exist in order for us to know exactly what to believe and have a good argument with our Christian neighbours about it. Rather, they are there to make us familiar with heavenly things, so that after we die, we will already have some idea of what to expect.

Are we ready for heaven? If we are one of the Lord's people, that's where we're going. We really only spend such a short time down here compared to eternity. All of us need to become far more heavenly-minded than we are. That's the use of these passages.

We are sometimes told that Christians are "too heavenly minded to be any earthly good." But I really don't think that's the case. As long as we're in these bodies we'll always be far more full of this world than any of us would want to be. I suggest that heaven will be quite a shock to us all when we get there, because we're all still so carnal by nature in our hearts.

We should be spending our days down here on this earth doing the good works that God has got for us to do here, but we should also be making ourselves ready for the next place, which is our eternal home.

Down here we are just unprofitable servants, merely doing our duty:

Luke 17:10

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

And we must all remember that on this earth, we are but dust:

Genesis 3:19

Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

We will never understand much of these "apocalyptic" passages, but we can, through them, become familiar and ready for when we finally leave this earth and arrive in our resurrection bodies, in our forever home.

Let's stop pretending we know everything. Let's humble ourselves beneath such passages. And get ready for the great move from things temporal to things eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are

*seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

The Antichrist

The Bible teaches that the visible church is going to be contaminated from within by an “*Antichrist*.” Only John actually uses the term “*Antichrist*,” Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2, uses several different names: “*that man of sin*” and “*the son of perdition*” (v.3) and “*that Wicked*” (v.8), but he’s obviously referring to the same person.

The prefix “*anti-*” is used today to mean “the opposite of,” but it really means “in the place of,” in other words someone who will come into the church and set himself up in the place of Christ, demanding the worship of Christ. So we’re not looking for a world leader. The world leaders are leading people far from Christ already, and they will continue to do so until the end. They don’t profess to be Christian. They’re not in the place of Christ at all, they’re always there and obviously evil. The Antichrist will be a man from within the visible church who rises by deceit and leads people astray. Paul says he:

2 Thessalonians 2:4

....opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

He sits in the visible church receiving the worship that ought to be given to Jesus Christ. So, who is this person? There are two main ideas within evangelical circles as to who he is. One is that he’s the pope of Rome, the other is that he’s a leader who is still to come just before Christ returns. Which one is correct? My answer is that both are correct, and, not only that, but there are many more antichrists than just these two. John tells us that there are “*many antichrists*”:

1 John 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

The danger with looking for just one person, is that we’ll miss all the others. In 1 John 4:3, John mentions a “*spirit of antichrist*,” and it is this that we should be watching for, on our lookout for antichrists in the church.

So what are the characteristics of an antichrist? Well, we've already seen one. He's going to lead people astray after himself, and away from Jesus Christ:

2 Thessalonians 2:4

....sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Paul also tells us that the Antichrist will deceive with false signs and wonders:

2 Thessalonians 2:9

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

John tells us that he:

(1.) denies Jesus is the Christ.

(2.) denies the Father and the Son.

and (3.) confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh:

1 John 2:22

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:3

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

2 John 7

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Now, does this apply to the pope of Rome? Well, yes. He sits in the Roman Catholic church and is worshipped by millions as the vicar of Christ. People cry in the streets when he's driven past. He sits in the temple of God (i.e. the church) accepting from his followers the worship that ought only to be reserved for God. He also accepts false signs and wonders, and elevates to sainthood anyone who can "prove" to his satisfaction that they have performed miracles. But surely, he doesn't deny Christ, does he? Well, yes he does. He denies the finished

work of Christ on the cross, because he tells his followers that the way of salvation is through sacrificing Christ again and again in the Mass, whereas Christ's work was once for all:

Hebrews 10:10

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

So the pope of Rome has all these characteristics. He has the “*spirit of antichrist.*”

But Scripture also seems to suggest that just before Christ comes again there will be a similar figure deceiving the visible church. This may still be the pope of the day, or it may be some other infiltrator in the visible church. Paul indicates that an antichrist will be destroyed by Christ's second coming:

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

But we don't stop at these two. John says that there are “*many antichrists*” (1 John 2:18) and that they are “*even now already in the world*” (1 John 4:3). Paul tells us that “*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*” (v.7). There will be many who display these characteristics, and we should always be on the lookout for the “*spirit of antichrist*” (1 John 4:3) wherever it may be found.

So, I'm not just criticising Roman Catholics for following the pope here. Protestant churches abound with such men and organisations. If an organisation requests unswerving obedience to them and not to Christ alone, look out! If a tele-evangelist, who already owns a mansion and a helicopter, asks you for even more money to support his “*ministry,*” look out! If anyone, anywhere, tries to make a reputation for themselves from stupid people blindly following them believing that they are some great prophet or apostle or man of God, look out! All of these phenomena display the “*spirit of antichrist*” and should be avoided. The lesson to learn is that we should NEVER follow men. Follow Christ alone.

Isaiah 2:22

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

I want to look now at two verses in particular:

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

I believe that these two verses have generally been misinterpreted. We have five pronouns here. A “what,” a “he” and a “his” in verse 6, and two “he’s” in verse 7. We need to know exactly who these pronouns refer to.

Those who believe the pope of Rome is the Antichrist interpret the passage in this way:

*6 And now ye know **the Roman Empire** withholdeth that **the pope** might be revealed in **the pope’s** time.*

*7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **the Roman emperor** who now letteth will let, until **the Roman emperor** be taken out of the way.*

The idea behind this is that the papacy came to prominence as the Roman Empire declined.

Those who believe in an end-times Antichrist interpret the passage in this way:

*6 And now ye know **the Holy Spirit** withholdeth that **the antichrist** might be revealed in **the antichrist’s** time.*

*7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **the Holy Spirit** who now letteth will let, until **the Holy Spirit** be taken out of the way.*

The idea here is that the Holy Spirit normally guides the church, but just before the end of time, His influence will decline as the Antichrist appears.

It is interesting to note that the New King James Version of the Bible capitalises the two “He’s” in verse 7, thus referring them both to deity, which would only fit this latter interpretation. Bible translators should translate, not try to interpret.

However, both of these interpretations I have difficulty with. Both interpretations equate the “*revealing*” of the antichrist with his rising to power. That’s not the case. The rising to power of the antichrist is with deceit:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Deceit, by definition, is hidden. Nobody knows they’re being deceived. That’s the whole point. A “*revealing*” is exactly the opposite. To reveal something is to show what was previously hidden.

We’re told of Christ being “*revealed*” at His second coming:

Luke 17:30

Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

When Christ came the first time, God chose to send Him in a hidden manner. Currently, He is reigning on His throne and working in the world, but only Christians recognise this. Most of the world can’t see that at all. When He comes again in glory however, He will be “*revealed*,” and “*every eye shall see Him*” (Revelation 1:7).

Similarly, these antichrists reign in a hidden manner, most people won’t recognise their presence. But when God chooses to reveal them, they will be seen for who they are.

To “*reveal*” the antichrist means that his reign of deceit is over. It’s the end of his reign, not the beginning. So I would interpret the above verses as follows:

*6 And now ye know **God’s providence** withholdeth that **the antichrist** might be revealed in **God’s time**.*

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **God** who now letteth will let, until **the antichrist** be taken out of the way.

It is the Lord who allows antichrists to reign in deceit, but only ever for a limited period of time, until He chooses to “*reveal*” them. All is done for the Lord’s holy and just ends:

2 Thessalonians 2:11,12

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The antichrist’s “*revealing*” I equate with his being “*taken out of the way*,” not his rise to power. Note in verse 7 we are told “*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*,” in other words, the antichrist is already at work, long before his “*revealing*.” The word “*mystery*” meaning something that is hidden for a time, and which is later revealed, such as “*the mystery of the kingdom of God*” (Mark 4:11), or “*the mystery of the gospel*” (Ephesians 6:9), or “*the mystery of the faith*” (1 Timothy 3:9).

The man of sin is only “*revealed*” as the man of sin when the deceit is exposed.

So, if antichrists come in deceit, how can we recognise a “*spirit of antichrist*” at all? The only way is to stay close to “*the spirit of his [Christ’s] mouth*” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), in other words the Word of God. Staying close to God’s Word is the only way not to be deceived. We know that many people will be deceived. Many will blindly follow these people. So don’t trust in men, don’t trust in a church, however many are blindly following it, but trust in the Lord and stay close to Him.

Antichrists will come and go, and as the Lord in His providence removes the “*withholding*” they will be “*revealed*” for who they are, men of sin, and their time of deceitful influence will come to an end. Ultimately, all these deceitful men of sin will be finally “*revealed*” and fully exposed once and for all when Christ comes again:

1 Corinthians 3:13

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

So the message is to look out for the “*spirit of antichrist*” wherever it may be found, and keep close to the Lord and His Word at all times, because this spirit of deceit “*doth already work*” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) in the church, and is deceiving many right now.

Mark 13:33

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

References to an Antichrist in Scripture

The “*spirit of antichrist*” is everywhere where men seek to exalt themselves in the visible church, in other words, where authoritarian dictatorship reigns at the expense of truth and righteousness. The whole visible church is corrupted with this spirit, no matter what visible denomination or organisation that calls itself “church” one is talking about. In the times of the Reformation, there was only one visible church, the Roman Catholic church, so the Reformers clearly saw this spirit in the papacy. Nowadays we have many denominations and churches, and this spirit is in all of them to some degree. The natural man tends only to see this visible influence of the church, and doesn't understand the concept of an invisible church, which is a small despised minority within it (but which are the true church, chosen and kept by God). God has deliberately allowed this to happen for the good of His elect.

The Antichrist is not the beast of the sea or the false prophet in the book of Revelation (although he is under their control) as these are fallen angels, not men. He is not in the book of Revelation at all, except (1.) possibly alluded to in Revelation 12:15 as the flood from the mouth of the dragon which tries to sweep the church away, and (2.) Revelation 17:11 as the eighth horn.

He only really appears in the following passages:

(1.) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 – as “*the man of sin,*” who causes the church to fall away (v.3).

(2.) Daniel 7:8,11,20,21,25 – as the “*little horn*” arising after the collapse of the Roman Empire. This would particularly point to the pope of Rome. Note 7:25 He “*shall think to change times and laws.*” Only God can do this (Daniel 2:21). The pope of Rome invented the Gregorian calendar, which nearly everyone in the world uses today.

(3.) Daniel 8:9-14,23-25 – This antichrist reigned in the time of the four kings arising after the Greek Empire was split into four and before the Roman Empire rises. So it must primarily refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple in 168 BC.

(4.) Daniel 11:21-45 – “*he shall come in peaceably and obtain the kingdom by flatteries,*” i.e. not by war (although “*arms shall stand on his part,*” v.31).

This refers to a king that shall rise out of the Roman Empire, again mainly referring to the pope of Rome. Some references are to a continuous Roman rule, hence things referring to the secular Roman Empire merge with things relating to the ecclesiastical Roman Empire.

Characteristics of Antichrist

Book of Daniel:

7:8 – He is a man with a “*mouth speaking great things.*”

7:11 – His body will be “*destroyed and given to the burning flame.*”

7:20 – His “*look was more stout than his fellows.*” He will be greater than the Caesars.

7:21 – He “*made war with the saints and prevailed against them.*” The vast majority of the visible church is under his control and unbelievers see only his influence and not the true invisible church, so they get a wrong idea about true religion.

7:25 – He shall “*speake great words against the Most High,*” “*wear out the saints,*” “*think to change times and laws,*” and believers will “*be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time,*” (i.e. the second coming of Christ).

8:10 – “*It cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them.*”

8:11 – He “*magnified himself even to the prince of the host,*” i.e. Christ, “*Messiah the Prince*” (9:25). By him “*the daily sacrifice was taken away,*” i.e. persecution of believers. The “*place of his sanctuary was cast down,*” Christ is no longer in His rightful place in the church.

8:12 – “*An host was given him against the daily sacrifice,*” i.e. again we see persecution of believers. Truth was cast to the ground. The false church “*practised and prospered.*” Note that the visible church is largely given over to him “*by reason of transgression*” to stop anyone exalting themselves that they have the one true church. i.e. It is for our eventual good and well-being.

8:23 – “*A king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences.*”

8:24 – His “*power shall be mighty, but not by his own power,*” i.e. not visibly war-like but under the pretence of peace. He shall “*destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice,*” “*and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.*”

8:25 – “*Through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand.*” “*He shall magnify himself in his heart.*” He shall “*by peace destroy many.*” He shall “*stand up against the Prince of princes,*” i.e. Christ. He shall “*be broken without hand,*” i.e. by the breath of Christ’s mouth, His Word (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

11:36 – He shall “*do according to his (own) will.*” He shall “*exalt himself and magnify himself above every god.*” He shall “*speake marvellous things against the God of gods.*” He shall “*prosper*” until the appointed end shall come.

11:37 – He shall “*not regard the God of his fathers.*” He shall not regard “*the desire of women.*” He shall “*magnify himself above all.*”

11:38 – He shall “*honour the god of forces.*” He shall honour a foreign god with “*gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things.*”

11:39 – He shall do this “*in the most strongholds with a strange god.*” He shall acknowledge and increase this god with glory. He shall “*cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.*”

11:40-44 – He shall spread himself over nearly the whole world, but tidings out of the east (the Orthodox Church? or China?) and the north (the Protestant church?) shall trouble him and curtail his total dominion.

11:45 – He shall “*plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas*” (the nations) “*in the glorious holy mountain*” (the visible church). But his end will be as has been ordained.

2 Thessalonians:

v.4 – He “*opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God.*” Cf. Ezekiel 28:2, the prince of Tyrus.

v.6 – God’s providence “*witholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.*”

vv.7,8 – Christ will consume him with “*the Spirit of His mouth*” (truth) and “*the brightness of His coming.*”

v.9 – His coming is “*after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*”

v.10 – The reprobate will perish by “*all deceivableness of unrighteousness.*”

v.11 – God sent them this “*strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*” deliberately.

v.12 – All those who believe not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness will be damned.

The Future of the Jews

A lot of Christians believe that God still has a purpose for the Jews. But He hasn't. He's finished with them, other than treating them as any other nation, i.e. a remnant will be saved by grace.

Many Christians follow events in the Middle East very closely, particularly since 1948 when the state of Israel was founded. But the current state of Israel is of no consequence to the Christian. I have no problem with the Jews having a homeland, if that's what they want, but it's of no consequence whatsoever to the Christian. Indeed, Orthodox Jews, who have been living in Palestine since the 19th century, don't recognise the current state of Israel anyway, and align themselves with the Palestinians. Christians shouldn't align themselves with either party in what is effectively a this-worldly land dispute.

True Religion

From the fall of Adam, salvation has always been by grace through faith, because we cannot save ourselves:

Psalm 51:11,12

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

And salvation will always be by grace through faith until Christ's second coming. But outwardly, and I stress outwardly only, God has ordained there to be a visible church, an outward organisation of all those who profess the name of the One True Living God, Lord of Heaven and Earth. This visible church will always be a mixture of wheat and tares – those who truly believe to the saving of the soul, and hypocrites who say they believe but have never been born-again in their hearts. Before Christ came into the world, this visible church was the nation of the Jews. Since Christ has come, and particularly since AD 70 when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed never to be rebuilt, this visible church is no longer the Jews but the Christian Church, which contains both Jews and Gentiles:

Genesis 9:24-27

And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; And Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; And Canaan shall be his servant.

1 Timothy 3:15

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Romans 11

The view that God still has a purpose for the Jews, only comes from a wrong interpretation of Romans chapter 11. The receiving of Jews (by God) as “*life from the dead*” (v.15), is regarded as being a mass turning of the Jews to Christ near the end of time. Blindness in part happening to Israel now (v.25), until the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, and the idea that “*all Israel shall be saved*” (v.26) is seen as an event that will happen after all the Gentiles who are going to be saved have been saved.

But that’s not true. Rather it is a “what if...” passage. i.e. Paul is saying in effect: “*What if* Jews should be saved, wouldn’t it be wonderful?” It is never a statement of what is actually going to happen *en masse* at all.

Look at the background. If Romans 11 wasn’t in the Bible, it would be possible to think that the Jews were not to be evangelised any more, they have had their day. Christ said to the Jews:

Matthew 23:38; Luke 13:35

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Now Christ has come into this world and atoned for sin, there is no need for Temple worship any more, so God in His providence did away with the Temple for good in AD 70, when the Romans burned it down. It never needs to be rebuilt.

After this event, which the Bible prophesies but does not describe (so we can conclude the Bible was complete by then), it would be quite understandable for any Christian to fully believe that the Jews had had their chance, and should no longer even be the objects of evangelism. To counteract this erroneous view, Paul wrote Romans 11.

Romans 11:1

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid...

Paul goes on to say that there will always be a remnant of the Jews saved by grace, who will come to know Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, when a Jew is saved, it will be as “*life from the dead*”:

Romans 11:13-15

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Note here he is talking about the fact that he might save “*some of them*,” so he is clearly talking only about a remnant that will be saved, not a mass turning at the end of time, in fact the end of time is not even spoken about here.

But what about:

Romans 11:25,26

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved.

Note that it says “*And **SO** all Israel shall be saved*,” in other words “*in this manner*,” not “and THEN chronologically.” The “*fulness of the Gentiles*” being “*come in*” is a clear reference to:

Luke 21:24

....and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

In this verse, the “*times of the Gentiles*” being fulfilled is immediately followed by signs from heaven prior to Christ’s return. There is no Jewish conversion taking place in-between. Once the last Gentile has been gathered in, Christ returns. The quote from Isaiah following this statement in Romans 11:26, we may think points to the Jews only:

Romans 11:26,27

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

But it is not unusual for a prophecy mentioning the salvation of “*Jacob*,” or “*the house of David*” or the like, to refer to all the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, not just to the Jews only. For example:

Acts 15:14-17

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

This is a quote from Amos 9:11,12, and it clearly indicates the “*tabernacle of David*” is to include Gentiles, “*the residue of men*.” The true “*Israel of God*” (Galatians 6:16) is the elect, made up of Jews and Gentiles, not the Jewish race.

So for these reasons, I see Romans 11 as a passage meant to show that we should evangelise Jews just as we should evangelise other nations, a fact which one could have lost sight of, if all we had were Christ’s teachings on the subject.

Jewish Privileges

The Jews, in the past, had tremendous privileges. God chose them to receive the Scriptures, to be an example to everybody else (although they failed miserably), and indeed to be the race the Messiah would come from. What privileges!

Romans 3:1,2

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans 9:4,5

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Christ and the apostles went to the Jews first:

Matthew 10:5,6

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Acts 13:46,47

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

But the Jews, apart from a remnant saved by grace, rejected the gospel. So God rejected them from having any more privileges. Not that they can never be saved, but the only way any of them can be saved now is by coming to Christ, just like everybody else.

Rejection Prophesied

This rejection was always prophesied:

Parables about a Great Supper:

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Luke 14:16-24

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Builders refused:

Psalm 118:22,23

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Matthew 21:33-44 (also Mark 12:1-11 and Luke 20:9-18)

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

House left desolate:

Matthew 23:37-39

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Luke 13:34,35

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth

gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The Fig Tree:

Many people regard the fig tree as a symbol of Israel, although the Bible nowhere says so.

Matthew 21:18-22

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Mark 11:12-14; 20-26

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.... And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Luke 13:6-9

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Temple Destroyed:

Luke 19:41-44

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The True Israel

The true Israel of God are all those, both Jew and Gentile, who come to Christ:

Romans 2:28,29

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

Romans 3:29-30

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Galatians 3:7

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Galatians 6:15,16

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism is a very popular, but wrong, scheme of things connected with the Second Coming of Christ. It is a very complicated system involving, amongst other things, two further comings of Christ, two types of Christian and two judgments. And it has to be said that, the fact that it is a rather convoluted scheme in itself should warn us that it is all man-made. God would never operate like that.

Dispensationalism is promoted by such as the works of J N Darby, the Schofield Reference Bible, the Ryrie Study Bible and Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' "Left Behind" books and films.

Brethren assemblies and Pentecostal churches embrace this view vigorously, many of them even making at least some aspects of the scheme part of their Statement of Faith. If we add to these most evangelical Christians in the USA and China, who also tend to embrace this view, that is a significant number, indeed a majority, of evangelical Christians in the world today. Yet it is so utterly wrong.

Evangelical Christians believe the truth that the Bible is the Word of God and that we have the good news of salvation from our sins in Jesus Christ to proclaim to all who will hear. People need to be told urgently to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as the only way to be saved from hell fire, which is where all of us deserve to go, and where all of us will justly end up, if we ignore this message. These Christians I have mentioned would agree wholeheartedly with all of that. Yet the fact that they hold to such a dogmatic view on future events – the prophecies of which we are never going to be fully sure about until they happen – ruin their testimony to the truth.

I'm going to collate the main tenets of Dispensationalism here, together with my comments on each. These will be in chronological order as to how dispensationalists think future events will occur. Not all dispensationalists will embrace all these tenets, there are variations amongst them, but these are the general ideas:

1. Christ's coming is always imminent. The call is always "Are you ready?"

Dispensationalists call all men to be ready to meet with Christ. And so we all should be. But by that, they mean, "Are you ready for Christ's imminent return?" To truly make ourselves ready for Him, we need to change. We need continual godly living, watching and praying. The whole of the Christian life is one of continually "making ourselves ready." Continually watching and praying, His coming could be at His return at the end of time for everybody, or for each individual Christian at their death. But dispensationalists seem to think that to be "ready" is to simply have an expectation in our heart that He could come for all of us at any moment.

Their call implies that we can make ourselves ready, now, at the instant we are called. If we just say we are ready right now, that's all that's needed. But it's not just an instant thing we do upon a call, every time we are reminded that His coming is imminent.

What the Bible teaches us about being ready is far more than simply whipping up an expectation within ourselves:

Luke 23:43

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise [upon death].

Matthew 24:42-46

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Luke 21:34-36

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy

to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Mark 14:38

Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Colossians 4:2

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving...

1 Thessalonians 5:6

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

2 Timothy 4:5

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

1 Peter 4:7

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

2. The next prophecy to be fulfilled will be Christ coming again for His saints.

Christ is coming again, and we should be ready. But to say that His coming is the next prophecy to be fulfilled, is a bit arrogant. There are so many prophecies in Scripture, many with more than one fulfilment, that we cannot truly know exactly what the next one to be fulfilled will be until it happens. We only truly know what prophecies mean as they are fulfilled, and not before.

3. The reason Christ hasn't come again yet, is because He's waiting for the church to be ready.

But the church will never be ready. The time of Christ's coming is not flexible, depending on anything, least of all the church being ready. Christ's coming again is at a set time, which only the Father knows:

Mark 13:32

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

4. There are two comings of Christ. The first is invisible, like a thief in the night, when He will rapture the faithful.

But, in the Bible, the coming of Christ is always described as noisy. It's like a thief for the suddenness of it, not the invisibility of it:

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Matthew 24:27-29

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken....

This lightning must be speaking of the first of their two supposed comings, because it's before the "tribulation." Very visible and noisy.

And the dispensationalist's very "proof text" for a "rapture" mentions a shout, a voice and a trumpet. Not a secret, invisible rapture at all:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:** and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with***

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

In any case, in the Bible, the “*thief in the night*” is not Christ’s coming exactly, but the “*day of the Lord*,” in which the world is going to be completely destroyed. It is not the start of a “tribulation” or a “millennium”:

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5. There are two types of Christian – faithful and worldly.

There are not two classes of Christian. All believers are a mixture of faithfulness and worldliness. Some are more faithful than others, some are more worldly than others. We’re all on a spectrum. Dispensationalism treats Christians as either one or the other, distinguishing between those who are “ready” when Christ comes, the faithful Christians, and those who are not ready, the worldly Christians. But you can’t speak like that, because we’re all a mixture of both. Worldliness in the truly born-again Christian is always going to be there to some degree. It does not affect his salvation, but it’s not the right attitude because it engenders unfruitfulness:

Mark 4:18-19

And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as bear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

2 Peter 1:5-8

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Worldly Christians will be saved, but as through fire:

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

6. Faithful Christians, those who make themselves “ready”, will be raptured.

Their “proof text” for this is:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The dead in Christ and those which are alive when He comes, will be caught up to meet the Lord and ever be with Him. That’s a comfort to the Christian. Most dispensationalists believe this is Christians all being taken away from a forthcoming “great tribulation” on the earth. But the earth is finished at this point. Rather, it is them going to be forever with the Lord.

The idea of a rapture of the faithful is actually the opposite of the truth. It is the wicked who will be taken away, the believers will all be “left behind.”

Matthew 24:37

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

In the days of Noah, the wicked were taken away in the flood, and the believers, Noah and his family, were left behind on the earth:

2 Peter 2:5

And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly....

We should want to be “left behind,” not taken away:

Psalm 37:9-11

For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Proverbs 2:21-22

For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

Proverbs 10:30

The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

Matthew 13:41-43

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matthew 13:49

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

7. Unfaithful, worldly Christians will be left behind

The unfaithful, worldly Christians will not be raptured, but left behind with the rest of the unbelievers, to endure seven years of “great tribulation.” Dispensationalists like the idea of giving people a “second chance” to believe, after Christ has come again. The Bible is clear that there is no “second chance” for anybody. This one life is all we have:

Hebrews 9:27-28

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

8. There will be seven years “great tribulation.”

Dispensationalists take all references in the Bible to a “tribulation” or “great tribulation” to mean a specific seven-year period still future. But it is not a specific seven-year period of time near the end at all. The Biblical phrase “tribulation” or “great tribulation” refers to life in this world. It is the same period of time as the “*Times of the Gentiles*.”

Luke 21:22-24

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

There are three references to “great tribulation” in the Bible, none of which are a proper name for any specific period of time:

Matthew 24:21

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Revelation 2:22

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Revelation 7:14

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

There are many more references to “tribulation,” again proving that it all points to meaning life in this world:

Deuteronomy 4:30

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice.

Judges 10:14

Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

1 Samuel 26:24

And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

Matthew 13:21

Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Matthew 24:29

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

Mark 13:24

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Acts 14:22

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Romans 2:9

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

Romans 5:3

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.

Romans 8:35

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Romans 12:12

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.

2 Corinthians 1:4

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

2 Corinthians 7:4

Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

1 Thessalonians 3:4

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

2 Thessalonians 1:6

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.

Revelation 1:9

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2:9,10

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

There is a difference of opinion here among dispensationalists. While most believe the rapture of Christians occurs at the beginning of the seven year tribulation period (pre-tribulation position), some think it doesn't occur until the end of that period (post-tribulation position) and some think it occurs in the middle (mid-tribulation position).

But what exactly are the marks of the End Times anyway? We see the world getting worse and we think Christ must be returning shortly. But is that really so?

Matthew 24:6

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

We're told "the end is not yet." These are just the "beginning of sorrows":

Matthew 24:7-8

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

None of these things have anything to do with signs of Christ's return. They're just part of the normal everyday life we should expect to face in this world. This whole life is a tribulation. Everybody goes through it, but if we're Christians we can be of good cheer, because Christ has overcome the world:

John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There aren't any signs of the end to look for. Christ will come suddenly into this world, when we're least expecting it, at the time appointed of the Father, to judge the world:

Matthew 24:27

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:36

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Matthew 24:44

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

So the great tribulation isn't a period of seven years just before the end. It's our whole life in this world.

9. During the "great tribulation" an Antichrist will reign.

The Bible teaches that the visible church is going to be contaminated from within by an "*Antichrist*." Only John actually uses the term "*Antichrist*," Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2, uses several different names:

“*that man of sin*” and “*the son of perdition*” (v.3) and “*that Wicked*” (v.8), but he’s obviously referring to the same person.

Many dispensationalists see this to be a great world leader, who will deceive the whole world during the “*great tribulation*” period. The prefix “anti-” is used today to mean “the opposite of,” but it really means “in the place of,” in other words someone who will come into the church and set himself up in the place of Christ, demanding the worship of Christ. So we’re not looking for a world leader. The world leaders are leading people far from Christ already, and they will continue to do so until the end. They don’t profess to be Christian. They’re not in the place of Christ at all, they’re always there and obviously evil. Any Antichrist is going to come from within the visible church, and rise by deceit and lead people astray. Paul says he:

2 Thessalonians 2:4

....opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

He sits in the visible church receiving the worship that ought to be given to Jesus Christ.

John tells us there will be many antichrists in the church throughout history:

1 John 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

But Scripture does seem to suggest that, just before Christ comes again, there will be a particular antichrist deceiving the visible church, who will be destroyed by Christ’s second coming:

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

Look at these two verses in particular:

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

I believe that these two verses have generally been misinterpreted. We have five pronouns here. A “what,” a “he” and a “his” in verse 6, and two “he’s” in verse 7. We need to know exactly who these pronouns refer to.

Dispensationalists interpret this passage in this way:

*6 And now ye know **the Holy Spirit** withholdeth that **the antichrist** might be revealed in **the antichrist’s** time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **the Holy Spirit** who now letteth will let, until **the Holy Spirit** be taken out of the way.*

The idea here is that the Holy Spirit normally guides the church, but just before the end of time, His influence will be taken out of the way as the Antichrist appears.

It is interesting to note that the New King James Version of the Bible capitalises the two “He’s” in verse 7, thus referring them both to deity, which would only fit this interpretation. Bible translators should translate, not try to interpret.

However, this equates the “*revealing*” of the antichrist with his rising to power. That’s not the case. The rising to power of the antichrist is with deceit. It’s hidden. It’s not “*revealed*” at all:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Deceit, by definition, is hidden. Nobody knows they’re being deceived. That’s the whole point. A “*revealing*” is exactly the opposite. To reveal something is to show what was previously hidden. To “*reveal*” the antichrist means that his reign of deceit is over. It’s the end of his

reign, not the beginning. So I would interpret the above verses as follows:

*6 And now ye know **God's providence** withholdeth that **the antichrist** might be revealed in **God's time**. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **God** who now letteth will let, until **the antichrist** be taken out of the way.*

It is the Lord who allows antichrists to reign in deceit, but only ever for a limited period of time, until He chooses to “*reveal*” them. All is done for the Lord’s holy and just ends:

2 Thessalonians 2:11,12

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The antichrist’s “*revealing*” I equate with his being “*taken out of the way,*” not his rise to power. The man of sin is only “*revealed*” as the man of sin when the deceit is exposed at Christ’s second coming:

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

But the dispensationalist cannot agree with this because Christ has already come in the rapture.

10. At the end of the “great tribulation,” there is the judgment seat of Christ, where believers only are judged.

There are two references in Scripture to the “*judgment seat of Christ.*” It is possible to refer these only to believers if you really want to:

Romans 14:10

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

But there are plenty of Bible references to Christ judging all men, including unbelievers:

John 5:22-23

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Matthew 25:31-32, 41

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats....Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....

1 Peter 4:4-5

Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

2 Timothy 4:1

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom....

Romans 2:16

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Acts 17:31

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Acts 10:42

And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

John 12:47-48

v.47

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world....

[This does not mean Christ won't judge "the world," the unbelievers. It means He came the first time to save, but the next time will be to judge. Read on....]

v.48

....He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

John 8:15-16

Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

Micah 4:3

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 11:1-4

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:...But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Isaiah 2:4

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Psalm 110:4-6

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek....He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

Psalm 2:12

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

11. Faithful Christians will reign with Christ in the Millennium.

Dispensationalists are pre-millennial, that is they believe Christ comes again to set up a thousand-year reign on the earth. He will be based in Jerusalem, and rebuild the Temple. One has to ask the question, Why? There's no more need for the Temple. The sacrifices offered there, were only ever a picture of that true sacrifice Christ came to accomplish. Now He has done that, what's the point rebuilding it?

The concept of a "millennium," or "thousand-year reign" only comes from one passage of Scripture:

Revelation 20:1-6

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

It is very dangerous to try to interpret anything in the book of Revelation too literally. Having said that, it must mean something, it

can't mean nothing, because it is Scripture. When we see a “*thousand years*” mentioned, should we really take it to mean a literal thousand years on the earth, or should we treat numbers in the book as symbolic? For example, are these numbers literal or symbolic?:

Revelation 1:4

....the seven Spirits which are before his throne....

Revelation 4:4

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats....

Revelation 7:4

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

12. Unfaithful Christians will go into outer darkness for a thousand years, a place of repentance (“weeping and gnashing of teeth”).

Several parables are misinterpreted here.

It is pointed out that in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, all had lamps, so all must represent Christians. The five faithful ending up in the millennium, and the five worldly, ending up in outer darkness. But “*outer darkness*” isn’t mentioned here, it is only mentioned after the next parable. Here, the bridegroom says “*I know you not.*” That’s pretty clear:

Matthew 25:11-13

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

In the following parable of the talents, all the servants had the same master, and were in the same household, so again it is assumed they must all represent Christians. The first two were faithful, the last one was worldly. He ended up in “*outer darkness*”:

Matthew 25:28-30

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then follows the parable of the sheep and the goats, in which it is so clear that the final estate of the goats is hell fire. All three parables really teach the same thing:

Matthew 25:41,46

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

And then there is the parable of the man without a wedding garment in Matthew 22. It is pointed out that he still managed to get into the wedding feast, and so must represent a Christian, but a worldly one. He too ending up in “outer darkness”. But we’re told he was also bound, taken away and not one of the chosen:

Matthew 22:12-14

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

The only other reference to “outer darkness” in Scripture is also in Matthew’s gospel:

Matthew 8:11-12

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This refers to the unbelieving Jews. Dispensationalists are very favourable to the Jews. Many believe they will be converted to Christ en masse during the “great tribulation.” Many others are also Christian

Zionists, that is they believe that the Jews will all get into heaven without even needing to come to Christ. Maybe, if they don't believe in Christ, they'll have to go through "*outer darkness*" for a thousand years rather than the "millennium" but they'll all be saved in the end. But none of that is true. The only way any Jew is going to be saved at all is exactly the same way as everyone else – he must embrace Christ as His Saviour:

Acts 4:11-12

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

In all these cases, the dispensationalists don't seem to understand the idea that the outward visible church is actually made up of a mixture of believers and unbelievers all together. They think it's a mixture of faithful and worldly, but all profess faith, so all are counted believers. But that's not true. All churches are made up of wheat and tares, true Christians and hypocrites that outwardly profess faith but have never been born-again.

The dispensationalist does not equate "*outer darkness*" with hell fire. Instead, it is a place specifically for worldly Christians who weren't "ready" when Christ came, so they miss out on getting into the millennium and reigning with Him for a thousand years. Instead they go to "*outer darkness*," a place characterised by weeping and gnashing of teeth. They would say this is the weeping of repentance. They will all repent, and therefore be saved in the end. Again, we have the concept of a "second chance."

But there is no "second chance" for anybody. We need to urgently be called to repent now, in this life, before it's too late. We all only have one life to repent in. There is not a "second chance" after Christ's return. The weeping here is the weeping of regret, and it's for ever, not the weeping of repentance only for a thousand years.

Hell fire is also characterised by the weeping of regret, gnashing of teeth and a furnace of fire. This is the same place as "*outer darkness*" - i.e. it is the eternal abode of the wicked:

Matthew 13:41-43

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matthew 13:49-50

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 24:50-51

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 13:27-28

But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

Darkness occurs elsewhere too, also connected with eternal judgment:

The angels that sinned are reserved in chains of darkness in Tartarus, to be reserved for judgment:

2 Peter 2:4

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment....

The wicked are reserved in the mist, or blackness, of darkness for ever:

2 Peter 2:17

These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

Jude 1:13

Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

13. The second coming of Christ after the millennium, is His coming to judge the world and is visible with a trumpet.

We saw earlier that the first coming-again of Christ at the “rapture” was noisy, with a trumpet. This one will be too. So, maybe there’s only one coming again of Christ after all?

14. Both faithful and worldly Christians will be saved in the end.

The reason for this is that they’ve already been judged at the judgment seat of Christ. We agree worldly Christians will be saved in the end, but that’s all of us if the truth be known. The extent of our worldliness will just be the extent of our unfruitfulness, so there is an incentive to be faithful. But it’s not fear of “*outer darkness*” for a thousand years.

15. The great white throne judgment. This is for unbelievers only.

The great white throne judgment can’t just be for unbelievers. It must still involve believers, because the “*book of life*” is opened. That wouldn’t be necessary if all those in it had already been judged at a different judgment seat of Christ:

Revelation 20:11-15

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

16. Unbelievers will go to hell because they rejected Christ – not because of their sins.

Rejection of Christ is a sin, but we all deserve hell fire for all our sins. Sin seems to have a low place in the dispensationalist view. We have our sins forgiven at the start, when we believe in Christ, but then sin is taken as a light thing. Few dispensationalists I have known have a very deep experience of their own sins after becoming a Christian. But the nearer we get to Christ, the more we ought to see them:

Romans 7:21-25

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

That cannot be the experience of an unbeliever, because unbelievers aren't bothered by sin. Only a Christian can be bothered by it. Yet many dispensationalists aren't bothered by ongoing, indwelling sin at all.

17. Before Satan fell, his name was Lucifer.

The name "*Lucifer*" only occurs in the King James Bible in Isaiah 14:12. The word "*heylel*" was translated as a proper name, but it isn't one, it means "day star," or "morning star." Isaiah 14:4-23 refers primarily to the king of Babylon, but it can also legitimately be used as a reference to Satan's fall, because his fall was similar to that of the king of Babylon, but we don't need the proper name "*Lucifer*" in there to see that. Ezekiel 28:11-19 is primarily about the king of Tyre, and that too can legitimately reference Satan's fall as well, but his name isn't mentioned there either.

The name "*Satan*" means "*adversary*," so that probably wasn't his name before he fell. But we're not told in Scripture what his name was before. The name "*Satan*" first appears in 1 Chronicles 21:1, where he tempts David to number the people.

18. Satan and his angels fell between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.

We don't know when Satan and his angels fell, other than the fact it was before Eve did, because he tempted her through the serpent. Dispensationalists suggest that they fell between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, because we're told:

Genesis 1:2

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

It is suggested there was a world of angels before this, and after Satan fell, with those who followed him, that first world was ruined. But it doesn't say anything about another world and it being ruined. This just refers to the basic matter before God formed anything from it.

God created only one world, and it was for man. Angels were only ever ministering spirits for us:

Hebrews 1:14

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

To invent the idea of a whole world in existence before man came into being is not necessary. But it conveniently fits the modern idea people have of the world taking billions of years to form.

There are many intricate strands to dispensationalism, and many differences of opinion on some things, but these are the the fundamental principles. Our hope must be that people would abandon this system. It utterly ruins their witness of the truth.

A while ago, I went to a regional Missionary Conference organised by the local Brethren assemblies. It was excellent. It was so encouraging to listen to missionary reports from various countries, to hear about the number of people being converted, and the many congregations being established throughout the world. At the end of the conference, one of the missionaries gave a rousing call for us all to get involved with missionary work, and it certainly moved my heart to want to get

involved. However, in the second to last sentence of his speech, he just happened to mention, in passing, the “Rapture,” and my heart sank. They are doing such a good work planting all these congregations, yet when the congregations are established, they are teaching the people their particular view of future events. What a disappointment.

The gospel is the most important thing for the church to be propagating. Not a convoluted scheme on future events. Even if it was true, which it isn't, it would only ever be a minor side issue. Christ is coming again for judgment. We'd better get ready. But to major on the intricacies of a man-made system to try to explain future events, is not relevant.

The Millennium

Introduction

The “Millennium” refers to the “*thousand years*” mentioned six times in chapter twenty of the book of Revelation. So many books and articles have been written on this subject. Many people think they know exactly what is going to happen in the future in minute detail, and they’re so sure of it. But all of them not only differ so wildly from one another, but they also seem to be written from a perspective of trying to convince the reader that their particular theory is true simply because the author’s particular church teaches it. Too many church members take on board their particular church’s teachings on the last things without really thinking whether they’re right or wrong. This is blind belief and we should not be behaving like this. We should think through things for ourselves.

The fact remains that because we are dealing with future events, we are never really going to know which theory, if any, is actually correct until it happens. At Christ’s first coming, the majority of the church leaders of the day did not acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as being the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures; a few people only realising this, mostly after the events had occurred. Therefore by nature of the case, all theories about the Millennium are going to be exactly that – just theories (like the Atomic Theory, or the Theory of Evolution).

The Holy Spirit convinces a man of the truth, and I personally am thoroughly convinced of the truth about, for example, six-day Creation, the received texts of Scripture, the Atonement and so on, but I have never had that same certainty about any of the theories about the Millennium that I have ever come across. I therefore proffer yet another theory, one which I have not found elsewhere, but which I have more conviction about than all of the others. I hasten to add, though, it is still only a theory. I’m willing to be corrected by further reading of Scripture. How dare I be so sure about anything before the time.

Problems with Current Theories

There are three main groups of current theories about the Millennium. And these can be grouped depending upon the relationship of the Millennium to the time of Christ's return. Those who argue that Christ comes before the Millennium are known as *Pre-millennialists*, those who argue that Christ comes after the Millennium are known as *Post-millennialists* and those who do not see a literal millennium at all but the thousand years of Revelation describing something else, such as the whole of the period between Christ's first and second comings, or the period between a believer's conversion and his death, for example, are known as *A-millennialists*. Within each group there are many different variations, which it is not necessary to go into in detail about, but it is necessary to state the problems I have with each group in general before I give you my theory.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialists believe that the gospel alone will usher in the Millennium. The gospel will spread to the ends of the earth and many will be saved. In time, a majority of the world will be converted to Christ, nations will begin to enact laws in keeping with Christian principles rather than worldly ones, and there will be a time of general peace, which they equate with the Millennium, before Christ returns to judge the world and glorify His people. I have problems with this.

Firstly, I would like to make it clear that the gospel will perform all the work God intends it to perform, not only in the saving of all His people but in the damnation of the rest. Let us not be concerned about the failure of the gospel at all. All God's chosen people, whoever they are, will be saved:

John 10:27-29

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

This is a tremendous comfort to the Christian. However we must not be ignorant of the fact that the gospel is not only a savour of life unto life to the elect but becomes a savour of death unto death to the rest (albeit in and of itself it is good news to them), those who have heard it being more culpable if they refuse the gospel than those who have never heard it:

2 Corinthians 2:16

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Luke 12:47,48

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

God will save all His people however many there are, and wherever they are. Indeed we are told that this will be a great multitude that no man can number:

Revelation 7:9,10

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

The number of those who aren't saved will also be as the sand of the sea:

Revelation 20:8

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

A vision of a future Millennial kingdom with lots of conversions at a certain period of time is not necessary for the application of this comfort to the individual believer.

Secondly, it seems that the Postmillennialists cling to certain verses of Scripture that they claim refer to the conversion of the vast majority of the world in what they would term the “latter-day glory.” Verses such as:

Psalm 22:27

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

Psalm 72:7-11

In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

There are two things to mention about such verses. Firstly nowhere does it specifically state that towards the end of time there will be a mass turning to Christ in true salvation. We do read:

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

But this just means that the gospel will be preached to all nations (note it does not even mean all people head for head) as a witness to them all. This does not mean that they will nearly all be converted, it just means it will be a witness to them, either for good or ill.

Secondly, when Scripture talks about the “world,” or “all the ends of the earth” we must remember that the Jews of the day had only ever known of salvation as being solely within their own community. In other words, to be saved in Old Testament times one had to either be a Jew or at least come into contact with the Jews. Nowadays the gospel goes to the “ends of the earth” and it is no longer confined to the Jews as

before. This was a major shift in the thinking of the Jew in Biblical times, hence the emphasis on “*the world*,” not just the Jews. It is not a blanket statement that the whole world will all necessarily be converted, rather that some out of every tribe and nation will come to believe, not merely some out of just Israel.

We must also realise that Christ will have dominion from sea to sea (Psalm 72:8). All will eventually bow the knee before Christ, but not necessarily before His return by the preaching of the gospel. Those who reject Christ here will be bowing the knee in hell fire. All men will eventually serve Him and give Him the glory:

Philippians 2:9-11

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In fact, Christ has dominion over the nations and they are under His control even now.

One of the main reasons we can't go along with the Postmillennialist view is because the Bible tells us that the world, if anything, will get worse, not better before the end:

Matthew 24:21,22

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Postmillennialists dismiss this as referring to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, but is that really the only thing that the passage is about? Was that the greatest tribulation anyone has ever suffered? It was no worse than many other atrocities that have been perpetrated throughout the centuries in other parts of the world. Relatively speaking, of course, the world cannot get “worse” than it always has been – total depravity is total depravity. However, it seems that any restraints put on the sin of the world by God in His providence will be removed to a great degree and it would at least *seem* worse to the believer, maybe because believers will be so few in comparison to the wicked at that time.

Also, the Bible exhorts us to watch, for we do not know the time of the Lord's return. In order to be watchful we can't believe that there is going to be a thousand years (or at least a very long time anyway) after the world has been "Christianised" by the gospel before Christ will come again. We see no Millennium now, no land on earth has a truly Christian government today. So the Postmillennialist's Millennium has not even started yet. So does that mean we can relax and take our ease, because we know Christ is not going to return for a long time yet (according to the Postmillennialist)? Of course not. We must be ready for His return at all times. This does not just mean that we must simply be ready for death to come to us personally at any time. The Bible specifically states that it is Christ's return we must be ready for:

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We seem to be taught in Scripture that there is going to be more godlessness before the end and more troubles for the poor believers, not a spiritually aware converted world:

Matthew 25:5

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Luke 21:35

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Luke 18:7,8

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This is a rhetorical question. He will find faith, but not in many. What is the point of Christ asking this question if the majority on the earth when He comes again are going to have this faith anyway?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

The “*peace and safety*” here is a false peace that godless men have produced for themselves, without reference to God and His commandments. It is not the peace of a converted world, otherwise destruction would not come on them.

Matthew 24:15-22

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand;) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Postmillennialists refer this again to the fall of Jerusalem, but in the passage it is immediately followed by the description of Christ's return, so there is at least a sense in which it refers to that time as well. The fact that v.21 is taken directly from Daniel 12:1 also confirms this.

Postmillennialists themselves believe that after their Millennium there will be a falling away because Revelation 20 states as much:

Revelation 20:3

And cast him [Satan] into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Revelation 20:9

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

So the question stares us in the face: What on earth is the point of believing in a great time of Christian prosperity towards the end of time if the whole thing is going to collapse anyway? This falling away proves the pointlessness of the Postmillennialist finding some kind of hope or comfort in this view.

With regards Matthew 24, Postmillennialists hang their exposition heavily on a certain interpretation of v.34:

Matthew 24:34

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

They have to interpret the word “*generation*” to mean all those alive at the time this was spoken. This way, they can fit verses 1 to 36 to refer to the fall of Jerusalem, and the rest of the chapter (and indeed chapter 25) to refer to Christ’s second coming, with a nice clean break between the two. This may seem quite plausible at first, especially as the equivalent passages in Luke’s gospel seems to be split almost exactly along those lines, with the first part (supposedly about the fall of Jerusalem) coming in chapter 21, and the second part (supposedly about the second coming of Christ) in chapter 17. However, two problems present themselves here. Firstly, Luke 17:31 is about being on the housetop. In Matthew 24 this (supposedly, to the Postmillennialist) refers specifically to the fall of Jerusalem, whereas in Luke it refers to the second coming. So the division is not as clear-cut as it may at first seem.

Secondly, the word “*generation*” does not only mean all those alive at one particular time, (or a period of twenty or forty years or so), but it can also mean “family line”. Sometimes it can only mean the first definition, e.g. Exodus 1:6, Matthew 1:17. Sometimes it can only mean the second definition, e.g. Matthew 1:1, Psalm 14:5, Psalm 22:30, Psalm

49:19, Luke 16:8, Acts 2:40, 1 Peter 2:9. Other times it could be either definition. Of this latter sort are the passages in question. We cannot argue from these passages alone that the word “*generation*” here can only be the first definition. We do not have sufficient facts before us to warrant such a conclusion. Hence we cannot be as clear-cut as to which verses belong to the fall of Jerusalem and which to the second coming as we would like. There is a sense in which they could refer to both events.

This also means that passages such as Deuteronomy 7:9, 1 Chronicles 16:15 and Psalm 105:8 which refer to “*a thousand generations*” cannot be used, as postmillennialists would like them to be used, to refer to the idea that Christ will not come again for a very long time, at least $40 \times 1000 = 20,000$ years.

Scots Presbyterians have a Postmillennial view.

Amillennialism

Here we have a wide-ranging group of people, who believe that the Millennium is not a literal period of time at all, but a symbol of something else. Typically, the time between Christ’s first and second comings, or maybe the time between a person’s conversion and his death, or between his death and his rising on the last day to judgment or something similar.

One thing all these Amillennial theories do have in common is that they all believe that the world will be in a godless state just before the end, with people generally ignorant of a returning Christ. This solves the problem that the Postmillennialist has of trying to explain away Scriptures that clearly indicate this. It also clears the way for a belief that Christ can come at any time, so the believer should always be ready.

However, the main problems with Amillennialism are that firstly, the passage in Revelation 20 where the thousand years are mentioned, gets allegorised away and not taken in the straightforward meaning of the words. For example the “*first resurrection*” (Revelation 20:5) is equated with conversion, and Satan being “*bound for a thousand years*” (Revelation

20:2) is equated with the gospel age, i.e. the New Testament era. This allegorising of the plain text is far-fetched. When it says that:

Revelation 20:4

I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This text is allegorised so as not to apply to happenings on the earth, because “souls” are mentioned. However, it clearly states that the souls “lived,” a reference to Genesis 2:7:

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

For a soul to live in this sense, it has to have a body. In the Genesis account this was of the dust of the ground, but in the Revelation account, talking of the resurrection, it refers to the resurrection body.

Secondly, if we are in the Millennium now, we therefore must believe that Satan is “bound” now:

Revelation 20:1-3

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Amillennialists would say that Satan is bound in the sense that true religion is no longer limited to the Jews any more, and that Satan still has an influence but is now on a “short lead.” This is very difficult to accept. Satan still has tremendous influence on the world and can hardly be said to be “bound” more than in the time before Christ came. In any case he has always been on a “short lead,” because throughout all ages he has never been able to do anything that God did not permit

him to do (see Job 1-2), this is not just a peculiarity of New Testament times.

Many Reformed churches tend to embrace an Amillennial view.

Premillennialism

This involves the return of Christ before the Millennium.

Premillennialism has the same advantages as Amillennialism in that it allows for Christ to come at any time, and for things to be in a bad state just before Christ's return, but the problem with it is that, in this system, Christ returns twice. His first return is not the end of the world. There is plenty more happening here on this earth afterwards – an idea which is not Scriptural:

1 Corinthians 15:23,24

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

There is one particular Premillennial scheme that is so common, many people believe it is the only Premillennial scheme there is, and that is that of Dispensationalism. This was made very popular by J. N. Darby and the Brethren movement. Pentecostals and many Baptists have also picked up on this scheme.

In summary, Christ comes in his first return invisibly, all believers are raptured into the air, and disappear from the earth for a time (typically for either three and a half or seven years), while the "Great Tribulation" takes place on the earth. After this, Christ sets up his kingdom for a thousand years on the earth with a physical temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. Then, after this Millennium, comes the Final Judgment.

In this scheme, the world is split into "dispensations," hence the name. First there was the "dispensation" from Creation to the Fall, then Adam to Abraham, then Abraham to Moses, Moses to David, David to

Christ, Christ to His coming again (the “gospel” dispensation we are in now), then Christ’s earthly rule in Jerusalem with the temple sacrifices being re-instated for a thousand years, then the final judgment. The problem with all this is that there ends up being more than one means of salvation. In the Old Testament it was via the sacrifices, now in the “gospel” dispensation it is by the blood of Christ. In the Millennium it will be by re-instating the sacrifices again. This is all wrong. Every one of the elect in every age goes to glory because of the shed blood of Christ. Christ’s blood was not just shed for those in the present “gospel” dispensation:

Hebrews 4:2

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them....

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

And the idea of there being a particular time known as the “Great Tribulation” too is completely opposite to what the Bible teaches:

Revelation 7:14

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This refers to believers, but it states that these are the ones who have “come out of great tribulation.” So they were once in this tribulation and have not missed it completely by being “raptured” to totally avoid it altogether.

Matthew 24:37-41

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of

man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

In the days of Noah it was the wicked who were “taken” away, and the believers who were “left” behind, not, as the Dispensationalists would have us believe, the other way around:

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Psalms 37:10,11

For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Proverbs 2:21-22

For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

Proverbs 10:30

The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

So the whole concept of a “rapture” before a period of tribulation which all believers will miss, is totally wrong. The idea of a “rapture” is taken from:

1 Thessalonians 4:16,17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

But this happens at the end of time, there is no mention of a millennial kingdom on earth afterwards in this passage at all.

And what’s the point of reinstating the animal sacrifices? They were originally there as a picture to point us to Christ’s once for all sacrifice on the cross. We no longer need animal sacrifices, and we never will need them again:

Hebrews 7:26,27

For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Most people think that Premillennialism is solely a belief in Dispensationalism, such is Dispensationalism's dominance in modern evangelical circles. But there is a far more sober view that is completely different, but nowhere near as common. In this view, Christ will return, then will reign for a thousand years on the earth (the Millennium), at the end of which is the final Judgment. No secret "rapture," no special period known as the "Great Tribulation," no reinstatement of the animal sacrifices.

However, most proponents of this more sober scheme still go wrong when they believe that, in the millennial kingdom after Christ's return, it will still be inhabited by people in their earthly bodies. The believers who have died or are alive at Christ's coming will have been resurrected at this point and be in their resurrection bodies, but there will be others in the Millennium who will still be in their sinful earthly bodies, and indeed more sinful people still to be born to them. So we have the surreal spectacle of some people in their resurrection bodies mingling with those still in sinful flesh, with otherwise things going on pretty much as before. They would get this from passages such as:

Isaiah 65:20,21

There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

Also, Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt temple in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48 is used to believe that an exact literal temple of those dimensions is still to be built, because the description there does not fit with one that has ever existed yet.

Indeed the problem with Premillennialists tends to be the opposite of that of Amillennialists. Whereas Amillennialists tend to over-spiritualise biblical passages, Premillennialists tend to take everything

far too literally. The right way to interpret Scripture is to take everything in the plain meaning of the words, e.g. when Isaiah says that “*the trees of the field shall clap their hands*” (Isaiah 55:12), it is obviously poetic, not literal.

Baptists, Brethren and Pentecostals are all Premillennial.

My Theory Explained from Revelation 19 and 20

The Millennial theory that I wish to put forward here is based on a logical, straightforward reading of Revelation 19:11 to 20:15. That this is all one chronological order of events is clear from the word “*and*” which is constantly repeated to link each stage to the next (19:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 20:1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

Amillennialists and Postmillennialists must have a chronological break somewhere (usually at the end of chapter 19) to make their theory fit this narrative, so that they can make Christ’s coming at the end of chapter 19 to be the same as Christ’s coming in chapter twenty. Otherwise they have two comings of Christ here, which would not fit into their scheme of things. This however is a forced break, and there is no reason to break the chronology at all. If here, then why not at any of the other of the “*and*”s in the passage? Any break made is purely arbitrary, to make the passage fit a theory, rather than to let the passage flow and hold together in the plainest sense of the words. My theory links the entire passage together as a chronological whole.

I cannot read Revelation 19:11 to 20:15, in the plain sense of the words, without seeing the following chronological sequence of events:

- (1.) Christ comes again to “*judge and to make war*” (19:11).
- (2.) Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword (usually taken as the sword of the Spirit, i.e. His Word) whereby He smites the nations and treads them in the winepress of God’s wrath. (19:15).
- (3.) The fowls are called to eat the flesh of those about to die (i.e. the wicked) (19:17,18).

(4.) The beast leads the wicked into war against Christ and his armies (whether these are angels or glorified saints we do not need to know, they could be either or both) (19:19).

(5.) The beast and false prophet are defeated by Christ, and are both cast into the lake of fire (19:20).

(6.) The wicked hordes which followed the beast and false prophet are slain by the sword proceeding out of Christ's mouth and the fowls gorge themselves on their flesh (19:21).

Note that treading the winepress of God's wrath, fowls gorging themselves and a sword coming out of Christ's mouth etc. are picture language. We would be stupid to take what is clearly picture language in any way literally. I leave any detailed explanation of pictures such as these as they are not relevant to the basic theory I am offering here. Until these events happen everything is really guesswork anyway, so I'm not going to go into too much detail on what they all mean.

Note also at this point that Christ has come again *before* the Millennium, so I have to admit I must by definition be a Premillennialist. Not of the usual variety though, as I have never come across this scheme anywhere else before.

(7.) Satan is cast into the bottomless pit and bound for a thousand years (the "Millennium") (20:1-3).

(8.) The souls of believers "*lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*" (20:4). For a soul to "*live*" it must be given a body (Genesis 2:7), hence believers will be on the earth in their resurrection bodies, whilst the wicked will be dead until the end of the Millennium (they are slain in 19:21, this is confirmed in 20:5).

(9.) 20:6 confirms that these are believers only who take part in the "*first resurrection*" and they will not undergo the "*second death*" of the Lake of Fire (20:14).

So the Millennium will not be a place where the wicked, believers in their fleshly bodies and believers in their glorified bodies will all be mingling together, with the temple re-established in Jerusalem. The

only people alive in the Millennium will be believers in their resurrection bodies. The meek shall indeed inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

The question could be asked, what is the purpose of the Millennium? This question both Postmillennialists and Premillennialists cannot answer. I answer that it is a display to all creatures of the justice of God and vindication of His people before the final Judgment itself actually takes place. Why do we need a display? Well, the question could be asked, why do we need this world, when the elect have been chosen from all eternity anyway? God has ordained all things, including this world and including the Millennium, for His own glory. No other way could display His glory to any greater effect than the way that He has ordained will come to pass.

(10.) At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released out of the bottomless pit, the wicked will be raised (in their resurrection bodies) and Satan will gather them to war against the saints; but God will stop this war from taking place by destroying them with fire (20:7-9).

The fact that there are two separate resurrections, one for the just and one for the unjust, is biblical:

Luke 14:14

And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

John 5:28,29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Acts 24:15

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

(11.) Satan will be cast into the “*Lake of Fire*” (where the beast and false prophet are) to be tormented for ever and ever (20:10).

(12.) Earth and heaven will “*flee away*” and be no more as we know it. Presumably it is burnt with fire as in 20:9 (20:11).

There are plenty of biblical texts that describe the earth being burnt with fire or purged with fire to make way for the new heavens and the new earth described in chapters 21 and 22. How this exactly takes place we are not told, and again we should not be too dogmatic as to the precise details:

2 Peter 3:7

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

(13.) Judgment takes place, and “*death*” and “*hell*” are cast into the “*Lake of Fire*” (“*Gebenna*”), i.e. are destroyed for ever (20:12-14).

A note is in order here with regards “*death*” and “*hell*”:

With regards “*death*,” it no longer has any power after this point as it is cast into the “*Lake of Fire*.” The torment is “*for ever and ever*” (v.10). So we see that after this point people will never be able to die again, and will be either in bliss in heaven or in torment in “*hell*” (“*Gebenna*”). All those not in the “*Book of Life*” are not just annihilated out of existence, but cast into the “*Lake of Fire*,” i.e. torment for ever without any relief possible by “*death*.” Similarly those who are in the “*Book of Life*” will be everlasting with the Lord, without “*death*” to end such a state.

With regards “*hell*,” there are four words in the Bible that are translated in English into the word “*hell*.” This is important to note because Annihilationists would say that because here it states that “*hell*” is thrown in to the “*Lake of Fire*,” therefore there is no eternal torment in “*hell*” for ever after all. This is not true. The two words “*Sheol*” (Hebrew) or “*Hades*” (Greek) denote the place where the **souls** of the wicked apart from their bodies go after death in this life and before they are reunited with their bodies again at the end. (The souls of

believers go to “*Paradise*”). The word “*Tartarus*” (Greek) only occurs once in the Bible (2 Peter 2:4) and denotes the place where fallen angels are kept until the judgment, after which they are cast into the “*Lake of Fire*.” “*Tartarus*” is also known as the “*Bottomless Pit*” which Satan is thrown into for the duration of the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3), and “*The Deep*” which demons pled with Christ not to be cast into (Luke 8:31). The word “*Gebenna*” (Greek) denotes the “*Lake of Fire*” itself, where reunited bodies and souls spend their eternal torment. “*Hades*” is the word used for “*hell*” in this passage, so it refers to the place where souls apart from their bodies go. It is this place that is destroyed forever (as there is now no need for it because souls and bodies can now no longer be separated by death) and not the final place of torment, “*Gebenna*,” the “*Lake of Fire*,” which does still exist after this, and indeed will do so everlastingly.

(14.) Whosoever was not found in the “*Book of Life*” was cast into the “*Lake of Fire*” (“*Gebenna*”) to suffer most grievous torments for ever (20:15).

(15.) Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation then go on to speak about “*a new heaven and a new earth*” which will be the final home for the believers who have escaped the “*Lake of Fire*.”

That is my theory, and I cannot see this passage (which is incidentally the only passage in the whole of Scripture which mentions this “*thousand years*” at all) as meaning anything else. I hope I have kept to the plain meaning of the words and not either allegorised or literalised anything in any way in my explanation of the passage.

One final thing to mention. If this theory is true, then the end times will be at least a thousand years in length (to include the Millennium), so how can we explain the many passages of Scripture which mention that all these things will happen on the “*Last Day*,” or the “*Day of the Lord*”? The answer is simply that we should:

2 Peter 3:8

....be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

In any case, just before the coming of Christ we are told that:

Revelation 10:6

....*there should be time no longer.*

So we see that this event occurs outside of the constraints of time, although for convenience in Scripture it is called the “*Last Day*” or “*Day of the Lord,*” as it will be at the end of time as we know it now.

One objection to this could be that we can be so dogmatic with regards the six literal days of twenty-four hour periods of the Creation week, how can we now talk about a long “day”? Well, in Genesis 1 we are clearly told that “*and the evening and the morning were the first day,*” (Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31), whereas here we are specifically told that “*there will be time no longer*” (Revelation 10:6). So the Genesis days are literal days of twenty-four hours and the Revelation “*Last Day*” is not.

Confession of Faith on the Last Things

To clarify my theory even more, and to back up what has been said by passages from other parts of Scripture, I proffer the following Confession of Faith on this subject:

1. A man is made up of both body and soul.¹ A man’s spirit is not a third separate entity, rather, it is so fused to the soul, like joints and marrow, that it can only be separately discerned by the Word of God.² Therefore, when the word “*spirit*” is used in relation to man, it refers to the soul, particularly with respect to its moral disposition.³

Upon death, the body and soul separate.⁴ The body returns to the dust and sees corruption.⁵ The soul of the wicked descends to Hades (Sheol, The Pit)⁶ where it remains, forsaken by the Lord⁷ and unable to praise him⁸, in great torment reserved under punishment for the day of judgment.⁹

The soul of the believer will be delivered from the power of Sheol (Hades, The Pit).¹⁰ It will be carried by the angels into Paradise (Abraham’s bosom) to be with Christ¹¹ until the times of restitution of all things¹², waiting for the full redemption of the body.¹³

These are the only two places which Scripture acknowledges for souls separated from their bodies.¹⁴ Souls cannot pass from one place to the other as there is a great gulf fixed between the two.¹⁵

1. Isaiah 10:18; Job 14:22; Matthew 10:28

2. Hebrews 4:12

3. Isaiah 42:5; Job 34:14; Zechariah 12:1; Luke 8:55; James 2:26; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Ecclesiastes 8:8; Isaiah 57:15,16; 1 Corinthians 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:34; Luke 1:47; Luke 23:46; Psalm 31:5; Hebrews 12:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Proverbs 20:27

4. Luke 12:20; 1 Kings 17:21,22; Genesis 35:18; Job 7:15; 2 Corinthians 5:8

5. Genesis 3:19; Acts 13:36; Psalm 90:3; Job 7:21; Psalm 104:29; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 3:20

6. Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 15:24; Proverbs 23:14; Isaiah 5:14; Acts 2:27

7. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Psalm 9:10

8. Isaiah 38:18; Psalm 88:10-12; Psalm 6:5; Psalm 30:9; Psalm 115:17

9. 2 Peter 2:9; Isaiah 50:11; Job 21:30; Luke 16:23-28; Romans 2:9

10. Psalm 49:9,15; Psalm 86:13; Job 33:30; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 30:3; Psalm 34:22; Psalm 56:13; Psalm 116:8; Hosea 13:14

11. Luke 16:22; Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:6,8; Revelation 2:7

12. Acts 3:21; Romans 8:21

13. Romans 8:11,23; Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:4; 2 Corinthians 5:2-4

14. Luke 16:22-26

15. Luke 16:26

2. Angels who have sinned have no means of salvation¹ and are cast down to Tartarus (The Deep, The Bottomless Pit) by God, to be delivered into chains of darkness to be reserved unto the judgment of the Great Day.²

Satan's main objective was to destroy the Christ before He came.³ He was given freedom to roam the earth and have access into heaven⁴, but only under God's providential control.⁵

Upon Christ's victory on the cross, Satan and his angels were defeated, no longer had a place in heaven⁶, and were cast out into the earth⁷, where Satan turned his mind to persecuting the Lord's people.⁸ But they are kept safe by God.⁹

Satan has been given the key to the Bottomless Pit (Tartarus, The Deep), so that the demons (fallen angels) there can be let loose on the earth.¹⁰ The two greatest of these are the Beast (Beast from the sea), whom, along with Satan himself, all unbelievers marvel at and worship¹¹, and the False Prophet (Beast from the earth), who, with

miraculous signs, causes all unbelievers to worship the Beast (Beast from the sea) and gives them his mark.¹² Again, all of this is only under God's providential control.¹³

1. Hebrews 2:16,17
2. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Luke 8:31
3. Revelation 12:4
4. Revelation 12:3,4,7; Job 1:6,7; Job 2:1,2; Zechariah 3:1
5. Job 1:12; Job 2:6
6. Revelation 12:8
7. Revelation 12:9,12,13; Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; John 14:30; Revelation 9:1
8. Revelation 12:12-17
9. Revelation 12:6,14,16; 1 John 5:18; John 17:12
10. Revelation 9:1-3
11. Revelation 13:3,4,8
12. Revelation 13:13-17
13. Revelation 13:8; Revelation 14:1

3. On one day in the future, the day and hour of which is only known to the Father¹, Jesus Christ will visibly return. It will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night.² This is so that we may shake off all carnal security and be always watchful.³

He will appear as lightning.⁴ The sun and moon will no longer give their light, the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.⁵ This is also symbolic of the fact that at this time all those who exalt themselves in this world shall finally and thoroughly be abased.⁶ Then every eye shall see Christ coming in the clouds with power and great glory.⁷

He will descend with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel Michael and with the last trump of God.⁸ He will come with his holy angels⁹, and the souls of all believers who have died.¹⁰ Their souls will then be reunited with their bodies which are raised first. This is the resurrection of the just (the first resurrection, the resurrection of life).¹¹ They are raised incorruptible.

Those believers who are still alive at the time will also be changed into an incorruptible state in the twinkling of an eye.¹² They will then be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus so shall they ever be with the Lord.¹³

All believers will then be conformed to Christ's own glorious body.¹⁴

1. Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32
2. Luke 12:40; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 16:15; Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28
3. Luke 21:34-36; 1 Thessalonians 5:4; 2 Peter 3:11-12; Mark 13:35-37; Matthew 24:42-44; Matthew 25:13; Luke 12:36-48
4. Matthew 24:27; Luke 17:24
5. Isaiah 34:4; Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 13:10; Zechariah 14:6,7; Amos 8:9; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24,25; Luke 21:25; Ezekiel 32:7; Revelation 6:12-14; Joel 2:31; Joel 3:15,16
6. Ezekiel 31:14; Matthew 23:12; Job 22:29; Psalm 138:6; Isaiah 57:15; Daniel 4:37; Luke 1:51,52; Luke 14:11; Luke 18:14; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5
7. Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; Matthew 16:27; Luke 9:26; Revelation 1:7
8. 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9; Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; Revelation 11:15; Isaiah 27:13
9. Matthew 24:31; Matthew 25:31; Matthew 16:27; Mark 13:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Matthew 13:39,49; Mark 8:38
10. Revelation 19:14; Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Jude 14; Zechariah 14:5
11. 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Job 19:26,27; Romans 8:11; Isaiah 26:19; Luke 14:14; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:4,6
12. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54
13. 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Matthew 24:40-41
14. Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:21

4. When Christ appears, the wicked who are still alive on the earth will mourn.¹ Great terror will fall on them and their hearts will fail them for fear.²

Even so, the Beast will attempt to gather them together to make war against Christ and the saints³, but the Beast and the False Prophet will be taken and cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).⁴ The rest of the unbelievers will then be killed by the sword proceeding out of Christ's mouth.⁵

Then Satan himself will be cast into the Bottomless Pit (Tartarus, The Deep) and bound for a thousand years with a seal set upon him that he should deceive the nations no more.⁶

All events regarding the last things, including the "thousand years," are known in Scripture as taking place on "*The Great Day*," "*The Day of the*

Lord” or “*The Last Day*”⁷, which is after there is time no longer, the sun and moon having disappeared.⁸

The court shall be seated and all believers shall reign with Christ for the thousand years.⁹ Indeed, the meek shall inherit the earth.¹⁰ Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.¹¹

1. Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7; Zechariah 12:10; Amos 8:10; Zechariah 14:13
2. Luke 21:26; Revelation 11:13; Revelation 16:9,11; Isaiah 24:16-18; Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30; Revelation 6:15-17; Isaiah 13:7,8; Isaiah 2:20,21; Jeremiah 4:28,29; Ezekiel 38:19,20
3. Revelation 19:19; Ezekiel 39:2; Revelation 16:14-16; Zechariah 14:2
4. Revelation 19:20; Daniel 7:11
5. Revelation 19:21; Isaiah 24:1-3; Jeremiah 25:27-33; Ezekiel 39:3-5; Isaiah 11:4; Isaiah 34:2,3; Isaiah 66:16,24; Jeremiah 7:32-34; Jeremiah 19:6,7; Jeremiah 31:40
6. Revelation 20:1-3; Isaiah 24:21,22
7. John 6:39,40,44,54; John 11:24; John 12:48; Hebrews 10:25; Ezekiel 39:8; 2 Peter 3:10,12; Revelation 6:17; Zechariah 14:7-9
8. 1 Peter 4:7; Daniel 12:13; Revelation 10:6
9. Daniel 7:26,27; Revelation 20:4,6; Zechariah 14:9,11; Revelation 5:10; Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 27:13; Isaiah 66:23
10. Matthew 5:5; Psalm 25:13; Psalm 37:9-11,22,28-29,34; Isaiah 60:21; Proverbs 2:21-22
11. 1 Corinthians 15:24

5. When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.¹ All the dead unbelievers will then be resurrected, their souls being reunited with their bodies. This is the resurrection of the unjust (the second resurrection, the resurrection of damnation).² Satan will go out to deceive them all and to gather them together to battle against all the believers, who during the thousand years have been living peacefully on the earth.³ But fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them.⁴ Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) to be tormented day and night for ever and ever.⁵

The earth and the heaven will flee away; and there will be found no place for them any more.⁶

All people will then stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment.⁷ God is the Judge to whom we must all give an account,⁸

and the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son.⁹ Indeed, all believers will play their part in judging the world and angels.¹⁰

Every man will be judged according to his works.¹¹ All men will therefore be found guilty.¹² However, deliverance from being cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) is not based on this, but on whether their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life.¹³

1. Revelation 20:3,7; Revelation 17:8
2. John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Isaiah 24:22; Revelation 20:6
3. Revelation 20:8,9; Ezekiel 38:8-23
4. Revelation 20:9; Revelation 16:21; 2 Peter 3:7; Isaiah 66:15,16; Ezekiel 38:22; Malachi 4:1; Zephaniah 1:18; Zephaniah 3:8
5. Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41
6. Psalm 102:26; Revelation 20:11; Isaiah 13:13; Hebrews 12:27; Matthew 24:35
7. Revelation 20:12-13; Daniel 7:9; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:32; Acts 17:31; Romans 14:12; Jude 14,15; 1 Corinthians 4:5
8. Daniel 7:9; Psalm 58:11; Psalm 75:7; Romans 14:12; Hebrews 4:13; Matthew 12:36
9. John 5:22; John 9:39; Acts 10:42; Romans 14:10; Daniel 7:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10
10. Psalm 149:9; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Corinthians 6:2,3; Luke 11:31,32; Isaiah 41:15,16
11. Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:12,13; 2 Peter 2:12,13; Jeremiah 17:10; Job 34:11; Psalm 62:12; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 2:23
12. Psalm 130:3; Ephesians 2:12; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; Romans 3:9-20,23; Psalm 14:2,3; Psalm 53:2,3
13. Revelation 20:15; Luke 10:20; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 21:27; Daniel 12:1; Exodus 32:33; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8; Matthew 25:34; Romans 3:24; Malachi 3:6

6. Death and Hades (Sheol, The Pit) will then be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).¹ Christ will then make himself subject to the Father that God may be all in all.²

Whosoever is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).³ This is the second death.⁴ It is an everlasting process of destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power⁵, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.⁶ A place of outer darkness where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.⁷

Then a new heavens and a new earth will appear wherein dwelleth righteousness.⁸ It shall remain forever.⁹ This will be the Holy City, New Jerusalem.¹⁰ God will dwell therein with the elect forever and will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither

sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.¹¹ There will be no more temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.¹² There will be no more sun or moon for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.¹³

Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.¹⁴

1. Revelation 20:14; 1 Corinthians 15:26
2. 1 Corinthians 15:28
3. Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:8; Luke 12:5; Matthew 25:41
4. Revelation 2:11; Revelation 20:6,14; Revelation 21:8
5. 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 33:14; Psalm 92:7; Matthew 10:28; Daniel 7:26; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:46
6. Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:43-48; Ezekiel 20:47,48; Isaiah 34:8-10; Jeremiah 7:20; Matthew 3:12
7. Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 13:42,50; 2 Peter 2:17; Jude 13; Isaiah 8:22; Matthew 25:30
8. Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22; Hebrews 2:5,6
9. Isaiah 66:22; Joel 3:20
10. Revelation 21:2,10; Psalm 48; Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26
11. Revelation 21:3,4; Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 51:11; Isaiah 65:17-19; Revelation 7:16,17
12. Revelation 21:22
13. Isaiah 60:19,20; Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5; Zechariah 2:5
14. Revelation 22:20; 1 Corinthians 16:22

Scripture Indexes

The Bible - Scripture Index

Genesis

- 3:19. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
- 44:17. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid

Deuteronomy

- 1:1. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Red Sea
- 1:5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Red Sea
- 6:16. This is an Hard Saying

Joshua

- 22:29. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
- 24:16. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid

1 Samuel

- 12:23. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
- 14:45. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
- 20:2. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid

2 Samuel

- 16:16. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Save
- 17. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Brother of Goliath
- 18:1. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Numbered
- 21:19. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Brother of Goliath
- 21:22. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Brother of Goliath
- 24:1. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Numbered

1 Kings

- 1:34. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Save
- 1:39. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Save
- 18:27. Loving the Authorised Version

2 Kings

- 11:12. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Save

1 Chronicles

11:19. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid

21:1. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Numbered

2 Chronicles

23:11. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Save

Job

3:8. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Their Mourning

22:5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Infinite

27:5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid

Psalms

12:6,7. Loving the Authorised Version

19:1-3. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

110:3. Loving the Authorised Version

119:89. Loving the Authorised Version

147:5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Infinite

Proverbs

22:19-21. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

25:11. This is an Hard Saying

Ecclesiastes

7:1-4. The One Thing Needful

Isaiah

8:19,20. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

14:12-15. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer

40:8. Loving the Authorised Version

49:22. Loving the Authorised Version

55:12. The Quest for Certainty: The Problem with Language

Jeremiah

29:13. This is an Hard Saying

31:15. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Rahel

31:18. Loving the Authorised Version

Lamentations

1:7. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Sabbaths

Daniel

9:24. The Apocrypha

Nahum

3:9. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Infinite

Matthew

2:17. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Rahel
4:4. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
4:7. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
4:10. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
5:18. This is an Hard Saying; Loving the Authorised Version
5:44. This is an Hard Saying
7:7,8. This is an Hard Saying
14:19. The Quest for Certainty: The Problem with Language
15:36. The Quest for Certainty: The Problem with Language
20:16. The Apocrypha
21:45. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
22:23. One is Your Master
22:29. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
22:31. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
23:8. One is Your Master
23:33. One is Your Master
23:37. The Apocrypha
23:38. The Apocrypha
24:8. One is Your Master
24:41. Loving the Authorised Version
25:41. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
28:9. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Touch Me Not

Mark

4:11,12. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
13:33. The One Thing Needful
16:17,18. This is an Hard Saying

Luke

1:3,4. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
1:5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Son
1:36. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Son
3:23-38. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Son
8:3. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Son
10:38-42. The One Thing Needful
13:1-5. One is Your Master
16:26. This is an Hard Saying

18:1-8. The Quest for Certainty: The Problem with Language
20:16. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
22:19. This is an Hard Saying
23:33. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Calvary
23:55. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Son
24:10. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Son

John

1:4,5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
3:19-21. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
5:39,40. One is Your Master
6:53-56. This is an Hard Saying
6:60. This is an Hard Saying
6:66. This is an Hard Saying
8:12. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
8:44. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
12:31. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
14:17. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
15:26,27. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
17:17. The One Thing Needful; The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
18:38. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
20:17. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Touch Me Not

Acts

5:32. This is an Hard Saying
7:45. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Jesus
12:4. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Easter
15:15,16. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
19:24,27,28,34,35. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Diana
25:19. Loving the Authorised Version
25:23. Loving the Authorised Version
26:3. Loving the Authorised Version
26:18. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
26:24. Loving the Authorised Version
26:27. Loving the Authorised Version
26:28. Loving the Authorised Version
28:25. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer

Romans

1:19,20. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
1:20. This is an Hard Saying
1:32. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
2:1. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
2:14,15. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
3:1,2. The Apocrypha

3:4. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
3:6. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
3:20-23. This is an Hard Saying
3:31. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
6:2. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
6:15. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
7:7. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
7:13. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
8:16. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Spirit Itself
8:26. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: The Spirit Itself
8:28. One is Your Master
9:14. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
11:1. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
11:11. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
12:21. This is an Hard Saying
15:4. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

1 Corinthians

1:21. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
2:13,14. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction
6:15. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
8:1,2. This is an Hard Saying
8:2. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
15:29. This is an Hard Saying

2 Corinthians

1:21,22. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer
13:5. The One Thing Needful

Galatians

2:17. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
3:21. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid
6:3. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
6:14. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: God Forbid

Ephesians

2:20. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer
4:28. This is an Hard Saying

Philippians

2:13. Loving the Authorised Version

Colossians

3:1-4. The One Thing Needful

2 Thessalonians

2:11,12. This is an Hard Saying

1 Timothy

3:15. The Apocrypha

2 Timothy

2:9. Loving the Authorised Version

3:15. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

3:16,17. This is an Hard Saying; The Apocrypha

3:16. One is Your Master; The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

4:6-8. The One Thing Needful

Hebrews

1:1,2. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

1:1. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

4:8. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Jesus

4:12. This is an Hard Saying

5:12-14. This is an Hard Saying

9:27. The One Thing Needful

James

4:14. The One Thing Needful

1 Peter

1:4,5. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer

2:2. This is an Hard Saying

2:8. The Quest for Certainty: The Answer

2 Peter

1:3,4. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

1:10,11. The One Thing Needful

1:19. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction; Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer

1:20,21. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

1:21. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction; Loving the Authorised Version

3:7. Loving the Authorised Version, Mistakes: Lucifer

3:15,16. This is an Hard Saying; The Apocrypha

3:18. This is an Hard Saying

1 John

1:3,4. The Quest for Certainty: Introduction

2:26,27. One is Your Master

2:27. This is an Hard Saying; Loving the Authorised Version

Revelation

2:28. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer

7:9. The Apocrypha

11:3,4. This is an Hard Saying

12:9. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer

14:12. This is an Hard Saying

22:16. Loving the Authorised Version: Mistakes: Lucifer

Signs and Wonders and Spiritual Gifts - Scripture Index

Genesis

20:7. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

Exodus

7:1. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

15:20. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

20:17. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

Numbers

11:25. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

12:6. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

Deuteronomy

6:22. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

13:1-3. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

28:46. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

Judges

4:4. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

1 Samuel

10:5. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

2 Kings

22:14. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

1 Chronicles

12:32. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Discerning of Spirits

2 Chronicles

15:8. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

34:22. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

Nehemiah

6:14. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

9:10. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

Psalms

8:2. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

51:11. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

68:18. 7. Spiritual Gifts

Proverbs

9:10. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

31:1. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

Isaiah

8:3. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

20:2-4. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

28:9-13. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

63:10. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

Jeremiah

5:15. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

32:20. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

Daniel

4:2. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

6:27. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

9:24. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

Hosea

2:23. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

Joel

2:28-32. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament; 5. Speaking in Tongues

Matthew

7:15-20. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

7:21-23. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

7:22,23. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

10:1. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

10:8. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament; 7. Spiritual Gifts

11:13. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

11:25. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

14:31. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Faith

17:15,16. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

24:24. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

28:18-20. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament: Christ's Instructions before His Ascension

28:19,20. 5. Speaking in Tongues

Mark

7:6. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

9:38-40. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

13:22. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

16:15-20. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament: Christ's Instructions before His Ascension

16:15. 5. Speaking in Tongues

16:20. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament; 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament; 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts; 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders

Luke

1:67,68. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

2:36. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

7:9. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Faith

10:1,9,17-20. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

John

4:48. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

5:19-21. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament: Greater Works

5:20,21. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: The Working of Miracles
6:26. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament
7:24. 8. 1 Corinthians 12
9:32. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament
14:11-14. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament: Greater Works
20:30,31. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

Acts

1:8. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
1:21,22. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
2. 2. Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament; 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament: Christ's Instructions before His Ascension; 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Divers Kinds of Tongues
2:1-21. 5. Speaking in Tongues
2:22. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament
2:42,43. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
2:43. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
4:16. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
4:22. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
4:30. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
5:12. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
6:5. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Philip
6:8. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Stephen
8:1. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Philip
8:6,7. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Philip
8:13. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Philip
8:14. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Philip
9:27. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Barnabas
10:44-47. 5. Speaking in Tongues
14:3. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
14:8-18. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
10:42. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament
14:14. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Barnabas
15:12. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Barnabas
15:32. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders; 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy
15:41. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
19:6. 5. Speaking in Tongues
19:7. 5. Speaking in Tongues
19:11,12. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
19:13-17. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
20:9,10. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
21:4. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
21:9. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy
21:10,11. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
28:3-5. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders
28:8,9. 6. The Decline of Signs and Wonders

Romans

1:11,12. 7. Spiritual Gifts
8:24,25. 9. 1 Corinthians 13
10:20,21. 10. 1 Corinthians 14
12:2. 10. 1 Corinthians 14
12:4-8. 7. Spiritual Gifts
12:6. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy
12:18. 10. 1 Corinthians 14
15:19. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts

1 Corinthians

1:12. 8. 1 Corinthians 12
1:19. 10. 1 Corinthians 14
1:21. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: The Working of Miracles
1:27-29. 10. 1 Corinthians 14
2:6-10. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: The Word of Wisdom and Knowledge
8:1-3. 9. 1 Corinthians 13
11:5. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy
12-14. 1. Introduction; 7. Spiritual Gifts; 8. 1 Corinthians 12
12. 8. 1 Corinthians 12
12:31. 10. 1 Corinthians 14
13. 8. 1 Corinthians 12; 9. 1 Corinthians 13
13:1. 5. Speaking in Tongues
13:2,3. 5. Speaking in Tongues
14. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy; 10. 1 Corinthians 14
14:5. 8. 1 Corinthians 12, The Interpretation of Tongues
14:39. 8. 1 Corinthians 12
15:5,7. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts
15:8. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts

2 Corinthians

5:16,17. 8. 1 Corinthians 12
7:1. 9. 1 Corinthians 13
8:23. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Others
12:12. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts

Galatians

3:5. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: The Working of Miracles
5:22-26. 8. 1 Corinthians 12; 9. 1 Corinthians 13

Ephesians

4:8. 7. Spiritual Gifts
4:11,12. 7. Spiritual Gifts
4:23. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

Philippians

2:25. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Others

Colossians

1:18. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

2:19. 8. 1 Corinthians 12

2 Thessalonians

2:9,10. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

1 Timothy

2:11,12. 10. 1 Corinthians 14

2 Timothy

4:20. 3. Signs and Wonders in the New Testament: Christ's Instructions before His Ascension

Hebrews

1:1,2. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

2:3,4. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts; 7. Spiritual Gifts

3:1. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: Christ

12:14. 9. 1 Corinthians 13

James

1:5. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: The Word of Wisdom and Knowledge

2 Peter

1:19-21. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

3:18. 9. 1 Corinthians 13

1 John

4:1-6. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Discerning of Spirits

Revelation

2:2. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts: False Apostles

2:20. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

19:10. 8. 1 Corinthians 12: Prophecy

21:4. 4. Signs and Wonders in Acts

Marriage - Scripture Index

Genesis

- 2:18. Marriage
- 3:16. Arranged Marriages
- 6:2. Arranged Marriages
- 24:1-4. Arranged Marriages
- 24:5-8. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29
- 24:57,58. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29
- 24:61-67. Arranged Marriages
- 34:4-6. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29
- 41:45. Arranged Marriages

Exodus

- 20:3. Arranged Marriages
- 20:14. Arranged Marriages
- 20:16. Arranged Marriages
- 22:16,17. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

Deuteronomy

- 22:13-29. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29
- 24:1-4. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith
- 24:1. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

Judges

- 14:1-3. Arranged Marriages
- 21:18-25. Arranged Marriages

2 Samuel

- 13:15. Arranged Marriages
- 20:3. Divorce and Remarriage: 4. Matthew 19:9 and 5:32

Psalms

- 127:3. Marriage

Jeremiah

- 4:30. Arranged Marriages

Ezekiel

- 16:37. Arranged Marriages

23:17,22,28. Arranged Marriages

Nahum

3:6. Arranged Marriages

Matthew

1:18-20. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith

1:19. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

5:28. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

5:31,32. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith

5:32. Divorce and Remarriage: 4. Matthew 19:9 and 5:32, 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

18:17. Divorce and Remarriage: 6. Wilful Desertion

19:6. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith, 6. Wilful Desertion

19:8,9. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith

19:8. Marriage

19:9. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith, 4. Matthew 19:9 and 5:32, 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

19:12. Marriage

Mark

10:9. Divorce and Remarriage: 6. Wilful Desertion

10:11,12. Divorce and Remarriage: 4. Matthew 19:9 and 5:32

Luke

16:18. Divorce and Remarriage: 4. Matthew 19:9 and 5:32

20:34-36. Marriage

John

4:18. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

1 Corinthians

7:10,11. Divorce and Remarriage: 6. Wilful Desertion

7:12,13. Divorce and Remarriage: 6. Wilful Desertion

7:14. Divorce and Remarriage: 6. Wilful Desertion

7:15. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith, 6. Wilful Desertion

Romans

7:2,3. Divorce and Remarriage: 3. Westminster Confession of Faith

1 Corinthians

- 5:1. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29
- 7. Marriage
- 10:8. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

2 Corinthians

- 6:14. Marriage

Jude

- 1:7. Divorce and Remarriage: 5. Deuteronomy 22:13-29

Revelation

- 17:16. Arranged Marriages

Understanding the Future - Scripture Index

Genesis

- 1:5,8,13,19,23,31. The Millennium: My Theory
- 1:2. Dispensationalism 18
- 2:7. The Millennium: Amillennialism
- 3:19. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature; The Millennium: Confession 1:5
- 9:24-27. The Future of the Jews
- 35:18. The Millennium: Confession 1:4

Exodus

- 1:6. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
- 32:33. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
- 33:20. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

Deuteronomy

- 4:30. Dispensationalism 8
- 7:9. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

Judges

- 10:14. Dispensationalism 8

1 Samuel

26:24. Dispensationalism 8

1 Kings

17:21,22. The Millennium: Confession 1:4

2 Kings

6:17. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

1 Chronicles

16:15. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

21:1. Dispensationalism 17

Job

1,2. The Millennium: Amillennialism

1:6,7. The Millennium: Confession 2:4

1:12. The Millennium: Confession 2:5

2:1,2. The Millennium: Confession 2:4

2:6. The Millennium: Confession 2:5

7:15. The Millennium: Confession 1:4

7:21. The Millennium: Confession 1:5

14:22. The Millennium: Confession 1:1

19:26,27. The Millennium: Confession 3:11

21:30. The Millennium: Confession 1:9

22:29. The Millennium: Confession 3:6

33:30. The Millennium: Confession 1:10

34:11. The Millennium: Confession 5:11

34:14. The Millennium: Confession 1:3

Psalms

2:12. Dispensationalism 10

6:5. The Millennium: Confession 1:8

9:10. The Millennium: Confession 1:7

9:17. The Millennium: Confession 1:6

14:2,3. The Millennium: Confession 5:12

14:5. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

16:10. The Millennium: Confession 1:10

22:27. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

22:30. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

25:13. The Millennium: Confession 4:10

30:3. The Millennium: Confession 1:10

30:9. The Millennium: Confession 1:8

31:5. The Millennium: Confession 1:3

34:22. The Millennium: Confession 1:10
37:9-11. Dispensationalism 6; The Millennium: Confession 4:10
37:10,11. The Millennium: Premillennialism
37:22. The Millennium: Confession 4:10
37:28,29. The Millennium: Confession 4:10
37:34. The Millennium: Confession 4:10
48. The Millennium: Confession 6:10
49:9. The Millennium: Confession 1:10
49:15. The Millennium: Confession 1:10
49:19. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
51:5. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
51:11,12. The Future of the Jews
53:2,3. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
56:13. The Millennium: Confession 1:10
58:3. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
58:11. The Millennium: Confession 5:8
62:12. The Millennium: Confession 5:11
69:28. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
72:7-11. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
72:8. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
75:7. The Millennium: Confession 5:8
86:13. The Millennium: Confession 1:10
88:10-12. The Millennium: Confession 1:8
90:3. The Millennium: Confession 1:5
92:7. The Millennium: Confession 6:5
102:26. The Millennium: Confession 5:6
104:29. The Millennium: Confession 1:5
105:8. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
110:4-6. Dispensationalism 10
115:17. The Millennium: Confession 1:8
116:8. The Millennium: Confession 1:10
118:22,23. The Future of the Jews
130:3. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
138:6. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
146:4. The Millennium: Confession 1:5
149:9. The Millennium: Confession 5:10

Proverbs

2:21,22. Dispensationalism 6; The Millennium: Premillennialism, Confession 4:10
10:30. Dispensationalism 6; The Millennium: Premillennialism
15:24. The Millennium: Confession 1:6
20:27. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
23:14. The Millennium: Confession 1:6

Ecclesiastes

3:20. The Millennium: Confession 1:5

8:8. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
12:7. The Millennium: Confession 1:3

Isaiah

2:4. Dispensationalism 10
2:20,21. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
2:22. The Antichrist
5:14. The Millennium: Confession 1:6
8:22. The Millennium: Confession 6:7
10:18. The Millennium: Confession 1:1
11:1-4. Dispensationalism 10
11:4. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
13:7,8. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
13:10. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
13:13. The Millennium: Confession 5:6
14:4-23. Dispensationalism 17
14:12. Dispensationalism 17; The Millennium: Confession 2:7
23:16-18. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
24:1-3. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
24:21,22. The Millennium: Confession 4:6
24:22. The Millennium: Confession 5:2
24:23. The Millennium: Confession 3:5, 4:9
26:19. The Millennium: Confession 3:11
27:13. The Millennium: Confession 3:8, 4:9
33:14. The Millennium: Confession 6:5
34:2,3. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
34:4. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
34:8-10. The Millennium: Confession 6:6
35:10. The Millennium: Confession 6:11
38:18. The Millennium: Confession 1:8
41:15,16. The Millennium: Confession 5:10
42:5. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
50:11. The Millennium: Confession 1:9
51:11. The Millennium: Confession 6:11
55:12. The Millennium: Premillennialism
57:15,16. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
57:15. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
60:19,20. The Millennium: Confession 6:13
60:21. The Millennium: Confession 4:10
65:17-19. The Millennium: Confession 6:11
65:17. The Millennium: Confession 6:8
65:20,21. The Millennium: Premillennialism
66:15,16. The Millennium: Confession 5:4
66:16. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
66:22. The Millennium: Confession 6:8,9
66:23. The Millennium: Confession 4:9
66:24. The Millennium: Confession 4:5, 6:6

Jeremiah

4:28,29. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
7:20. The Millennium: Confession 6:6
7:32-34. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
17:10. The Millennium: Confession 5:11
19:6,7. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
25:27-33. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
31:40. The Millennium: Confession 4:5

Ezekiel

1:1. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
20:47,48. The Millennium: Confession 6:6
28:2. The Antichrist
28:11-19. Dispensationalism
31:14. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
32:7. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
38:8-23. The Millennium: Confession 5:3
38:19,20. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
38:22. The Millennium: Confession 5:4
39:2. The Millennium: Confession 4:3
39:3-5. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
39:8. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
40-48. The Millennium: Premillennialism

Daniel

2:21. The Antichrist
4:37. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
7:8,11,20,21,25. The Antichrist
7:9. The Millennium: Confession 5:7, 5:8
7:11. The Millennium: Confession 4:4
7:13,14. The Millennium: Confession 5:9
7:26,27. The Millennium: Confession 4:9
7:26. The Millennium: Confession 6:5
8:9-14,23-25. The Antichrist
9:25. The Antichrist
11:21-45. The Antichrist
12:1. The Millennium: Postmillennialism, Confession 5:13
12:2. The Millennium: Confession 6:5
12:8,9. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
12:13. The Millennium: Confession 4:8

Hosea

10:8. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
13:14. The Millennium: Confession 1:10

Joel

- 2:31. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
- 3:15,16. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
- 3:20. The Millennium: Confession 6:9

Amos

- 8:9. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
- 8:10. The Millennium: Confession 4:1
- 9:11,12. The Future of the Jews

Micah

- 4:3. Dispensationalism 10

Habakkuk

- 2:14. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

Zephaniah

- 1:18. The Millennium: Confession 5:4
- 3:8. The Millennium: Confession 5:4

Zechariah

- 2:5. The Millennium: Confession 6:13
- 3:1. The Millennium: Confession 2:4
- 12:1. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
- 12:10. The Millennium: Confession 4:1
- 14:2. The Millennium: Confession 4:3
- 14:5. The Millennium: Confession 3:10
- 14:6,7. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
- 14:9. The Millennium: Confession 4:9
- 14:11. The Millennium: Confession 4:11
- 14:13. The Millennium: Confession 4:1

Malachi

- 3:6. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
- 4:1. The Millennium: Confession 5:4

Matthew

- 1:1. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
- 1:17. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
- 3:12. The Millennium: Confession 6:6

5:5. Dispensationalism 6; The Millennium: Premillennialism, My Theory, Confession 4:10

8:11,12. Dispensationalism 12

8:12. The Millennium: Confession 6:7

10:5,6. The Future of the Jews

10:28. The Millennium: Confession 1:1, 6:5

12:36. The Millennium: Confession 5:8

13:21. Dispensationalism 8

13:39. The Millennium: Confession 3:9

13:41-43. Dispensationalism 6, 12

13:42. The Millennium: Confession 6:7

13:49,50. Dispensationalism 12

13:49. Dispensationalism 6; The Millennium: Confession 3:9

13:50. The Millennium: Confession 6:7

15:24. The Future of the Jews

16:27. The Millennium: Confession 3:7, 3:9, 5:11

19:28. The Millennium: Confession 5:10

21:18-22. The Future of the Jews

21:33-44. The Future of the Jews

22:1-14. The Future of the Jews

22:12-14. Dispensationalism 12

22:13. The Millennium: Confession 6:7

23:12. The Millennium: Confession 3:6

23:37-39. The Future of the Jews

23:38. The Future of the Jews

24:1-36. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:6. Dispensationalism 8

24:7,8. Dispensationalism 8

24:14. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:15-22. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:21,22. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:21. Dispensationalism 8

24:27-29. Dispensationalism 4

24:27. Dispensationalism 8; The Millennium: Confession 3:4

24:29. Dispensationalism 8; The Millennium: Confession 3:5

24:30. The Millennium: Confession 3:7, 4:1

24:31. The Millennium: Confession 3:8, 3:9, 3:10

24:34. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:35. The Millennium: Confession 5:6

24:36. Dispensationalism 8; The Millennium: Confession 3:1

24:37-51. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:37-41. The Millennium: Premillennialism

24:37. Dispensationalism 6

24:40-41. The Millennium: Confession 3:13

24:42-46. Dispensationalism 1

24:42-44. Understanding Future Events; The Millennium: Confession 3:3

24:44. Dispensationalism 8

24:45-51. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

24:50,51. Dispensationalism 12
25. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
25:5. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
25:11-13. Dispensationalism 12
25:13. The Millennium: Confession 3:3
25:28-30. Dispensationalism 12
25:30. The Millennium: Confession 6:7
25:31,32. Dispensationalism 10
25:31. The Millennium: Confession 3:9
25:32. The Millennium: Confession 5:7
25:34. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
25:41. Dispensationalism 10, 12; The Millennium: Confession 5:5, 6:3
25:46. Dispensationalism 12; The Millennium: Confession 6:5
27:46. The Millennium: Confession 1:7

Mark

4:11. The Antichrist
4:18,19. Dispensationalism 5
8:38. The Millennium: Confession 3:9
9:43-48. The Millennium: Confession 6:6
11:12-14. The Future of the Jews
11:20-26. The Future of the Jews
12:1-11. The Future of the Jews
13:24,25. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
13:24. Dispensationalism 8
13:26. The Millennium: Confession 3:7
13:27. The Millennium: Confession 3:9, 3:10
13:32,33. Understanding Future Events
13:32. Dispensationalism 3; The Millennium: Confession 3:1
13:33. The Antichrist
13:35-37. The Millennium: Confession 3:3
14:38. Dispensationalism 1
15:34. The Millennium: Confession 1:7

Luke

1:47. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
1:51,52. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
2:25-38. Understanding Future Events
2:51. Understanding Future Events
3:21,22. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
8:31. The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 2:2
8:55. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
9:26. The Millennium: Confession 3:7
10:18. The Millennium: Confession 2:7
10:20. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
11:31,32. The Millennium: Confession 5:10

12:5. The Millennium: Confession 6:3
 12:20. The Millennium: Confession 1:4
 12:36-48. The Millennium: Confession 3:3
 12:40. The Millennium: Confession 3:2
 12:47,48. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
 13:6-9. The Future of the Jews
 13:27,28. Dispensationalism 12
 13:34,35. The Future of the Jews
 13:35. The Future of the Jews
 14:11. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
 14:14. The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 3:11
 14:16-24. The Future of the Jews
 16:8. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
 16:22,23. The Millennium: Confession 1:14
 16:22. The Millennium: Confession 1:11
 16:23-28. The Millennium: Confession 1:9
 16:26. The Millennium: Confession 1:15
 17. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
 17:10. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
 17:24. The Millennium: Confession 3:4
 17:30. The Antichrist
 18:7,8. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
 18:14. The Millennium: Confession 3:6
 19:41-44. The Future of the Jews
 20:9-18. The Future of the Jews
 21. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
 21:22-24. Dispensationalism 8
 21:24. The Future of the Jews
 21:25. The Millennium: Confession 3:5
 21:26. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
 21:27. The Millennium: Confession 3:7
 21:34-36. Dispensationalism 1; The Millennium: Confession 3:3
 21:35. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
 22:30. The Millennium: Confession 5:10
 23:30. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
 23:43. Dispensationalism 1; The Millennium: Confession 1:11
 23:46. The Millennium: Confession 1:3

John

5:22,23. Dispensationalism 10
 5:22. The Millennium: Confession 5:9
 5:28,29. The Millennium: My Theory
 5:29. The Millennium: Confession 3:11, 5:2
 5:39. Understanding Future Events
 5:42,43. Understanding Future Events
 6:39,40. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
 6:44. The Millennium: Confession 4:7

6:54. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
8:15,16. Dispensationalism 10
9:39. The Millennium: Confession 5:9
10:27-29. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
11:24. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
12:31. The Millennium: Confession 2:7
12:47,48. Dispensationalism 10
12:48. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
14:30. The Millennium: Confession 2:7
16:33. Dispensationalism 8
17:12. The Millennium: Confession 2:9

Acts

1:11. The Millennium: Confession 3:2, 3:7
2:27. The Millennium: Confession 1:6
2:40. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
3:21. The Millennium: Confession 1:12
4:11,12. Dispensationalism 12
7:55,56. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
10:10,11. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
10:42. Dispensationalism 10; The Millennium: Confession 5:9
13:36. The Millennium: Confession 1:5
13:46,47. The Future of the Jews
14:22. Dispensationalism 8
15:14-17. The Future of the Jews
17:31. Dispensationalism 10; The Millennium: Confession 5:7
24:15. The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 3:11, 5:2

Romans

2:9. Dispensationalism 8; The Millennium: Confession 1:9
2:16. Dispensationalism 10
2:28,29. The Future of the Jews
3:1,2. The Future of the Jews
3:9-20. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
3:23. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
3:24. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
3:29,30. The Future of the Jews
5:3. Dispensationalism 8
7:21-25. Dispensationalism 16
8:11. The Millennium: Confession 1:13, 3:11
8:21. The Millennium: Confession 1:12
8:23. The Millennium: Confession 1:13
8:29. The Millennium: Confession 3:14
8:35-39. Dispensationalism 8
8:35. Dispensationalism 8
9:4,5. The Future of the Jews

- 11. The Future of the Jews
- 12:12. Dispensationalism 8
- 14:10. Dispensationalism 10; The Millennium: Confession 5:9
- 14:12. The Millennium: Confession 5:7, 5:8

1 Corinthians

- 3:11-15. Dispensationalism 5
- 3:12-15. The Millennium: Confession 5:11
- 3:13. The Antichrist
- 4:5. The Millennium: Confession 5:7
- 5:3. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
- 6:2,3. The Millennium: Confession 5:10
- 7:34. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
- 10:1-4. The Millennium: Premillennialism
- 15:23,24. The Millennium: Premillennialism
- 15:24. The Millennium: Confession 4:11
- 15:26. The Millennium: Confession 6:1
- 15:28. The Millennium: Confession 6:2
- 15:42-44. The Millennium: Confession 3:12
- 15:51-54. The Millennium: Confession 3:12
- 15:52. The Millennium: Confession 3:8
- 16:13. Dispensationalism 1
- 16:22. The Millennium: Confession 6:14

2 Corinthians

- 1:4. Dispensationalism 8
- 2:16. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
- 4:17,18. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
- 5:2-4. The Millennium: Confession 1:13
- 5:6. The Millennium: Confession 1:11
- 5:8. The Millennium: Confession 1:4, 1:11
- 5:10. Dispensationalism 10; The Millennium: Confession 5:7, 5:9, 5:11
- 7:4. Dispensationalism 8
- 12:4. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

Galatians

- 3:7. The Future of the Jews
- 4:26. The Millennium: Confession 6:10
- 6:15,16. The Future of the Jews
- 6:16. The Future of the Jews

Ephesians

- 2:12. The Millennium: Confession 5:12
- 6:9. The Antichrist

Philippians

- 1:23. The Millennium: Confession 1:11
- 2:9-11. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
- 3:21. The Millennium: Confession 3:14

Colossians

- 4:2. Dispensationalism 1

1 Thessalonians

- 3:4. Dispensationalism 8
- 3:13. The Millennium: Confession 3:10
- 4:14. The Millennium: Confession 3:10
- 4:16,17. Dispensationalism 4, 6; The Millennium: Premillennialism
- 4:16. The Millennium: Confession 3:8, 3:11
- 4:17. The Millennium: Confession 3:13
- 5:1-3. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
- 5:2-4. Dispensationalism 4
- 5:2,3. The Millennium: Confession 3:2
- The Millennium: Confession 3:2
- 5:4. The Millennium: Confession 3:3
- 5:23. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
- 5:6. Dispensationalism 1

2 Thessalonians

- 1:6. Dispensationalism 8
- 1:7. The Millennium: Confession 3:9
- 1:9. The Millennium: Confession 6:5
- 2. The Antichrist; Dispensationalism 9

1 Timothy

- 3:9. The Antichrist
- 3:15. The Future of the Jews
- 6:16. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

2 Timothy

- 3:16. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
- 4:1. Dispensationalism 10
- 4:5. Dispensationalism 1

Hebrews

- 1:14. Dispensationalism 18
- 2:5,6. The Millennium: Confession 6:8

2:16,17. The Millennium: Confession 2:1
4:2. The Millennium: Premillennialism
4:12. The Millennium: Confession 1:2
4:13. The Millennium: Confession 5:8
7:26,27. The Millennium: Premillennialism
9:27,28. Dispensationalism 7
9:28. The Millennium: Confession 3:2
10:10. The Antichrist
10:25. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
12:22. The Millennium: Confession 6:10
12:23. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
12:27. The Millennium: Confession 5:6

James

2:26. The Millennium: Confession 1:3
4:6. The Millennium: Confession 3:6

1 Peter

2:9. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
4:4,5. Dispensationalism 10
4:7. Dispensationalism 1; The Millennium: Confession 4:8
5:5. The Millennium: Confession 3:6

2 Peter

1:5-8. Dispensationalism 5
2:4. Dispensationalism 12; The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 2:2
2:5. Dispensationalism 6
2:9. The Millennium: Confession 1:9
2:12,13. The Millennium: Confession 5:11
2:17. Dispensationalism 12; The Millennium: Confession 6:7
3:7. The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 5:4
3:8. The Millennium: My Theory
3:10. Dispensationalism 4, 8; The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 3:2, 4:7
3:11,12. The Millennium: Confession 3:3
3:12. The Millennium: Confession 4:7
3:13. The Millennium: Confession 6:8

1 John

2:18. The Antichrist; Dispensationalism 9
2:22. The Antichrist
4:3. The Antichrist
5:18. The Millennium: Confession 2:9

2 John

1:7. The Antichrist

Jude

1:6. The Millennium: Confession 2:2

1:9. The Millennium: Confession 3:8

1:13. Dispensationalism 12; The Millennium: Confession 6:7

1:14,15. The Millennium: Confession 5:7

1:14. The Millennium: Confession 3:10

Revelation

1:4. Dispensationalism 11

1:7. The Antichrist; The Millennium: Confession 3:7, 4:1

1:9. Dispensationalism 8

2:7. The Millennium: Confession 1:11

2:9,10. Dispensationalism 8

2:11. The Millennium: Confession 6:4

2:22. Dispensationalism 8

2:23. The Millennium: Confession 5:11

3:3. The Millennium: Confession 3:2

4:1. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

4:4. Dispensationalism 11

5:10. The Millennium: Confession 4:9

6:9-11. The Millennium: Confession 1:13

6:12-14. The Millennium: Confession 3:5

6:15-17. The Millennium: Confession 4:2

7:4. Dispensationalism 11

7:9,10. The Millennium: Postmillennialism

7:14. Dispensationalism 8; The Millennium: Premillennialism

7:16,17. The Millennium: Confession 6:11

9:1-3. The Millennium: Confession 2:10

9:1. The Millennium: Confession 2:7

10:4. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

10:6. The Millennium: My Theory, Confession 4:8

11:13. The Millennium: Confession 4:2

11:15. The Millennium: Confession 3:8

12:3,4. The Millennium: Confession 2:4

12:4. The Millennium: Confession 2:3

12:6. The Millennium: Confession 2:9

12:7. The Millennium: Confession 2:4

12:8. The Millennium: Confession 2:6

12:9. The Millennium: Confession 2:7

12:12-17. The Millennium: Confession 2:8

12:12,13. The Millennium: Confession 2:7

12:14. The Millennium: Confession 2:9

12:15. The Antichrist

12:16. The Millennium: Confession 2:9
13:3. The Millennium: Confession 2:11
13:4. The Millennium: Confession 2:11
13:8. The Millennium: Confession 2:11, 2:13, 5:13
13:13-17. The Millennium: Confession 2:12
14:1. The Millennium: Confession 2:13
15:5. The Use of Apocalyptic Literature
16:9. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
16:11. The Millennium: Confession 4:2
16:14-16. The Millennium: Confession 4:3
16:15. The Millennium: Confession 3:2
16:21. The Millennium: Confession 5:4
17:8. The Millennium: Confession 5:1, 5:13
17:11. The Antichrist
19:11-20:15. The Millennium: My Theory
19:14. The Millennium: Confession 3:10
19:19. The Millennium: Confession 4:3
19:20. The Millennium: Confession 4:4
19:21. The Millennium: Confession 4:5
20:1-6. Dispensationalism 11
20:1-3. The Millennium: Amillennialism, Confession 4:6
20:2. The Millennium: Amillennialism
20:3. The Millennium: Postmillennialism, Confession 5:1
20:4. The Millennium: Amillennialism, Confession 1:13, 3:11, 4:9
20:5. The Millennium: Amillennialism
20:6. The Millennium: Confession 3:11, 4:9, 5:2, 6:4
20:7. The Millennium: Confession 5:1
20:8,9. The Millennium: Confession 5:3
20:8. The Millennium: Postmillennialism
20:9. The Millennium: Postmillennialism, Confession 5:4
20:10. The Millennium: Confession 5:5, 6:5
20:11-15. Dispensationalism 15
20:11. The Millennium: Confession 5:6
20:12,13. The Millennium: Confession 5:7, 5:11
20:14. The Millennium: Confession 6:1, 6:4
20:15. The Millennium: Confession 5:13, 6:3
21,22. The Millennium: My Theory
21:1. The Millennium: Confession 6:8
21:2. The Millennium: Confession 6:10
21:3,4. The Millennium: Confession 6:11
21:8. The Millennium: Confession 6:3, 6:4
21:10. The Millennium: Confession 6:10
21:22. The Millennium: Confession 6:12
21:23. The Millennium: Confession 6:13
21:27. The Millennium: Confession 5:13
22:5. The Millennium: Confession 6:13
22:20. The Millennium: Confession 6:14
